



Urban League of
Greater Madison



November 16, 2022

Dear Community Services Committee Members & Staff:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at last week's Community Services Committee, and for your thoughtful deliberations. As the Committee works towards finalizing its recommendations for the next **5-year** cycle of employment programming, we ask that you please reconsider the proposed funding allocations which **eliminate 100% of the funding** for the Construction Employment Initiative (CEI), an effective consortium model of programming with a strong track record of success.

We are writing in response to some of topics raised during the Committee's deliberations. These include factors related to geographic location of applicants, opportunity in construction, and most importantly—equity.

Geography. There were several comments made about geography factoring into the proposed funding allocations as an additional component to the scoring rubric. However, no explanation was given as to (a) if or how funding allocations based on scoring caused a geographic problem or (b) how the recommendations as presented achieved any sort of geographic improvement in services to the community. Moreover, we believe that many, if not most of the applications which were submitted would be programs that serve the entire city of Madison. This is certainly the case for the Construction Employment Initiative.

Construction Opportunities. Data was also presented inferring that construction was not a high demand sector. While construction may not have shown the fastest rate of growth in the table that was shown, the data did show **growth** in the construction industry of 10.2% during the period 2006-2019. Moreover, it is important to note that this time period included the great recession of 2008-2009, which hit the construction industry harder and longer than most industries. Current data from DWD shows that there are 1,743 construction jobs openings in the Madison region with an equivalent number expected annually through at least 2028. Moreover, median earnings for these jobs in the Madison region is currently \$29.47, which is \$5.71 above the national average (attributed in part to the labor shortage here). So, while other sectors may have a higher rate of growth, there are many family supporting careers available in the construction industry, and not enough people ready to fill them.

Racial Equity. We **applaud** the staff and committee's commitment to lean into racial equity. However, we believe the proposed funding allocations work against that goal, and we urge your consideration of what we believe are not equitable outcomes for underserved communities reflected in the proposed funding allocation.

First, the construction industry has long been a sector that has put up extra barriers to opportunities for people of color. It remains a complicated industry to enter. However, it is also one of the few industries with more relaxed criminal background requirements; it is one of the few industries that people can enter and make a family supporting, middle-class wage without a college degree; and likewise it is one of the few industries that allows individuals the opportunity to upskill on the job while being paid through the apprenticeship model.

The CEI partners have a proven track record of helping hundreds of low-income people of color prepare for and enter into good paying jobs in this industry. Given the Committee's expressed commitment to racial equity, we believe it is notable that the CEI partnership consists of one Black-founded/led organization and one Latinx founded/led organization. Yet, the sole construction related program recommended for **an increase** in funding is neither founded/led by a person/community of color nor is it a Madison-based organization.



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Second, by our analysis in the current year (2022) the City of Madison is allocating approximately \$779,000 to adult employment programs. The recommendations for 2023 and beyond decrease that amount to \$527,000. **This is a reduction of 32% in funding allocated to impactful programming for under-served adults.** Over the last two years, during the height of the pandemic, 169 low-income adults completed training and learned valuable skills and 140 secured good jobs after completing a CEI program. Over 80% of these individuals were persons of color. **Eliminating this program is not an equitable outcome for low-income, BIPOC adults in our community who are seeking a more stable economic situation for themselves and their families.**

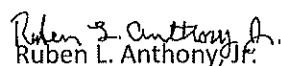
Likewise, we believe that the proposed funding allocations are diverting intended resources from the young adult/emerging adult population. We estimate that in 2022, approximately \$234,000 was allocated to employment programming for young adults/emerging adults. The Mayor directed an additional \$250,000 towards this population. **Thus, we would have expected to see at least \$484,000 in funding for young adult/emerging adult category. Instead, the proposed allocation contains only about \$364,000 for this population.** This does not seem to accomplish the goal that was identified by the Mayor to ensure MORE programming focused on employment outcomes for young/emerging adult population. We find this also to be an inequitable outcome for the young adult/emerging adult population.

As you can see, there was a significant shift in resources away from programs that (a) served adult and young/emerging adult populations (b) have a proven track record of providing actual job placement outcomes and (c) are delivered by BIPOC agencies for BIPOC populations. Instead, funds were shifted toward youth programming, much of which appears to be focused more so on career exploration and soft skills, rather than job placement outcomes that help stabilize and empower adults and families. The City of Madison, including the Community Development Division, has multiple other buckets of funding focused on youth programming. This is one of the only sources of funding available for programming aimed specifically at getting under-served adults and young adults prepared for and placed into good jobs.

Over the last two years, the CEI partnership has enrolled 204 individuals in training, maintained an 83% completion rate, placed 140 people (82%) into employment including 71% into jobs paying \$15 or more per hour, 42% into jobs paying \$17 or more per hour, and helped 54% of our participants increase their hourly wages by more than 20%. Over 80% these individuals were persons of color.

By eliminating 100% of the funding to the CEI program, over the next 5-year funding cycle, an estimated 500 mostly BIPOC members of our community will no longer have access to programming that can help them achieve good paying, stable careers. We urge you to consider this negative impact on your racial equity objectives and; restore adult funding levels to its 2022 level of \$779,000; ensure that the funding allocation to young adult/emerging adult programming grows by at least \$250,000 as directed by the Mayor for a total of at least \$484,000 in this category of programming; ensure programs that scored highly against the clearly defined rubric and more importantly that have a track record of delivering employment outcomes are maintained at or near their 2022 funding levels; and sustain your support of Madison-based, BIPOC-led organizations.

Sincerely,


Ruben L. Anthony, Jr.

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CC: Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, City of Madison Common Council Members