



MEDIA ADVISORY
For Immediate Release

Minority Business Owners in Alexandria Call on City Council to Stand Strong in the Face of “frivolous & politically charged” lawsuit

1/27/2023 - The [City of Alexandria’s Black Indigenous People of Color \(BIPOC\) Small Business Grant Program has been put on hiatus](#), following the recent lawsuit filed by Triventis, a fully white-owned engineering defense contractor based in Alexandria.

Alexandria’s BIPOC Small Business Program, which was designed to work with minority owned businesses that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to structural barriers and discriminatory financial lending practices, was created following an outflow of community input during the City’s review of their allocation of COVID relief funds to small businesses.

In the wake of this inequity, AMBA, the Alexandria Minority Business Association, formed and began meeting to discuss potential solutions. One of which, the BIPOC Small Business Program, was initiated by the Alexandria City Council. The program allocates a total of \$500,000 worth of grants, with the maximum amount an individual recipient could receive being \$7,000. For reference, the City of Alexandria’s overall budget for fiscal year 2023 was over \$1 billion. The \$500,000 allocated to the BIPOC Small Business Program constitutes less than 0.05% of the City’s budget.

When asked about the situation, Kevin Harris, the founder of AMBA, stated “The BIPOC Small Business Program was created as an initial step for Council to fix some of the inequities that took place during COVID-19, and address the financial and structural hardships that BIPOC businesses have faced due to systematic racism and disinvestment. “

“BIPOC-owned businesses are integral to our local community.” Harris continued. “We have to stop viewing grants towards BIPOC businesses as “giveaways”, but rather as the true investments that they are in the City’s intellectual and financial infrastructure. These investments will only make our city stronger, and pay dividends to the entire Alexandria community.”

AMBA has allied with the [Social Responsibility Group \(SRG\)](#) in this effort. SRG, led by Pastor Lou Whiting, advocates for the success of disenfranchised and marginalized residents in Alexandria and surrounding communities.

“SRG is deeply disappointed that our City now faces this legal challenge in its efforts to address the compelling governmental interests of diversity, equity, and inclusion for members of their constituency that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.” said Pastor Whiting. “Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential priorities for Alexandria and our entire nation. This lawsuit demonstrates our need for sustained action.”

Though the program was set to begin receiving grant applications on January 26th, Triventis’s suit, which was filed on January 22nd, has now put the entire program in limbo.

Contact:

Kevin Harris Email: kevinharris@myhooplif.com Phone: (571) 241-1486



The petitioner, Tridentis, is based in Alexandria and works primarily as a contractor building marine vehicles for the Navy and other sections of the Defense Department. [The Tridentis Board of Advisors, which consists entirely of white men](#), have donated [thousands of dollars to right wing politicians or PACs](#) (Political Action Committees), such as Donald Trump, Congressman Rob Wittman, and multiple far right Super PACs.

AMBA and SRG believe this is nothing more than an attempt at political theater; Political theater that comes at the expense of the Alexandria community.

“Tellingly, Tridentis has hired Consovoy McCarthy PLLC as their legal counsel for this suit.” said Harris. “I think that shows pretty clearly what their end-goal is.”

Consovoy McCarthy PLLC is known in political circles for being one of the most infamous fringe conservative law firms in the country over the last half decade, consistently representing far-right political figures or organizations. [Recently, Consovoy McCarthy represented multiple petitioners in attempts to overturn the legitimate results of the 2020 Presidential election \(dockets tab of link\)](#) Prior to this, Consovoy McCarthy has served as private legal counsel for much of Trump’s inner circle during his Presidency, directly representing President Trump, the Trump Organization, and three of the President’s children, including stonewalling the Elijah Cumming led efforts of the House Ways and Means Committee to audit President Trump's tax returns.

[Consovoy McCarthy are also currently representing the Students for Fair Admissions \(SFFA\) in their case against Harvard University at the United States Supreme Court.](#) If SFFA & Consovoy McCarthy were to win their suit, it would potentially end Affirmative Action throughout the country.

Consovoy McCarthy’s connection to this case has not gone unnoticed.

“I don’t see how this is anything other than an attempt to nationalize a local initiative to rile people up for political gain.” said Jeremy McClayton, the co-founder & owner of JS Consulting and Marketing, a political consulting firm based in Northern Virginia. “There are plenty of municipalities throughout the US that have similar programs to Alexandria’s BIPOC initiative. And, based on a cursory look, I’m not sure how Triventis could argue that they would be hurt by this program. They make autonomous naval ships that probably cost millions of dollars each to make. These grants top out at \$7,000. The math doesn’t add up.”

McClayton, who is white, surmised it bluntly.

“The City creating this grant for BIPOC businesses is a benefit for the entire community - There are thousands of funding opportunities that my business qualifies for that our friends and neighbors of color have historically been blocked from receiving. This isn’t about giving minority businesses a leg up, it’s about investing in BIPOC owned businesses whose impact will benefit the entire community.”

AMBA plans on releasing a sign on letter early next week for concerned community members to get involved in this process.

Contact:

Kevin Harris Email: kevinharris@myhoopliflife.com Phone: (571) 241-1486