



**National  
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.  
Changing Lives.  
For An Equitable Future.*



**Greater Washington  
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.  
Changing Lives.*

December 19, 2023

Commissioner Adam Silver  
National Basketball Association  
NBA Olympic Tower  
645 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10022

Dear Commissioner Silver,

We write to support the continuation of Washington, DC as the location for the current Washington Wizards NBA franchise. We have become aware of the proposal to relocate the franchise to Northern Virginia, and believe that the NBA belongs in Washington, DC

For reasons we will outline, this proposed move is inconsistent with the history, commitments, and future of the National Basketball Association that you have so powerfully and eloquently represented.

First, the Wizards franchise, since relocating from Landover several decades ago, has enjoyed substantial support from the fan base of Washington, DC. The Capital One Arena is a high-quality, centrally-located facility in the heart of Downtown DC. Mayor Muriel Bowser and the DC Council have proposed their own \$500 million investment that would allow for upgrades and renovations that would transform Capital One into one of the finest urban arenas anywhere in America.

Second, the Capital One Arena has been a significant urban catalyst and primary to the economic revival transformation and comeback of downtown Washington, which had become an area in substantial decline from the middle 1970s through the early 1990s, when the Washington Wizards arrived. Many small businesses including in nearby Chinatown, along with entrepreneurs, hotels, bars, restaurants, and others have been part of this economic revival, grown with the franchise, and sustained a diverse fan base.

Indeed, the Capital One Arena and the economic development it spawned are, in our opinion, one of the finest examples of downtown urban redevelopment and the role of professional sports anywhere in America in the last 50 years. We believe ripping the Wizards away from Downtown DC would not only cause economic harm, it would erode fan trust.

Third, the National Basketball Association needs a presence in our nation's capital. Washington, DC represents the rhythm and the pulse of this entire nation. It would not send a positive signal for the National Basketball Association to relocate outside of Washington, DC to a congested suburban location. This by no means derogates the Alexandria, Virginia area, but Washington, DC is where the Wizards belong.

We speak to you as leaders of the nation's foremost civil rights and urban advocacy organization.

Experiences have taught that the notion that franchise relocations should simply become a bidding war between cities or states is abhorrent to the idea that there is a single professional basketball league in the United States. It is material that community support and what a team truly means to the essence of a community are far more important factors than whether there is a "better financial arrangement" in another city that can be secured by a franchise owner.

We, therefore, wholeheartedly endorse the idea that the Wizards should remain in Washington, DC at their current location and that the league and the team's current ownership should work in conjunction with the Mayor and the leaders of Washington, DC on a plan to transform the Capital One Arena.

Such a plan would not be disruptive, would not result in gentrification, nor require substantial additional public investments in road improvements and transportation, which is simply what the proposed relocation project entails.

Finally, we emphasize that this should not be taken in any way as a criticism of Northern Virginia or Virginia's leaders. It is simply a strong endorsement of the need for professional basketball to remain in Washington, DC.

As always, we are available for further conversations and discussions and will be engaged in public expressions of our support for the position which we have outlined.

Many thanks for your leadership, availability, and accessibility to us and the civil rights community over the years.

You have truly stood out in this regard.

With warmest regards, I am

Yours very truly,



Marc H. Morial  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
National Urban League



George H. Lambert, Jr.  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Greater Washington Urban League

cc: Mark Tatum, Deputy Commissioner, National Basketball Association