

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 12, 2018

Mr. Gerald Shanklin
Administration for Children and Families
OCS Grants Operations Center
1401 Mercantile Lane, Suite 401
Largo, Maryland 20774

Dear Mr. Shanklin:

I am pleased to support the application of the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC)'s *Sherman Phoenix Support Project* to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services – Office of Community Services (OCS). The *Sherman Phoenix Support Project* will create 52 new full-time, full year jobs, of which 75 percent will be taken and held by low-income individuals in a Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) designated by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The WWBIC is a leading innovative statewide economic development corporation "Putting Dreams to Work" since 1987. WWBIC provides those who want to start, strengthen or expand businesses with access to quality business education and responsible financial products. WWBIC helps low-income individuals improve economic well-being by building assets and advancing economic self-sufficiency, with a focus on women minorities, and low-income individuals. WWBIC has extensive expertise in both urban and rural business development and ready loan funds.

The *Sherman Phoenix Support Project* site is located in a census tract (94% minority, 89% African American) with unemployment and poverty rates more than twice that of state and national rates. It was the epicenter of Milwaukee's Sherman Park Neighborhood civil unrest and riots in August 2016, sparked by the fatal police shooting of a 23-year old black man. Four people were injured and several neighborhood businesses were burned causing \$6 million in damage. News reports - and Milwaukee residents - connected the riots to the City's history of segregation and discrimination. The *Sherman Phoenix Project* will transform the vacant, fire-damaged BMO Harris Bank building into a high-quality community gathering place offering prepared foods, wellness services, and arts and cultural activities, with commercial space for 20 small entrepreneurs. With a fall 2018 completion target, Sherman Phoenix will be a model for healing our city, generating positive economic and social returns in communities of color. WWBIC will use a portion of the award funds to assist Sherman Phoenix in closing its funding gap of \$500,000 (it has already raised \$3.5 million for the \$4 million project). With the remaining funds, WWBIC will provide business and financial education and one-on-one technical assistance to the Sherman Park tenant entrepreneurs and in surrounding areas. Sherman Phoenix is located within the Transform Milwaukee area, a public-private, state-led economic development focus area, and in a Choice Neighborhood.

I strongly support efforts aimed at spurring economic development and providing opportunities for upward income mobility in Wisconsin's rural communities and HUBZones. For this reason, I respectfully request that full and fair consideration be given to the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation's application. Please keep Jessica Sielaff in my Madison office updated on the progress of this application and contact her should you have further questions or concerns. She may be reached at 30 West Mifflin Street, Suite 700, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, by phone at 608-264-5338, or by email at projects_grants@baldwin.senate.gov. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator