



ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC.

NU XI ZETA CHAPTER

SERVING ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

P.O. Box 25961, Alexandria, VA 22313

“Celebrating 25 years of building stronger families and stronger communities”

December 9, 2011

Dear Alexandria City Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Alexandria, Virginia Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. As you begin planning for the 2012 General Assembly, we would like to share our thoughts on your 2012 legislative program.

Of particular interest to the chapter are the following:

- HIV/AIDS Funding
- Increased Flexibility for Unused Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) Funds
- Supplier Diversity in Contracting

HIV/AIDS Funding

We are pleased to see the City advocating for more funding for the Virginia AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). In the past, our Chapter has participated in a number of efforts to build awareness and provide funding for HIV/AIDS initiatives. In 2009, the Chapter joined the local Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. as a proud sponsor of AIDS Walk Washington benefiting the HIV/AIDS programs of Whitman-Walker Clinic. AIDS Walk Washington is a 5K walk that generates much needed funding for HIV-positive individuals living in the Northern Virginia area. In 2011, our Chapter began volunteering with the Northern Virginia Clergy Council for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS in their partnership with the Fairfax County Health Department. Through this partnership, we collaborated with the African-American churches to actively involve the faith community in taking action toward stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Increased Flexibility for Unused Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) Funds

Our Chapter supports any effort that would allow for an increase in VPI funds to be made available to the City of Alexandria. Education and youth have become a major focus for the Chapter. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, well-designed preschool education programs produce long-term improvements in school success, including higher achievement test scores, lower rates of grade repetition and special education, and higher educational attainment.

Annually, our Chapter participates in the National Educational Association's Read Across America, an annual reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on March 2nd, the birthday of beloved children's author Dr. Seuss. The event is a great way to bring together community leaders to read to children. This year over 60 children and their parents participated in group readings led by community and political leaders, and educational games and activities.

Supplier Diversity in Contracting

We applaud the City's dedication and support to supplier diversity in state government contracts. A 2004 Procurement Disparity Study of the Commonwealth of Virginia revealed huge disparities in minority-owned business utilization in the state procurement process. For example, in the 2004 study, minority and women business enterprise (M/WBE) construction subcontractors won \$818,053, 1.07 percent of the total; M/WBE won prime construction contracts for \$12.4 million, 1.49 percent of the total. We hope Virginia is able to model Alexandria's commitment to pursuing a procurement landscape that is more representative of the diversity of the business community.

I also want to shed light on another issue of great importance to our organization – restoration of voting rights for citizens with felony convictions in Virginia.

Currently, it is estimated that 378,000 citizens in Virginia are barred from voting. Virginia is one of only two states that permanently disenfranchises individuals with felony convictions, leaving it to the Governor to restore those voting rights to an individual. Today, thirty-seven states restore voting rights to former felons upon release from incarceration, and completion of parole or probation. Two states – Maine and Vermont – never revoke the voting rights of its citizens.

We also urge the Council to protect the voting rights of all Virginians. States across the country are passing measures impeding voting including reducing the number of early voting days and instituting tougher laws on collecting voter registrations.

I urge you to support legislation to reform Virginia's felon disenfranchisement laws and protect against the erosion of voting rights in Virginia.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. is a community-conscious, action-oriented organization committed to effectively and compassionately meeting the needs of the communities it serves. Our Chapter focuses on empowering leaders to make an impact on vulnerable communities in Alexandria and Arlington through the March of Dimes, Read Across America, civic empowerment activities and by providing direct community support to various organizations including ALIVE! Inc. and Community Lodgings. The members of the Alexandria, Virginia Chapter are committed to improving the quality of life in our local communities, while embracing the transitions needed to meet the new challenges. For more information, visit www.nuxizeta.org.

Sincerely,



Krysta Jones, President
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
Nu Xi Zeta Chapter