## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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## ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD

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IN THE MATTER OF:

AV Resto Group #3, LLC, : t/a Never Looked Better :

1230 9th Street, N.W. : Fact Finding Retailer CT - ANC 2F : Hearing

License No. 116062 Case #21-CMP-00047 (Failed to Follow Terms :

of Your License)

Wednesday December 8, 2021

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board met via WebEx videoconference, Chairperson Donovan W. Anderson presiding.

## PRESENT:

DONOVAN W. ANDERSON, Chairperson BOBBY CATO, JR., Member RAFI ALIYA CROCKETT, Member EDWARD S. GRANDIS, Member JENI HANSEN, Member JAMES SHORT, JR., Member

## ALSO PRESENT:

SARAH FASHBAUGH, DC ABRA Staff HERBERT ROSENBLUM, Applicant Counsel KRYSTLE BIBBINS, Applicant WILLIAM SETH McCLELLAND, Applicant JEFFREY COLES, Applicant JACOB FLORES, Applicant INVESTIGATOR KEVIN PUENTE, DC ABRA JOHN GUGGENMOS, ANC 2F

1	P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
2	2:31 p.m.
3	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So the next
4	case on our calendar is a fact-finding hearing of
5	Case Number and I'm sorry. Before as I
6	stated, if there are parties here for the protest
7	hearing, the earliest the 2:30 protest hearing
8	will start is 3:30.
9	I just want you to be aware that the
10	earliest that the protest hearing will start
11	today is 3:30, and the Agency will be contacting
12	the parties, the protestants, to see if anything
13	can be done. But just as an FYI, the earliest
14	the 2:30 protest will start is 3:30 today. Our
15	10:30 hearing this morning ran much longer than
16	we'd anticipated.
17	All right. So this is a fact-finding
18	hearing on Never Looked Better, License Number
19	116062.
20	Ms. Fashbaugh, can you please elevate
21	the rights of the parties in this case, please?
22	MS. FASHBAUGH: Please stand by.
23	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.
24	MS. FASHBAUGH: Herbert Rosenblum,
25	you're elevated.

Krystle Bibbins, your rights have been 1 2 elevated. Jeffrey Coles, your rights have been 3 4 elevated. I do not see a Jacob Flores on the 5 line. 6 7 William Seth McClelland, your rights have been elevated. 8 9 John Guggenmos, your rights have been elevated. 10 11 And, Kevin Puente, your rights have 12 already been elevated. 13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. So, for 14 everyone who has a camera -- if you have a 15 camera, can you please turn your camera on, 16 please? 17 All right. Good afternoon, everyone. 18 This is a fact-finding hearing regarding -- the 19 Agency was brought to the attention that there were alleged videos of minors -- there are videos 20 21 of minors allegedly drinking alcohol in Never 22 Looked Better, and that there is an allegation 23 that ownership was encouraging minors to drink 24 alcohol online and also how to get away with 25 drinking alcohol as a minor in an establishment.

None of these incidents were personally observed by ABRA investigators, so these are things that were brought to attention online. The purpose -- this is a fact-finding hearing. We're trying to gather information to see whether or not we have enough information to

So we're going to have this hearing today as a fact-finding hearing. The board has not made any determination about further action. What we're doing is that we're gathering facts. This is an informal matter. No one will be sworn in because it's informal. And the Board at a fact-finding hearing cannot order the Licensee to take any specific action.

The Board, however, can ask the Licensee if he will take an action, and the Licensee can volunteer yes or say no. But I just want to say that because we're just gathering information -- this is more so informal -- the Board is not in a position to order the Licensee to take any specific action at a fact-finding hearing.

At the end of this hearing, the Board will take this matter under advisement, meaning

move forward.

that we will look at the information that was gathered today, and we'll either send this matter to the Office of the Attorney General for further action, meaning that if they believe that there are any laws that were violated then we'll have a show-cause hearing, or the Board will determine that there's no further action.

So, as I said before, that's the posture that this case -- those are the two possible endings that the Board can have, either that we take no further action or we submit this to the Office of Attorney General for them to investigate to see if any specific charges can be brought regarding the establishment.

So is everyone -- we're all on the same page where we are today?

All right. So I'm going to have the parties introduce themselves for the record.

It's my understanding that, also, there is counsel for the establishment, Mr. Herbert S. Rosenblum.

So I'm going to start to have everyone identify themselves for the record. So please spell and state your name for the record. Let's start with Mr. Rosenblum, please.

1	Is Mr. Rosenblum online? Mr.
2	Rosenblum is who's the owner? All right.
3	Whom are you, sir?
4	(Simultaneous speaking.)
5	MR. McCLELLAND: Mr. Rosenblum's on
6	mute.
7	(Simultaneous speaking.)
8	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes. Can you
9	spell and state your name for the record and who
10	you represent, sir?
11	MR. ROSENBLUM: Yes. Herbert
12	Rosenblum, H-E-R-B-E-R-T, Rosenblum, R-O-S-E-N-B-
13	L-U-M. I am the attorney for the Licensee, Never
14	Looked
15	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And I'm
16	sorry. Who is the Licensee, and are they online,
17	sir?
18	MR. ROSENBLUM: Yes, they are.
19	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And what are
20	their names? And then, once you tell us their
21	names, they can identify themselves for the
22	record, please.
23	MR. ROSENBLUM: Yes. There's four
24	representatives. The primary representative is
25	W. Seth McClelland, and he is on the bottom of my

Then there's Jeff Coles, C-O-L-E-S. 1 screen. 2 there is Krystle Bibbins, B-I-B-B-I-N-S, and she 3 is toward the middle of the screen. And then 4 there's Jacob Flores, and he is on the screen 5 with Mr. Coles. CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. 6 So 7 let's start with Ms. Bibbins. Can you please 8 spell and state your name for the record, ma'am, 9 and your relationship to this case? MS. BIBBINS: Hi. Good afternoon. 10 МУ 11 name is Krystle Bibbins, K-R-Y-S-T-L-E, B-I-B-B-12 I am a licensed manager at Never Looked 13 Better. 14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Flores? 15 MR. FLORES: Hello. I'm Jacob Flores. 16 That's J-A-C-O-B, F-L-O-R-E-S. And I am also a 17 licensed manager at Never Looked Better. 18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. McClelland? 19 MR. McCLELLAND: Hi. Yes. It's William Seth McClelland. That's W-I-L-L-I-A-M, 20 21 S-E-T-H, M-C-C-L-E-L-L-A-N-D. And I am a 22 Licensee. 23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Coles? 24 MR. COLES: Hi. I'm Jeffrey Coles, J-25 E-F-F-R-E-Y, C-O-L-E-S. And I am a partner in

	the par and a the establishment and the
2	Director of Operations.
3	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So
4	I've identified everyone from the Licensee. Is
5	that correct, Mr. Rosenblum?
6	MR. ROSENBLUM: Yes. I would like Ms.
7	Bibbins to testify first or make her statement
8	first because she has other obligations starting
9	approximately 3:00, if that is okay if we start
10	with her.
11	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yeah, I'll keep
12	that in I'll keep it, but I need to set the
13	stage first before she testifies. So
14	MR. ROSENBLUM: Sure.
15	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I need to
16	start off with our investigator first. But I'll
17	keep that in mind.
18	All right. Mr. Puente, can you please
19	spell and state your name for the record and your
20	relationship to this case?
21	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Kevin Puente, K-
22	E-V-I-N, P-U-E-N-T-E, ABRA Investigator.
23	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.
24	Mr. Guggenmos, can you please spell
25	and state your name for the record, please?

1 MR. GUGGENMOS: Sure. It's John 2 Guggenmos, J-O-H-N, G-U-G-G-E-N-M-O-S. And I'm 3 Chairperson for ANC 2F. CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. 4 5 Good afternoon, sir. Have I captured everyone today who 6 7 needs to speak today? Everyone has been 8 recognized? 9 All right. All right. So, before --10 I heard what you said, Mr. Rosenblum. And so 11 what I'll do is -- but I'm going to have our 12 investigator at least set the stage for why we're 13 here. 14 So, Mr. Puente, can you just bring us 15 up to speed why we're here today, sir? 16 INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes, sir. So 17 ABRA received a complaint from ANC 2F regarding 18 Never Looked Better and one of its owners, Mr. 19 Seth McClelland. 20 It was concerning videos that were 21 posted on the social media page TikTok by Mr. 22 McClelland encouraging underage drinking, how 23 kids can get into a bar with a fake ID. 24 also, there was a 15-year-old D.C. resident and

student of D.C. Public Schools who actively

posted on Instagram and TikTok of him at the bar
of Never Looked Better.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: That's it?

INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes. I've got
videos if you want me to show those videos now,

or do you want me to wait?

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Give me a minute. Let me go to Mr. -- Mr. Guggenmos, since you started this process in a sense, can you just bring us up to speed? Why did you alert ABRA to this potential violation?

MR. GUGGENMOS: There were a group of neighbors that indicated there are a number of issues. And so -- and the SMD elevated it or sent the letter to ABRA. I think from there, I think some of the -- being quite frank, the owners kind of took off with some of the allegations, but that's -- we did it in just service to the constituents.

the allegations, sir? What are the allegations?

MR. GUGGENMOS: Well, what's -- I

mean, what was stated there about the videos, I

-- I know I hate to even say publicly, but that

there was child sex trafficking, that there was

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But what are

just unsavory activity with the ABRA investigator after hours, that -- I mean, defecation in the alley.

I mean, it just -- there was a host of things. And of source our job is not to

things. And, of course, our job is not to investigate anything, but if there is a -- at the moment, seemed like there may be an ounce of credibility. We're not even judging it. We're just passing it on to who we thought the proper authorities were, but you have the expression.

That's what I think led to this.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Fine. Thank you.

All right. Mr. Rosenblum -- I mean,
I'm going to have Mr. Puente show the video. But
what is it that Ms. Bibbins -- can you give us -what is it that Ms. Bibbins will be speaking
about, sir?

MR. ROSENBLUM: She will be speaking about her job -- this is not her only job. She's a member of the Bar of the District of Columbia. She's a member of the Bar of the State of Maryland. She has another job.

She is the full-time night manager starting approximately 9:30, 10:00 until closing.

And she will go through what the facility does to 1 2 check people coming into the establishment, that 3 they have five ABRA-approved people during the weekend. They have people at the door. 4 They 5 check everyone's ID. They use a blue light to make sure 6 7 that the people are legal, that they're of age, 8 that there are times that they have 9 identification from perhaps a foreign country 10 that they cannot recognize from the book that 11 ABRA has provided them, so they deny them 12 entrance into the facility. She will testify --13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. All 14 I was just trying to get a proffer of right. 15 what she's going to testify to. So why don't you 16 have her -- again, I'm not swearing anyone in, 17 and because you told me that she has some time 18 constraints and you believe that she has some 19 critical information here -- so why don't you 20 have her start with her presentation, sir? 21 MR. ROSENBLUM: Okay. Thank you. 22 Please state your name.

MR. ROSENBLUM:

MS. BIBBINS: My name's Krystle

Ms. Bibbins, are you

Bibbins.

23

24

	employed by Never Looked Better?
2	MS. BIBBINS: Yes, I am.
3	MR. ROSENBLUM: What is your job and
4	position?
5	MS. BIBBINS: I am a manager at Never
6	Looked Better. I actually do things for the
7	events, off-duty hours and on-duty hours. I am
8	there every weekend Friday to Saturday, and
9	during the weekday also.
10	MR. ROSENBLUM: And how long have you
11	worked at this establishment?
12	MS. BIBBINS: For the company, I've
13	been working with them for three and a half
14	years. And I started with Never Looked Better
15	about two months into their opening.
16	MR. ROSENBLUM: And you're there on
17	the weekends. Is that correct?
18	MS. BIBBINS: That is correct.
19	MR. ROSENBLUM: Of course, that's the
20	busier time of the business, correct?
21	MS. BIBBINS: Correct.
22	MR. ROSENBLUM: And tell the Board
23	what this establishment does with respect to
24	admitting people into the premises.
25	MS. BIBBINS: Every day for every time

that we're open, we have a security staff person who is trained and doing visual checks on every ID, passports, and any government-issued IDs. If there's any question about identification, we carry a current book that has all 50 states, territories, and countries with their current upto-date information, so we can cross-reference any of that if we have any questions.

As well as myself, Jacob and several other staff members, we're all ABRA manager certified. We've taken Alcohol Board training. We're TIPS certified, and most of us have been in the industry for over 20 years.

MR. ROSENBLUM: Is there ever occasion when you or any of the other persons at Never Looked Better stop serving someone?

MS. BIBBINS: Yes. The staff, as well as the managers, we are thoroughly trained in stopping service for some patrons we deem are a danger or safety concerns to themselves or others. Our policy is we cut off service at that point. We offer water, and then we make sure they're able to get to a cab or Uber outside out of our 9th Street exit.

MR. ROSENBLUM: Is there a concerted

effort being made by some neighbors to close Never Looked Better?

MS. BIBBINS: There is. There is a concerted effort by several neighbors in the area. There is an Instagram page dedicated to shutting down several businesses in Blagden Alley, not just Never Looked Better. They call themselves Save Blagden Alley.

They have repeatedly posted misinformation about us, included the human defecation -- attributing that to us. They have no actual proof of that. There are several other businesses in the area. It's also an alleyway. It's a pretty busy thoroughfare. People come and go from 9th Street. U Street is just a few blocks down. 14th Street is around the corner.

So we've been getting a lot of hate mail, hate Instagram, frankly just bullying online, from this Saved Blagden Alley group.

MR. ROSENBLUM: What about the claims of pedophilia?

MS. BIBBINS: I'm not sure if the rest of the Board or the participants have copies of our exhibits that we will be presenting, but on several occasions, a certain member of the Save

Blagden Alley group has accused us of child sex trafficking, pedophilia, and other such things.

No proof. Obviously, we're not doing that. But it's a scary thought, and it's been damaging to our reputation.

MR. ROSENBLUM: And why is it scary?

MS. BIBBINS: It's scary because I

think everybody remembers the Ping Pong Pizza

incident where someone from out of town came in

and shot up the pizza place. So, due to that, we

have increased security. We have now three

security people on the weekends instead of two.

So we have two inside, one outside at the door.

We don't allow backpacks, big bags.

We have everybody being checked. We don't let people into our bar who are standing in line waiting based on their -- make sure they're -- you know, unsavory or not, we don't want them in our establishment.

MR. ROSENBLUM: Tell me about a picture that was posted of one of your employees with their child.

MS. BIBBINS: Yes. Again, on the Save Blagden Alley post, we had several stories and Instagram posts from this page featuring one of

our employees with their kid. And I believe Mr. Robert Goldberg took that to mean we were child sex traffickers. Obviously, it was damaging to our employee. It was damaging to the rest of our staff.

Other staff members' kids are also on social media. They've seen this, and hey, I heard you guys are -- is there child sex trafficking going on at your bar? So we've been constantly having to defend our reputation based on some of these things that they're posting.

Save Blagden Alley has also posted disinformation about our mask policy while we had mask mandates in D.C., saying that we don't protect our staff and that we don't protect our patrons, when at the time, patrons in bars and restaurants were allowed to take off their masks when they were eating or drinking.

MR. ROSENBLUM: Have the police been called to Never Looked Better?

MS. BIBBINS: They have. One Farrah Ahmed, the host and owner of Save Blagden Alley, frequently calls MPD or ABRA to come to our establishment. Every occasion that they have come when I have been working, I have gotten a

glowing report. No violations have been found. 1 2 I'm on pretty good terms with all the MPD at this 3 point. 4 They come in, make sure we're at under 5 capacity or completely at capacity. We've never 6 been over. We've never had issues while they 7 were there, and they've basically just been in 8 support of us. 9 MR. ROSENBLUM: Has EMT ever been 10 called because someone was overserved or someone 11 was in medical distress? 12 MS. BIBBINS: I do believe an EMT was 13 called on an occasion when I was working. 14 patron had left, and she was hit by an Uber on 15 her way out on 9th Street. We called EMTs for 16 her to make sure she was okay. 17 And those are my experiences there. 18 Like I said, I started a couple months after they 19 opened, but that was the only time EMTs showed up 20 for while I was working. 21 MR. ROSENBLUM: To your knowledge, has 22 anyone ever been overserved or blacked out as a

Like I said, the staff is fully trained to make

To my knowledge, no.

result of being overserved?

