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**FAVORABLE Support of SB 442/HB 313:
Public-Private Partnership Agreements - Minority Business Enterprise Programs**

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

Senate Bill 442 proposes to restore the applicability of Maryland's Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program to public-private partnerships (P3s).

As a certified small business owner in Maryland, I am keenly aware of the benefits of public-private partnerships. P3s enable greater private sector participation, expertise, and mitigate risk for state agencies engaged in large infrastructure projects.

Restoring the application of the MBE program to P3s would benefit my Minority Business Enterprise for several reasons. It would provide the much needed opportunities for Minority Businesses to seek and participate in the contracting space. A needed gateway of potential opportunities and a wealth of additional resources to work with government agencies, primes as well as financial institutions to grow as a subcontractor, eventually into a prime contractor. Minority Businesses need the assurance that our state governing body and its governing agencies is committed to our participation, inclusion and success in growing, creating jobs and building our great state infrastructure and with that commitment takes the necessary steps and actions needed to restore confidence and be the driving force to many Minority Businesses success stories.

After the completion of the 2017 Business Disparities in the Maryland Market Area study, Chapter 340 of the 2017 Maryland Code reauthorized the MBE program for five more years. However, it did not restore the application of the program to P3s. Senate Bill 442 would restore that application, enabling my Minority Business Enterprise to thrive in Maryland.

Thus, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 442/House Bill 313.

Respectfully,

Keon Walters