

A RESOLUTION

25-115

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 4, 2023

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to grant the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development the authority to issue sole-source grants to the African American Civil War Museum and Ben’s Chili Bowl to support renovation efforts.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “African American Civil War Museum and Ben’s Chili Bowl Limited Grant-Making Authority Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2023”.

Sec. 2. (a) The African American Civil War Museum (“AACWM”) opened to the public more than 20 years ago. It helps visitors understand the largely unknown role of black and brown soldiers who fought for freedom from slavery during the Civil War. The AACWM displays photographs, documents, and artifacts, and holds regular seminars and historic presentations by community members. The museum serves as a unique resource for teachers, scholars, students, and professionals of museum studies, descendants of Civil War soldiers, and the general public. More than 200,000 visitors come to the African American Civil War Memorial and AACWM each year.

(b) Ben’s Chili Bowl has been a pillar of U Street community and District culture since it opened its doors in 1958. Although U Street has seen many changes over the decades, Ben’s Chili Bowl has remained, satisfying tens of thousands of customers with their famous homemade chili and half smokes. As a District landmark, Ben’s Chili Bowl has served as a destination for visitors from around the world and has served everyone from jazz legends Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald to President Barack Obama.

(c) Emergency legislation is necessary to cover renovations and improvements to both locations, to close the funding gap experienced by the AACWM to build out the museum into the remainder of its facility, and to assist Ben’s Chili Bowl’s U Street location with HVAC replacement, electrical and plumbing repairs and upgrades, roofing repairs, and substantial concrete and masonry work.

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(d) Expanding the AACWM will also complete a key recommendation from Office of Planning's DUKE small area plan in the historic Cardozo/Shaw neighborhood, utilizing the former Grimke School for the AACWM and its foundation.

Sec. 3. The Council determines that the circumstances in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances, making it necessary that the African American Civil War Museum and Ben's Chili Bowl Limited Grant-Making Authority Emergency Amendment Act of 2023 be adopted after a single reading.

Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.