MS. BIBBINS:

23

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sure no one gets to that point. We have every authority to take drinks, pour out drinks. We also make sure no outside beverages come into our establishment, starting with security. So water bottles, coffee cups, Starbucks cups, none of that can even come in.

Anything that's found on a patron -if they're found trying to conceal something,
they're immediately escorted out. That's our
policy.

MR. ROSENBLUM: Now, this is one of your places of employment. What is your other type of employment that you have?

MS. BIBBINS: My other -- well, besides working for Never Looked Better, we also have another establishment, The Mirror -- managing both of the events there and primarily at Never Looked Better.

In addition, I'm also a licensed attorney for the State of Maryland and for Washington, D.C. I've been a practicing attorney since 2016. I do government contracting work during the day. As a legal consultant, I have a secret clearance. I've been fully vetted by the government, and as by ABRA's -- you know, the

application's pretty long. But that's my 1 2 background. I've been doing this since I was 16, 3 so --4 MR. ROSENBLUM: You've been working in 5 the hospitality industry since you were 16? MS. BIBBINS: Yep, working in 6 7 hospitality. Well, I'll be a 8 MR. ROSENBLUM: 9 gentleman and not ask how many years that is. 10 MS. BIBBINS: Well good. But yeah. 11 So we're all trained. We have the experience. 12 We have the knowledge, not to mention we get our TIPS certification renewed every two years. 13 14 we know how to spot anyone who has been drinking 15 too much. Always offer water. 16 We have a couple restaurants that are 17 We suggest food if food is necessary, 18 but our concern is the safety of our patrons from 19 the moment they step in to the moment they get 20 out. So we make sure that everyone's still 21 having a good time, but we follow the rules also. 22 MR. ROSENBLUM: I have no further 23 I would ask you to answer anything questions. 24 that any member of the Board has. 25 MS. BIBBINS: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I just have one 1 2 question I want to ask you, Ms. Bibbins. 3 MS. BIBBINS: Yes, sir. CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What time do 4 5 you work there? MS. BIBBINS: Usually, I get there 6 7 around 3:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and I 8 stay there until 2:00 a.m. when we close. And we 9 stay for about an hour, hour and a half for 10 cleanup. 11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. Thanks. 12 All right. Any questions by any Board members or you, Mr. Puente, of Ms. Bibbins? 13 14 know we're doing this a little bit out of order, 15 but -- because of her commitments. So I just 16 wanted for her to state what she wants to do 17 before I can excuse her. 18 So any questions? Any questions based 19 on what she presented? Any questions that any 20 Board members might have, or Mr. Puente or Mr. 21 Guggenmos? 22 MR. GUGGENMOS: No. 23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. 24 Thank you. All right. Fine. 25 All right. As I stated before, this

is just a fact-finding hearing. This is not the fact-finding hearing regarding the fact that there could have been underage drinking in the sense of what's posted on Instagram. We're not stating that this occurred. I mean, there's a lot of salacious information that's presented here, and this is not the forum for this.

I believe that the Agency is concerned

-- what I think the Agency has expressed is that
their concern has to do with noise, and they're
trying to work with the owner regarding what can
be done to address noise. But we're not making

-- this is not the body -- even if there's -some of the allegations I've heard -- I mean,
whether or not they're factual or not, this is
not something that this Board will deal with.

The Board will deal with if -- the Agency or any other body brings noise violations or if there are concerns regarding underage drinking, those are things that we would be more so concerned with. But the other salacious information that was just stated, this is not an area that this Board would investigate. That would be for another body.

All right. Mr. Puente, you said that

1	the issue at hand one of the reasons why we
2	have this fact-finding hearing today, I think it
3	was more so, as I stated before, the allegation
4	that there might have been underage drinking.
5	And this is something that was found on
6	Instagram. So I think that's more of the type of
7	information that's relevant to this Board.
8	So, Ms. Fashbaugh, can you give Mr.
9	Puente the ability to share his screen?
10	And, Mr. Puente, if there's
11	whatever videos that you have that you want to
12	share with us you can go ahead and share with the
13	Board, please.
14	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Okay.
15	MS. FASHBAUGH: This has been
16	accomplished.
17	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.
18	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: So here's the
19	first video.
20	(Video plays.)
21	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Puente,
22	what is it that this video is supposed to
23	who's on this video, by the way?
24	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This is the
25	owner, Mr. Seth McClelland. He's basically

1	telling kids what to order when they come to a
2	bar with a fake ID.
3	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I mean, is that
4	the same person who is here today?
5	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes, sir.
6	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. All
7	right.
8	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Here's the
9	second video.
10	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No, I'm sorry.
11	Can you go back to the first video? Because I
12	don't know if there was supposed to be was
13	there any volume to that video, or is it just a
14	picture?
15	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: There's volume
16	on it. I can hear it on my end. Are you able to
17	hear the volume?
18	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I was not able
19	to hear. I didn't hear anything, so that's why I
20	was asking.
21	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yeah, I have it
22	on full volume right now.
23	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Is any other
24	Board member hearing, or is it just me?
25	MEMBER SHORT: I can't hear anything.

1	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So we're not
2	we're not hearing anything, Mr. Puente.
3	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: All right. Let
4	me try something else real quick. Just give me
5	one second, sir.
6	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. I
7	think I just did something to my I'm still
8	here. I don't know what I did. So let me figure
9	out what I did. So hold on, please.
10	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: All right. So
11	let's try it this way.
12	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on, Mr.
13	Puente. I just did something, so I'm I don't
14	know what I did, so let me okay. All right.
15	Go ahead.
16	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: All right.
17	(Video plays.)
18	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I'm still
19	not hearing anything, Mr. Puente. So maybe we
20	can move on to another video because I'm not
21	hearing anything.
22	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes, I'm trying
23	to play it directly off the website now, from
24	TikTok.
25	MR. ROSENBLUM: Chairperson Anderson,

1	I think we agree that these are authentic, and I
2	think that the words that are shown on the screen
3	are correct as to what is said. So I'm not
4	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So
5	what is it
6	(Simultaneous speaking.)
7	MR. ROSENBLUM: We're not contesting
8	that they were posted.
9	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, Mr. Puente,
10	what is it that you just showed? What is it that
11	this video that you just showed us what was
12	that supposed to what's the allegation in this
13	video, since we couldn't hear, for the record?
14	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Mr. McClelland
15	is advising people what to order if you're
16	underage and have a fake ID.
17	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
18	Okay. Do you have another video?
19	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yeah. I got two
20	more.
21	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And I was told
22	that Mr Counselor stated that they're not
23	contesting what this video states.
24	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Okay. Are you
25	able to hear this one?

1	MS. FASHBAUGH: No, we're not.
2	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: All right. So
3	this video's telling you Mr. McClelland is
4	telling people what to do if they get caught with
5	booze and what they should say they got it from,
6	saying they got it from a homeless person.
7	And the third video is another video
8	of telling you what to order when you're at the
9	bar underage.
10	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Again, we can't
11	hear. So all right. Mr. Puente, just for the
12	court reporter, what is it that the first video
13	allegedly stated? What is it that he stated in
14	the first video?
15	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: What you should
16	order if you have a fake ID at a bar.
17	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And the second
18	video?
19	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: What to do if
20	you get caught with booze and you're underage.
21	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And the third
22	video?
23	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: What to order at
24	the bar if you're using a fake ID.
25	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

Thank you. Do you have any other videos, or is that the extent of it?

INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: That's the videos. Now I just have some exhibits. One of the allegations made was a 15-year-old boy was inside Never Looked Better. After doing the investigation, the 15-year-old is a D.C. Public Schools student. He is a TikTok influencer. He goes around and posts about different establishments and their food and everything.

And he posted that he was at Never Looked Better, and his post verified that he's inside. I verified this because I've been inside Never Looked Better and can say this is the layout of the bar, the steps going down. And then he shows himself at the bar with several drinks, one here, then he's sitting at a table with food and drinks, what appears to be wine as well.

That's it, sir.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

Thank you.

MR. ROSENBLUM: We don't agree that this is pictures of what happened at our establishment.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Which -- all right. This is a video that was posted on Instagram. And the investigator stated that, at least since he has been in the establishment, the video that was shown of the establishment -- that it's the interior of the establishment.

