

Maricela Ehmann
55 Telefon Trail
Killington, Vermont 05751

Wednesday, March 3rd, 2021

[Subject: Bill H.336 - An act relating to promoting economic opportunity for BIPOC-owned businesses]

Dear members of the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development:

I'm the owner of an event services company in Rutland county, the Board President of a Vermont-based nonprofit organization, and a woman of color who would like to see new BIPOC business owners flourish in this State. I would like to encourage you strongly to support the Bill H.336, An act relating to promoting economic opportunity for BIPOC-owned businesses as sponsored by Representative Coffey and Representative Mrowicki. I cannot stress enough the importance of perspicuous access to business development programs which include technical assistance and access to capital specifically tailored to BIPOC residents of Vermont. Existing and new BIPOC business owners have the potential to not only thrive in the state but also create many new job opportunities which will contribute to the local economy.

Consider as an example the wedding and event industry in Vermont. The industry is composed of a variety of small businesses who are supported by many other local industries. If we have the opportunity to diversify our workforce and increase the visibility of BIPOC vendors in Vermont, you will effectively increase the number of BIPOC individuals looking to host events in the State. Additionally, you will see an increase in the indirect spending of the guests in conjunction with such events. This is especially vital as the industry recovers from the fallout of the pandemic and prepares for an event and travel "boom".

Technical support needs to be clear and accessible for BIPOC sole proprietors, BIPOC-owned small to medium sized businesses and start up business. This is especially important in creative industries due to many individuals with great ideas and talent may not have the experience in HR, finance, marketing or business legality to provide them with a stable foundation.

Personally, I did have the business and HR background to support the development of my business, but it was clouded by the struggles I went through to fully understand the differences of certain aspects of business registration and tax fillings which are specific to Vermont. Some of those issues were not obvious until my business grew exponentially and the need to hire additional staff arose.

I know time is limited to vote bill H.336 out of committee, and hearing testimony from BIPOC business owners may not be an option at this time. As an advocate for growth, diversity and inclusion in my industry, I have heard the struggles other BIPOC business owners faced, and I seek to change the narrative. I urge you to do the same and ask you to consider the impact of supporting Vermont's BIPOC business owners and potential owners would have on our overall economy.

Thank you for your consideration and the work you do on behalf of the residents of this State.

Best regards,



Maricela Ehmann
(802) 422-4160
maricela@ehmannevents.com