

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland's 2009 Legislative Priorities

For the 2009 Legislative session, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland will continue to put forth and support legislation that will eliminate the disparities within the state and ensure economic opportunities and good welfare for all.

The LBCM will be focusing on the following five areas:

Under **Budgetary Items**, chaired by Senator Ulysses Currie, we are interested in the following items:

1- CAPITAL BUDGET

- a. Bowie State University – new fine and performing arts building- \$34 million
- b. Coppin State University – science and technology center - \$9.4 million
- c. Morgan State University – campus-wide renovations, new environmental studies and business schools - \$45 million

2- HIGHER EDUCATION – HBI – BOWIE, COPPIN, MORGAN AND UMES

- a. Graduation rates and college readiness
- b. Comparability and competitiveness
- c. Need-based financial aid and Pell Grants

3- STATE BUDGET

- a. Out-of-state placements
- b. GCEI

4- COLLEGE BOARDS

- a. SAT and ACT

Under **Economic Development**, chaired by Delegate Herman L. Taylor, Jr., the Caucus will examine and support the following issues:

1- ADJUSTING THE CURRENT CAP

A range of bills are being introduced regarding caps on the MBE/WBE program, including:

- Removing the cap altogether
- Doubling the net worth to a cost of living adjustment
- Having MDOT and GOMA evaluate the program and provide a recommendation on the increase as it relates to net worth and size.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland's 2009 Legislative Priorities

We support this adjustment because the current cap hinders the ability of minority business owners to become prime contractors and it inhibits their ability to compete on a larger scale. We also need to increase the capacity for minority business opportunities and growth.

2- INCREASING OUTREACH PROGRAMS

We are calling for an increase in outreach programs because:

- We need to make it “the norm” to see MBE participation
- Outreach can help ensure the start up and maintenance of the minority and small business population.
- Growth cannot occur unless channels of communication and open exchange are built.
- Information is available, but it is not being accessed.

3- CREATING OF A MBE STATE DIRECTORY

Currently, MBE that have graduated from the program or exceeded the cap are removed from the directory. In order to foster growth, access to these businesses should not stop here. If minority business is to thrive, it needs to be given the opportunity to do so.

- The directory will allow graduated businesses to be accessed to foster continued growth.

4- IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

We support this improvement for the following reasons:

- To allow better access to minority business
- Economic development and participation of minority business cannot occur if they cannot be accessed

Under **Health Care**, chaired by Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, we are supporting reinstatement of funding for the following areas:

- 1- The Minority Outreach and Technical Assistance Program (MOTA) funded through the Cigarette Restitution Fund. Cutting this funding will have a negative impact on minorities across the state.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland's 2009 Legislative Priorities

- 2- Statewide Steering Committee for Adult with Sickle Cell Disease. Reinstating at least some of the money for legislation passed in 2007 (HB 793).
- 3- The Office of Minority Health for programs overseen by the OMH such as infant mortality.

Under **Higher Education**, chaired by Delegate James Proctor, Jr., we are asking the administration to further examine the following areas and how they impact HBIs:

1- SIX YEAR GRADUATION RATES AT HBIs

The current model does not address the economic or social disadvantages that disproportionately affect graduation rates.

2- NEED FOR ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL AID

Most students are heavily reliant of financial aid to fund their college education. Financial aid is a determinate factor on whether or not a student continues their education.

3- REMEDIAL CLASSES

Remedial classes have become a necessity for most students entering college due to lack of preparedness from high school. We must reevaluate how high schools students are becoming college ready.

- 4- Consultants to determine by campus needs to students and ability of schools to provide services

Under **Law and Justice**, chaired by Delegate Joseline Peña-Melynk, we are supporting the following areas:

1- IDENTIFICATION CARDS FOR RELEASED INMATES

The MD Motor Vehicle Administration began a pilot program in November 2008 at the Brock Bridge Minimum Security Prison in Jessup to issue identification to inmates upon release. The MD Public Safety and Correctional Services Department is partnering with MVA on this

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland's 2009 Legislative Priorities

project, which has minimal cost implications for MVA, and was executed through a joint Memorandum of Understanding. Senator Pugh's bill would standardize the program statewide and give inmates an important tool for successful re-entry into the workforce and society.

2- EXPUNGEMENT

This bill would give a person the opportunity to apply for expungement of a police record for a single, non-violent crime, but not sooner than four years after conviction or completion of the sentence, including probation, and only after the person has been employed for 18 months. This possibility of a "clean slate" for someone who has committed a non-violent offense greatly enhances employment prospects, including jobs for which the applicant must pass certain types of background checks and security clearances, and would expand opportunities for future promotions and/or career changes.

3- PRISONER RE-ENTRY

A task force would investigate the above factors and others to help better understand and then recommend what would constitute a comprehensive re-entry plan for the 12,000 inmates Maryland's corrections systems release each year.