

**Althea Graves**  
**Councilwoman – Ward 12**

PROVIDENCE CITY HALL  
25 DORRANCE STREET, ROOM 310  
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903  
OFFICE: 401-521-7477  
AGRAVES@PROVIDENCERI.GOV



**PROVIDENCE**  
CITY COUNCIL

**COMMITTEES**

Committee on City Property, Member  
Committee on Finance, Member  
Committee on Urban Redevelopment,  
Renewal, and Planning, Member  
Housing Crisis Task Force, Member  
Special Committee on Legislative Affairs,  
Member

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
Chair, Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

February 13, 2026

Chairman Abney,

I am writing to you and your esteemed colleagues in support of HJR7597, the joint resolution authorizing an appropriation of \$200,000 to RIBBA.

From its founding 14 years ago, the Rhode Island Black Business Association, or RIBBA, has been entirely committed to advancing business opportunities for Black-owned and minority-owned businesses throughout Rhode Island. In its aim of reducing the racial wealth gap to the benefit of all Rhode Islanders, it offers services and programs available to all Rhode Islanders and has a membership including individuals of every conceivable background and businesses of all sizes. RIBBA has much to be proud of; over 6,000 businesses have been part of its outreach, 1,500 small business have been aided, \$1.9 million in capital has been secured through its partners, at least 215 workforce development program participants have been trained, and over 3,000 people are employed and empowered by its network of allied businesses. The holistic programs offered by RIBBA support rising entrepreneurs and experienced businesspeople alike.

Actions taken by the federal government in the prior year have been and continue to be detrimental to their financial footing. As programs are mainly supported by government grants, corporate grants, and public support, every dollar of funding RIBBA receives is directed to the mentorship, workforce development, entrepreneurship training, capital access, business development, contracting, and business advocacy so vital to its mission. RIBBA programs cannot and will not be able to continue without ongoing support to compensate for lost grant funds.

It is in support of RIBBA and in recognition of its remarkable work that I am writing to you expressing my strong support for HJR7597. As it is headquartered in my ward, RIBBA occupies a unique and valued place in my community, one that is deeply threatened by the funding shortfall created by cuts to federal supports. I urge you and your colleagues to grant your full support to RIBBA and its ongoing work to improve the welfare and wellbeing of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Althea Graves  
Councilwoman – Ward 12

**Providence City Council**

Providence City Hall, 25 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI 02903