

*MARCC Statement in Response to NAACP/BMC Protest and Arrests over CPS
Minority Contracting Issue*

Cincinnati Public Schools formed a Supplier Diversity Division eight years ago. This two person office was responsible for tracking the number of minority contractors hired by CPS within the framework of their Facilities Master Plan. Some of those minority contractors and sub-contractors provided supplies and materials while others trade skills for the renovation to current school buildings and the construction of new school buildings. As the building plan progressed and more sites came on line the responsibilities for the implementation of Supplier Diversity increased while the number of staff remained the same.

The NAACP discovered three months ago that mistakes were made in the recording of the number of minority contractors hired for construction work in Cincinnati Public Schools. It was a human error no school personnel or School Board members caught. Since that time CPS has assigned an outreach professional to work with staff and construction firms to insure minority contractors are involved in the bidding process. It has requested and received a Community Labor Project Agreement that includes a plan to hire a diverse construction workforce now and in the future. MARCC supports the Agreement and is prepared to work for its success. Also, an audit is being conducted at the request of CPS to review all construction contracts to retrieve an exact count of minority contractors and sub-contractors hired from the beginning of the implementation of the Facilities Master Plan. This is a time consuming process to make sure the community gets it right.

The response from both the Baptist Ministers Conference and the NAACP has been one of anger and frustration with a desire to make things right. BMC wants to see minority contractors on school sites getting the job done and improving the financial stability of minority families. The NAACP wants minority contractors to reap the same rewards as other contractors. Both groups have acted on their beliefs. The issue is real. We urge CPS to continue taking steps to correct its mistakes.

We as a community need transparency to re-build trust in the fact finding and resolution process over this issue as all parties play their role in rectifying the problem. There have been and will be challenges for all of us to overcome in order for this conflict to bear fruit. Now is the time to act as one community with persistence, civility and respect for each other and peacefully seek a workable solution to this economic inequity.

*The Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati
(MARCC is an interfaith coalition made up of 17 Denominations, working
together on social concerns to improve the quality of life in Metropolitan
Cincinnati.)*

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