

Good morning Mr. Chairman and committee members.

Thank you for allowing me to make my remarks on such a critical issue as African American inclusion in the economic fabric of the City of Milwaukee as a government and the City of Milwaukee as a municipality.

For over forty (40) years, I have been working on minority business development, particularly as it relates to African Americans. I started this work while Research Director for the Milwaukee Boston Store, given the leeway by the person I reported to, Mr. Peter Scotese, Chairman of the Board. Even there, the subject and intent was inclusion, from being fashion models on the run way to designing and manufacturing garments for sale in the store.

I moved on to become the Economic Development Coordinator for the City of Milwaukee Model cities program, under then Mayor Henry Maier. While at that program, I was one of three people responsible for creating the Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), the other two being Pat Walsh and Pat LeSage.

For most of the decade of the 1980's, I was the Executive Director of the Milwaukee Community Development Corporation (MCDC), a program funded initially by a section of the federal anti poverty program, then by the US Department of Commerce. During that period I guided a staff of six persons who offered management and technical assistance to small, minority owned businesses, particularly African Americans. We provided help to hundreds of businesses, some that are still in business and presumably doing well.

During that same decade, I sat on the committee that was created to provide policy guidance to the affirmative business program that guided the City's efforts during much of the 1980's and into the early 1990's to include minority business in City purchasing and procurement. Clearly the effort was needed if the City was to help turn around the decades of not spending money with a rapidly growing segment of the city.

I worked as the monitor on the Kohl Center in Madison when the minority participation goal was to do at least 5% and the ultimate accomplishment was almost 12%. On Miller Park, where I worked for the Miller Park District Board, the goals were 25% minority and 5% women and both were exceeded. Both projects were in jurisdictions with far fewer minorities as a percentage of the population, but the commitment of the decision makers was to make the necessary happen.

I sat through the "benign neglect" of the African American community by the Norquist administration, as it did not want to ruffle the feathers of the majority community and the business community by making strong efforts to alleviate the disparities that existed between the majority community and the African American community. We seem to have continued on that path.

It is disturbing to know that the City of Milwaukee would consider eliminating a race based remedy where we have a race based problem. Other cities, such as Atlanta, have found ways to address similar disparities and make progress towards reducing the disparities and growing minority businesses, particularly African American owned business.

My concern is the settlement. After reviewing the settlement agreement, I was not able to find out what the deficiency in the study was which set the goals. While I think that most legislation in general, Chapter 370 being no exception, that legislation should be fixed and not repealed. I could find no rationale as to why the City Attorney would agree to a settlement rather than suggest a way to fix 370. Historically, the City attorney has been no help in trying to help the City of Milwaukee find a solution to this race based problem.

This city needs to go forward and not backwards. A variety of disparities have been illuminated in recent years as to the status of the African American community.

High and growing Black Male unemployment.

High and growing Black Male incarceration.

A poverty rate at or near the top among cities in the US.

Near or at the bottom of major cities as to creating Black owned business.

And the list goes on.

My recommendation is to hold this file in committee while the community helps the city administration find solutions to eradicate some of these disparities, per the letter sent to the City Clerk and Common Council a couple of weeks ago..

Sincerely,

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