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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Entrepreneurship Center at the Urban League of Greater Cleveland, in collaboration with UBIZ Venture Capital, is Preparing African-American Woman Entrepreneurs. The Black Women in Retail Program is sponsored by Walmart through the Walmart.org Center for Racial Equality.

Cleveland, OH, September 25, 2023 – The Urban League of Greater Cleveland's Entrepreneurship Center enrolled 14 Black, women-owned businesses to receive general and industry-specific coaching, mentoring, and training through the Black Women in Retail Accelerator Program in collaboration with the National Urban League and sponsored by Walmart through the Walmart.org Center for Racial Equity.

The program concludes with pitch opportunities in September and October for qualified businesses; participants will also be given direct assistance with certification, direct access to retail relationships, and leadership skills development training.

“Our participants are learning how to position their products to get on the shelves of big box retailers,” said Michael Obi, President & CEO, of UBIZ Venture Capital. “They will also have an opportunity to explore manufacturing options to scale up their production capacity.”

Cleveland is one of five Urban League affiliates participating in the national program in collaboration with the Urban Leagues of New Orleans, Cincinnati/Southwest Ohio, Atlanta, and St. Louis.

“I am so excited that our Urban League was one of the affiliates selected to participate in the Walmart Retail Program,” said ULGC President & CEO Marsha A. Mockabee. “This extensive program is a game changer for these Black and African American women who will have an opportunity to get their products in major retail establishments.”

Currently, Black women are the fastest-growing demographic of entrepreneurs in the U.S., but even with their growing presence in the business world, these women face disproportionate financial headwinds. Given a lack of access to capital, Black women are more likely than other demographic groups to self-fund their businesses.

In collaboration with all affiliate groups, the program provided a series of virtual and in-person leadership development training sessions, which will help Black women-owned retail businesses strategize, evaluate and, if needed, pivot their business model and processes to make informed decisions and better communicate with, delegate to, and motivate staff.

The program’s goal is to provide participants access to strategically placed retail relationships to strengthen their abilities to become service providers; develop manufacturing relationships to increase shelf presence, thus growing revenues; and potentially receive working capital to support business growth.

The program is continuing to provide opportunities for the participants with events such as the onboarding of Meijer’s Richmond Heights Super Center Partnership held on September 21 with a Road Map to Retail Virtual Supplier Informational Session.

The Entrepreneurship Center is also hosting a Black Women in Retail Pitch Competition for the participants on October 26 that includes a \$2500 prize. The 2023 Black Women in Retail program will culminate with a Career Expo and Graduation ceremony on November 4. “Black women in business continues to be a movement and we are excited to participate in the growth of sisterhood through economics in retail to increase wealth and the presence of black entrepreneurship in the community,” Alisa Bray, UBIZ Director of Operations, Portfolio Management & Programs.