

## **NATIONAL WOMEN LEADERSHIP SUPPORTING MY BROTHER'S KEEPER**

5875 Solomons Island Road  
Tracys Landing, MD 20779

June 29, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you to applaud several initiatives implemented by your Administration to improve the lives of low income and at-risk Americans. We are particularly pleased with initiatives which have had a positive impact on women and girls of color, including: The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans; the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics; The Affordable Care Act which covers women of color who represent 53% of the uninsured females; and, "Girls at Risk," that provides prevention and education which focuses on the connection between juvenile delinquency and STD/HIV infection.

We also support your efforts to raise the minimum wage, an issue affecting girls and women of color at disparate rates; your efforts to ensure that progress continues; and your commitment that longstanding needs of females are addressed through your White House Commission on Women and Girls. We express our gratitude, as well, for the excellent work that First Lady Michelle Obama has done in mentoring and outreach to girls – connecting them with women of substance and celebrity.

Thank you, Mr. President for these wonderful milestones.

We are also writing to you because we are equally concerned about the special needs of at-risk boys and young men of color. As you are aware, statistics show that approximately two-thirds of African-American, and one-third of Hispanic/Latino children, are raised in single parent homes. Slightly more than 25% of Hispanic, African-American, and American Indian/Alaskan Native children live in poverty, while 15% of White Americans live in poverty...very bleak statistics.

The dire statistics pertaining to boys and young men of color suggests the need for a more targeted approach. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, African American males, ages 10-24, are the victims of murder at a rate almost nineteen times than that of their non-Hispanic, and White American peers; and, Hispanic/Latino American males, in this same age group, are six times more likely to be victimized than their non-Hispanic White American peer group.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, reports that nearly 1 in 4 boys of color, (except for Latino and Asian American students with disabilities), have at some point been suspended from school. African American and Latino boys, and young men, are also more likely than their white peers to have witnessed violence, in or out of the home and have parents who are/have been incarcerated. African American and Latino males also have a much higher odds of being plagued by chronic health conditions and by contracting diseases which require repeated and consistent care for treatment, including: childhood asthma requiring hospitalization, childhood obesity, and HIV/AIDS.

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These dismal figures have only served to increase our enthusiasm and support for your administration's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, launched earlier this year to assist every boy and young man of color, to beat the odds to live high quality lives for themselves, their families and communities.

It is our understanding that after your February 27, 2014, call for support of the initiative, private philanthropies, businesses, governors, mayors, faith leaders, and nonprofit organizations, pledged to invest \$200 million dollars over the next five years, in addition to the \$150 million already invested. These earmarks are much needed in order to guarantee the success of the initiative.

What is even more exciting to us about the initiative is your charge to all Americans, especially communities of color, to participate and make it successful by volunteering as mentors. This personal request allows for organizations, businesses, and entities, already working to improve the lives of boys and young men of color, to partner; and, allows citizens, with long-term interest and support, and those unaware of these disparaging facts, to work together to improve the statistics within their communities.

Realizing the important role women play in the lives of boys and young men of color, we are thankful that women of color organizations were invited to share their viewpoints during "My Brothers Keeper's" regional listening sessions, one of which was co-hosted by a Black woman leader. We would also like to acknowledge the role of girls, young women, and mothers of color that was highlighted in the My Brothers' Keeper Funder 90 day report, from the Executive Alliance of Men and Boys of Color.

We encourage you to continue to engage women of color leaders in the planning and implementation of My Brother's Keeper initiative including---the White House briefings, ongoing conference calls with MBK Chair, Broderick Johnson and other planning activities.

We believe that a successful "My Brother's Keeper" initiative can result in stronger families, stronger fathers, stronger employees, stronger leaders; and ultimately, a stronger America. Therefore, Mr. President, we pledge our commitment to support this ground-breaking and historic initiative, which addresses the challenges facing the everyday lives of our at-risk children and youth.

Sincerely yours,

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