

EXHIBIT 7

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND
(Northern Division)**

Wicomico County Branch of the
National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,

v.

Wicomico County, Maryland, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 23-MJM-03325

DECLARATION OF AMBER GREEN

1. I, am over 18 years of age and am competent to testify. I provide this declaration in support of Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary Injunction in this case.

2. I am a Black registered voter residing in Wicomico County. I was born in Washington, D.C., grew up in Charles County, and first moved to the Eastern Shore when I attended the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, in Princess Anne. In 2013, I moved to Salisbury, Wicomico County, where I worked part time at the local news WMDT Channel 47 ABC, and free lance graphic design.

3. In 2013 I also began the Fenix Youth Project, a non-profit organization based in Salisbury that nurtures youth leadership in areas of social justice, democracy, and civic engagement for tomorrow's leaders; among its advisors, organizers and clients are many young marginalized community members, including Black Wicomico County residents. The organization works to address some of the most pressing issues that Wicomico County's young people face, including programs addressing youth homelessness, mental and physical health, so as to transform

a young person from merely surviving, to thriving. The organization was formed to empower young leaders to take a seat at the decision-making table, and its work includes promotion of civic engagement through voter participation among young people involved in its programming. I wanted to start the organization to give young Black community members a voice, since they face so many systemic issues but have no say in creating solutions.

4. Founding the Fenix Youth Project and the ensuing work that came from the Fenix Youth Project really opened my eyes to the problems that we face in Salisbury, and Wicomico County more generally. One of the most pressing issues that we see regularly at the Fenix Youth Project are issues with housing that intersect with many other issues that young marginalized people face, including young Black people, but is the root cause that drives many of the problems.

5. Another major issue is the treatment of Black students in Wicomico schools. The public school system is not giving space for Black students, LGBTQ+ students, and other students the rights and space they need to exist.

6. Salisbury City is only just starting to address these issues at a very local level, but the County has completely ignored these issues.

7. Another significant issue is the way that our capitalist system and the non-profit industrial complex contributes to the perpetual cycle of disinvestment in the Black community. As the head of a non-profit and as a Black woman leader, I find that obtaining grants to fund the necessary work that the Fenix Youth Project engages in is woefully inadequate to serve the vast economic issues of marginalized members of our community, including our Black community. My philosophy in creating the Fenix Youth Project was never to make money, but to eventually put myself out of a job because the needs of the community had been met, but funding is necessary to achieve these goals.

8. We need people in office who will listen to our concerns.

9. I ran for County Council District 1, the one district in Wicomico County where a Black person has a chance of winning a seat in the election. I lost in the primary, but I ran against Shanie Shields (who went on to win the seat), and Monica Brooks. The campaign between the candidates was generally a positive experience for me, as we were all advocating for the same cause and all wanted what was best for the Black community in Wicomico County.

10. However, I did experience some intense racism that discouraged me from wanting to engage in any kind of political life for years following the 2022 elections. When Wicomico County sheriff's deputy Corporal Glen Hilliard was shot and killed in June 2022, my campaign took a significant turn because of my positions on public safety, where I called to reallocate public safety dollars to community based projects and organizations that could better address public safety needs, than spending more on an already ballooning police budget. I became the target of intense racism, abusive social media messages, was called a communist, police-hater, and racial epithets including the n-word.

11. In discussion with many members of the community following the public vitriol cast at me for my positions on policing, many people felt that I was not the right candidate and should not be the representative on the County Council for the Black community. My political positions were too radical, and many agreed that I would have been met with backlash from the white Wicomico community, preventing any forward momentum on issues important to the Black community. It felt very much like upsetting the status quo would cause major disruptions for the Black community, but I also feel that without upsetting the status quo, Black people in positions of power will be treated like tokens, and positive change for the Black community will not be achieved in meaningful ways unless we advocate for ourselves.

12. Looking back, I resent the system and rules we had to play by, where we were pitted against each other; three Black women of considerable strength and resolve who were all vying for the single seat on the County Council made available to us. We have a vibrant and thriving Black community that deserves more than what the County has handed us.

13. My experience running for office in 2022 set me back years from running for public office again, and instead I focused my time on the Fenix Youth Project. If the system were to change to seven districts with two Black-opportunity districts, I might reconsider running again for county office, but under the current 5-2 system, there is no question I would never run for office again.

14. I understand that there is also a charter amendment that is going to be put to referendum in November 2024, where the Wicomico County Executive Office will be eliminated and added to the County Council's duties. I think it's a positive thing to put the question to referendum, and I would want to vote for eliminating the County Executive Office. However, I'm concerned, and don't know how to vote in favor of that issue because the referendum also reaffirms the 5-2 district/at-large election system that dilutes the Black community's vote. Even though I agree with eliminating the County Executive, I feel like I have to vote against the measure because I can't vote in favor of a system that continues to dilute our vote.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct according to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.



Executed on July 11, 2024

Amber Green