

**Appendix A**

Attorney General Karl Racine  
441 4th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

May 1, 2019

Dear Attorney General Racine,

We are Congress Heights (Ward 8) District of Columbia residents and homeowners who are concerned that a great opportunity for our community will soon be lost. We are speaking of the Congress Heights Metro project planned to take place at Alabama and 13th St. SE, known as the “CityPartners 5914” project. We are urging you to immediately help support this project, to bring jobs, stores, restaurants, safety and affordable housing to Congress Heights, on top of a busy Metro station. This project has wide community support, but there are ten former residents fighting to stop it. These residents suffered under intolerable living conditions at the hand of the previous landlord. The previous landlord, Sanford Capital, has since been kicked out of the District, thanks to your efforts. The new owner, CityPartners, is a respected local developer that is offering each of the former tenants \$100,000, new apartments at their current rental rates, and asking the tenants to collaborate as owners in the development. These Tenants are unfortunately displacing their rightful anger against the old landlord onto the new owner and developer. Congress Heights can become the model of responsible development if you can help squash this beef! When CityPartners bought out Sanford Capital, they inherited this legal dispute. And now the Tenants and CityPartners have been locked in court for the past year as the buildings sit unoccupied. The buildings are abandoned after a fire several months ago. The dispute is over TOPA rights and what comes next for this development. For their TOPA rights, CityPartners has offered the Tenants:

- \$100,000 per household
- To pay the taxes on the \$100,000 (approximately worth another 10K).
- The Tenants can return to the new complex, once built, at the same monthly rent as before
- The opportunity to invest a portion of their buyout in the new building
- Financial advisors to help manage the \$100,000
- Pay for all associated moving expenses

The new complex would have even more affordable housing units than were originally there, with hundreds of market-rate apartments as well. This new shopping and commercial center at Congress Heights would improve many residents’ lives and not displace anyone, because everyone who used to live there is being offered a new apartment to move into once the new building is built, and there will be many other affordable units. We also understand that there will be retail space offered specifically to

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Ward 8 businesses at discounted rates. This is good for the Tenants, Ward 8 businesses, and the Congress Height neighborhood and community.

We are also aware of the broader concerns with gentrification in Congress Heights. But we believe that making coffee shops, restaurants, and new neighbors the enemy is not the answer. This project will create hundreds of brand new apartments for low income families, and give the neighborhood walkable businesses and dining on this side of the river. Ward 8 is a retail desert and has limited grocery stores, this project would help change that. It will also help to increase the safety near the metro which everyone benefits from. Our fear is that due to the controversy of Sanford Capital and the many lawsuits, this opportunity will be spoiled for our neighborhood. What is the alternative, the Tenants refuse the \$100,000, the project falls apart, and we are left with abandoned buildings for another five, maybe ten years as it gets sorted out in court? No One Wins. Let's get smart, there is a middle ground that will help the community and Tenants. And everyone can win. We as homeowners in Congress Heights are invested in building up our community. We value the diversity and the potential that Congress Heights has to offer. We don't want the residents of Congress Heights to lose out on a great opportunity. Several of us have also emailed city officials about this project, but have yet to hear back from them. We are not sure why no one has responded to our concerns. We also have passed a petition around the neighborhood in support of this project and to date have received over 30 signatures. We need the City to help facilitate a conversation, enough with the courts. We believe that people of good will are on both sides of this debate and should come together to reach an agreement so we can all benefit.