

## TESTIMONY AGAINST SENATE BILL 635

Good Day,

I am Darlene D. Mitchell, an Executive with Sage Services Group LLC, a small, woman-owned, minority firm based in Bowie, MD. I ask for your indulgence for the next 2 minutes.

I am compelled to remind you of the following pivotal events:

New York City, 1863

East St. Louis, MO, 1917

The Red Summer, 1919

Chicago, IL

Washington, DC

Knoxville, TN

Black Wall Street

Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1921

Rosewood, Florida, 1923

These dates are a chronology of the horrific and repeated slaughtering of Black business owners in Black communities. The attacks were perpetrated by angry white men, each time, simply because Blacks were independently prospering economically, and whites were not. It is astonishing that Senate Bill 635 even has breath!

The history of supplier diversity for minority businesses in this country is rooted in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. The State of Maryland has been a champion of Minority Business Enterprise programs since its inception in 1978 when the General Assembly enacted legislation, creating the program to ensure that socially and economically disadvantaged small business owners are included in the State's procurement and contracting opportunities. Maryland often leads the country in achieving MBE participation goals and has committed funding for dedicated staff positions to specifically and closely monitor the efforts of all state agencies to ensure these goals are met and maintained.

Minority-owned businesses contribute \$400 billion to the nation's economy and over 2.2 million jobs. Mega corporations such as Wal-Mart alone spends \$1 billion annually with minority and women owned business. UPS, spends \$2.6 billion annually doing business with around 6,000 small and diverse businesses. Coca-Cola is spending over \$800 million annually on diverse businesses and had a goal of increasing that to more than \$1 billion by the end of last year. These programs work. Inclusive procurement delivers broader societal benefits by generating

economic opportunity for disadvantaged communities to affluent communities and everyone in between.

The United States has committed a lot of wrongs in its past denying access and opportunities to talented people because of the color of our skin. I ask...why is it...each time Black and Brown people are on the brink of taking our slice of the pie, a new legislation suddenly appears; and the course of the legislation always seem to minimize, reduce, retract, deduct and dismiss what Black and Brown people have rightfully earned.

Of what character is a man who would put his child under tremendous training for years to reach the Olympics, then when of age, tell him he is only qualified to join a community league in a town with no team. This is the impact of such a Bill. Minorities and women still face obstacles gaining access to those holding the purse strings in this country. As the spotlight on systemic racism continues to mushroom throughout the United States, these programs are more important now than ever. To infer that this bill may actually enhance opportunities for MBE's to participate in state procurements and have little or no effect on an agency's performance in achieving a participation goal, demonstrates a clear lack of understanding for the dynamics of operating a minority business with government.

May I suggest, taking advantage of this opportunity to create a new category for participation goals; such as the Maryland Correctional Enterprise, a worthy and deserving entity.

As an Executive and Owner of a certified Small, Minority-Owned, Woman-Owned business, I am obligated to appeal to your greater sense of human intellect. Do not support a formula just because it equates; but rather, seek to better understand beyond the obvious, each component and implication of the formula for which a solution is being sought.

Darlene D. Mitchell