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January 2nd, 2018

Dear Council Member,

We are writing to show our support for Ordinance BL2017-983 (the “Do Better Bill”), introduced by Council Member Anthony Davis.

A Better Balance (ABB) is a legal advocacy organization dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace. We help workers across the economic spectrum care for their families without risking their economic security. Since 2014, our Southern Office, based in Nashville, TN, has focused on supporting low-wage workers throughout the South through policy advocacy and direct legal representation. Because of our free legal hotline, we hear firsthand from workers experiencing discrimination and mistreatment on the job. Because Tennessee has few legal protections ensuring adequate benefits for workers, we too often hear from vulnerable workers who are on the brink of poverty.

According to *The Tennessean*, each year Nashville awards companies with millions of dollars in tax breaks and cash grants to encourage businesses to hire workers in Davidson County.¹ However, these tax breaks and grants are a privilege, not a right, and with that right should come an expectation of transparency so that citizens know that their tax dollars are being used to bring high-quality jobs to Nashville. Transparency in government dealings, especially those involving large quantities of money, should always be a priority so as to assure the public against the appearance of corruption. It also allows citizens to hold publicly elected officials accountable for failing to deliver on job creation promises.

Of course, the bill *does not require* any businesses to make any changes to benefits or wages when applying for a tax break or grant. This means that any objection to the bill is not based on a business cost that would be incurred, but instead an opposition to transparency. There is no evidence that a business would decide not to move to Nashville simply because they are asked basic information about how they treat their workers. In fact, many businesses provide a living wage and excellent benefits precisely because it is good for their bottom line and they are proud of how they treat their workers. It does a disservice to these companies and to Nashville to say that businesses would have something to hide.

In conclusion, we urge you to vote for the Do Better Bill.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Gedmark
Director of the Southern Office/Senior Staff Attorney

¹ <http://www.tennessean.com/story/money/2017/12/18/nashville-chamber-moves-derail-business-incentive-transparency-bill/962495001/>.