

EXHIBIT D

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Bankole: Whitmer, Dems ignore Highland Park water crisis

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What good is it to have Democrats in power in Lansing, with control of the executive and legislative branches, if they are showing trepidation in solving the crisis facing Black Michigan?

In the wake of a crisis resulting from mounting water bills, impoverished Highland Park is the latest city testing the resolve and commitment of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's administration to a real and inclusive urban agenda. The city doesn't even have a fully functioning public library.

Highland Park's \$21 million water debt is strangulating the city. Whitmer needs to intervene immediately to bring this protracted issue to a resolution that would allow the city to get back on its feet.

Whitmer has no excuse. The governor would not have been elected the state's chief executive twice without the ardent support of Black voters. She owes it to Black people to go above and beyond for distressed Black communities that Democrats consistently use to drum up support during elections. It is almost embarrassing to watch Highland Park basically on its knees asking for state help.

The governor indicated this week that she is weighing her options for how to proceed. Her focus should be on helping give the city a fresh start to rebuild from its economic doldrums.

"The governor has already sent her ambassadors to the city to try to get more detail about the water situation. It is now time for Gov. Whitmer to step in and fix the Highland Park water situation," Maureen Taylor, longtime water rights activist and head of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, told me. "We have in Michigan taken over every elected position, and we

are not going to see this circumstance again for decades. While we are holding the reigns of the wagons of progress, we should run the table.’

Taylor said Democrats are facing a historic opportunity that they should not squander. The time to act is now.

“We are in charge of everything. Let’s go act like we are in charge,” Taylor said.

But for Democrats it is easier said than done, which explains why Highland Park remains a lingering issue. Benton Harbor is another city whose school debt crisis appears to have been ignored by Lansing powerbrokers under the leadership of Rep. Joe Tate, D-Detroit, the first Black speaker of the House.

Democrats are notorious for claiming that there is no money to address the plethora of challenges facing urban communities.

Yet Fay Beydoun, a staunch ally of Whitmer and a party faithful is able to easily receive \$20 million in taxpayer dollars from the state for her organization, Global Link International, which only established 10 days after funds were allocated for it. It has done nothing to deserve the funds.

The money Beydoun received is a million dollars short of Highland’s water debt and almost twice the amount of Benton Harbor’s school debt. Lansing’s misguided priorities are ridiculous and underscore the need to pressure the administration to step up to the plate.

Highland Park probably doesn’t have influential people like Beydoun who can receive millions of dollars from the state simply for setting up an organization.

But there are real Black lives in that city, including innocent women and children whose well-being should matter to Whitmer and Democrats. They may not be major campaign donors to the party's coffers, but they are the heart and soul of the Democratic Party. As such, their issues should be of the highest priority to Whitmer and her team.

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Catch “Redline with Bankole Thompson,” which broadcasts at 11 a.m. weekdays on 910AM and “Sunday Nation,” on Sundays at 1 p.m. on MyTV38 WADL-Detroit. His column appears on Mondays and Thursdays in the newspaper.