So would we agree not whether or not there's alcohol or if this young man is drinking alcohol or whatever is it that this young man is doing in this establishment, but would you agree that the posting that we just saw -- that these postings are of the interior of Never Looked Better?

So are we saying that -- okay. Hold on a minute. Mr. Puente, let's go back to the first posting. Can you share your screen again? And then I'm going to ask Mr. Rosenblum. Okay? So let's start at the beginning, please.

MR. ROSENBLUM: And, Mr. Anderson, I would like my clients or the representatives to answer --

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I know, whoever can -- okay. We have on Instagram -- we have a young man standing in front of a door. Is this door this young man is standing in front of -- is

1	this the door for Never Looked Better? Yes or
2	no? Who can answer?
3	MR. COLES: Yes, it is.
4	(Simultaneous speaking.)
5	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So the door
6	that the young man is standing in front of, this
7	is the door of Never Looked Better. Who is
8	confirming that?
9	MR. COLES: This is Jeffrey Coles.
10	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Coles is
11	saying that
12	(Simultaneous speaking.)
13	MR. COLES: is of our front door.
14	Yes.
15	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: This is the
16	front door of Never Looked Better that the young
17	man is standing back of. Thank you.
18	Next picture. What is this, Mr.
19	Puente? What is it we're looking at?
20	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: As soon as you
21	enter through that door, you're greeted with
22	these stairs going down into the establishment.
23	And right behind them they have a lighted sign.
24	I believe it says Never Looked Better. So, yes,
25	this is right when you walk inside the

1	establishment.
2	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And, Mr.
3	Puente, from your have you been to this
4	establishment before?
5	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes, sir.
6	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Does this look
7	like the interior of Never Looked Better?
8	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.
9	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: From ownership,
10	the picture that we're looking at, is this the
11	interior of Never Looked Better, or is it not the
12	interior of Never Looked Better?
13	MR. COLES: This is Jeffrey Coles.
14	I'm confirming that this is the entranceway
15	leading up to our security checkpoint.
16	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
17	Thank you.
18	Go ahead, Mr. Puente.
19	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This is
20	downstairs
21	(Simultaneous speaking.)
22	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This is
23	downstairs at the bar area. As soon as you come
24	off the stairs, there is a little corridor. And
25	you walk maybe ten feet and turn right, and

1	you're facing the open area of the bar.
2	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Puente,
3	based on your personal experience, is this the
4	interior of Never Looked Better?
5	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.
6	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr I'm
7	sorry. I think it's Mr. Coles.
8	MR. COLES: Yes.
9	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Were you the
10	one speaking prior?
11	MR. COLES: Yes.
12	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Can you
13	confirm
14	MR. COLES: This is leading right up
15	to our security checkpoint.
16	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you, sir.
17	Go ahead, Mr. Puente. Mr. Puente, can
18	you please tell us what is it that we're looking
19	at, sir?
20	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: The bar area of
21	Never Looked Better.
22	(Simultaneous speaking.)
23	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry.
24	Hold on. Mr. Puente, from your experience being
25	in the establishment, what is it that we're

1	looking at, sir?
2	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This appears to
3	be the bar with chairs.
4	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But do you
5	know, Mr. Puente, whether or not this is the
6	exact bar area of the establishment?
7	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Just looking at
8	it now, sir, I'm pretty sure that this individual
9	posted the wrong bar of this this looks like a
10	different bar looking at it right now.
11	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Coles, is
12	this the interior of this establishment, sir?
13	MR. COLES: We can confirm that this
14	absolutely is not the interior of Never Looked
15	Better.
16	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, Mr. Coles,
17	you're saying that this is not the interior of
18	Never Looked Better.
19	MR. COLES: Correct.
20	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Puente,
21	what's the next picture that we have?
22	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This is another
23	downstairs of the bar area.
24	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And, Mr.
25	Puente, based on your personal knowledge, is this

the interior of the bar area of Never Looked 1 2 Better? 3 INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: No. Looking at 4 it, no, it's not, sir. 5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Coles, based on your knowledge of the establishment, 6 7 sir, is this the interior of Never Looked Better? MR. COLES: I'm confirming this is 8 9 absolutely not the interior of Never Looked 10 Better. 11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. 12 Go ahead, Mr. Puente. Mr. Puente, 13 what is it that we're looking at, sir? 14 INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This is a 15 picture of an individual, the 15-year-old. 16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And what's 17 behind him, sir? Do you know? It looks like a 18 INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: 19 painting and the painting shelf. 20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Based on your 21 knowledge of Never Looked Better, do you know 22 whether or not this -- the picture that you see 23 behind this young man, can you confirm based on 24 your personal knowledge whether or not this is in 25 Never Looked Better?

1	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: I can't say for
2	sure, sir.
3	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Coles, can
4	you identify what we're looking at, sir?
5	MR. COLES: I can confirm that this is
6	no space inside Never Looked Better.
7	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Puente,
8	what else do we have?
9	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This is another
10	picture of the bar area.
11	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And, Mr.
12	Puente, based on your knowledge of Never Looked
13	Better, can you confirm whether or not this
14	picture is the interior of Never Looked Better?
15	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: I don't believe
16	it is, sir. I can't tell.
17	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Coles,
18	based on your
19	MR. COLES: I can confirm this is not
20	the interior of Never Looked Better.
21	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay.
22	Mr. Puente? What are we looking at,
23	Mr. Puente?
24	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Appears to be a
25	door.

1	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Do you know,
2	Mr. Puente do you have any personal knowledge
3	of whether or not this door is in Never Looked
4	Better?
5	MR. COLES: No, I do not, sir.
6	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Coles, can
7	you confirm what it is we're looking at, sir?
8	MR. COLES: This door is not in Never
9	Looked Better.
10	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Puente,
11	what else are we looking at?
12	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: These are
13	pictures of two what appears to be alcoholic
14	beverages.
15	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I don't
16	know what surface that's on. I don't know if
17	that's on the bar. So let's move on because I
18	don't even know how to describe what it is that
19	what are we looking at, Mr. Puente?
20	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Appears to be
21	food and some alcoholic beverages on a table.
22	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Do you know,
23	Mr. Puente, whether or not this table appears to
24	be in Never Looked Better?
25	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: I do not, sir.

No.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Coles, can you -- by looking at the surface of this establishment, can you tell -- by looking at the surface, can you --

MR. COLES: By looking at the surface of this, also the previous picture, the glassware of the previous picture, I can confirm that neither of these pictures was taken inside Never Looked Better.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Mr. Puente, what else do we have here, sir?

INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: And this is just talking about the 15-year-old, what he does.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Me. Puente, do you know this young man whose name -- well, if he's a -- I can put his name in the record because you said he's on TikTok and appears to have 37.7 thousand followers. So what is it that we're looking at, Mr. Puente?

INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This was a Washingtonian article talking about the minor and what he does, goes around the city trying different places.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

1	What else do you have to share with us, Mr or
2	let me ask Mr. Coles.
3	Do you know who this person is, Mr.
4	Coles?
5	MR. COLES: I am not familiar with
6	this person, no.
7	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
8	All right, Mr. Puente. Anything else
9	you want to share?
10	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: No. That's it,
11	sir.
12	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
13	Thank you.
14	MR. ROSENBLUM: Mr. Anderson, I have
15	one question of Mr. Coles at this time.
16	Mr. Coles, does Never Looked Better
17	serve food?
18	MR. COLES: We do not.
19	MR. ROSENBLUM: And so the food on
20	that table is not from Never Looked Better. Is
21	that correct?
22	MR. COLES: Correct.
23	MR. ROSENBLUM: French fries or you
24	don't serve french fries, do you?
25	MR. COLES: We do not.

