

Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and Members of the Committee

My name is Michael Moreno Sanchez and I am testifying in support of the Restorative Justice Grant Program. In August of 2022, I was the victim of a robbery and I had the opportunity to engage in a restorative justice process with the person who harmed me.

I remember the event very clearly. It was just like any other day to me. I was just coming and clocking in and doing my thing. But I remember seeing Sedric coming through that door and my first impression about him was wow this guy is a really funny guy who seems nice. But as it soon came to be I was very wrong because he had come to rob the store.

In that moment I was scared. My adrenaline was through the roof. I didn't know what to do because I thought these things only happened in movies. Looking back I probably should have thrown burgers to defend myself but it didn't come to my mind.

Fast forward a couple months and I was in front of a district attorney and I had two choices. Either I could go and take Sedric to trial and go through that long process. Or I could chose this new program that I had never heard about called the Restorative Roots Project. I had no idea what they were about and I had never heard of restorative justice but they explained to me that if I chose this program I was going to be able to meet with Sedric and get to ask things that I wouldn't be able to during a regular trial. So I decided to go for it and, I have to say, it was a good decision. Not only did the restorative justice facilitators help me out but I got to go to therapy thanks to them. They helped me out in finding a barber school and they also helped me prepare for the one on one meeting with Sedric.

When it came down to that meeting, I was really nervous. But with the help of the facilitators I was able to let loose. And, to be honest, it was like we were long distance friends. We clicked right away. I got to know Sedric more personally and I got to know why he did the things he did. And now looking back, I can tell that my first impression wasn't actually wrong about Sedric.

I hope that you will be able to help others the same way that I got help. Please invest in restorative justice and allow more victims of crime the opportunity to engage in these healing processes.