



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

860-240-8555

2015 Legislative agenda

Education

➤ Cultural Competency

- Look at implementing a program where cultural competency is taught to current teachers as a part of their professional development.
- Imbed cultural competency into the curriculum of teacher training programs.
- The commission believes that this approach to addressing the achievement gap will help to make strides in educating children from low performing mostly minority districts.

Cultural competence in education is:

- ✓ Knowing the community where the school is located
- ✓ Understanding all people have a unique world view
- ✓ Using curriculum that is respectful of and relevant to the cultures represented in its student body
- ✓ Being alert to the ways that culture affects who we are
- ✓ Placing the focus of responsibility on the professional and the institution
- ✓ Examining systems, structures, policies and practices for their impact on all students and families

➤ Addressing chronic absenteeism which leads to drop out

- Develop a rapid response effort once a student is on the verge of being chronically absent
- Mentoring efforts that are aimed at addressing this issue possibly using college students who are looking to earn extra credit or those looking

Our Mission

To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut

356,880

The estimated African-American population in Connecticut. There has been a 45% increase in the African American population over the last 30 years. African-Americans make up 10% of the population

82%

The difference in income between the median income for African American families and the median income for the state of Connecticut

85%

Of African Americans graduate from High school

19%

Of African Americans have a bachelor's degree

for volunteering opportunities.

➤ **Post-Secondary education student debt**

- Addressing for profit colleges from a regulation and consumer protect aspect. Many for profit institutions make promises that they are unable to deliver on. They have predatory recruiting practices that target poor minority communities. The false sense of achievement these student have are quickly diminished when they are unable to pass state licensing exams as they are as not fully prepared for the career they hoped to have. Students who attend for profit colleges tend to carry \$40,000 more in debt that students who attend state institutions.

“The situation for students at for-profit institutions is particularly troubling. On average, attending a two-year for-profit institution costs a student four times as much as attending a community college. More than 80 percent of students at for-profits borrow, while less than half of students at public institutions do. Ultimately, students at for-profit colleges represent only about 11 percent of the total higher education population but 44 percent of all federal student loan defaults.” (<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/obama-administration-announces-final-rules-protect-students-poor-performing-care>)

Housing

- Have banks also use a vantage score qualifications in addition to a FICO score for looking at mortgage.
- Vantage scores are similar to FICO scores but are not used as widely. African Americans have a significant wealth gap compared to their white peers earning approximately 75 cents for every 1 dollar earned by a white worker. African Americans are less likely to have access to credit and therefore less likely to own a home which the asset that most Americans use to build wealth. By being able to consider vantage scores and other forms of income and payment verification this would help this community have access to mortgages which in turn will help to build wealth.

Criminal Justice

➤ **Criminal records for employment purposes**

- Propose legislation that would make a person able to check off that they were not convicted in applications for employment if it had been more than 5 years since their last offence and they have not had any other convictions. This excludes simple traffic violations. This would only apply to Misdemeanors. (Certain jobs would still be able to see the criminal records for example law enforcement, working with children, elderly, etc.)

“Today, a criminal record serves as both a direct cause and consequence of poverty. It is a cause because having a criminal record can present obstacles to employment, housing, public assistance, education, family reunification, and more; convictions can result in monetary debts as well.”

“It is important to note that communities of color—and particularly men of color— are disproportionately affected, and high-poverty, disadvantaged communities generate a disproportionate share of Americans behind bars”.

The lifelong consequences of having a criminal record—and the stigma that accompanies one—stand in stark contrast to research on “redemption” that documents that once an individual with a prior nonviolent conviction has stayed crime free for three to four years, that person’s risk of recidivism is no different from the risk of arrest for the general population. (<https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/VallasCriminalRecordsReport.pdf>)