



DATE: March 1, 2021

TO: Chair Representative Anastasia Williams House Labor Committee
1st Vice Chair Mary Messier House Labor Committee
2nd Vice Chair Karen Alzate House Labor Committee

FROM: BETA Group, Inc.

RE: BETA Group, Inc. **OPPOSES House Bill 5717**
An Act Relating to Public Property and Works – Minority Business Enterprise eliminating women from qualification for MBEs.

Dear Chair Williams, First Vice Chair Messier and Second Vice Chair Alzate:

On behalf of The BETA Group, Inc. which employs 100 plus Rhode Island workers who provide engineering services to the State of Rhode Island, **we respectfully oppose House Bill 5717**. Historically, women owned businesses and engineering firms have faced roadblocks and barriers to entry which the current minority set asides have been enacted to address. Eliminating women in the definition of minority thereby excepting them from the protections of the minority set asides would have serious and adverse consequences for these businesses. The roadblock and barriers to entry for these women-owned business still exist and even with the minority set asides, it is still an uphill climb for most of these businesses. Particularly now, with the adverse economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, this legislation would deal a blow to Rhode Island women-owned businesses already struggling. As you are aware, Covid-19 has had a particularly adverse impact on women and their ability to remain in the workplace. This legislation would make this economic reality even worse.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of our concerns, and respectfully urge you not to move forward with House Bill 5717 or any legislation that would except out women from the definition of a minority for purposes of the current minority set asides. **We believe this legislation would jeopardize women-owned Rhode Island businesses with no benefit to the state of Rhode Island.**

Sincerely,

BETA Group, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marylou Armstrong", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Marylou Armstrong
Senior Vice President
Chair - BETA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) Committee