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COALITION OF
BLACK WOMEN

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Chairman Marvin Abney
House Committee on Finance
Room 35, 82 Smith Street
Providence, RI, 02908

Testimony in support of H7482: resolves that \$500,000 in the FY25 state budget be directly allocated to the RI Black Business Association for business and workforce development.

Dear Chairman Abney and esteemed members of the House Committee on Finance,

I am writing to express my strong support for H7483 sponsored by Representative Nathan Biah, which proposes a critical investment in the Rhode Island Black Business Association (RIBBA). This investment is essential for fostering the growth of small businesses and expanding economic opportunities in underserved areas across Rhode Island.

As a resident of Johnston and representing both Black Market Realty, my small business, and the Rhode Island Coalition of Black Women, I deeply appreciate the support provided by RIBBA in advancing our entrepreneurial endeavors. RIBBA has been instrumental in assisting us with Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) certification and providing essential training for our construction team, equipping us and many entrepreneurs for government contracting opportunities.

In my role as Vice President of the Rhode Island Coalition of Black Women, our mission is dedicated to advocating for the education, health, and economic empowerment of Black women and girls in Rhode Island. It is striking that while Black women entrepreneurs are numerous, they are mostly likely to remain as micro-businesses.

RIBBA's services play a crucial role in addressing this disparity. For instance, they facilitated the development of a vital website for an audiologist within our network, which was essential for her business growth and accessing necessary loans to start her private practice. Additionally, RIBBA secured grant funding for a model and pose coach to participate in a minority exhibit, significantly boosting her visibility and connecting her with a branding coach to enhance her market presence.



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Despite the availability of other small business organizations offering similar services, the cultural disconnect remains a significant barrier to our scalability and success.

It is imperative that the General Assembly invests in the Rhode Island Black Business Association this year. RIBBA has earned the trust of the community and has a proven track record of success. If Rhode Island truly values supporting economic development, it must demonstrate this commitment by supporting exemplary organizations like RIBBA, which in turn support small businesses and entrepreneurs. Let us not miss this opportunity to create good-paying jobs and nurture mature, sustainable businesses in the most economically disadvantaged communities.

I urge the members of the House Committee on Finance to wholeheartedly support H7483 and recommend its passage to the House floor.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Naomi Mark
Vice President, Rhode Island Coalition of Black Women
President, Black Market Realty
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