

BLACK BUSINESS COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT SCHOOLS RESPONSE LETTER

December 21, 2022

Hon. Edward Kasemeyer, Chair
Interagency Commission on School Construction
c/o State Department of Education
Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building,
200 West Baltimore St., Suite 200,
Baltimore, MD 21201

Hon. Angela Alsobrooks
Prince George's County Executive
Wayne K. Curry Administration Bldg.
1301 McCormick Drive
Largo, MD 20774

Dr. Monica Goldson, CEO
Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS)
Sasser Administration Building
14201 School Lane
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Dear Hon. Edward Kasemeyer, County Executive Angela Alsobrooks, and CEO Monica Goldson:

We write to you today with great urgency and concern. Six members of the Prince George's County Council, including Council Members Wala Blegay, Edward Burroughs, Tom Dernoga, Jolene Ivey, Eric Olson, and Krystal Oriadha, sent you a letter dated November 4, 2022 regarding the next phase of the Prince George's County Public Schools ("PGCPS") Public-Private-Partnership ("P3") ("Blueprint Schools") school construction program. In their letter, the signatory Council Members, who happen to constitute a simple majority of the County Council, state that they will oppose the next construction phase ("Phase 2") of the Blueprint Schools if a Project Labor Agreement is not included. This exclusionary proposal would be substantially detrimental to the African American business community and African American residents of Prince George's County and may jeopardize the building of the Phase 2 Blueprint Schools. It is the antithesis of the national and local movements for more equity and inclusion for the African American community in economic opportunities. We collectively urge you to reject this proposal out of hand.

Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) exclude African American owned construction businesses ("black firms") and African American workers ("black workers") from construction projects. Very few African American construction firms have a unionized workforce and the workers within most building trades unions have limited numbers of African American members. A PLA on a project typically requires any contracting firm working on that project to obtain its workforce from one or more specified building trades unions and often includes the requirement that the firm and/or its workers on the project contribute to the union's pension fund, benefit programs, and dues. Among the reasons most black firms are non-union contractors include (1) black firms, due to generational discrimination and disparities, are smaller and operate on lower margins than their larger white counterparts, making them less able to sustain the additional costs imposed by PLAs, (2) the long history of discrimination within the construction trades against African-Americans, including black-owned firms, and (3) PLAs significantly limit the available

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workforce pool, since less than 11% of Maryland's construction workers are a part of a union (and less than 4% of those in the District of Columbia).

Black workers are in limited number in most building trades unions due to generations of discrimination within the construction trades. Obstacles such as seniority, nepotism, and the "good old boy" system have effectively excluded black workers from building trades unions and limited their ability to work on PLA projects, especially in the higher paid construction trade jobs that support middle-class families. A recent example right here in Prince George's County touted as a success by some PLA advocates exemplifies the exclusion of black workers on a PLA project. In 2020, as a pilot, PGCPS placed a PLA on an asbestos contract, with LiUNA as the union supplying the workers. The analysis of the workers who worked on this project embarrassingly showed that only 2 out of 63 workers employed were black, approximately just 3% of the workforce. In a county that is 64% African American, a project employing only a 3% black workforce is not an economic success story for the African American community. It is an abject failure that demonstrates the exclusionary nature of PLAs on the black community.

It is unfortunate that Council Members Blegay, Burroughs, Dernoga, Ivey, Olson, and Oriadha have endorsed such an anti-black business and anti-black worker policy in their November 4, 2022 letter. Among their stated reasons for advocacy of a PLA requirement on the Phase 2 Blueprint Schools projects are that a PLA will facilitate the projects occurring on-time and on-budget and provide sufficient wages for those employed on the project. They are attempting to provide a solution for a problem that does not exist. For example, Phase 1 of the Blueprint Schools (which contained no PLA requirement) promised completion of five (5) middle schools and one (1) K-8 school by the end of 2023, serving 8,000 Prince George's County kids and families. According to PGCPS, these schools are scheduled to be completed on time, in just 3 years, a pace unprecedented in Prince George's County history, and within the costs outlined in the P3 agreement, all done so without the "aid" of a PLA. Furthermore, Phase 1 was subject to the state prevailing wage law (as will Phase 2) providing sufficient wages for the workers on the project.

