



# LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
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February 27, 2024

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Chairwoman Joseline Peña-Melnyk,  
241 House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairwoman Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for House Bill 962 -State Procurement - Small and Minority Business Reserve Program (Parren J. Mitchell MBE Prime Contracting Act). **This bill is on the 2024 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

House Bill 962 is an important piece of legislation that will help address historical disparities and barriers faced by minority-owned businesses and aid in moving our Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) toward renewed success.

It is serendipitous that this Bill will be heard during Black History Month, as it seeks to honor the remarkable legacy of Parren James Mitchell. In 1950, the Honorable Mitchell sued the University of Maryland for admission into their, then, segregated University and backed by the NAACP, won admission and was the first Black man to graduate from the school; however, that was just the first time he made history. He utilized his education and became the first African American elected to Congress from Maryland in 1971. Parren J. Mitchell was one of the founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus and immediately became an active Member, utilizing his voice and perspective. In his capacity as Chair of the Small Business Committee, Congressman Mitchell submitted an amendment to a \$4 billion piece of public works legislation, mandating state and local governments pursuing federal grants to allocate **10%** of the funds to retain minority-owned firms as both contractors and subcontractors.

Fast forward to 2024, HB 962 renames the Small Business Reserve (SBR) Program to be the Small and Minority Business Reserve Program, reflecting a commitment to promoting MBEs within the State procurement process. Additionally, and most notably, the Bill requires State agencies to set-aside **10%** of their procurements specifically for Certified MBEs and Veteran Owned Small Business Enterprises. It is a critical piece of legislation to increase the prime contracting procurement opportunities for MBEs and moves Maryland toward its 29% MBE Aspirational participation goal, *which the State has consistently failed to meet*. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports House Bill 962 and asks that you vote favorably on this bill.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland