

CASE STUDY



BLAQUE Advances Educational Equity With Legal Support From Husch Blackwell

KANSAS CITY, MOOVERVIEW

Dr. Cokethea Hill had a vision for creating a nonprofit organization that advances educational equity and improves educational outcomes for African-American children in public schools. While Dr. Hill had a robust framework for how to achieve the underlying goals, the scope and boldness of her ideas required a sophisticated approach to the organization's formative stages.

Dr. Hill met Demetrius Peterson through a relationship he made in the Centurions Leadership Program, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's two-year leadership development program. After an initial consultation, Dr. Hill retained Husch Blackwell to transform her vision into a reality.

Challenges

Dr. Hill's vision was big and bold. It required a framework that could:

- (a) immediately inspire confidence in the donor class and philanthropists who could fund the operation in a meaningful way,
- (b) ensure compliance with all necessary laws and regulations,
- (c) and create a structure that will support growth of the organization.

Legal Team

Theresa M. Mullineaux
Bryce Navarro

These are issues with which even mature not-for-profits struggle with at times; for new organizations, such challenges could be formidable.

Solution

Taking our cues from the client's passion and depth of knowledge regarding the mission of the organization, we quickly brought together a team of lawyers who could creatively think about how to achieve Dr. Hill's objectives.

Our team worked directly with Dr. Hill to find the appropriate not-for-profit structure that fit her long-term goals for the organization.

After BLAQUE was formed, Dr. Hill expressed that she wanted to continue the relationship with Husch Blackwell. As a result, the firm has continued working as BLAQUE's general counsel meeting with funders, reviewing contracts, and providing other advice and guidance.

In particular, we used our legal expertise to create BLAQUE's form contractor/consulting agreement, which they now use for their various vendors. This allows for BLAQUE to cut costs and mitigate the risks associated with using an outside vendor agreement, including litigation. We also provided strategic comments to a license agreement related to the use of personal information. By providing counsel on intellectual property issues and data and privacy use restrictions, we helped safeguard BLAQUE allowing Dr. Hill to focus on her vision.

Result

BLAQUE became operational in October 2020 and has already experienced success on the fundraising front, securing pledges and grants that will enable the organization to thrive. We are excited to continue to support BLAQUE in

its mission to improve academic, economic, social, emotional, and life outcomes of African-American children in public schools.