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**PRIDE CENTER OF MARYLAND (PCOM) APPEAL LETTER TO  
Baltimore City's Mayor Office Board of Estimates ("BOE")**

Date: March 27, 2024

Attention:

Council President Nick Mosby  
Mayor Brandon M. Scott  
Comptroller Bill Henry  
City Solicitor Ebony Thompson  
Acting Director of DPW Richard Luna  
100 N. Holiday Street Room 204  
Baltimore, MD 21202

From:

Dr. Cleo Manago, CEO  
The Pride Center of Maryland  
2418 Saint Paul Street  
Baltimore, MD 21218

Subject: Protest to Notice of Termination RE: Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs (MORP) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant

To Whom It May Concern:

I am hereby writing this appeal letter to request the Baltimore City's Mayor Office Board of Estimates ("BOE") to reconsider the termination of the Pride Center of Maryland's Violence Intervention Program ("VIP") contractual Grant Agreement #442226 with the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs.

I am writing to respectfully protest the decision to terminate Grant Agreement #442226, effective March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024. and believe that a reconsideration of the termination decision would be fair and just.

I understand that the decision by the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs ("MORP") recommending to the Board of Estimates of Baltimore City ("BOE") to terminate the aforementioned agreement was made due to the purported material failure to comply with Federal statutes, regulations or terms and conditions of the Federal award as described in the Notice of Termination for Cause hereby given because PCOM has failed to cure the defaults cited in the Notice of Default dated January 19, 2024, specifically:

A. PCOM has failed to provide sufficient documentation to demonstrate that the cumulative number of participants who showed an increased knowledge of intimate partner violence ("IPV") was near or equal to the number of participants reported to the Recovery Office.

B. PCOM has failed to provide a response and documentation in a timely manner that demonstrates it has not duplicated ARPA SLFRF benefits provided by the Recovery Office with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement ("MONSE") or the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services ("MOHS"). However, I would like to offer additional context and information that I believe were not fully considered during the decision-making process.

First and foremost, I want to express my commitment to the success and mission of The Pride Center of Maryland. During my tenure as Chief Executive Officer, our organization has served Baltimore City communities and surrounding areas through education, advocacy, and support for individuals, families, and allies through health and wellness empowerment. While I acknowledge the challenges that led to the termination decision, I firmly believe that with the right support and guidance, we can address and rectify these issues effectively.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight certain circumstances that might not have been taken into account during this decision-making process.

In a Monitoring Report and a Request for Information Letter provided to PCOM on November 17, 2023, the Recovery Office notified PCOM of reporting deficiencies in the required documentation PCOM submitted to validate the reported performance measures for the Project. PCOM is required to report on the following performance measurements as funded under the above-mentioned agreement which include the following:

- (1) (Required by Treasury) Cumulative number of workers enrolled in sectoral job training programs;
- (2) (Required by Treasury) Cumulative number of workers completing sectoral job training programs;
- (3) (Required by Treasury) Cumulative number of people participating in summer youth employment programs;
- (4) Cumulative number of individuals who identify as sexual and gendered minorities served;
- (5) Cumulative number of individuals who identifies as Black served;
- (6) Cumulative number of individuals recruited into our membership and services program;
- (7) Cumulative number of members enrolled into the VIP program over the lifetime of the grant;
- (8) Cumulative number of members enrolled into a sectional job training program;
- (9) Cumulative number of clients assisted with housing placement due to violence;
- (10) Cumulative number of clients enrolled into wrap around case management services;
- (11) Cumulative number of clients enrolled into conflict mediation services;
- (12) Cumulative number of trainings held; and
- (13) Cumulative number of participants who shown increase knowledge of intimate partner violence (“IPV”).

On December 14<sup>th</sup> and December 26<sup>th</sup>, PCOM responded to the Request for Information providing supporting documentation to reflect performance measures 1 through 10 and 12 mentioned above. Additionally as requested by MORP, a comprehensive Corrective Action Plan was completed to demonstrate PCOM’s level of commitment to comply within the reporting guidelines as written in the original grant agreement between both entities. In the Corrective Action Plan, PCOM addressed various challenges within the organization due to the transition in personnel and management. An internal Compliance Review Team was implemented to ensure and verify the provided data supported with documentation to meet reporting guidelines, provide additional training and educational opportunities, and introduce hiring and retention strategies to address gaps in reporting program metrics. The Compliance and Review team established and executed an evaluation process to improve the timeliness, completeness, consistency, accuracy, usefulness, and availability of internal program reporting tools and spreadsheets moving forward.

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Furthermore, the course of action was implemented immediately following the request to ensure that the quality performance of the organization's services would reflect in our reporting to MORP moving forward including an improved internal data management system and process, hiring of new staff, and trainings held to support program staffing needs. MORP failed to provide any additional feedback to PCOM on the data provided as requested by the agency. PCOM continued to provide services for the Violence Intervention Prevention project, and submit all online reports to MORP in a timely and efficient manner.

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 MORP cited a Notice of Default letter to PCOM due to the failure to collect and submit required documentation in a timely manner to validate reported performance data for the Project. In response to the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs Notice of Default regarding The Pride Center of Maryland's Violence Intervention Project (VIP) cited January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024, PCOM provided MORP with a comprehensive list of requested supporting documentation to corroborate program efforts including 1. Trainings Held, 2. Conflict Mediation Services, and Summer Youth Employment data. PCOM provided a comprehensive list outlining training sessions conducted by PCOM and in collaboration with community partners. The supportive documents submitted included an Excel spreadsheet that detailed each training session. The data provided identified the trainer, the number of individuals trained, and the frequency and duration of each training course. Additionally, original scanned copies of pre and post-tests completed before and after VIP training sessions, case notes of interactions between clients and para-professional mediators, and a list of attendees who successfully completed the Summer Youth Employment program.

I believe that these factors shed additional light on the situation and present a more comprehensive view of PCOM's concerted efforts to report performance and contributions to the federally funded project. We at PCOM understand the significance of managing and collecting required performance metrics for grant funded programs. I assure you that we are dedicated to learning from this experience and making the necessary changes to become a more effective and valuable recipient of this project, and continued partner with the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs.

I kindly request an opportunity to present and discuss my appeal further. We are open to any guidance, feedback, or conditions that would allow our organization to continue to demonstrate our commitment to continue to serve Baltimore City community members who benefit from PCOM's VIP services and trainings.

Thank you for your consideration to appeal the requested termination of agreement. I am hopeful that a reconsideration of the termination decision will allow PCOM to continue to provide services under the Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cleo Manago



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Dr. Cleo Manago, Chief Executive Officer