1	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. Any
2	other video or pictures you have to share with
3	us, Mr. Puente?
4	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: No, sir.
5	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. All
6	right.
7	MR. ROSENBLUM: I have several
8	questions of Mr. Puente, if I may just a
9	couple.
10	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Go ahead, Mr.
11	Rosenblum.
12	MR. ROSENBLUM: Thank you.
13	Mr. Puente, the TikTok videos, they
14	appear to be filmed in a residence. Is that
15	correct?
16	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, sir.
17	MR. ROSENBLUM: They weren't filmed or
18	made in any commercial establishment in the
19	District of Columbia. Is that correct, to your
20	knowledge?
21	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: One of the
22	videos appears to show a bar, commercial bar, in
23	the background.
24	MR. ROSENBLUM: The ones you showed
25	today do not show anything in one of the

1	commercial facilities, correct?
2	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: No, the first
3	one did, actually.
4	MR. ROSENBLUM: I have no further
5	questions of Mr. Puente.
6	Thank you, Mr. Puente.
7	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any questions
8	by any Board members of Mr. Puente yes, Ms.
9	Hansen?
10	MEMBER HANSEN: Could I ask you to put
11	the exhibit back up and scroll to the first
12	slide?
13	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Mm-hmm.
14	MEMBER HANSEN: So we have established
15	that this is the outside of Never Looked Better,
16	correct?
17	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes, ma'am. And
18	also, in the bottom right corner, there's the
19	ABRA-approved window lettering of the
20	establishment.
21	MEMBER HANSEN: And after this photo,
22	the other photos do not show that does show
23	Never Looked Better. My concern isn't that the
24	other photos aren't of Never Looked Better. It
25	seems from the caption that where it says

Jonathan D.C. Speakeasy -- is that he is showing speakeasies in general. He has checked into Never Looked Better because that's the first photo, and the other ones are generally just D.C. speakeasy.

So they're not supposed to point to

Never Looked Better incorrectly. They're just

other speakeasies. So he's just giving us a tour

of D.C. speakeasies with the first one. Is that

how you see this also?

INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.

MEMBER HANSEN: Okay. So those two, and then is there one after this --

INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.

MEMBER HANSEN: -- that is confirmed to be the inside as well?

INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.

MEMBER HANSEN: And then it trails off. Okay, because you can only check into one place. So then he continues on with his tour. So he has this idea -- is that the idea of the Washingtonian article about how to get into these types of establishments as an underage person and then goes on a tour of -- is that the correct order of events? He --

1	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes. He posts
2	various videos of going into different
3	speakeasies and other bars and taverns.
4	MEMBER HANSEN: So, in the order of
5	events, also, the first video or exhibit that we
6	saw with the owner posting on is it TikTok
7	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.
8	MEMBER HANSEN: how to get into
9	underage bars is the correct order of events
10	that that happened before this person went on
11	this tour?
12	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.
13	MEMBER HANSEN: He could have been
14	influenced by that video to go on an underage
15	tour of D.C. speakeasies?
16	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.
17	MEMBER HANSEN: And can we go back to
18	that TikTok, the instructions on how to get into
19	underage bars?
20	And who created this?
21	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: This says this
22	is from W. Seth McClelland's account.
23	MR. McCLELLAND: I created this.
24	MEMBER HANSEN: And can you read just
25	for the record, because it can't be picked up,

1	what is being said here in these slides?
2	(Simultaneous speaking.)
3	MR. McCLELLAND: The entire video?
4	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes. It says
5	what to order if you're using a fake ID.
6	MEMBER HANSEN: I was asking him to
7	say if you could go to is that the first
8	slide?
9	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes.
10	MEMBER HANSEN: Okay. You created it.
11	Could you speak
12	MR. McCLELLAND: Yeah. It says what
13	to order if using a fake ID.
14	MEMBER HANSEN: Is that the next
15	slide? Does it say that the whole time? Because
16	we can't hear.
17	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yeah. It's like
18	a 12-second video. I just paused it.
19	MEMBER HANSEN: Okay. And what was
20	the idea behind making this video?
21	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, hold
22	on, hold on, hold on, hold on, Ms
23	who are you asking a question to? Remember Mr.
24	McClelland has not stated anything as yet. He
25	has not spoken. He's been represented by

1	counsel. So, if you want to ask Mr. Puente a
2	question
3	(Simultaneous speaking.)
4	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry?
5	MEMBER HANSEN: Does this TikTok still
6	exist? Is it still live?
7	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on. Hold
8	on. Ms. Hansen, hold on. Hold on one minute.
9	All right. Mr. McClelland has not testified. He
10	has not stated anything, and I don't know whether
11	or not he wants to say something today. You're
12	asking questions of Mr. Puente. You can only ask
13	questions of Mr. Puente. Since Mr
14	MEMBER HANSEN: I just
15	(Simultaneous speaking.)
16	MEMBER HANSEN: to ask Mr. Puente
17	if this is still a live video.
18	INVESTIGATOR PUENTE: Yes, ma'am.
19	It's still up on TikTok.
20	MEMBER HANSEN: No further questions.
21	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
22	Thank you. It's just, from a procedural
23	perspective, we have a lot of people appearing
24	today, and they are being represented by an
25	attorney. So Mr. Rosenblum is an attorney, and

1	he represents the establishment. So, therefore,
2	all questions have to be directed to Mr.
3	Rosenblum. And if he wants his client to speak,
4	then he has to make that determination. We
5	cannot force a client of Mr. Rosenblum to speak.
6	That's all I was just trying to clarify.
7	So, since Mr. McClelland has not
8	he's here today. He has not spoken, and I'm not
9	sure if his attorney wants him to say anything.
10	So, unless his attorney says that yes, he can
11	answer the question or he should that's the
12	only reason why I'm getting myself involved in
13	this portion, per se. Okay?
14	All right. Any other Board members
15	any questions for Mr. Puente?
16	MEMBER SHORT: Mr. Chair?
17	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr. Short?
18	Can he close this screen? Are you going to ask
19	about these pictures, Mr. Short, or is it you're
20	asking general questions?
21	MEMBER SHORT: Yes, I'd like to ask
22	about these pictures.
23	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So they need to
24	be up, or that's what I'm just trying to
25	figure or do they need to be up on

(Simultaneous speaking.) 1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- screen? 2 MEMBER SHORT: If it's okay with you, 3 4 Mr. Chair, I prefer they be up when I ask the 5 questions. CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: That's fine. 6 7 Go ahead, then. 8 MEMBER SHORT: This is to Attorney 9 Rosenblum. 10 MR. ROSENBLUM: Yes, Mr. Short. 11 MEMBER SHORT: Is it any way possible 12 you could explain or could your client explain 13 what was the purpose of making this and putting this online? 14 15 MR. ROSENBLUM: My client will try to 16 explain, and I will also chime in, if I may, 17 after he explains. One thing I want to make sure 18 that the Board knows, and Ms. Hansen specifically knows, that the three pictures of Never Looked 19 20 Better are before this Mr. Laurie gets to the 21 security checkpoint. 22 He may have gotten in the initial door 23 and gotten down the steps, but he didn't get into 24 the facility itself. So what he's posted is a

25

lie.

In essence, he --

MEMBER SHORT: Mr. Rosenblum, with all 1 2 due respect to you, sir, as an attorney, that 3 wasn't the question I asked --4 MR. ROSENBLUM: Yeah, I said that Mr. McClelland will speak to the TikToks. Okay? 5 And I will have him speak -- right now is fine if --6 7 MEMBER SHORT: Well, I'd ask him, if that's him, is that inside of the establishment 8 9 we're talking about today? Is that him? Is that in his bar? 10 11 That's him, but he's MR. ROSENBLUM: 12 not in the bar. He's not in the facility. 13 him at home. 14 MEMBER SHORT: Oh, okay. All right. 15 Well, thank you. That's the question I was 16 trying to get an answer to. 17 MR. ROSENBLUM: Yeah. It's him at home. 18 Okay? At his residence. 19 MEMBER SHORT: Can I ask you, or ask 20 him through you, what is the purpose of -- what do you order if you're using a fake ID? 21 22 MR. ROSENBLUM: I think it's better 23 for him to respond than for me to respond. Ι 24 think that you will hear it from him. After he 25 speaks, I would ask that I be heard for a minute

or two as to what he says, if that's agreeable to the Board.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: That's fine, sir.

All right, Mr. McClelland. Mr. Short had a question for you. I think the question was as to the purpose of the video.

MR. McCLELLAND: Yes. Hello. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Board members. I just want to say that I take being a Licensee very, very seriously. It's a privilege, and I love this city. I'm from here. And I try to live my life in a positive way.

In regards to the TikToks, I created the TikTok account during the COVID lockdowns.

We were all stuck in our homes, and it was a way to pass the time. It's modeled off a thing that Dr. Seuss used to do when serving in World War II called What Not to Do in the Military. So, basically, when you have a grenade, you throw the pin and drop the grenade. It's an old joke.

