



PRESS ALERT

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BUILD Calls on CareFirst CEO to Meet to Negotiate 1000 New Jobs

Date: TUESDAY, Nov. 3rd, 2015 Time: 10:45 AM

Where: CareFirst Headquarters, 1501 Clinton Street, Baltimore MD

Baltimore, MD: On Tuesday, 50 BUILD clergy and members will call on CareFirst CEO, Chester Burrell, to meet to negotiate 1000 new jobs in front of the CareFirst headquarters building. Seven area hospitals including Johns Hopkins, University of Maryland Medical Systems, and Medstar (Union Memorial, Good Samaritan, etc.) have proposed creating 1000 health care worker jobs. The positions would be filled with people from the most distressed ZIP codes. This proposal is in direct response to decades long needs to address the link between poverty and health, and driven by the sense of urgency generated by the unrest following the death of Freddie Gray. The hospitals are asking the Health Services Cost Review Commission to approve a modest reimbursement increase of $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1%, which translates into \$2.50 per every \$1,000 in billing. That means that a procedure that used to cost \$1,000.00 will now be billed to the insurance companies for \$1,002.50.

“This is historic and unique,” explains Rev. Glenna Huber, BUILD Co-Chair. “Baltimore’s hospitals have never stepped up *together* to create employment for those living in communities that have been systematically left out of economic gain and prosperity for generations.”

CareFirst opposes the initiative with its CEO, Mr. Burrell, leading the opposition. Beginning on October 8th, BUILD tried multiple times and ways to request a meeting with Mr. Burrell to discuss his opposition: Called him; emailed him; sent a delegation to personally hand deliver a letter requesting to meet with him; sent him a letter via certified mail. BUILD leaders want to meet with the CEO who has the power to determine the fate of 1000 new employees, which would uplift thousands through their families and communities. BUILD has received no response. Fifteen days later BUILD was asked to meet with his representative, to which we agreed on the condition that this would not substitute as a meeting with the CEO. Mr. Burrell’s representative made it clear: CareFirst opposes the Health Job Opportunity Program, would not change their position, and Mr. Burrell would not meet with BUILD to discuss it.

Baltimore’s unrest showed once again we live in two cities. Although there have been many well-intentioned responses to the unrest in Baltimore, most are short-lived. After listening to over 5,000 citizens last year and hundreds before and after the unrest, the number one

priority we heard was the need for jobs. BUILD is committed to *BUILD One Baltimore – A City with Jobs, a City for Youth and a City that is Safe*. We are committed to addressing the underlying causes of the unrest to achieve long-term change.

“To BUILD One Baltimore, the two cities must meet,” explains Rev. Andrew Foster Connors. “During this generational moment, Mr. Burrell refuses to even meet with BUILD leaders, further dividing our city. Baltimore can not afford to return to business as usual. We need jobs. Not Band-Aids”

BUILD is not for or against CareFirst or the hospitals. BUILD is for more jobs and for better health. BUILD will call on Mr. Burrell to meet, to sit down with the insurance companies, hospitals, the HSCRC and BUILD. Let’s agree on the contributions of each at this critical time. Together, let’s make two cities one by employing 1000 people.