

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Charles Metzger and I am the Controller of ReBuild Metro, Inc. We are a non-profit in Baltimore, whose mission is to revitalize East Baltimore through the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned properties. Our organization has redeveloped over 450 formerly abandoned properties reducing the community's vacancy rate by 90% and creating quality affordable housing, parks, green spaces, and small retail businesses. We utilize grants, donations, and philanthropic promissory notes (loans) to finance our work.

In the regular course of business, each December we mail interest payments to philanthropic investors. In January 2021, we received five calls for investors looking for their 2020 payment, as they did not receive the checks we mailed. We issued stop payments on the check and reissued the interest payment using electronic ACH transfers. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident. During the 1st quarter of 2021, we did not receive mail for six weeks. After numerous calls to our Post Office on Shady Ave. in Baltimore City, we received some mail but the full complement of what was missing. The lack of regular USPS deliveries presents a significant hardship because our operations are dependent upon receiving grant payments, donations, and vendor invoices, all of which are mailed. In addition to impacting our revenues, the service problems affect our expenses. ReBUILD Metro owns 160 unique properties and pays monthly utility bills, which we are no longer receiving consistently. Due to the missing utility bills, we have incurred hundreds of dollars in late fees related to missing invoices.

Following the utility bill issue, I filed a complaint with the Post Mater in Washington, DC. When the DC office replied to my request, they indicated that the mail carrier could not access our mailbox. This statement has no grounds in truth. Our office is a corner rowhouse in East Baltimore and we have been served for years through a US mailbox on the front of the building. Additionally, we have a second entrance with a private mail slot, which serves to collect rent and other community correspondence. Following another month of failed postal service, we contacted Congressman Mfume's office. Within a week of communicating with Congressman Mfume's office, normal postal deliveries resumed. We thought our USPS problems were resolved, but In December 2021 the service issues reemerged.

In December 2021, we mailed our annual interest payment to our philanthropic investors, whose funding makes much of East Baltimore's revitalization possible. Over the past two weeks, we received calls from philanthropic investors stating that the annual interest payment was not received. We were again forced to stopped payment on the checks and issued electronic ACH transfers. A few days later, one investor called stating that they finally received the check, but it was postmarked January 21, 2022. Coincidentally, we mailed several other annual interest checks to them on December 15th, which arrived as scheduled. This situation undermines ReBUILD Metro's credibility, calling into question our competency, financial management, or both.

In addition to ReBUILD Metro's problems with the mail, our community residents are experiencing similar failures in USPS service. ReBUILD Metro may worry about its reputation, but some of our most vulnerable community members are exposed to much greater hardships when they incur late fees which they cannot afford or receive late unemployment or social security checks. We ask you to complete a full review of the USPS service in our community.

Thank you again for giving me the time to speak to you today.

Charles Metzger