

**Jon Taffer – Opening Statement**  
**Senate Special Committee on Aging Hearing: “Aging with Purpose”**  
**December 10, 2025**

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and members of the Committee—thank you for the opportunity to be here today. It’s an honor to speak on a topic that’s not only timely, but personal: aging with purpose.

I started in hospitality in 1973 as a bartender at Barney’s Beanery in West Hollywood. Five years later, I was running the Troubadour nightclub—where legends took the stage and music history was made. By the 1980s, I was operating my own bar, and since then, I’ve owned 17 different hospitality businesses. These days, I’m perhaps best known as the executive producer and host of *Bar Rescue*. What I do on that show is really about one thing—helping people find their purpose again, often when they’ve lost all hope.

I’ve been fortunate to work with hundreds of business owners on *Bar Rescue*, many of whom were hanging on by a thread—financially, emotionally, or both. What turns things around isn’t just better finances or improved operations. It’s when people reconnect with a sense of purpose—when they remember *why* they started, and *who* they’re doing it for.

And that doesn’t just apply to small business owners. It applies to all of us—especially as we age.

I’ve seen firsthand the moment when a senior regains a sense of purpose. I change the lives of seniors often—whether it’s through my show, mentorship programs, volunteer work, or even rejoining the workforce. When they see hope and feel accomplishment, they light up. Their energy, commitment, and attitude often rival employees half their age.

So many people lose purpose in phases—first when their kids leave home, then later when they retire. Without the structure of a job, coworkers, or daily goals, they’re left unanchored. We spend decades striving—raising families, building careers, solving problems—and suddenly, that drive doesn’t have anywhere to go.

But when even a small sense of accomplishment or a chance to help someone re-enters their lives—when they become part of a team again or offer guidance to someone just starting out—it’s powerful. It changes lives. And in some cases, it extends them.

That’s not just anecdotal. Research shows people who have a sense of purpose live longer, healthier lives. Purpose improves mental health, physical health, and overall quality of life. And seniors are a massive, often overlooked, reservoir of knowledge, skill, and mentorship just waiting to be activated.

In hospitality, for example, immigrant business owners account for approximately 40% of the industry. They’re often self-taught, operating with passion but little formal business

training. Imagine pairing those owners with retired professionals who spent their careers managing teams, overseeing logistics, or running companies. That's a win-win. The businesses get expert advice. The seniors get purpose, respect, and a chance to make an impact.

I applaud the work already being done by the Small Business Administration and local Chambers of Commerce to support mentorship—but the demand far exceeds the supply. We need to make it easier and more rewarding for seniors to step back into these roles, even on a part-time or volunteer basis.

The strength of this country isn't found in a boardroom. It's not even found here in the Senate. It's found in the 34 million small businesses across America—and in the millions of experienced Americans who are ready to contribute, if only we give them the opportunity.

Purpose is what gets us up in the morning. And everyone deserves to feel that purpose—whether you're 22 or 72.

Helping others gives me purpose. Seeing dreams come back to life when people think all is lost is one of the most meaningful things I've done in my career. On TV, it may look like I have all the answers, but I'm still learning every day. What I do have is 40 years of hard-earned lessons. And I'm here today to share what I've learned: that age is not the end of value—it's the multiplier of it.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.