



Baltimore Community Rowing
3301 Waterview Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21230

June 23, 2020

Susan Smith
Chief Domestic Officer & Interim CEO
USRowing
2 Wall Street
Princeton, NJ 08540

Dear Ms. Smith,

On behalf of Baltimore Community Rowing (BCR) and its youth outreach program, Reach High Baltimore, we thank USRowing for its renewed focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) of black athletes in the sport of rowing. Rowing organizations nationwide have much to gain from the nation's focus on the Black Lives Matter movement and the spotlight it shines on equity in our sport. While large full-service organizations like Row New York and Philadelphia City Rowing are well recognized for their excellent work in the rowing community, we encourage USRowing to highlight and include smaller community-based diversity programs, like Reach High Baltimore, in its DEI dialogue and action plan.

Founded in 2011, Reach High Baltimore is the youth outreach program of BCR Juniors that provides middle and high school students from Baltimore City Public Schools with access to high-level training and racing opportunities through scholarships, transportation to the boathouse, and summer employment. BCR Juniors serves an average of 150 student athletes a year in a supportive and inclusive rowing community, an average of 50% of which receive scholarships from Reach High Baltimore. BCR recruits rowers from neighborhoods across the city, creating a diverse team roster, of which 45% are rowers of color. In 2019, rowers from 12 Baltimore City middle and high schools participated in BCR programs through Reach High, alongside students from 38 public and private schools from counties in the Baltimore metro area. In 2015, USRowing awarded Reach High Baltimore founder, Judd Anderson, the Anita DeFrantz Award for leading the top outreach program in the country on the basis of its diverse youth population.

As USRowing begins its DEI efforts anew, we would like to be partners with USRowing to affect change at the national level. With 10 years of experience supporting black athletes, BCR is an accessible community-based model for programs just beginning to wonder "what's next" and "where do we start."

We encourage USRowing to move beyond discussions and dialogue to plan for concrete actions that will benefit community-based DEI programs at boathouses nationwide. USRowing should be focused on important changes for the inclusion of black athletes including:

- Assessing the cost structure of your pay-to-participate activities and creating scholarship opportunities for black junior rowers to attend Olympic Development Programming;
- Maintaining contacts with rowing programs with diverse rosters to actively identify and recruit black athletes for ODP programs
- Assisting community rowing organizations in addressing barriers to participation that black athletes may face, such as cost of participation and hidden fees, lack of reliable transportation, inability to swim, and lack of representation in marketing materials;
- Ensuring that DEI training is available to every rower, coach, referee, and family;
- And, amplifying black voices that reflect the experiences of these diverse constituencies.

It is time for USRowing to move beyond DEI as a feel-good acronym and put actionable steps in motion to ensure black athletes have a truly equitable and inclusive experience in the sport of rowing in boathouses across our nation. BCR stands ready to support USRowing in its efforts. Our black athletes, coaches, and families are relying on us.

Respectfully,

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