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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
(VICE RANKING MEMBER)

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION
AND CIVIL JUSTICE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM,
HOMELAND SECURITY, AND INVESTIGATIONS

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR,
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

To Whom It May Concern:

On Friday, September 15, 2017 at 12:00 p.m., a briefing will be held in the Rayburn House Office Building with the U.S.-Africa Diaspora Business Council and Council Fire on the Benefit Corporations for Africa Initiative. I kindly invite and encourage you and your staff to attend.

My constituent and friend, Tebabu Assefa, will be leading the discussion on the positive social consequences that Benefit Corporations, or “B-Corps,” are having on American society and commerce. Mr. Assefa is a leader in the Ethiopian diaspora community in the U.S. and has been recognized by the Obama Administration as a “Champion of Change” because of his founding and stewardship of Blessed Coffee, a benefit corporation that partners with more than 300,000 small coffee farmers in Ethiopia to create a successful coffee business in America which constantly reinvests in both American and Ethiopian communities.

In 2010, Maryland became the first state to enable businesses to register as Benefit Corporations. Today, more than 30 states have followed suit. Benefit corporations are for-profit businesses that declare in their articles of incorporation a commitment not just to making money but to creating a specific “positive social impact,” such as advancing adult literacy efforts or bringing a local stream back to life. B-Corps are showing that businesses can be profitable for private purposes *and* socially beneficial for larger public purposes at the same time. The Benefit Corporation designation, which obliges companies to abide by the highest standards of social and environmental conduct and to file regular reports on their progress, sends a powerful message to shareholders, employees, business partners and consumers that the company has a commitment not simply to shareholder profits but to larger community purposes as well.

At this briefing, the U.S.-Africa Diaspora Business Council and Council Fire will highlight the virtues of the B-Corp model in promoting socially conscious and environmentally sustainable commerce in both Africa and America. I hope that you and your staff will have the opportunity to participate.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie Raskin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jamie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Raskin".

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Honorary Host Committee:

U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen, Congressman Jamie Raskin, Congressman Karen Bass, Congressman John Sarbanes, Ms Sarah Bloom Raskin, MD State Senator Will Smith, MD Delegate Shelia Hixson, TP Mayor Kate Stewart, MC Councilman Marc Elrich, TP Councilman Terry Seamens, TP Councilman Jarrett Smith, TP Councilman Peter Kovar, and Rev Alvin Hathaway

Strategic Partners:

DC Mayor's Office on African Affairs, United People for African (UPAC), Start Up Africa, 21 Centuries Community, African Services Committee and Conscious RT

US-Africa Diaspora Business Collaboration, in cooperation with Congressman Jamie Raskin, is pleased to invite you to Congressional Briefing to present:

Benefit Corporation for Africa Initiative

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF SOCIAL BUSINESS TO IMPACT DEVELOPMENT & GROW US-AFRICA TRADE

12:00 p.m. Friday, September 15, 2017, Rayburn HOB, Room S 215, 45 Independence Ave, SW Washington DC

(Entrance on the East side of the U.S. Capitol on 1 Street)

MASTERS OF CEREMONY

TP Councilman Terry Seamens & Martha Negash

SPEAKERS

Congressman Jamie Raskin, the Author of Benefit Corporation Legislation

Michael H Shuman, an economist, attorney, author, and expert on community economics.

Thomas Raffa, Founder and MP of Raffa Financial Services, Inc, a Mid Atlantic (B - Corp)

Tebabu Assefa, & Sara Mussie, Founders of Blessed Coffee, the Nation's Second Benefit Corporation

Sylvester Okere, President & CEO: United People for African Congress (UPAC)

Erastus Mong'are, Executive Director, StartUpAfrica Inc

Peter Kovar, Takoma Park Councilman, BCAI Senior Advisor

Benefit Corporation for Africa Initiative aims to bring together strategic players to educate, build, and drive innovative ways to use market forces to solve the most urgent problems of our time, with strategy focused on the purposes of leveraging the power of business to achieve economic & social development and solve environmental problems in the Africa, US and beyond.
For more info & to RSVP, info@blessedcoffee.us or 301-802-2812