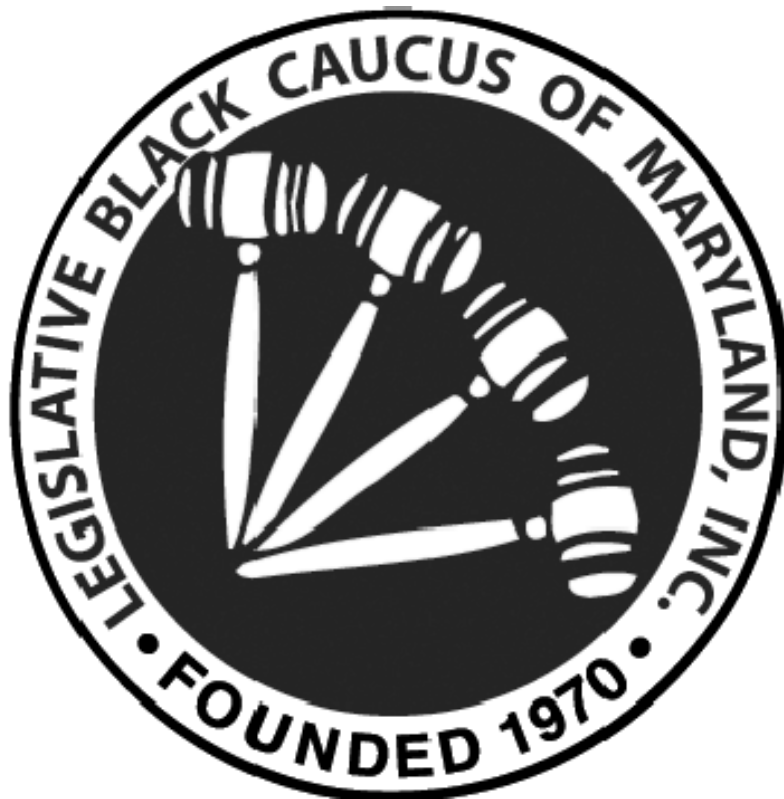


2011 Legislative Priorities



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Redistricting:

- African Americans represent over one-third of the State, yet we are currently only 25% of the House and 17% of the Senate. The Caucus' goal in redistricting is to ensure fair and equitable representation of black's throughout the state of Maryland. The Maryland State Court of Appeals, in the 2002 redistricting case which overturned the Governor's 2002 Redistricting Plan, stated that "the equal protection clause and the 15th Amendment require states to apportion both houses of their legislatures on an equal population basis to assure that one citizen's vote is approximately equal in weight to that of every other citizen and prohibit them from intentionally discriminating through the apportionment process against racial or ethnic minorities." The caucus would like to work with leadership to ensure that the plan adopted by the General Assembly is not successfully challenged on a constitutional basis or on Article II of the voting rights act. To that end, we respectfully request that members of the caucus be included in redistricting workgroups established by the House and the Senate.
- Section 4. of the Maryland Constitutions states that "[e]ach legislative District shall be compact in form and of substantially equal population. Due regard shall be given to natural boundaries and the boundaries of political subdivisions." The Caucus wants to ensure that political subdivisions are not divided in a way that dilutes the African American vote. We believe that preventing voter dilution will ensure the election of African Americans as state representatives, judges, council members, school board and other offices.
- We respectfully request that minorities, specifically African Americans, are represented on the Redistricting Commission. Furthermore, we would like the Governor to regularly engage with the Caucus on the Congressional and State Redistricting plans.
- Public engagement is an extremely important part of the redistricting process. Therefore, we suggest that the Commission hold their meetings at various locations throughout the state, especially in locations that minorities are underrepresented .i.e. Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore.

Health Care

- Health Disparities
 - Develop strategies to end racial and ethnic health disparities
 - **Ensure ALL aspects of health disparities are incorporated into Health Reform legislations below:**
 - 3 Administration Bills:
 - Health Benefits Exchange
 - Health Quality & Cost Council
 - Insurance Market Reform
- Health Information Technology (HIT)
 - **Address challenges for minority physicians and consumers**
 - Ensure black physicians are not left behind regarding the implementation of HIT
- Infant Mortality
 - Reducing infant mortality is one of Administration's 15 strategic priorities to improve the quality of life in Maryland.
 - While a 10% decline in Maryland's infant mortality rate represents progress, **more must be done to target infant mortality within the African-American community.**
 - Maryland's Black infant mortality rate is 12.0 deaths/1,000 births
- Correctional Medical Services
 - Improvements in the coordination of services are necessary for inmates being released from prison:
 - Healthcare: inmates with pre-existing medical conditions should receive proper referrals and follow-up care upon release from prison. (*Public Health issue*)
 - Housing: inmates are being released, homeless and sleeping on streets.
 - Example Shelter: Code Blue Shelter (located in Baltimore City; Unhealthy living conditions and drug trafficking exists)
- Drug Treatment: inmates with history of substance abuse require proper treatment and services while incarcerated and post-release

Higher Education

- We are greatly concern about the placement of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, its reorganization and its impact on Historical Black Institutions
- As in previous years, we are still adamantly against the duplication of academic programs. We will continue to fight on this issue, and comparability and competitiveness for HBIs. We are concern about the amount of funding allocated in the budget for litigation for MHEC.
- We support the funding requests from all the HBIs
- We would like to create a study to examine the impact of adjunct faculty versus full time faculty as it relates to graduation rates

Economic Empowerment:

- Following the review of the MBE disparities study, we will examine ways to further expand the State's MBE program, increase minority participation in areas such as equity, and moving minority businesses beyond the MBE program.
- We encourage the State's pension fund to expand its diversity into areas such as private equity, real estate and broker dealer relationships.
- We shall also provide legislation to examine the use of waivers by State Agencies.
- We will continue to monitor the video lottery process, to ensure minority participation.

Quality of Life Issues

- We will continue to support quality of life issues such as:
 - Maryland Automobile Insurance Fund
 - Compulsory attendance age
 - Prisoner Re-entry to the workforce
 - A study to examine the drop-out rate amongst prisoners and individuals who are going through the prison system
 - Making Families Whole- examining the disenfranchisement in joint custody cases.

*We are also supporting the Harriet Tubman Statue bill