So what we were doing -- what I was doing was what to do or what not to do in a restaurant. And some of the jokes were what to order on a first date, what to get if it's busy,

what to get if you're not drinking that night.

And it was with these jokes. And one thing that
was kind of on my mind during lockdowns was our
formative years, just sort of growing up and that
time.

And so it was a joke, and the full thing, since you guys couldn't hear it, says, what to order if you're using a fake ID: a gin gimlet because no one under the age of 30 even knows what that is. So it was a quick joke. I understand now that as a Licensee, I need to hold myself to a higher standard.

I'm happy to delete the posts. The reason I didn't delete the posts is because I didn't want to appear to be hiding anything from the Board. I wanted you all to be able to see what was being alleged against me.

I made the videos on my personal account. It does not say what establishments I own. It does not say what city I live in. It does not say any directions on how to enter these establishments. It was simply a party joke, but I understand now that it wasn't very funny.

MEMBER SHORT: The last question I have is also to --

1	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I want to
2	hold on. Mr. Rosenblum, once Mr. Short is done,
3	you'll get an opportunity to
4	(Simultaneous speaking.)
5	MR. ROSENBLUM: Sure. Thank you, Mr.
6	Anderson.
7	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Go
8	ahead, Mr. Short.
9	MEMBER SHORT: Yes. I would think as
LO	a parent and a grandparent and a great-
L1	grandparent, this was done in bad taste. Do you
L <b>2</b>	agree with that or disagree with that?
L3	MR. McCLELLAND: I agree.
L <b>4</b>	MEMBER SHORT: Thank you very
L5	that's all I have, Mr. Chair. Thank you.
L6	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr.
L <b>7</b>	Short.
L8	Yes, Mr. Rosenblum. Go ahead.
L9	MR. ROSENBLUM: Mr. Chairman and
20	members of the Board, I guess the words that I'm
21	trying to say now and that I said to my client
22	was that I guess that's why we have several
23	different flavors of ice cream, because what's
24	humorous to some people is not humorous to
25	others.

And I advised him, and he has taken my 1 2 advice. He certainly is willing and is prepared 3 to take down these TikTok videos. I will say to 4 the Board that I would suggest that if there has 5 not been or was not this concerted effort to not only close his establishment, but others in the 6 7 area, that we wouldn't be here today. He's not ever been cited for a 8 9 violation of the law, underage -- someone coming 10 into the establishment. They've got certain 11 regimen that they've set up. They've got 12 experienced operators. And, basically, Mr. 13 McClelland and his crew apologizes to the Board 14 that it had to appear today and to explain this. 15 Thank you. 16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. 17 Thank you. 18 Mr. Puente, can you close the screen, 19 please? 20 MEMBER GRANDIS: Mr. --21 (Simultaneous speaking.) 22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr. 23 Grandis. 24 MEMBER GRANDIS: I didn't know you 25 were finished with the Board.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I just told Mr. 1 2 Puente to close the screen. That's all I did. didn't say I was finished with anyone. 3 I just asked Mr. Puente to close the screen. 4 5 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay. May I ask a couple questions, sir? 6 7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Go ahead, sir. 8 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay. 9 Mr. Puente, I'm not going to ask you 10 to put the screen back up. I think we all know 11 those pictures and those TikToks. 12 Mr. Rosenblum, may I ask your client, 13 Mr. McClelland, a couple questions regarding the videos? 14 15 Surely, Mr. Grandis. MR. ROSENBLUM: 16 MEMBER GRANDIS: Good afternoon, Mr. 17 McClelland. And it's a pleasure to have you to 18 come today and to speak to us regarding these 19 matters. 20 I actually was not going to ask any 21 questions, but you are a Licensee. And whether 22 you hold yourself to a higher standard or to 23 whatever standard, it's not our expectation that 24 a Licensee would post things even in maybe a

satirical fashion regarding a license that you

have sworn to uphold the statutes and regulations.

So I think this is not only bad judgment; I think it's stupid. It does not bring your license into a good perspective to me in the context of do you seriously agree that as a Licensee -- whether you agree with a statute or regulation, as a Licensee, that you are required to abide by them.

Based on the videos, it doesn't look like that you abide by our statute and regulations. So please explain yourself, because I don't believe you're Jonathan Swift. I don't believe you write satirical novels. So please help me understand better what we're getting at here, what you're trying to do when you publish these TikToks.

MR. McCLELLAND: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Grandis. I take being a Licensee to the utmost priority of my life and uphold myself and the businesses to obey all laws, and that's a huge part of my life.

In regards to the satirical bad jokes, we were in COVID lockdown. I think the first one was posted in January of 2021. It was a pretty

bad time for folks owning bars in the area, restaurants. We'd been locked down for about 15 months at that time. And it was just a way to pass the time, make some jokes, and -- I mean, I hate to say it like this, but we didn't even know if we were ever going to be back at that time.

That doesn't mean that I would make light of the laws of this great city and the laws of drinking. It was more about a pop-culture reference. There have been lots of movies made about high school and college years and the stupid things we all do, and that was sort of where it came from. And it wasn't meant as anything tutorial.

It was meant as a joke that everyone in this country has had some experience with, being an underage person. And it's a time in our lives that we all remember, and it was just a joke about that.

MEMBER GRANDIS: Thank you. Do you have any specific signage either on the front of your establishment -- it looks like you are definitely in the alley, based on the way the layout is of that zoning area. Do you have any specific signage about underage not allowed in

that bar, in that tavern, or inside the establishment, to sort of counter the TikToks that you have?

MR. McCLELLAND: Oh yes. Oh, we have all the ABRA signage up saying no one under the age of 21. We don't allow anyone under the age of 21 in. The three pictures that were posted by that young man were outside, going down the stairs, and at the bottom of the stairs. And right there is the security checkpoint.

So I believe what happened is he was trying to do his stuff online, and he -- and, also, the place was empty. So I'm sure it was right when we opened. So it looks as if he took a picture, went down the stairs, took a picture, turned around the corner, took a picture, and ran because our security host is right there. He didn't get past that.

You can see it's the length of the bar with no one in it. So it seems like that young person was getting a lot of views for trying to sneak into bars, but he didn't get into ours.

I'm not sure where the other place was, but we take it very, very seriously.

We have three ABRA security hosts on

the weekends, two on the weekdays: one at the front door, one at the back, one on the floor. We have an opening ABRA manager. We have a closing ABRA manager. Our closing bartenders are all ABRA certified. Myself and Jeff Coles are ABRA certified.

In my entire career, I've never had a violation for serving underage. I take it very seriously. I have a clean criminal record, no violations, nothing, police or ABRA. I take this very seriously. The TikToks that I'm going to take down today were simply something to do during COVID lockdowns when, I guess, we didn't know what was going to happen next. And I was just trying to find some way to make people laugh, I guess.

MEMBER GRANDIS: Right. And I want you to know I now am better versed about those pictures. I don't understand how 410 and 610 got into that investigative report. I'm not asking for a response on that because it looked like it was the inside of your bar, me not knowing the inside of your bar. So that clarification was very helpful.

I just hope that you would understand

that if there's any type of additional signage that you could put up for a period of time about underage -- because there are people who probably do see that TikTok who come into your establishment. And I think if that's not a representation of your establishment, I think a little bit more signage about underage not being tolerated would be helpful.

That's just my request. I'm not speaking on behalf of the Board. And I want to thank you for taking the time to answer my questions.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. McCLELLAND: Thank you. We'll find a way to make that happen for you.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Ms.

Hansen?

MEMBER HANSEN: Mr. McClelland, did you post this video to any other platforms such as LinkedIn, or was it only on platforms that target a nonprofessional, younger age group?

MR. McCLELLAND: If you mean TikTok,
I only posted it on TikTok. I mean, I think
there's people of all ages on TikTok. But the
algorithm sort of rewards you for getting likes,

so making short jokes that people can look at, especially during COVID, was rule of the day.

So, no, I've not posted it on any -nowhere else. Only on my private TikTok. It
does not list any of the establishments I'm a
part of or have been a part of. It doesn't list
the city I live in. It doesn't list the names.
It doesn't list anything other than these -- what
I thought were party jokes, but now I understand
are not a joke I should be making.

