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The Honorable Judge Mary D. France  
United State Bankruptcy Court  
Middle District of Pennsylvania  
P.O. Box 908  
Harrisburg, PA 17108-0908

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CLERK U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT

Dear Honorable Judge France,

I write you as a citizen and resident of the City of Harrisburg asking that you consider seriously the Harrisburg City Council petition for bankruptcy, and that you admit the City into bankruptcy.

My central concern as a City resident is that I and other residents stand to lose the most and know the least regarding the ultimate outcome of the City's fiscal situation.

We as residents stand to lose the most. Property taxes could go up immensely, leading to the flight of wealth from the city and its neighborhoods. What is at stake is whether the City continues its path of socioeconomic revival, or whether the boundaries of urban decay expand to encompass all the areas within the municipal boundaries. It is not an exaggeration to say that the social and economic life and death of the City is at stake.

At the same time, we as residents stand to know the least. As an example, I still know only a fraction of what I need to know about an issue this important to our City, even though as a City resident and community leader I have tried very hard to be informed. Even under the administration of the previous Mayor, I was part of a group of community clergy who met with the Mayor and members of Council trying to bring them together into some form of agreement. Since then, I have met personally with the current Mayor, spoken personally to members of Council, attended meetings and public hearings, spoken with a Dauphin County Commissioner and read anything I can get my hands on – and still very little is known to me or any other resident about our situation.

It seems that every lever of political power has been used to maintain our ignorance and constrict our options. Behind closed doors, the Harrisburg Authority entered into legally problematic financial arrangements that were backed by the City, co-signed by the County and approved by the State – all at the expense of City residents.

The autonomous administrative power of the Harrisburg Authority was used to cloak financial transactions and keep them beyond the reach of public scrutiny. Even as the Harrisburg Authority declined to make its records public, the Chair of that Authority - affiliated with a legal firm with a history of collecting legal fees from local municipal clients – directed a political campaign that replaced the previous Mayor with a new Mayor who was not equipped to respond adequately to the problems.

The County has brought legal and political pressure upon the City to impose a solution to the benefit of every municipality in the County other than the City – through law suits and use of political connections on the State level. The County co-signed for much of the offending bond-issue, evidently allowing the State to approve that bond issue on the basis of the tax-base of all of Dauphin County. Now that the irregularly-authorized bond issue has resulted in enormous debt, the obligation is being counted against the tax-base of the City alone. Politically, the County has something to hide. Legally perhaps too the County has something to hide, but as of now the residents of the City have no way of knowing.

The State, at the highest levels of political power, urged the City into the Act 47 process and then changed the rules. The Act 47 team clearly negotiated behind closed doors with all other political and financial actors in formulating a plan that was incumbent not at all upon those parties, but only upon the City. While it was clear that plan would solve the financial crisis for those parties, it was not clear that this plan would solve the crisis for the residents of Harrisburg. One by one, State power was utilized to legislate options off the table, such as a county sales tax, a commuter tax, and bankruptcy – never for the protection of City residents and always for the benefit of other politically more powerful constituencies. Most recently, the State has now authorized a political and administrative take-over of the City, which includes in it the ability to cancel the forensic audit which to this point is the only tool available to residents to learn more fully about our predicament.

Your Honor, I am writing you because **we as City residents have reason to claim that we must be seen not only as debtors in this financial predicament, but perhaps even more so as victims.** Every level of legal regulation and political authority that was set in place to protect us failed in the issuance of the bonds in question. Every level of political authority available to City residents to lead us out of this crisis is tainted by these failures and has something to hide. No level of political authority is available to City residents that will allow us a full understanding of our situation and any assurance of a just outcome.

Your Honor, a key issue in the proceedings before you is whether the City has attempted to negotiate in good faith with its creditors enough to be eligible for bankruptcy. **I would submit to you that under these circumstances there is very little more negotiation that can happen which will result in relief for the residents of the City** – the citizens who are the primary, and least powerful, constituency petitioning you in this case. **In this political environment, there is no table outside of Federal Court where negotiations can take place in good faith.** No one is willing to examine the question as to whether residents are victims or debtors – or whether City residents are the only debtors. No

solution can be proposed that one creditor or another cannot close off through use of political pressure, legislation or regulation.

Even our representatives before your court are clearly not equipped to represent us. Please keep in mind, that as a resident of the City of Harrisburg, the County of Dauphin and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – *all* the petitioners claim to represent me. The Mayor claims to speak for me. City Council claims to speak for me. The County Commissioners claim to speak for me. The State claims to speak for me. Yet at this point it is not clear that any of them speak for what is best for me and my community.

In a word, we – the residents, taxpayers and citizens of the City of Harrisburg – have no recourse for justice at this point except for you. The federal courts are the only avenue available to us where those making and enforcing the rules of judgment were not part of creating the crisis in the first place and perhaps have something to hide. The federal courts are the only forum of adjudication available to us where those interested parties cannot shape the rules. The federal courts are the only authority available to us with the legal power and the political will to carry forth any civil or criminal investigations that the evidence might suggest is necessary. The federal courts are the only avenue available to us where we – the residents – can assume that justice rather than politics is the primary criterion for a settlement.

Your Honor, please admit us into bankruptcy and allow us to have justice with transparency.

With great appreciation for giving my words some consideration,



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