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September 17, 2026

Economic Development Committee
Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: Support for the Erie County Small Business Enterprise Utilization Act

Dear Chairwoman, Vice-Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee:

The Western New York Law Center (WNYLC) is a non-profit legal services organization in Buffalo, New York that has been providing free legal services to small business owners through our Small Business Legal Clinic (SBLC) since 2017. We provide free legal services to hundreds of Erie County small business owners each year. We have seen first-hand how many small businesses have been unable to participate in Erie County's procurement processes.

WNYLC strongly supports Chairwoman St. Jean Tard's proposed legislation to create pathways for small businesses to secure more Erie County contracts. This legislation will remove barriers that many small business owners currently face when accessing County procurements of goods, commodities and professional services, thereby setting them up for success, and will drive local economic growth, improve the quality of life for Erie County residents, and positively impact our thriving small business community.

Small businesses are the backbone of the local economy. Historically, over 100 business certificates are filed in Erie County every week, which means that approximately 6,000 small businesses are formed in the county every year. Small businesses are local businesses that shape the landscape of our community and neighborhoods.

Successful businesses in Erie County i) produce goods and services that community members want and are willing to pay for; ii) keep local dollars in the economy; iii) create jobs; and iv) generate tax revenue. Successful businesses also provide socioeconomic mobility and can help break cycles of poverty in Erie County's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Through business ownership, hardworking people can achieve economic self-sufficiency for their families. Successful businesses strengthen neighborhoods by creating jobs, providing goods and services, and boosting property value.

We support Erie County's continued commitment to our small business community. We respectfully urge the Economic Development Committee to support this legislation that prioritizes engagement with small and locally owned businesses that are often unrepresented in government procurement.

If you require any further information, please contact me at 716-855-0203 ext. 133 or via email at nkarambelkar@wnylc.net. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Neha M. Karambelkar

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