

## **Speaker Heastie Appoints Assemblymember Bichotte Chair to the Oversight of the Minority Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs) Subcommittee**

**Albany, NY** – Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie appointed Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte as Chair of the Oversight of Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Subcommittee, a subcommittee created and held by Assemblymember Crystal People-Stokes, Chair of Government Operations for over 10 years. Both Speaker Heastie and Assemblymember People-Stokes have worked together to provide additional funding for MWBE initiatives in the enacted 2015-2016 state budget.

"I thank Speaker Heastie for his confidence in my abilities and recognition of my experience in the issues facing minority- and women-owned businesses," said Assemblymember Bichotte. I am ready and eager to work with my colleagues in the state legislature to make significant progress, especially in our cities, in promoting MWBEs and ushering in a new generation of minority and women entrepreneurs across the state. Promoting economic diversity only serves to strengthen our state's economy and our competitiveness regionally and nationally. I know I can bring to bear my knowledge and skills to push us forward toward that goal."

The MWBE government contracting industry has gained much attention given the billions of procurement opportunities across the state of New York, allowing MWBE firms to conduct business with New York State's and the city's local government agencies.

"Although the promise and the intent to increase participation has been instituted in various state and local laws, there still exists constraints in meeting aspirational goals for the historically underrepresented groups; ultimately preventing the needed quantum leap to happen in the MWBE sector. The way we change this is to implement and enforce the law," said Bichotte.

The Assembly's financial plan includes \$1 million for the Minority- and Women-Owned Business Development and Lending Program, which provides financial assistance to MWBEs, as well as to projects and programs that assist the development of entrepreneurship among minorities and women in New York.

The budget extends the Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise program for an additional year and allows for the hiring of seven new full time employees to support the program. This important program has provided valuable opportunities for MWBE-certified businesses to access state contracting opportunities and technical assistance to secure them. The budget also extends the completion date of the MWBE Disparity Study by six months. The report will now be due by August 15, 2016.

Assemblymember Bichotte plans to introduce and support bills around MWBE that will ultimately help increase participation, assist in capacity building and bring about a robust disparity study. She will work closely with Assemblymember People-Stokes in providing

recommendations around MWBE government procurement, and evaluate best practices and models on federal, state and city-wide levels.

Assemblymember Bichotte's previous MWBE-related experience includes working with the Division of Financial and Economic Opportunity at New York City's Small Business Services (SBS), the Contracts Department at New York City Comptroller's office, and several other MWBE organizations and initiatives.