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Maryland PSC Celebrates Utility Supplier Diversity *Annual hearing honors late Commissioner Harold Williams*

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(BALTIMORE, MD) – The Maryland Public Service Commission held its annual conference today for utility companies to report on their contracts with diverse suppliers. The proceeding reviewed the 2023 diverse supplier procurements, totaling more than \$2.2 billion (or 40.7%)—a milestone achievement—by participating companies, which include electricity, natural gas, water, transportation and telecommunication providers. Topping the list was Verizon Maryland with a reported total diverse spend of \$550 million, or 50.7%.

The Supplier Diversity Program is a voluntary program in which companies strive to award 25 percent of their total procurement spend to minority-, women-, veteran- (including service-disabled veteran), LGBTQ-owned, and non-profit businesses. This year is also the first year in which companies reported on their spending with businesses in HUB-zones, historically underutilized business zones, as designated by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Overall, the utility companies reported total procurement spending of nearly \$5.5 billion on all goods and services in 2023.

The Commission's annual conference has been renamed the 'Commissioner Harold Williams Supplier Diversity Conference' in honor of the former commissioner and champion of the Commission's supplier diversity program. Commissioner Williams passed away in 2022, after having retired a few years earlier. This year's hearing also had a specific focus on remembering his legacy and impact to supplier diversity programs both in Maryland and across the country.

Commissioner Williams was a keystone in Maryland for ensuring equity in business practices and was instrumental in structuring minority and women business programs both locally and nationally. He previously served as the Chairman of the MD/DC Minority Supplier Development Council, was a board member of the National Minority Supplier Development Council, a member of the Department of Energy's Minority Business Roundtable Committee and is especially remembered for his advocacy of utility supplier diversity.

In his time at the Commission, Commissioner Williams was pivotal in establishing and revamping the Commission's Supplier Diversity program, helped to oversee the program, organized the annual conference, and propelled utilities to achieve their supplier diversity goals.

This year's hearing also included the signing of a new, uniform memorandum of understanding (MOU) by applicable companies and the Commission for the program moving forward. Utilities, elected officials, former Commissioner Obi Linton, advocates and contractors shared memories of Commissioner Williams, celebrated program achievements, shared best practices and lessons learned, as well as discussed innovative ways to reach diversity goals. The Commission will issue its public determination by late summer.

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About the Public Service Commission:

The Maryland Public Service Commission regulates electric and gas utilities and suppliers, telephone companies (land lines), certain water and sewer companies, passenger motor vehicle carriers for hire (sedans, limousines, buses, Uber, Lyft), taxicab companies (in Baltimore City and County, Charles County, Cumberland and Hagerstown) and bay pilot rates.

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