



**Zeke Cohen**

Councilmember

*First District*

513 City Hall • Baltimore, MD 21202 • 410-396-4821 • ZEKE.COHEN@BALTIMORECITY.GOV

---

January 9, 2020

Associated Black Charities  
2 Hamill Road  
272 North Quadrangle  
Baltimore, MD 21210

Dear Diane Bell-McKoy,

I'm writing today in regard to the Baltimore City Children and Youth Fund. I fully support the Youth Fund, and believe strongly in its mission to promote racial equity, intergenerational leadership, community ownership and collective decision making. Through this correspondence, I do not seek to undermine the mission, or the important work. However, I have several concerns about the management and disbursement of funds by the Associated Black Charities (ABC).

My concerns are based on multiple communications I have received from grantees. As a member of the Baltimore City Council and as Chair of the Education and Youth Committee, I am seeking answers. Given the multitude of challenges facing Baltimore's youth, we must act with urgency. There cannot be any delays when it comes to improving the lives of our children.

My first concern is that despite grants being awarded, not all Year One funds have been disbursed. In 2018, \$9.8 million was awarded to youth-serving organizations throughout Baltimore. However, some first-year grantees of The Youth Fund have not received the full distribution of the grant they were awarded. Organizations informed me that they fulfilled all reporting requirements based on the original standard yet have not received the full disbursement of funds they were promised. This creates an enormous hardship for small, grassroots organizations that rely on these dollars to do their work.

My second concern is that the timeline of grant delivery for Year One funding set by ABC, has not been adhered to for all grantees. Some grantees reported receiving a commitment that the first year of funding for their programs would be disbursed in September 2018. Yet several did not receive their first disbursement of funds until November 2018, while some waited until December. This delay has created turmoil and instability for these organizations.

My third concern is the lack of clarity for Year Two funding. In 2019, it was indicated to grantees who had received first-year funding that they would be eligible for second-year funding, as long as their fiscal reports had been accepted by ABC. Several grantees indicate that emails sent as early as August 2019, and as recently as November and December led them to believe that they would receive second-year funding equivalent to what they had received in their first year of funding pending successful submission of financial reports. However, at the conclusion of December 2019 an email was sent to first-year grantees

---

**CHAIR: EDUCATION AND YOUTH COMMITTEE**



**Zeke Cohen**

Councilmember

*First District*

513 City Hall • Baltimore, MD 21202 • 410-396-4821 • ZEKE.COHEN@BALTIMORECITY.GOV

indicating that no system was in place to disburse funds, and no clear next steps were in place. Many of these youth-serving organizations are continuing to work in good faith, with the hope that funding will be approved soon. However, some simply cannot continue to service our children without these funds.

Children in Baltimore face enormous barriers. The Baltimore City Children and Youth Fund represented a bold recognition by Mayor Young and the Baltimore City Council that our children deserve more. It is critically important that the organizations that have been awarded these taxpayer funds be compensated in a timely manner.

I am seeking the following information in writing. I may ask for further clarification at a City Council Education and Youth Committee hearing.

1. When will the remaining Year One funding be fully disbursed?
2. When will the application for Year Two funding become available? When can organizations that are in good standing expect to receive the funds? How can we avoid any further delays so that organizations can meet their payroll obligations?
3. Moving forward, what measures will ABC put in place to ensure that timelines are adhered to and that grants are disbursed on time?

Please respond in writing within ten business days. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zeke Cohen".

Councilmember Zeke Cohen