July 23, 2021

The Honorable Governor Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Subject: Joint Recommendation for Appointment of Riders to MBTA Board of Directors

Dear Governor Baker:

We write to ask you to sign into law Sections 18 and 19 of H.3973, the fiscal year 2021 Supplemental Budget that would establish a new governing board for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). We also recommend appointing individuals we know would serve ably on the MBTA board of directors (MBTA Board) as rider representatives. We represent organizations that advocate for and bring together riders and workers throughout Massachusetts who are fighting for the future of public transit. We have long advocated for an MBTA board that includes both a labor seat and a rider seat to represent the people who are the lifeblood of our transit system.

We are grateful that the recent Supplemental Budget includes language to establish a new, permanent MBTA Board. As per the budget’s language, the labor representative must be appointed from candidates nominated by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO President. We fully support this language and urge you to preserve it. The legislation also calls for the appointment of a rider from an environmental justice population to the MBTA Board, but does not specify a nomination process. We believe that despite the lack of a nomination requirement in the legislation, the chosen rider representative must have the support of community organizations representing environmental justice (EJ) populations. EJ populations are most reliant on public transit, and also face a disproportionate burden of pollution and climate impacts from traffic, industry, and other sources.

The MBTA must center racial justice, economic justice, and equity in all its decisions. You can advance equity at the MBTA by ensuring rider representation from EJ populations on the new board.
We propose two individuals who we know would serve ably on the new MBTA Board, representing EJ populations while advancing the MBTA as a whole. As many diverse organizations working together as part of the Public Transit Public Good Coalition, Zero-Emission Vehicles Coalition, and Transit is Essential coalition, we ask you to appoint a rider representative from the following list of names:

- **Rafael Mares**: Rafael is executive director of The Neighborhood Developers, a housing nonprofit that works in Chelsea, Revere, and Everett to promote economic diversity, opportunity, and quality of life in these communities. Rafael understands the important role public transit plays in the lives of families in environmental justice communities, and regularly uses various bus and subway lines to commute to work, to get to meetings, and for personal trips. From 2009-2018 he held various roles at the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), including Vice President and Program Director. At CLF, Rafael researched, wrote and published materials on transit policy, public transit financing, state transportation funding, and the equity and environmental impacts of transportation. He served as an expert source on public transportation policy, financing, operations, and capital projects for local, regional, and national media outlets. He regularly represented CLF in public transportation advocacy before municipalities, metropolitan planning organizations, administrative agencies, and public authorities, and served on a number of public planning and transportation groups, including the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee (2009-2010) and the Executive Committee of Transportation for Massachusetts (2012-2018). For more than a decade, Rafael has played a major role in successful advocacy to preserve MBTA service and affordability, especially for environmental justice communities. In 2017, he played a key role in negotiating a landmark agreement on ground transportation at Logan Airport. Rafael lives in Revere, an environmental justice community.

- **Khalida Smalls**: Khalida is a lifelong Boston resident and MBTA rider. She has decades of experience working to improve the lives of working families and environmental justice communities. Khalida has served in multiple leadership roles at Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE), including leading the T Riders Union, which brings together transit riders to fight for equitable public transportation in lower-income communities and communities of color. Since 2019, Khalida has served as director of organizing with the Boston Teachers Union (BTU). Before joining BTU, she was the Green Justice Coalition Coordinator and Organizing Director at Community Labor United (CLU). Prior to joining CLU, Khalida served as the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Community Support for SEIU Local 32BJ New England District 615. In addition,
she has studied Urban Environmental Policy and Planning at the graduate level at Tufts University. A queer, Black woman of African and Caribbean descent, Khalida was a 2001 recipient of The Big Picture Award for activism focusing on transportation justice issues, presented by The City School, a non-profit Dorchester youth leadership. In 2004, she was a recipient of the Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas & Julius Bernstein Award for her commitment to environmental justice, from the Boston Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Khalida lives in Dorchester, an environmental justice community.

We strongly believe that both these nominees will adequately represent riders from the Commonwealth's EJ populations and ensure that the MBTA Board decisions serve the interests of those who are most dependent on our public transit systems.

In addition to asking you to appoint one of these qualified riders from environmental justice populations to the MBTA Board, we support the nominations for a labor representative from the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.

These candidates will strengthen the voice and needs of communities that rely on public transit and of everyday riders at the agency's decision-making level. Your swift action to appoint a rider and a labor representative from these nominations will greatly enhance the Commonwealth’s ability to ensure the MBTA can chart a successful path forward over the coming years.

Sincerely,

CLEAN WATER ACTION

GreenRoots
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