Prince George's County has a recent, significant horror story about a PLA that it attempted to impose on the construction of a new Laurel Library. The project was scheduled to commence construction in 2013 but did not actually begin construction until late 2014. The reason for this is that County had to abandon the PLA that it had initially imposed on the project because (1) the chosen contractor was not able to retain enough construction companies to fulfill the PLA requirement, (2) there wasn't enough union labor to perform the work, and (3) the costs proposed by the union subcontractors on the project exceeded the budget appropriated by the County for the project. Thus, in the case of Laurel Library, the PLA did not bring the project in on-time and on-budget. It did the exact opposite and had to be abandoned.¹

Furthermore, Phase 2 of the P3 Blueprint Schools is already underway as the County Council already approved the six (6) new elementary, regional, and K-8 schools to be built, replacing up to thirteen (13) existing schools and serving thousands of kids and families in our County with new schools, and approved Phase 2's general terms and conditions. The Phase 2 Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") must ultimately be agreed upon by the County Council, County Executive, PGCPS, and the State of Maryland before proceeding. In our estimation, due to the negative effects of PLAs on black economic opportunity and the potential for cost and timing

¹ The Brandywine Fire Station project, which completed construction in 2015 and also contained a PLA requirement, significantly exceeded the original budget and timeline for the project.

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overruns, it is unlikely that all of these parties will agree to a PLA mandate. Thus, the PLA-mandate position of Council Members Blegay, Burroughs, Dernoga, Ivey, Olson, and Oriadha will jeopardize the entire Phase 2 Blueprint Schools program, potentially killing 6 new school construction projects. This would deprive thousands of children and families (and their communities) currently served by 13 aging and/or overcrowded schools of having new 21st century school facilities, including many of those in these Council Members' districts.

For the foregoing reasons, imposing a PLA on Phase 2 of the Blueprint Schools in Maryland's largest predominantly black jurisdiction, on one of its largest construction programs in history, will have the effect of shutting out those very same black firms and black residents that call Prince George's County home. Instead of "equity and inclusion," a PLA mandate would be an "inequity and exclusion." It is shocking and disappointing, especially in a jurisdiction home to an African American County Executive, predominantly African American County Council, African American Public Schools CEO, predominantly African American Board of Education, with a 64% African-American population, that Council Members Blegay, Burroughs, Dernoga, Ivey, Olson, and Oriadha would advocate for a policy that is detrimental to the African American business community and African American families that these Council Members represent. We urge you to reject their position and we urge the residents of Prince George's County to do so as well.

Cc: The Prince George's County Council
Prince George's County Community Stakeholders

UNDERSIGNED BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES AND ALLIES:

<u>Shane Warren</u>	<u></u>	<u>WarrenBuilds</u>
Print Name	Signature	Business Name
<u>Brunson Cooper</u>	<u></u>	<u>Corenic Construction</u>
Print Name	Signature	Business Name
<u>Marc T Vaughn</u>	<u></u>	<u>M.T.V Electrical Services</u>
Print Name	Signature	Business Name
<u>Tony J. Holt</u>	<u></u>	<u>TJ Holt Electric</u>
Print Name	Signature	Business Name
<u>Joy Anderson</u>	<u></u>	<u>JRA & Associates Contracting, LLC</u>
Print Name	Signature	Business Name
<u>Cory Jones</u>	<u></u>	<u>First Choice Masonry Inc.</u>
Print Name	Signature	Business Name
<u>Cory M Jones</u>	<u></u>	<u>First Choice Masonry Inc.</u>
Print Name	Signature	Business Name

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Katrina Jones
Print Name

Katrina Jones
Signature

First Choice Masonry Inc.
Business Name

Armani J. Jones
Print Name

Armani J. Jones
Signature

First Choice Masonry Inc.
Business Name

Andre McCauley
Print Name

Andre McCauley
Signature

Primary Enterprises, LLC
Business Name

JOSHUA NWADIKEDCHA
Print Name

Joshua Nwadikecha
Signature

Service All Inc.
Business Name

Christian Emezio
Print Name

Christian Emezio
Signature

Eleuthera Builders
Business Name

Barrington Jackson
Print Name

Barrington Jackson
Signature

Plenary Enterprises, LLC
Business Name

PATRICK MBAH
LLC
Print Name

Patrick MBAH
Signature

MBAH & SONS FIELD SERVICES
Business Name

Miguel Lambert
Print Name

Miguel Lambert
Signature

The Bulldog Group
Business Name

Heath Yancey
Print Name

Heath Yancey
Signature

Yancey Roofing and Water proofing
LLC
Business Name

Theo Milford
Senior Vice President

Theo Milford Senior Vice President Conquest Solutions, LLC

Henry Hunt, Managing Member
Print Name

Henry M. Hunt
Signature

Hunt Consulting, LLC
Business Name

Ronald D. Lipford AIA
Print Name

Ronald D. Lipford
Signature

Arel Architects, Inc and
Arel ICM LLC
Business Name

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JAMES A. REID, JR., P.E.
Print Name


Signature

Civtech Designs, Inc.
Business Name

Ernest M. Njaba, P.E.
Print Name

Ernest Njaba
Signature

BOTA Consulting Engineers, Inc.
Business Name

Henry C Cunningham
Print Name

Henry C Cunningham
Signature

The Cunningham Consulting Group, Inc.
Business Name

Michael A. Withers

Michael A. Withers

M.A. + Associates, LLC

Print Name

Signature

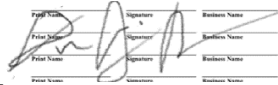
Business Name

Murry H. Edwards
Print Name

Murry H. Edwards
Signature

Contract Design & DEVELOPMENT, LLC
Business Name

Sandy Archer
Print Name


Signature

WAAcontractorsLLC
Business Name

Nikita F. Floyd
Print Name

Nikita F. Floyd
Signature

Green Forever Landscaping & Design INC.
Business Name

Alphonso Tillman

Alphonso Tillman

ISCM, LLC.

Print Name

Signature

Business Name

Husein Sharaf

H. Sharaf
Signature

Cloudforce

Print Name

Signature

Business Name

Patrick L. Carter
Print Name

Patrick L. Carter
Signature

Technical Specialties, Inc.
Business Name

ERICA CARTER
Print Name

Erica Carter
Signature

Technical Specialties, Inc
Business Name


Eric Chapman
Print Name

Eric Chapman
Signature

Risk Alleviators Technologies
Business Name

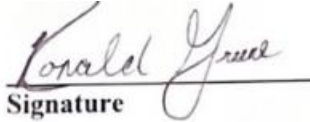
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Derek L. Demby
Print Name


Signature

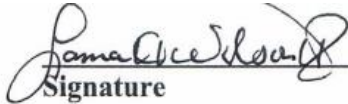
Integres, LLC
Business Name

Ronald GREENE
Print Name


Signature

GREENE'S TRUCKING
Business Name

Lamar Wilson
Print Name


Signature

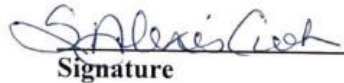
Wilson on Wheels II Logistics
Business Name

SHAWN SCARLATA
Print Name


Signature


MOBILE VIDEO GUARD
Business Name

S. Alexis Cook
Print Name


Signature

The Alexis / Windham Group
Business Name

Chauncey Gorham
Print Name


Signature

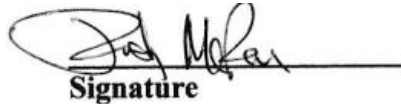
EDASC, LLC
Business Name

Print Name

Signature

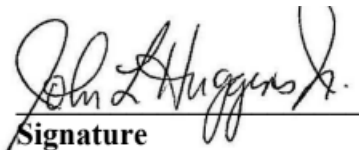
Business Name

Randy McFee
Print Name


Signature

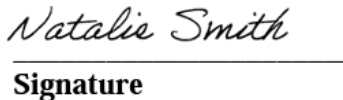
RMA, CPAs
Business Name

John L. Huggins, Jr.
Print Name


Signature

Broadband Connect LLC
Business Name

Natalie A. Smith
Print Name


Signature

PeopleWiseHR
Business Name

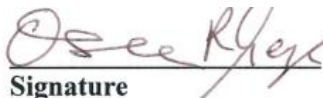
Orpheus Tucker **orpheus R. Tucker** The Safety Man, LLC

Print Name

Signature

Business Name

OSBORNE GEORGE
Print Name


Signature

O.R. GEORGE & ASSOC, INC
Business Name

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Enrique Young  FEBA, Inc.
Print Name **Signature** **Business Name**

JAMON Fields  Tag & Title at Hilltop
Print Name **Signature** **Business Name**

Michael Sakata  Maryland Transportation
Builders & Materials
Association
Print Name **Signature** **Business Name**

Marcus Jackson  ABC of Metro Washington
Print Name **Signature** **Business Name**