



March 23, 2021

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland LGBT Chamber of Commerce

Supporting COUNCIL BILL 21-0033 | Imari's Business Pride Act

A Bill to Include LGBT-Owned Businesses in Maryland Economic Opportunity Programs for Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individual

Gratitude is in order to Councilmembers Ramos, Burnett, Middleton, Dorsey, Cohen, Stokes, Glover for introducing Council Bill 21-0033, Imari's LGBTQ Procurement Preference Act. I am representing both the Maryland LGBT Chamber of Commerce as a Board Member as well as CEO of BRAC Consulting Group, LLC. A certified LGBTBE through the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, as well as a Maryland MBE/DBE/SBE.

As a company we understand the scrutiny that goes behind a certification. For this we are grateful as this means that only businesses that operate at the highest quality levels can be admitted. Albeit we are certified on State/Federal levels, there is still work to be done that will allow fair competition for LGBT businesses. For many years being my authentic self was not an option as this would immediately erase my merits in the professional space. Fear of rejection for simply being myself was crippling. The constant use of mental resources to not display any traits that would out me was exhausting. While I excelled in the corporate world, the constant anxiety that came from the use of those mental resources had taken away from giving it my all. Now I am proud to be diverse in every way, and I celebrate/champion everyone to bring their true selves to work.

Certifications obtained has allowed us to be a part of the conversation and have a seat at the table. As a leader, we are only as good as our team as our success is collective. One of my main motivators of starting a business was creating a space where EVERYONE can come be their authentic selves. Constraints of being/acting a certain way are gone. A happy, genuine, and appreciated employee will give 200%. Growth means you must not only create a space at the table but also pull up others behind you. Every one of us has appreciated someone thinking of us and helping us grow. This is another reason why making sure this bill is here to stay is to allow businesses like ours to not only obtain contracts, but just as important to create jobs for others that would otherwise not even be considered.

We do not seek to take away from any businesses, but to add to it by enriching its diversity through goals that are intentional with inclusion. We ask you to now be our champions and allies. We want to continue to add value to the powerful state of Maryland and amazing City of Baltimore, because we know we are greater together.



We ask that Baltimore city continue to be the progressive and equitable city we know it to be. Let's sign this into law and continue to be a city who is a leader in the Mid Atlantic. We ALL win when we have fair, equitable, equal, and unbiased opportunities.

Respectfully,



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