

Somerville Redevelopment Authority
Statement of Interest

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Courtney Brunson and I am writing to indicate my strong interest in serving on the Somerville Redevelopment Authority Board (“SRA”).

I am currently a member of the City’s Anti-Displacement Task Force, which allows me to work alongside my neighbors in combatting the displacement of fellow Somerville’s residents, including through the drafting of the home rule petition. While I have valued my time on the Task Force, I am interested in participating in opportunities directly involved with the development of housing and other infrastructure as part of the city’s urban renewal plans - and I believe this board would allow me to do so. Moreover, I believe my legal, policy, and community advocacy background provides me with a unique and important perspective that would help positively drive the direction of neighborhood redevelopment in Somerville.

I established my housing expertise at the Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren in Washington, D.C. In this role, I advanced the Senator’s priorities of investing in affordable housing and community development. I did so by spearheading the office’s outreach to state organizations to develop an affordable housing agenda and ensure federal appropriations were spent on the advancement of local infrastructure and development projects. Leading initiatives like these required me to build relationships with broad sets of political and community stakeholders and coalitions. It also required me to attend dozens of meetings with policy and issue experts to develop, consider, and uncover solutions to address these issues.

I attended Harvard Law School because I recognized the law’s crucial role in creating solutions to inequitable housing and neighborhood outcomes. While there, I served as the President of Harvard’s Legal Aid Bureau, the oldest student-run legal services office in the country and second largest legal aid provider in the Greater Boston area. As a Bureau lawyer, I represented indigent public and private housing clients, collaborated with organizations like City Life Vida Urbana on anti-gentrification and displacement movement work, and lobbied the state legislature on issues like the right to counsel and renter eviction protections. As the Bureau’s President, I managed the Bureau’s executive board, handled the organization’s budget, supervised the work of forty of my peers, and led the evaluation of the organization’s clinical instructors.

At the same time, I worked as the Policy Advisor at the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts (BECMA). In this role, I managed and expanded our community partnerships, developed the Council’s policy priorities, and lobbied for state legislation. This role also allowed me to support BECMA’s president, Nicole Obi, in the execution of her responsibilities as the co-chair of the Federal Funds Equity & Accountability Review Panel, which entailed advising her on implementing metrics and goals for how to equitably evaluate the spending of ARPA funds in communities disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In my current role at the Boston Foundation in my role as Director of the Greater Boston Partnership to Close the Racial Wealth Gap, I serve as a liaison with municipal, nonprofit, and private industry representatives in promoting affordable homeownership opportunities in households of color.

As a Black woman and Somerville resident, I directly benefit from and have a deep passion for promoting the livability and prosperity of this city. My legal, policy, and community qualifications would allow me to meaningfully participate in the Board's implementation of urban renewal efforts in a thoughtful and equitable manner.