

Shelley T. Peterson
Councilwoman – Ward 14

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PROVIDENCE
CITY COUNCIL

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Member
Committee on State Legislative Affairs, Member

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

March 11, 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 the Rhode Island Black Business Association, or RIBBA.

In the past 14 years, RIBBA has been entirely committed to advancing business opportunities for Black-owned and minority-owned businesses throughout Rhode Island. Working to reduce 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 spanning every conceivable background and businesses of all sizes. RIBBA has achieved much; 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 by its network of allied businesses. The holistic programs offered by RIBBA support rising entrepreneurs and experienced businesspeople alike.

Federal actions in the prior year have been and continue to be detrimental to their financial footing. As its programs are mainly supported by government grants, corporate grants, and public support, RIBBA directs every dollar of funding receives to the mentorship, workforce development, entrepreneurship training, capital access, business development, contracting, and business advocacy so vital to its mission. Those 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. Given its deep support for small businesses, 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,

Shelley T. Peterson
Councilwoman – Ward 14

Providence City Council

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