



Legislative/Policy Agenda

2016 Legislative Session

The AAAC had a successful 2015 legislative session and we would like to build from that momentum and continue to make more positive legislative strides that will be beneficial to the lives of African Americans in the state. This session we will focus on Criminal Justice and employment issues, racial disparities in economic development, education and continue our work on student debt reform.

Criminal Justice

In order to be fully rehabilitated ex-offenders need to have access to gainful employment. Currently there are many barriers that these individuals face such as not being able to receive certain licenses or certificates and having to check a box to say that they have been convicted of a felony in the job application process which in most cases eliminates any possibility of being given a first interview. The AAAC would like to see the following reforms:

- ***Ban the box for all employment***
- ***Remove felony restrictions placed on certain licenses***
- ***Reform Criminal Record information***

We also believe that there needs to be a time limit placed on the availability of criminal records for employment purposes. Other states have made policy reforms in this area. This session the AAAC would like to see Connecticut join the ranks of other states that have made bold reforms in criminal justice building upon the second chance society by placing a specified time limit on the availability of certain criminal records for employment purposes.

Education

Connecticut continues to be faced with the largest achievement gap in the country. In the upcoming session we will address one of the major components attributed to low student performance, minority teacher recruitment. Using the recommendations from the MTR taskforce the AAAC will work to improve the number of teachers and administrators of color in schools in Connecticut. More specifically there needs to be stronger language around teacher reciprocity and an examination of the requirements needed to become a certified teacher in Connecticut.

Education Funding

For many years there has been debate about how education is funded in the state. The AAAC would like to see a more balanced method of funding education so all students have access to the highest quality education possible.

Student Debt

Building upon the success of the student loan bill of rights that was passed last session the AAAC will continue to work on tackling student debt which is still a huge issue in our communities. A recent report showed that even though the debt load for African American families in urban areas may not be high, the default rates are disproportionately high.

Free Community college

Many states have started the conversation around free community college and some have actually made community college free to many students. In the next session we hope to start the journey in Connecticut to determine how the state could fund such an endeavor.

Economic Development

While the country has started to recover from the recession we see African American families doing so at a much slower rate if any at all. The AAAC is dedicated to helping African American families have access to economic mobility. This year we will look at the racial disparities that exist in economic development programs in the state and work on policy that will help to eradicate some of the barriers that exist.

Paid Family Medical Leave

The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not offer paid family medical leave. Many African American family care givers are either forced to take unpaid time off from work or are unable to take time off to care for their loved ones. This session we will work to pass a paid family medical leave insurance program which will benefit many workers in the state.

Retirement Security

The income inequality that exists across the board is evident when looking at retirement. There are disparities in access and participation in retirement programs which results in African Americans not being able to retire or when they do not having enough money in their golden years. The AAAC supports efforts to create a retirement program for all residents of the state which will give low income families that do not have access to an employer sponsored program the ability to save for their own retirement.

Debt Collection

A recent report from the CFPB shows that there are clear disparities that exist in debt collection practices. This session the AAAC will support state and federal legislators that are working on policies that will address unfair and deceptive practices that have been used by debt collection agencies for decades.

Health Care

Health disparities continue to exist in our state with minorities having poorer health outcomes when compared to whites. In the upcoming session the AAAC will continue to work to eliminate these disparities with policy and legislation.