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April 24, 2021

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on THUD

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on THUD

Dear Chair Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart,

I am requesting \$573,014 under the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Economic Development Initiative (EDI) program for the City of Tucson's Dunbar Pavilion and Dunbar School Arts and Culture Revitalization Initiative in fiscal year 2022.

The Dunbar Pavilion consists of two structures, the first being the original Paul Laurence Dunbar School built in 1918 and the second the John Spring Jr. High school built as an addition in 1948. The Paul Laurence Dunbar repurposed school is on the National Register of Historic Places and holds social and cultural significance as the only segregated school in Tucson, in an area of overt bigotry and discrimination as an educational facility for Tucson's Black children in grades 1-8. The school operated as such until 1951, when the State of Arizona ended codified segregation in its schools.

The facility now operates as a space for artists, educators, entrepreneurs and cultural activists interested in elevating and centering the accomplishments of African Americans in Tucson and Southern Arizona. The full vision for the Dunbar School is to be a convening and incubator space- promoting entrepreneurship, education, health and wellness, civic engagement, and arts and culture. Because the school was built on a philosophy of divisiveness and ignorance, we seek to reverse the effect of segregation by keeping the building open to all and creating a hub to learn about Black history and culture in Tucson and Southern Arizona

The funding will be used to provide an outdoor meeting and performance space/amphitheater as well as universal access and rehabilitation of the Paul Laurence Dunbar School. The project includes providing access to information that accurately tells the story of Black people in Tucson and Southern Arizona by preserving and celebrating the rich cultural history and future of people of African descent. The space will foster economic development initiatives by having rooms that can serve as permanent and semi-permanent office and retail space.

The project can obligate all appropriated funds within 12 months after enactment and it is “shovel ready”. The architectural, engineering work, full cost estimate, and environmental review are all complete. The City of Tucson has committed \$150,000 of Community Development Block Grant funds to other components of the larger Dunbar Rehabilitation Project, none of which are associated with this specific project. The project has broad community support and is located in a predominantly low-income area.

The project is a priority because the building is over 100 years old. This is a valuable use of taxpayer funds because without proactive measures to activate unused spaces and strengthen the integrity of the building, we are at risk of losing Tucson’s only tangible testament to the resiliency, history and future of Black people in our community. In a time where inequities in support for communities of color continue to persist, this will foster needed economic and cultural growth.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'R' at the beginning.

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress