



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement & Intelligence

Subcommittee Ranking Member Seth Magaziner (D-RI)

From Festive Cheer to Retail Fear: Addressing Organized Retail Crime

December 12, 2023

Many of us have heard from retailers concerned by organized retail crime, and so today's hearing is to explore the scope of this problem and determine how best to respond.

Crime overall continues to be at historically low levels and has continued to fall in recent years. According to the FBI, between 1993 and 2022, the violent crime rate across the United States fell by more than half, with homicides falling 35%, robberies falling 76%, and burglaries falling 78%. This trend continues to this day. The FBI reports that violent crime decreased 2% in 2022 compared to the previous year.

However, we must always strive to do better, to ensure that all Americans are safe in their homes, their schools, and their neighborhoods. We have heard reports of organized retail crime becoming more prevalent, which leads us to today's hearing. We all need to understand the nature of organized retail crime and the best practices for ending it.

I want to be clear about what we are talking about here. We are not talking about ordinary shoplifting committed by individuals working alone. We are talking about large, organized groups who engage in systematic theft of retail goods and the subsequent resale of stolen goods for financial gain.

Organized retail crime does not just impact large retail companies, it also affects mom-and-pop shops and especially retail employees. And, beyond the important concerns about safety, these crimes also raise costs for American consumers. Every time a store is robbed of products, has to hire more security, replace broken windows, or install new security systems, some of those costs are going to inevitably be passed on to shoppers.

It is important that we get to the root of the problem of organized retail crime, to keep people safe and lower costs for everyone across the country. This bipartisan hearing is a chance for us to hear from both industry leaders in retail and from federal law enforcement agencies about their efforts to combat organized retail crime.

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Media contact: Adam Comis at 202-225-9978