

ODETTE RAMOS

Councilwoman District 14



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100 N. Holliday Street, Room 505, Baltimore MD 21202

March 24, 2021

Testimony 21-0033 Imari's LGBTQ Procurement Preference Act Support

Chair Conway and members of the Public Safety and Government Operations Committee:

I am writing to ask your support for Council Bill 21-0033 Imari's Procurement Preference Act. This legislation codifies the Executive Order by Mayor Catherine Pugh in 2018 creating a program for LGBTQ to be considered in contracting in Baltimore City. I have attached the Executive Order as Appendix A as part of this testimony.

My constituent, Terrence Thwreath, Jr., whose testimony will be heard during our hearing, approached me and asked me to introduce this important legislation, modeled after other cities like New York City, Nashville, Jersey City, Miami, and others. I've provided links to those Cities' websites for details in Appendix B of this testimony.

Mr. Thwreath's brother, Imari, owned a clothing store. He faced discrimination as he transitioned, and eventually died by suicide in 2019. Mr. Thwreath wants to codify the previous executive order to allow for others LGBTQ business owners to reach their dreams. While Imari would not have been able to participate in minority contracting in his business, he felt it was important to help other transgendered and LGBTQ have the opportunity to do so.

This legislation creates the LGBTQ Business Enterprise program. It mirrors Baltimore's MBE/WBE and Small Business Enterprise programs. The logistics of this bill are as follows:

- MBOO would manage this program, as it does the MBE/WBE program and the Small Local Business Enterprise program, including certification, disparity study, and regulations.
- MBOO would conduct the baseline study to determine disparities to LGBTQ business, and then include LGBTQ business enterprises in subsequent disparity studies. The program to establish goals and procedures for the program cannot start until the study is completed to determine what those procurement goals should be.
- MBOO would also supply a report to the Mayor and City Council as they do for MBE/WBE and Small Business contracting.
- The appeals, waiver and certification requirements mirror those of the MBE/WBE and Small Local Business program.

In reading some of the agency reports, I wanted to address two items:

- In some other cities, the LGBTQ BE certification is done by the local LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce, instead of the process for MBE/WBE which is done by the city entity in charge of the program. This is an option we can explore to address the concerns in the Department of Finance's report.
- The Law Department asked us to consider moving the enactment date farther out. We are amenable to moving the enactment date.

We look forward to answering your questions about this process. I hope you will support this important legislation to help further justice and equity in our city.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Odette Ramos".

Odette Ramos
City Councilwoman, District 14

Appendices:

Appendix A: Executive Order from Mayor Catherine Pugh establishing the LGBTQ BE program in 2018

Appendix B: List of some cities that have LGBTQ BE programs