MEMBER HANSEN: Mr. Rosenblum said that we might not find out about these things had it not been for the efforts of the Save Blagden Alley group. I think some of us would have figured this out. Some of us have connections to young people in the area, whether they're kids or mentees or -- you know.

And, in my opinion -- and this is my opinion -- there was influence from your post.

And I don't feel as if you were sorry until we found out. So I just -- I want to know why you thought this was okay.

MR. McCLELLAND: Yeah. I mean, that post was ten months ago. I didn't -- I guess I just -- from my heart, I always intended it to be

a joke, a joke about growing up in America and a joke -- a pop-culture reference. We've been dealing with these assaults from the neighborhood and harassment.

I'm the Creative Director. I build the brands, and I built Never Looked Better to manifest positivity. It says You've Never Looked Better when you walk in. It says Hello, Gorgeous. It's flowers. It's our artist that we're featuring.

And I had no idea the level of hate and assault that was going to be levied against us. I mean, we've been sent mutilated vegetables. We've been accused of child sex trafficking on multiple occasions. I mean, my staff is scared.

So, to me, it seemed like finally, when the TikToks got involved, it was to -- that the idea that I was somehow encouraging minors to come to the bar were just to continue to promote this false narrative that's being cast upon us.

I understand now that -- you know, I don't want to give anyone any ammunition, so I'm going to just take those TikToks down. But our staff has been really scared. And so we've had

the ABRA or the police called on us almost every day. And so, to me, I wasn't really even thinking about the TikToks because when the reopening started, I didn't have, really, time to make TikToks anymore. We'd been trying to open this business.

And then we get these two one-star
Yelp reviews alleging child molestation, multiple
comments on this Save Blagden Alley by Robert
Goldberg saying that we're -- admit you're
running a sex-trafficking ring, and it's this -it's sad. It hurts. It's terrifying. I haven't
been able to sleep. I'm worried for my staff.

And then, finally, after six months of this harassment, them finding the TikToks from almost a year ago, that was what got them to get us here. And, again, I'm not saying that I should've done it or I -- I'm saying I should not have done it. I'm going to take them down.

They were meant as jokes. It breaks my heart that someone would project that they were meant to lure underage people in. That was never my intention. It's a private account. It does not list the name of the bar or the restaurant. It does not list the city I live in.

It was simply a one-liner joke.

I apologize for what it has brought to us today, having to be here and talk about it.

I'll take it down. But I believe that the intuitive leap that I was doing it to educate underage people is just part of this narrative that's being built against us that is untrue.

MEMBER HANSEN: You said you understood how the algorithm works because you demonstrated before how you've got to put up the one-liners and the likes and how it works, and you only do that on a platform where the intended audience is going to like or feed into your joke, which didn't land.

So you've only put this out there for yourself. I don't know if you're saying that the harassment didn't happen before you did this. I think those are two separate issues in my head. But you have to realize your responsibility to the audience that you created.

MR. McCLELLAND: I do. I do. I mean,
I don't know if this has anything to do with it.
You said the joke didn't land. I mean, it did
get 3.7 million views. So it was a joke that a
lot of people could see that -- you know, it's

something that we've all gone through. 1 But I didn't see that it was -- as 2 3 part of this whole link of us being accused of 4 this child sex ring, that then it's, oh, here's 5 another thing that we can say is part of -again --6 7 I don't think that's MEMBER HANSEN: 8 a marker for success. In my opinion, it's not to 9 be celebrated. 10 MR. McCLELLAND: I agree. 11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Are you done, 12 Ms. Hansen? Yes? 13 MEMBER HANSEN: I am. 14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. 15 Any other questions by any other Board 16 members? 17 I'm going to ask some questions 18 directly, Mr. McClelland, but before I ask you 19 questions, I just want to state to you that this 20 Board is in no position to tell you to take 21 anything down from TikTok. We cannot ask you to 22 do it. We can't suggest that you do it. 23 That is up to you, sir, whether or not 24 you believe that it's prudent to keep it up or

But I just want to clarify the record that

not.

this Board cannot ask you to take any posting 1 2 down from TikTok or pull any posting down. Okay? 3 I just wanted to let you know that. That's not 4 within our purview on the free speech event. 5 So I just wanted you to know that you decide what is it you want to do and that that's 6 7 not something that this Board could ask you to 8 do, sir. Okay? All right. 9 I guess one of the guestions I'll ask 10 you, who are the owners -- I'll ask you, who are the owners -- just to clarify for the record, who 11 12 are the owners of this establishment, Mr. McClelland? 13 14 MR. McCLELLAND: Myself and Jeff 15 Coles, and then we have some silent investors. 16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So 17 who's on the license? 18 Mr. McClelland: I am. 19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You're the only 20 person on the liquor license? 21 MR. McCLELLAND: I guess I'd have to 22 ask her, but I believe so. I think maybe all the 23 owners are --24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I was 25 just -- I'm just asking. All right.

1 MR. McCLELLAND: Yeah. 2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But I just 3 wanted to let you know that if you have any owner who owns more than ten percent that by law they 4 5 have to be on the license, just as an FYI. MR. McCLELLAND: We follow all laws --6 7 (Simultaneous speaking.) 8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm just saying 9 to you that -- and I'm only saying this because 10 there are other establishments who, for whatever 11 reason, got caught up with some issues, and they 12 came to us years later to say, oh, I did not know 13 that we never disclosed this ownership to you. 14 So I was just saying to you that by 15 law, if you have any owners who own more than ten 16 percent, by law they need to be on the license. 17 That's all I'm saying. And I'm not accusing you 18 of not doing that. It's just an FYI. 19 MR. McCLELLAND: Yes, sir. 20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What other 21 businesses are you involved in? 22 MR. McCLELLAND: In Washington, D.C.? 23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Outside of --24 do you own any other restaurants or taverns or --

either here in D.C. or any other state?

MR. McCLELLAND: I am a co-owner of The Mirror. I'm also a commercial real estate broker, and I help entrepreneurs fulfill their dreams, small business owners. So we've done a lot of restaurant deals here and the real estate side, and then also, I've had different deals in Virginia and New York as well.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So I guess what I'm trying -- do you own any other restaurants or alcohol establishments? That's what I'm trying to find out.

MR. McCLELLAND: The Mirror in D.C.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The Mirror in

D.C. Okay. To the best of your knowledge, have
any of the -- has either this establishment or

The Mirror ever been cited for underage drinking
or failing to check identification?

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Just for the record, tell us about Never Looked Better because I was surprised that you say you don't serve food. So tell me about your business model, and what is it that you serve? What is it -- yeah.

No, they have not.

MR. McCLELLAND:

MR. McCLELLAND: Sure. So Never
Looked Better is a concept that I designed based

on the '90s, which is when I was growing up. And it's very back now in the fashion and art world, which I try to be a part of. So we wanted to take some of these -- maybe some people would think -- trashy trends of the '90s and elevate them and make them better.

So we have things like espresso martinis and cosmopolitans and apple teas that were sort of sugary drinks back then and wanted to elevate that into the craft era. Our whole group is really concerned with being authentic and craft and local ingredients and sourcing things.

So that was the overall brand. We initially were planning to open of March 2020. So we had done the entire brand and had staffed up and paid everyone and the chef. We were on payroll. And then COVID hit, so we were shut down for 15 months, both The Mirror and Never Looked Better, and really everything, as we all know, but especially the bars and restaurants.

And we were completely shut down. So that was really tough, and it drained a lot of resources and we weren't sure if we were going to make it. So, when we were allowed to open, the

social distancing effects were in place, and so we could only have 50 percent occupancy and people had to be six feet apart. And, at that time, there was no bar service.

So we made the decision that at that time, we wouldn't be able to afford paying a chef, but we did want to open for the community because we really felt like restaurants are the lifeblood of a city, and we wanted to be there.

So we made the decision to open at the reduced capacity and reduced hours, but we were just going to focus on cocktails for the moment. So that was the reason behind not serving food. We had intended on serving food, and then when we opened, we got a really great review from Eater. You know, we got -- anyway, we got a lot of great reviews.

And so I think people had been locked down for a long time, so they all rushed out.

And that's when we were dealing with all the logistics of being in the alley. So we wanted to first make sure that we addressed the alley and honored it before trying to start generating more trash and more things by serving food.

So we moved our exit to the 9th Street

exit so that patrons could order an Uber on 9th 1 2 Street, and if they were allowed, they would not 3 disturb the neighbors. And we are right now trying to work with other business owners to 4 5 consolidate trash pick-up. And so, anyway, the goal for us now is 6 7 to be a positive business and a good neighbor. 8 And I do hope to revisit serving food in the 9

future once we can get through this difficult time.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I -- so, since you have opened, you've never served food?

> CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No?

No, sir.

No, sir. MR. McCLELLAND:

MR. McCLELLAND:

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. not going to go where I want to go I had a feeling but that's not the purpose of this hearing. All right. Does this establishment have a security plan?

MR. McCLELLAND: Oh yes. We have two co-heads of security: one male, one female. Again, we have an ABRA-licensed security host at the front door, at the back door, and on the floor making sure that guests are not overserved

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or not getting belligerent.

Until we get to a place where we're at capacity, we keep the security host at the bottom of the stairs, which is where that young man was taking his picture before being told to leave.

When it does get to our capacity, we move the host up to the top of the stairs to make sure that we keep the line quiet.

We have all guests exit on the 9th Street side. We have a security host at that door who asks them to remain quiet in the neighborhood. We have a host at the front door to ask them to remain quiet in the alley. And we have a -- sorry, I've lost my train of thought -- a first-aid kit in case anything were to happen that we can make sure people are taken care of.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I need you to address -- the Agency has received some reports that students from School Without Walls are attending your establishment, that there's underage drinking going on. And so there are reports that patrons are intoxicated to the point of unconsciousness.

Why don't you tell us about your -you said that you have security at the foot of

the steps. So explain your security procedures, and how is it that you ensure that underage individuals do not access the bar area?

MR. McCLELLAND: Yes, sir. So, when I was reading the complaint, I did see that in addition to the TikTok videos there was allegations of blacking out, underage drinking, the EMT being called, all these things.

And I can tell you now that none of those allegations are accurate. And that's why I made the jump to think that all of this was being levied against us by the same two individuals because the EMT has never been called. ABRA has been called, I think seven times with no violations; MPD six times, no violations.

We've been inspected countless times by ABRA and by MPD. And we 100 percent do not allow anyone under the age of 21 inside the establishment. We do, in an attempt to keep the noise out of the alley, keep the security host at the bottom of the stairs until we get to capacity.

So I understand that that young person snuck in and took those pictures before being booted. But -- so the security protocol is that

no one under the age of 21 is allowed in. 1 2 anyone is visibly inebriated, they're not allowed 3 in. And we checked every single guest's ID at the door. 4 5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Ι don't have any other questions. 6 7 In light of the questions asked, any 8 questions by any other Board member? And then 9 we're going to try to wrap this hearing up. 10 MR. ROSENBLUM: Mr. Anderson, the only 11 thing I would like to do is --12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr. 13 Rosenblum. Go ahead. 14 MR. ROSENBLUM: -- introduce the 15 exhibits that I provided previously to the Board, 16 1 through -- I think it's 1 through 4. 17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on, Mr. 18 Short. 19 Go ahead, Mr. Rosenblum. What are the 20 exhibits? Tell me, what are the exhibits that --21 MR. ROSENBLUM: Yes. One is a series 22 of emails with Mr. Guggenmos with respect to 23 redoing the settlement agreement with the 24 neighborhood association. And the other are --25 number 2 is the postings alleging that there's a

pedophile ring going on in this facility. And it's on the blog that's managed by Ms. Ahmed, and it is still there, these allegations. She and Mr. Goldberg seem to put this information out. That's Exhibit Number 2.

Exhibit Number 3 is a post where they posted something changing the name of the facility from Never Looked Better -- this says

Never Looked Worse. That's Exhibit Number 3.

And Number 4 is a note on the settlement agreement that Mr. Goldberg posted, again accusing the establishment of harboring pedophiles and running a sex ring. And I must say --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. ROSENBLUM: -- that this is very concerning, especially in light of what is going on in our country and in our city. This is a dangerous situation, and it's not getting better.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Mr. Rosenblum, this is not -- I'm coming to you Mr. Short. The pedophile, as I stated before, that's not an issue that this Board addresses. This is not the proper forum for that. So there's no need for you to give us any records in that

because we're not -- the only issues that is of concern to the Board is the allegation of underage drinking or if there is allegation of noise.

But if there are any allegations about a sex ring or -- that's not within the purview -- we have no jurisdiction over that, and that's something that would be addressed by another forum. So there's no need for that to be part of the record in this particular case.

As I said before, we're just gathering information. So it's not necessary for those documents to be formally presented. There were -- yeah. Yeah. So, as I'm saying, that's not necessary because we don't have any jurisdiction over that, and I think that this record that we have here clearly states what the concerns are, at least from our perspective, and we're trying to address that. Okay?

So there is no need for those documents to be formally introduced into this case because, again, we're just gathering information. And, at least for our decision, they have no probative value. So --

MR. ROSENBLUM: Okay.

1	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
2	MEMBER SHORT: Sir?
3	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr. Short.
4	MEMBER SHORT: Thank you, Mr.
5	Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the question came up
6	I guess not much came up. But, at any rate, a CT
7	should serve food. I'd just like to know, do
8	they have a kitchen?
9	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: A CT doesn't
10	have there's no food requirement for a CT.
11	They're not to serve that is something that
12	they can elect. I think, as stated by the owner,
13	that the goal was to serve food. They ordered a
14	chef, and because of COVID then that had changed.
15	But there's no requirement that they
16	have to serve food as a CT. If they're a CR,
17	their restaurant has to serve food. But as a
18	tavern, there is no legal requirement for a
19	tavern to serve food, sir.
20	MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Well, I'll still
21	just ask the question, Mr. Chair. Do they or
22	don't they have a kitchen?
23	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Rosenberg
24	I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Mr. McClelland, I
25	know you testified about your chef, but maybe

1	MR. McCLELLAND: Yes
2	(Simultaneous speaking.)
3	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: again, sir.
4	Yes to what, sir?
5	MR. McCLELLAND: Yes, we have a
6	kitchen.
7	MEMBER SHORT: All right. Thank you
8	very much, Mr. Chair.
9	CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
10	Thank you, Mr. Short.
11	Any other questions by any of the
12	Board members or anyone before I bring this case
13	to closure?
14	Yes, Mr yes, sir.
15	MR. GUGGENMOS: Yeah, I just wanted to
16	quickly make a statement that the ANC has I
17	personally spoke to Seth, and he did explain that
18	it was a joke and he understood that when I
19	told him that well, I understood that, but
20	when I told him that it wasn't being taken that
21	way by some, he did apologize to me.
22	But because of some of the other
23	really and I attacks or emails that don't
24	really fall under the purview of ABRA, he did say
25	he was going to discuss it with his attorney when

I personally -- that was me just personally suggesting that he took it down.

But I was satisfied that that was the intent and that he began working with us even

intent and that he began working with us even prior to coming to a final agreement on our settlement agreement moving the exit to the 9th Street side because we know that's when most noise is. So I feel that he has -- he's been communicative, responsive, and just wanted to speak in his behalf so that that was clear that, from our point of view, that's what's happening.

I know some of my fellow members in the ANC would like to see no line in the alley.

I'm not sure that that's -- with other businesses using it, is a realistic expectation. But that's the only hiccup that I would say lies before our Agency at this moment, that --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. GUGGENMOS: -- alley four times.

It's been quiet and orderly.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

Thank you for that representation, sir.

Any other comments by the Board members before I bring this matter to close?

All right. The Board will take this

1 matter under advisement. As I stated before, 2 we'll discuss it. The two options are, if we 3 believe that there are any violations -- legal violations occur, in fact sale to minor or -- not 4 5 the others, but just more so sale to minor, then 6 we will send this over to the Office of the 7 Attorney General for them to prosecute this case if they believe that there are legal issues 8 9 there, or the Board will take no further action. But the Board will discuss it, and 10 11 we'll let you know what, if any, action we'll 12 take. All right? 13 All right. Thank you very much. Have 14 a great day. 15 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 4:03 p.m.) 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

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## <u>C E R T I F I C A T E</u>

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Never Looked Better

Before: ABRA

Date: 12-08-21

Place: Teleconference

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Court Reporter

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