

## **Howard Jean Remarks**

### **CB 2 Min Header**

Good morning, and thank you Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is Howard Jean, and I am the founder Black Meta Agency, an information technology company that I built from the ground up with one goal in mind: to leverage blockchain technology to help everyday people access opportunity in the digital economy.

I understand this ecosystem from the very core. I'm in it, as a builder, as a developer, and as a stakeholder.

When I think about scaling my company here in Maryland, I want to stay. This is home. I want to grow my company, hire talent, and invest in the community that helped shape me. But if I have to choose between staying compliant and staying competitive, I'm forced to look at markets that are more open and accommodating to innovation.

I'm currently working with the DC Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking, where significant fintech capital is already flowing into blockchain-based companies. What I'm seeing in real time is founders crossing state lines for access to capital and regulatory clarity. Opportunity is moving, and it's not waiting. Maryland has the talent and entrepreneurial spirit to compete, but we need the policy environment to match it.

The staking ban doesn't just restrict a product. It stifles creativity. It limits growth. It shrinks the broader economic impact that comes from builders using these tools to create jobs and value in their communities. When innovation moves elsewhere, so do the jobs, the investment, and the tax revenue that comes with it.

At its core, it feels unfair. We talk about free markets and free enterprise, but when it comes to how I can use and grow my own digital assets, there's suddenly a ceiling placed above me. That contradiction is hard to ignore. Maryland residents should have access to the same financial tools that people in 46 other states already have.

The rest of the world is already moving forward with this technology. If we continue down this path, we won't just fall slightly behind as a state. We'll be playing catch-up in an industry that rewards early leadership and innovation.

I also think about the next generation. My generation had access to stocks, banks, and loans. The next generation has blockchain as an additional tool for financial freedom. This is a chance to pay it forward, to expand opportunity, not restrict it.

America was built from small communities that grew into something bigger. Crypto has that same potential. People who couldn't afford a home can now invest in fractional property, generate revenue for

themselves, and pull themselves up from poverty. These tools can expand access to investment and ownership in ways that traditional systems often haven't.

I want to build here. I want to hire here. And I especially want Maryland to lead the way.

My message is simple: give us the space to innovate and the chance to compete.

Thank you.