



OPEN LETTER TO CONNECTICUT CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS

The Greater Hartford African American Alliance Calls for a Congressional Investigation

October 29, 2021

To the Honorable Members of the Connecticut Congressional Delegation:

Dear Congressional Leader:

The Greater Hartford African American Alliance (“Alliance”) is demanding a Congressional Investigation into the huge economic inequities and wholesale economic exclusion of Minority Contractors in Connecticut.

The following list of concerns delineate why the Alliance is seeking a congressional investigation by our elected Connecticut Congressional Delegation.

Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) and Women Business Enterprises (WBE) are set up under the law as two enterprises that have the same or similar issues. The scheme of coupling WBEs and MBEs has undermined, devalued, and eroded the intent for which they were originally designed. As it now stands the scheme of coupling WBEs, and MBEs exacerbates harm against black and brown contractors by simply creating another venue for White contractors to economically benefit from federal, state, and local construction dollars.

When we refer to Minority Contractors, we are specifically referring to Black and Brown contractors. We consider “Minority” Contractors to be an offensive term, as it includes Women contractors, who are their own separate protected class, and are not ‘minorities’ at all. To many, these moments have felt like one step forward, two steps back.

This scheme to couple MBEs and WBEs has set up a competitive and unfair advantage to position White Women Owned Businesses to funnel monies into the already profitable White Construction Companies that are neither disadvantaged, nor for the most part, legitimate members of protective classes.

It is within this context that The Greater Hartford African American Alliance joins with Black and Brown Contractors in calling for a congressional investigation into how government aids and abets, the funneling of public monies into White, highly financed, and heavily bonded construction companies, often using White women who are counted as minorities, and allowed to take billions of dollars out of the hands of MBEs. This is done while Black and Brown construction companies face huge economic disparities, struggle to get bonding capacity, and continue to be robbed of resources by White female fronts.

Like Watergate, we need to do nothing more than to follow the money for all construction contracts over the past five years, and to look at the numbers of Black and Brown contractors that go to their graves, never benefiting from the laws that continue to be ignored relative to Minority Contractors.



The families of MBEs struggle and suffer under the weight of a system that continues to turn their heads to the injustices, inequities and inequalities built into the very laws that have been written to protect them.

We are calling for a CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION into the longstanding practice of diverting federally funded public dollars from MBEs into White construction companies that are anything BUT disadvantaged business enterprises. We would like the scope of this CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION to address specifically, the following issues:

- 1- Why Connecticut Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) are not receiving their fair share of federal, state, and local contracts from public monies.
- 2- How much money has been diverted from MBEs over the last five years?
- 3- What is the economic impact on Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) when they are coupled with Women Business Enterprises (WBEs)?
- 4- Does coupling of MBEs and WBEs create a scheme where monies can be funneled into the pockets of non-disadvantaged, White Contractors that are not Disadvantaged Business Enterprises?
- 5- How much money has been funneled into White Contractors through White, Women Business Enterprises (WBEs) over the last five years?
- 6- What can be done to IMMEDIATELY provide bonding opportunities for Connecticut MBEs?
- 7- What can be done to IMMEDIATELY provide early payments to MBEs for construction work that has been completed, so that MBEs can meet their payroll requirements?
- 8- Is there legislation in place to guarantee early payments to MBE Contractors so that they can make payroll?
- 9- Are MBEs adversely impacted because timely payments to MBEs are routinely ignored? What is being done to enforce timely payment policies for MBEs?
- 10- What is the economic impact on MBEs when construction goes back to a General Contractor (GC) bid process compared to a Construction Manager (CM) bid process?
- 11- What is the actual dollar utilization of MBEs in publicly funded projects in Connecticut for the last five years, with and without counting WBEs?)
- 12- What is the current utilization of MBEs on state on-call lists (with and without counting WBEs) and what is the dollar value/amount required before a project must go out for a public bid?
- 13- What is the procedure or policy currently being utilized by White Contractors that allows state agencies to grant contracts without a public bid?



- 14- Is it a requirement that publicly funded projects must have a public open bid process?
- 15- What is the policy on Publicly funded projects relative to open bids? Is this policy routinely enforced, and if not, does failure to enforce this policy have an adverse economic impact on MBEs?
- 16- What is the enforcement mechanism and what are the penalties for contractors and agencies who do not comply with laws designed to protect MBEs?
- 17- Are towns and municipalities following the local business preference in their town and city ordinances for federally funded or partially federally funded projects?
- 18- Is the micro business preference policy a requirement in construction contracts?
- 19- Is there a practice of MBEs being named on bid day by prime contractors, while these same MBEs that were named on bid day, were not utilized to perform the work after the bid was won?
- 20- We would like our Connecticut Congressional delegation to investigate how tax dollars are spent by organizations funded to support, grow, and advocate for MBEs in construction.
- 21- **We would like the following questions answered:** Does funding of MBE advocacy organizations result in more enforcement of laws designed to protect MBEs? Do these organizations create more contracts and bids, or more bonding capacity for MBEs? Does the funding of these contractor advocates result in more money going into the pockets of MBEs?
- 22- Investigate union relationships with MBEs and whether union contracts benefit, harm or undermine MBEs?

CONCLUSION

Members of the Greater Hartford African American Alliance stand prepared to work with our Connecticut Congressional Delegation to assist in the development of the scope of the investigation into the above matters. Our goal is to have our Connecticut Congressional Delegation change the way that Black and Brown Contractors are treated in the State of Connecticut, and to put in place immediate policies and enforcement mechanisms that will prohibit the violation of Connecticut Contractor's civil, human and economic rights under federal, state and local law.

Respectfully,



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Cc: Connecticut Congressional Delegation

