

The Honorable Speaker Robert DeLeo  
24 Beacon St, Room 356  
Boston, MA

August 5th, 2020

The Honorable Senator Karen Spilka, Senate President  
24 Beacon St, Room 332  
Boston, MA

The Honorable Secretary William Galvin  
24 Beacon St, Room 117  
Boston, MA

Dear Speaker DeLeo, Senate President Spilka, and Secretary Galvin:

We appreciate your attention to and leadership on the many issues our organizations have discussed with your respective offices in the past. Today, we are reaching out to urge you to turn that same attention to the critical issues within the State House that the staffers of Beacon B.L.O.C. (Building Leaders of Color) have elevated.

Several days ago, the Black staffers of Beacon B.L.O.C. sent an open letter detailing eight action steps to your offices. While we applaud the efforts taken thus far to respond to the concerns and experiences of this coalition, we call on you to coordinate a joint response, as well as investing time and energy in addressing the concerns of Beacon B.L.O.C. in preparation for the 2021-2022 legislative session.

Beacon B.L.O.C. was formed to provide a space for staffers of the Massachusetts State House – including the House of Representatives, State Senate, general court, and constitutional officers – to work collectively to dismantle racism within their workplace. Following the racially-motivated murders and botched investigations into the deaths of several Black and brown Americans, staffers came together with a desire to ensure that racism is driven out from all institutions, starting with the Massachusetts State House. The demands of the Black staffers of Beacon B.L.O.C. work to that end with the goal of fostering long lasting, meaningful civic engagement within communities of color statewide.

The collective of staffers who raised solutions to the issue of systemic racism within the State House are not alone in their experiences of marginalization. As advocates and organizations who spend a great deal of time in the State House ecosystem, our members and staff have also been impacted by the pervasiveness of the predominantly white institution. From being followed by DCR rangers, State troopers, and court officers during lobby days, to a consistent lack of linguistic diversity in signage, official communications and State House personnel and staff that have led our members to become lost losing precious advocacy time or have no ability to communicate with the legislators of interest –our own experiences demonstrate how far the State House is from being the People's House.

As elected officials, we know that a truly representative democracy is paramount to you and your members. However, representation does not end at the ballot box, and must be steeped in all aspects of engaging with the residents of the Commonwealth. To that end, as leaders within the State House we urge you to take the steps outlined by Beacon B.L.O.C to expand access and accountability to the State House, unlocking resident power that the Commonwealth has yet to harness.

Ensuring the State House is accessible for everyone means targeting those who have been on the margins for centuries – in part due to the laws passed by the former legislators and leaders of the Commonwealth. Presently, the State House stands as a beacon of power. Leadership positions and influential policy roles are mostly held by white legislators and staffers, providing a narrow opportunity for legislators and staffers of color to push for change on a multitude of fronts. Our hope is that by working with Beacon B.L.O.C., this institution can meet its reputation as a symbol and tool for expanding justice.

The legitimacy of the efforts of the Legislature and Secretary of the Commonwealth to address the needs and concerns of residents of color can only be fortified by making change to the processes within the People's House in the immediate future. We look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,



Jetpac



Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice



One Fair Wage



Black Economic Council Of Massachusetts



Black & Pink Boston



More Than Words



Young Abolitionists



Coalition for Social Justice



Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Coalition



Urban League of Eastern MA, Young Professionals Network



PHENOM



Health Resources in Action



Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless



Massachusetts Voter Table



Massachusetts Community Action Network



Community Action Agency of Somerville



Worcester Interfaith



Asian-American Women's Political Initiative



Community Action Works



Massachusetts Public Health Association



UFCW Local 1445



New Leaders Council



RIAN Immigrant Center



Massachusetts Food System Collaborative



Sierra Club Massachusetts



Progressive Massachusetts



Emvision Productions



SEIU Local 509



Raise Up Massachusetts



The Food Bank of Western MA



City Life / Vida Urbana



Massachusetts Teachers' Association.



Allston Brighton Health Collaborative



Brazilian Women's Group



Massachusetts Jobs with Justice



Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance



One Family



Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action



Educators for Excellence, Boston



SEIU Local 1199



Unitarian Universalist Massachusetts Action