

October 4, 2020

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
The John Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

I am Lafayette Barnes a Ward Eight resident who retired from the Government of the District of Columbia in 2017 and had formerly served as the Director of the Office of Partnerships and Grant Services (OPGS) in the Executive Office of the Mayor and an appointed Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of African Affairs. Today, I am presenting my written testimony in support of the passage of PR23-694, "Commission on the Arts and Humanities Dr. Heran Sereke-Drhan Confirmation Resolution of 2020" by the Committee of the Whole.

During my career with the Executive Office of the Mayor in the District government, I had the privilege of working closely with Dr. Heran Sereke-Drhan in her capacity as the Deputy Director of the Mayor's Office of African Affairs (MOAA), MOAA's liaison to the Commission on African Affairs, and as a Senior Grants Manager for MOAA and the Mayor's Commission on the Arts and Humanities. Since 2014, Heran and I have collaborated on numerous MOAA nonprofit capacity building and grant management initiatives that provided greater local government resources to strengthen community and program relations between the District government and its diverse and growing African and other immigrant communities.

Heran has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to fairness, sound fiscal and management practices, and professionalism in safeguarding the District government's ethic policies and procedures as well as its resources allocated to District residents and stakeholders.

She has successfully promoted and managed MOAA's:

- Annual City-wide African Heritage and Cultural Festival;
- President Obama's Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Initiative in collaboration with EOM staff and Howard University faculty;
- MOAA's annual Mandela Day of Service projects in Ward 8 and District neighborhoods;
- MOAA's 10th Anniversary event in 2016 at the historic Lincoln Theater where five community leaders received the Mayor's Award for Community Leadership; and
- MOAA's African Community Grantmaking Program for the District's diverse African Diaspora nonprofit service providers.

Heran has also graduated from OPGS' eight-week grant proposal writing training program and participated the office's draft of the DC City-wide Grants Management Manual. Her grant writing and management skills has enhanced her capacity to effectively manage MOAA's African Community Grantmaking Program as well as those related duties at the Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

Dr. Heran Sereke-Drhan has the commitment, vision, leadership, passion, and work ethic to enhance the District's diverse art and rich culture. Thus, I am confident that Dr. Heran Sereke-Drhan has the understanding and skill set to serve as the Mayor's Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities. This concludes my written testimony. I am available to answer additional questions that Members of the Committee of the Whole or you might have at this time.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear for the Committee.

Lafayette A Barnes

Ward 8 Resident