

May 4, 2026

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Emilia DaSilva-Tavarez, and I am writing in strong support of H7597, which proposes an appropriation of \$200,000 to the Rhode Island Black Business Association (RIBBA).

I founded my single-member LLC in 2022, and RIBBA played a significant role in supporting me during the startup phase. Unfortunately, I had to step away from my business to care for my parents, both of whom have since passed. As I work toward reestablishing my business, I look forward to once again being both an active participant in and a beneficiary of RIBBA's services.

H7597 is a critical investment in Rhode Island's small business ecosystem. Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, and their success directly contributes to the overall strength and resilience of our state.

RIBBA has demonstrated measurable impact across Rhode Island:

- Reached over 6,000 small businesses, with more than 1,700 receiving direct development support
- Supported over 50 certified MWBEs, generating more than \$30 million in economic activity
- Helped clients secure over \$2.3 million in capital to sustain and grow their businesses
- Contributed to the creation of more than 3,000 jobs statewide
- Trained over 230 individuals, achieving a 98% graduation rate and preparing participants for higher-paying career opportunities

Through my own experience, I have seen firsthand the difference access to resources, guidance, and technical assistance can make. However, many small and micro businesses in Rhode Island are still working to move from survival to sustainability. Organizations like RIBBA are essential in helping businesses make that transition while strengthening our broader economic foundation.

Without targeted funding, RIBBA may be forced to reduce staff and scale back critical programs that serve vulnerable populations and emerging entrepreneurs. This would be a significant setback at a time when Rhode Island is working to expand economic opportunity and strengthen community-based support systems.

This appropriation is not simply funding—it is an investment in:

- Job creation
- Workforce development
- Economic mobility
- Stronger communities across Rhode Island

I respectfully urge you to support the passage of H7597 to ensure that RIBBA can continue delivering impactful services that drive economic growth and opportunity throughout our state.

Thank you for your consideration, your leadership, and your continued commitment to the people of Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Emilia DaSilva-Tavarez -80 Carleton Street/02908

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