

EXHIBIT D

From: Clifthorne, Sarah (COM) <sarah.clifthorne@commerce.wa.gov>

Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 10:30 AM

To: Nobles, T'wina (LEG) <T'wina.Nobles@leg.wa.gov>;

Cc: Latterell, Maxine (LEG) <maxine.latterell@leg.wa.gov>;

Subject: RE: Procurement Integrity Analysis - Charles Mitchell and George Washington Bush Study on Reparative Action

Dear Senator Nobles and Melannie Cunningham,

Thank you for the chance to respond. As stewards of public funds and trust, Commerce has policies and procedures in place to ensure funding opportunities are awarded in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner meeting the highest standards of practice to improve equity in outcomes for communities.

Dr. Hunter/Doctor Blackness Enterprises LLC was not selected for funding because another application received a higher average score. Commerce received a protest from Dr. Hunter and our compliance and contracting officer responded (attached since her response addressed points Ms. Cunningham also raised). Our compliance and contracting officer did not find any term or policy with which Commerce did not comply, nor error in computing scores, nor basis of discrimination, bias, or conflict of interest.

That scoring team was led by Joseph Todd, who is also the Chair of the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs. **Commerce worked closely with Chair Todd and the Commission throughout the RFP process, as required by the proviso.**

Here are responses to specific concerns Ms. Cunningham raised in her attachment:

1. Commerce aims to use the most effective ways to get our competitive grant solicitations to potential grantees. Commerce's central location for posting grant funding opportunities is the Commerce website. We also emailed this solicitation to more than 100 local groups as well as reparations researchers around the country **and emailed this** through the GovDelivery email platform. WEBS is primarily the platform that DES hosts for public agencies to solicit for businesses to sell *goods and services* to state agencies.
2. As we shared with Dr. Hunter, a malicious URL was included in his proposal email which blocked the email from reaching Commerce. Under state IT security protocols, it instead went to WaTech for review. We are grateful that Dr. Hunter reached out to check in on his proposal, **because we were able to immediately pause the competitive process before an apparent successful bidder was announced.** The same panel of reviewers that read the other

applications fully reviewed and scored his application using the same criteria as all other proposals.

3. Dr. Hunter received notification on November 18, 2025, that his proposal was not selected for the award, and in full compliance with the RFP instructions and relevant policies, he was instructed that he was welcome to request a debrief in writing within 3 business days of that notice. **Commerce received a request for debrief on December 3, 2025, which was well past the deadline.** We did offer a courtesy debrief even though the request was not submitted within the timeframe outlined in both the RFP and the email. The allowable content we can address during a debrief is outlined in the RFP, and Commerce provided the allowable feedback. We also responded to Dr. Hunter's protest resulting from that debrief (attached).

4. **We can confirm that the successful bidder's proposal met the minimum qualifications to be considered for this grant** and also received the highest score among the three applicants. That firm, [Truclusion, presented their workplan to the Commission on African American Affairs last Friday.](#)

We look forward to working with the Commission and legislative, local government, and community partners on supporting this vital project.

Sincerely,

Sarah Clifthorne | INTERIM DIRECTOR
Washington State Department of Commerce
Cell: 360.789.1275

My work hours may not look like yours, but there's no expectation for you to read or respond outside of your regular schedule. Email communications with state employees are public records and may be subject to disclosure, pursuant to Ch. 42.56 RCW.