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Statement of Bruce Morris
Chairman of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus
State Representative for the 140th Assembly District
For the Joint Committee on Government Administration and Elections
February 25, 15
In Support of:

H.B. No. 6088, An Act Expanding the Set-Aside Program to Include Municipalities and State Grant Programs.

H.B. No. 5792, An Act Concerning the Set-Aside Program and the Percentage of Contracts Reserved For Minority Business Enterprises.

Good Afternoon Chairman Cassano, Jutila, and Honorable members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, As Chairman of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, I would like to express our strong support of *H.B. No. 6088, An Act Expanding the Set-Aside Program to Include Municipalities and State Grant Programs* and *H.B. 5792, An Act Concerning the Set-Aside Program and the Percentage of Contracts Reserved For Minority Business Enterprises*.

H.B. 6088, would expand the Set-Aside Program to include municipal projects, purchases and state-funded grants programs.

The Set-Aside program was enacted to help eliminate discrimination in the market area. In a study conducted by the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering in 2012, it was evident that the Set Aside Program was not sufficiently eliminating discrimination in the market. One main reason for insufficiency was due to lack in funds available to the program.

In the exception analysis by the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, the finding concluded that "94% of the aggregate agency adopted budget less federal, non-purchasing, and statute required expenditures was deemed exempt in 2012." Because of the excluded municipal funds, the expenditure available for the set aside program was only 6% of the total budget.

Statue mandates that 25% of State contracting goes to Small Business Enterprises (SBE). Of that 25% that goes to SBE, 25% is allocated to Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) and Women Business Enterprises (WBE). To do the math for you, that means MBEs and WBEs have to share 6.25% of the already very small budget. However, when you factor in the funding that is deemed exempt from this pool, MBE and WBEs are only getting 1.3% of the total State-contracting budget.

1.3% plain and simple is not fair and only perpetuates the inequalities minority and women business owners face! We need to do a better job of supporting and encouraging MBEs, WBEs and SBEs. This can only be done if we stop excluding municipalities from the state set aside program requirements.

All municipalities that use state money should be factored into the available budget for the Set-Aside Program. This has already been implemented in both New Haven and Hartford and should be expanded to include the entire state of Connecticut. We need to expand the Set-Aside Program to help create a more equal and diverse working economy.

H.B. 5792 goes hand in hand with H.B. 6086 to help expand and better the Set-Aside Program: H.B. 5792 would require half of the state contracts set aside for Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) and Women Business Enterprises (WBEs) be reserved for MBEs.

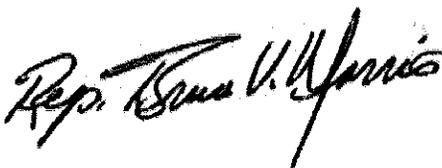
Under current statute, MBEs and WBEs are bundled together. This piece of legislation would just differentiate the two different business enterprises to ensure both have equal contracting opportunity.

We need to create a diverse work force to capitalize on all the members of our communities. When minority enterprises are succeeding whole communities and economies are succeeding. If we do not expand the contracts set aside for minority businesses the cycle of under utilizing minority talent will continue.

Let us expand state contracts to minorities to increase economic gains for all people.

Thank you chairmen and committee members for the opportunity to present testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rep. Bruce V. Morris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce V. Morris
Chairman of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus
State Representative
140th District