

**Statement of Leslie H. Wexner Submitted to the Committee On
Oversight And Government Reform, United States House of Representatives**

February 18, 2026

I am pleased to testify today. Pleased because it is an opportunity to set the record straight. Over the years, I have been the subject of outrageous untrue statements and hurtful rumor, innuendo, and speculation. Let me state from the start: I was naïve, foolish, and gullible to put any trust in Jeffrey Epstein. He was a con man. And while I was conned, I have done nothing wrong and have nothing to hide. I completely and irrevocably cut ties with Epstein nearly twenty years ago when I learned that he was an abuser, a crook, and a liar. And, let me be crystal clear: I never witnessed nor had any knowledge of Epstein's criminal activity. I was never a participant nor co-conspirator in any of Epstein's illegal activities. To my enormous embarrassment and regret I, like many others, was duped by a world-class con man. I cannot undo that part of my personal history even as I regret ever having met him.

Before going any further, though, I want to acknowledge the survivors of Epstein's terrible crimes and the devastation that each of them has endured as a result. The pain he inflicted upon them is unfathomable to me. My heart goes out to each of them.

I want you to know something about the man seated before you. I am 88 years old, a husband to Abigail since 1993, the father of four adult children and, proudly, a grandfather. I have lived in Ohio my entire life. I am a philanthropist, community builder, business owner, and the Founder and former CEO of LBrands. I constantly strive to live my life in an ethical manner in line with my moral compass, devoting time and energy to my faith, my community, my business, my LBrands associates, and my family and friends.

I founded The Limited Stores in 1963 with a \$5,000 loan from my aunt Ida. I grew the company from one small store, The Limited, by creating, acquiring, and leading the development of a large multi-divisional retail company of brands such as Express, Bath & Body Works, Victoria's Secret, Lerner, Lane Bryant, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Henri Bendel. I took the company public in 1969 and was the longest-serving CEO of a publicly traded company at the time of my retirement in 2020. While also running LBrands, I planned, marketed, designed, and developed both the Village of New Albany, one of the largest planned communities in America, and Easton Town Center, an innovative outdoor retail center, in my hometown of Columbus, Ohio. As an important part of my longstanding commitment to philanthropy, I created, and continue to personally participate in, the Wexner Foundation, which develops leaders and public servants. The total amount of our family's philanthropic giving to worthy causes exceeds a billion dollars.

Nearly every waking hour during my work weeks was spent on the business. My weekends also were filled by business responsibilities, my real estate development interests, community, charitable projects, and, ultimately, my growing family. Given these demanding time commitments, I long ago began hiring others to manage my personal finances, starting with Harold Levin, then Epstein, followed by Dennis Hersch, and now a combination of my wife Abigail and an outside multi-family office.

I was introduced to Epstein in the mid-to-late 1980s by Bob Meister, the former Vice Chairman of Aon. Bob knew I needed help managing my personal finances and suggested that I speak with Epstein. I did not rely solely on Bob's recommendation. I consulted Ace Greenberg and Jimmy Cayne of Bear Stearns, Epstein's former employer, both of whom endorsed Epstein without hesitation. Epstein also offered a reference, Elie de Rothschild. When I spoke with Elie, he highly recommended Epstein based upon work Epstein had done for his family. At first, Epstein was unwilling to take me on as a client. In fact, for the first few years I was acquainted with him, Epstein offered me advice here and there while explaining that giving individual financial advice was not his focus and refusing to accept compensation. He said he was assisting me as a favor. Little did I realize that, from the very start, Epstein was conniving to gain my trust.

As my financial resources and time demands continued to grow, I formally hired Epstein to manage my personal finances. Because my public company and other duties required my full attention, I provided Epstein with a power of attorney so he could execute transactions quickly, without constantly requiring my signature. The need for a power of attorney was clear to me, and I provided the same scope of authority to Epstein as I did to his successor, Dennis Hersch. What I did not anticipate was Epstein misusing the trust I placed in him despite his fiduciary obligation to act in my best interest.

What is so clear only now is that Epstein lived a double life. He was clever, diabolical, and a master manipulator. He was meticulous in revealing to me only glimpses into the life in which he was a sophisticated financial guru who consulted with heads of state, high-ranking politicians, royalty, university presidents, professors, CEOs, musicians, and other luminaries. He was a member of the Trilateral Commission and was a trustee of Rockefeller University. While I did not socialize in Epstein's social circle, he often told me about his famous acquaintances and important positions he held, and at times I experienced what seemed to be random chance encounters, probably orchestrated by Epstein, with prominent individuals who said they knew Epstein. Over the course of many years, he carefully used his acquaintance with important individuals to curate an aura of legitimacy that he then used to expand his network of acquaintances, and apparent credibility, even farther.

The other life he led, that we now know was full of unthinkable crimes, he most carefully and fully hid from me. He knew that I never would have tolerated his horrible behavior. Not any of it. At no time did I ever witness the side of Epstein's life for which he is now infamous. I am the father of two girls, now women, and the thought of what he did makes me sick. I dated Abigail

for three years and have been married to her for 33 years. We are completely devoted to each other. To be clear, never once in 36 years have I been unfaithful to Abigail in any way, shape, or form. Never. Any suggestion to the contrary is absolutely and entirely false.

Again, to be clear, I never saw or heard about Epstein being in the company of a minor girl. To the contrary, he led me to believe he was in serious and long-term relationships with two women, Dr. Eva Andersson and later Ghislaine Maxwell, both of whom he said he contemplated marrying. I was never on his airplane. Contrary to rumor, I did not give Epstein the New York townhouse; he purchased it from me for what I was told was the appraised value. After we moved out, I never set foot in that house again. I visited Epstein's island only once, shortly after he purchased it, when Abigail, our young children, and I stopped for a few hours one morning while we were on a cruise on our boat. Again, the side of Epstein that he chose to reveal to me was far different from the predator he eventually was exposed to be.

As I have stated before, my contact with Epstein entirely terminated nearly twenty years ago. In late 2006, Epstein told Abigail that he had a legal issue in Palm Beach but insisted that what he referred to as baseless, trumped-up charges by an overaggressive police chief would be dismissed. In 2007, however, Epstein informed Abigail that his situation could become messy and he might have to spend time away. To say the least, this was shocking. At the same time, Epstein suggested that Abigail could handle our personal finances if he were to become unavailable, and for the first time he provided her with the financial information she would need. Due to the complexity of the information, it took time to unravel, but after reviewing the information it became clear to Abigail that Epstein had stolen vast sums from our family. Once I learned of his abusive conduct and theft from my family, I never spoke with Epstein again. Never.

In September 2007, nine months before he pled guilty in Florida, we revoked Epstein's power of attorney, removed his access to our bank accounts, and forced him to resign from all our affiliated entities. Confronted with his financial wrongdoing by Abigail, Epstein agreed to, and did, return a substantial amount of money, even while continuing to maintain his total innocence of any wrongdoing, never dropping the con. In light of his eventual guilty plea and deception of our family, we completely severed our relationship with Epstein. Epstein was permanently and irrevocably out of my life. While others visited Epstein in jail and associated with him after his release, I did not. Nor did I witness, condone, or enable his crimes in any way.

I want to thank the Committee for its efforts to get to the bottom of Epstein's con and illegal activity. I hope you are successful in uncovering the truth and bringing closure to all survivors. If I am able to assist you in that effort by answering your questions, I am grateful for the opportunity to do so.