

To: Members of the Howard County Maryland Council & EBOC

Subject: Testimony in support of CR181-181

Date: November 18, 2016

Dear Council Members and Commission:

I, Virginia Callahan, President & CEO of VA Associates, a Howard County Maryland Woman Owned and Minority Business, submit this letter in support of Council Resolution 181-2016. I am in favor of calling on the Equal Business Opportunity Commission to make certain studies related to the County's Equal Business Opportunity Program and purchasing practices, to study polices and experiences of other jurisdictions with respect to contracting and purchasing and the use of businesses owned by women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities; to recommend to the County Council measures to improve the County's purchasing policies and practices; and generally relating to fostering equal business opportunities for businesses owned by women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in Howard County. I further suggest that the Commission studies:

1. Purchasing related to small businesses within the named categories.
2. Increasing percentage for subcontracting. Also, removing small business adhere to a 10% policy subcontracting policy?
3. Existing Information Systems to track, report, and comply with procurement/purchasing policies
4. Compliance approach to "Majority Owner" as an active participant & not for designation and award capture only?

The current contract awards made to this proposed studied group versus the Howard County business population, as communicated by data submitted by Councilman Ball and verified by the Census Bureau Survey, suggests there is much room for improvement by the Howard County Purchasing Department; to create business opportunities for businesses owned by women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in Howard County and small businesses within these groups.

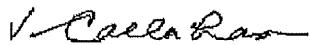
Howard County established itself from its foundation as a County that values all of its citizens and every aspect of diversity in community and business. It is our obligation to ensure the County has policies and practices that are fair and provide opportunity for all businesses to compete regardless of race, disability, gender, or size. Creating such means the County Government must be sensitive to historical and current discriminatory practices in purchasing that intentionally and unintentionally create a disadvantage for the identified categories.

I am a Howard County resident of 19 years and business owner of 12 years. I have held contracts in seven different States and the District of Columbia with excellent past performance. However, none were in Howard County. Three months ago I was hired by an out of state Prime Contractor to provide services for a project at Howard County Government. I was thrilled at the opportunity to provide services in my home county. However, I was disappointed that the contract had been awarded to an out of state vendor when capability existed within the County. The Prime Contractor accessed VA Associates through their personal knowledge of its expertise. The Howard County contact was thrilled

to see the Prime had identified a contractor in Howard County. I also participated in the BRAC program at its inception and I was one of the businesses identified to work with Howard County Large Primes to grow my business in Howard County. No opportunities were presented and no contracts awarded, in spite of many meetings and business development efforts. I returned to pursuing opportunities elsewhere. Where purchasing studies had already been completed and changes made to assist those who were found to be at a disadvantage and discriminated against or low representation. My efforts resulted in new business but outside of Howard County. I can say without hesitation that the purchasing process in Howard County seemed supportive in words but lacking in clarity of process, practices, and support to minorities, women, those with disabilities, and small businesses. Many of the BRAC business participants shared experiences and came to the same conclusion. Citing collective awards without looking at various industries, also paints a false picture of achieving objectives. More lucrative contracts often have few of the named participants in CR181. Large Prime Contractors were consumed with achieving their revenue budgets utilizing their own staff or growing their employee base via staff from small business subcontractors.

I support CR181-2016 and ask that you support it. It's a beginning, to provide opportunities to an overlooked part of the business population. A population that wants an equal part in serving the County where they live and share the values of its founder and community. We are better together in life and business.

Respectfully,



Virginia Callahan | President & CEO

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Reference: Insight, Center for Community for Economic Development. State Policies and Programs for Minority- and Women-Business Development.

<http://ww1.insightccd.org/uploads/publications/assets/50%20state%20inclusive%20business%20policy%20scan.pdf>