

NICK CHARLES  
Legislative District 25  
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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB673: State Procurement - Small and Minority Business Reserve Program (Parren J. Mitchell MBE Prime Contracting Act)**

Favorable

Good Afternoon Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

For the record, my name is Senator Nick Charles. As you may know, I have been working for years in the House and now have the privilege to work in the Senate on behalf of improving our State's procurement system. SB673 is a cross-file of HB962, which will be heard in the Health and Government Operations Committee in the House. I urge a favorable report on this important piece of legislation that will help address historical disparities and barriers faced by minority-owned businesses and aid in moving our Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) toward renewed success.

It is serendipitous that this Bill will be heard during Black History Month, as it seeks to honor the remarkable legacy of Parren James Mitchell. In 1950, the Honorable Mitchell sued the University of Maryland for admission into their, then, segregated University and backed by the NAACP, won admission and was the first Black man to graduate from the school; however, that was just the first time he made history. He utilized his education and became the first African American elected to Congress from Maryland in 1971. Parren J. Mitchell was one of the founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus and immediately became an active Member, utilizing his voice and perspective. In his capacity as Chair of the Small Business Committee, Congressman Mitchell submitted an amendment to a \$4 billion piece of public works legislation, mandating state and local governments pursuing federal grants to allocate **10%** of the funds to retain minority-owned firms as both contractors and subcontractors.

Fast forward to 2024, and I respectfully ask you to consider- what better way to honor the legacy of Congressman Parren J. Mitchell than by passing this legislation? SB673 renames the Small Business Reserve (SBR) Program to be the Small and Minority Business Reserve Program, reflecting a commitment to promoting MBEs within the State procurement process. Additionally, and most notably, the Bill requires State agencies to set-aside **10%** of their procurements specifically for Certified MBEs and Veteran Owned Small Business Enterprises. It is a critical piece of legislation to increase the prime contracting procurement opportunities for MBEs and moves Maryland toward its 29% MBE Aspirational participation goal, *which the State has consistently failed to meet.*

I urge a favorable report. Thank you,

Senator Nick Charles

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nick Charles".