



20 LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND 24 PRIORITY AGENDA ACCOMPLISHMENTS



2024 PRIORITY AGENDA ACCOMPLISHMENTS



HEALTH

HB 1051/SB 1059: Maryland Maternal Health Act of 2024

In Maryland, Black women are 4 times as likely to die as a result of childbirth. Between 2014 and 2016, birthing Black women in the United States were three to four times (243%) more likely to succumb to a pregnancy-related death than their white counterparts. HB 1051/SB 1059 requires the creation of an electronic prenatal risk assessment (PRA) form to connect to local health departments, as well as mandates birthing facilities to complete Postpartum Infant and Maternal Referral (PIMR) forms. Additionally, this legislation obliges the participation of birthing facilities in the Severe Maternal Morbidity (SMM) Surveillance and Review Program, and creates a Maryland Report Card for Birthing Facility Maternity Care for each hospital in the State. This bill was sponsored by Delegate Jennifer White Holland and Senator Arthur Ellis.

HB 1293/SB 938: Maryland Department of Health - Public Education Campaign on Prostate, Lung, and Breast Cancer Prevention

Black Marylanders are disproportionately impacted by cancer, including prostate, lung, and breast cancer. Through legislation, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland has worked to reduce and eliminate barriers to screening for these cancers. HB 1293/SB 938 creates a \$750,000 statewide public education campaign to educate and engage impacted communities and reduce incidences of lung, prostate, and breast cancer. The bill was sponsored by Delegate Jamila Woods and Senator Malcolm Augustine.

HOUSING

HB 693: Governor's Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024

Racial discrimination has kept Black communities in Maryland trapped in a cycle of poverty and housing insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this cycle and, in 2021, led to 24% of Black renters in Maryland falling behind on their rent, leading to higher rates of eviction and homelessness. The Governor's Renters Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024 will raise the bar on evictions by increasing the filing fee for evictions to \$43 for breach of lease, summary ejection, and tenant holdover. The surcharge will be deposited into the Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund and the Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program. This bill was sponsored by the Gov. Wes Moore Administration.

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BLACK WEALTH & BUSINESSES

HB 877/SB 703: Board of Public Works - Transparency Data Dashboard

The Board of Public Works is tasked with approving state budget spending, overseeing the issuance of bonds, and the acquisition and transfer of state property. Increasing the transparency of the Board's decision-making process ensures that Black entrepreneurs have greater opportunities for state contracts. HB 877/SB 703 requires the Board of Public Works to establish a public, interactive dashboard that allows citizens to access the information that they need. It also requires the Governor's office to include an appropriation in the annual budget bill for staffing and software for the upkeep of the dashboard. This bill was sponsored by Delegate N. Scott Phillips and Senator Antonio Hayes.

SB 1014: State Procurement - Procurement Forecast and Outreach

Maryland is home to over 102,000 Black-owned businesses. Black-owned businesses generate \$6.8 billion annually, contributing a generous amount of money to Maryland's state economy. Maryland also ranks 7th in the nation for the largest number of minority-owned businesses. However, the State of Maryland has never once met its 29% aspirational goal of contracting MBEs since they have set the goal. SB 1014 aids small and minority-owned businesses by requiring units to publish annual procurement forecasts on a strict schedule, monitor which contracts were successfully awarded with and without being forecasted, and increase outreach efforts from units to MBEs. This is a data-driven approach to move the State procurement system closer to its goal. This bill was sponsored by Senator Nick Charles.

HB 962/SB 673: State Procurement - Small Business Reserve Program - Goals and Outreach Program

There are over 580,000 small businesses across the state of Maryland, with 34.5% of these businesses being minority-owned. However, due to longstanding economic inequality, minority-owned businesses generate less revenue than white-owned businesses. HB 962/SB 673 renames the Small Business Reserve (SBR) Program to the Small and Minority Business Reserve Program, recognizing the importance of MBEs in State procurement. The SBR Program operates as a set aside specifically for certified small businesses—providing them with a unique marketplace to compete for State procurement contracts. This bill also raises the goal from 15% to 20% for the total dollar value of contract awards given to small businesses under the SBR Program. This is significant because many contracting opportunities given to our MBEs are subcontracting jobs, and the SBR Program raising its goal for small business participation will increase the amount of prime-contracting opportunities for small businesses and, thus, MBEs. The bill was sponsored by Delegate N. Scott Phillips and Senator Nick Charles.

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EDUCATION EQUITY

HB 200/SB 161: Community Schools – Alterations

In Maryland, Community Schools provide critical wrap-around services to students and families, and schools have increased and flourished under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Maryland houses over 500 community schools across 23 counties and Baltimore City. HB 200/SB 161 strengthens and improves Maryland's Community Schools by implementing national best practices. This bill was sponsored by Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins and Senator Alonzo Washington.

HB 1244: Maryland Higher Education Commission – Academic Program Approval and Institutional Mission Statements – Requirements

During the 2022-2023 academic year, several predominantly white institutions (PWIs) across Maryland were found to have duplicated several degree programs from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the state. These harms led to a violation of a 2021 legal settlement that required Maryland to direct \$577 million to the state's HBCUs for underfunding the schools. HB 1244/SB 1022 establishes a new process for academic program approval and institutional mission statements based on State and regional needs. It also incentivizes collaboration between institutions for program development to help maintain distinctiveness among higher education institutions. Lastly, it allows the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to review existing programs for any signs of duplication and establish a council and procedure guide related to the review process. This bill was sponsored by Delegate Stephanie Smith.

Equitable Funding for Land Grant Institutions (state budget item): The United States ranks first in college endowments globally; however, the endowment dispersion is not equal across the board. For every \$100 a predominantly white institution receives, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) only receive \$1. The funding disparities between Maryland's Land Grant Institutions, the University of Maryland College Park and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, have persisted between 1987 and 2020 despite mandates set forth to equally fund both schools. In efforts to rectify this, Gov. Wes Moore included approximately \$5 million in land grant funding for Maryland's sole HBCU Land Grant Institution, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

Access to Early Childhood Education (state budget item): quality early childhood education correlates to long-term educational success for children. Through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, more families have access to early childhood education. However, access has been at risk due to limited funding and the overwhelming interest in accessing quality programs. The program has seen participation—more than doubled since January 2021, increasing to more than 31,000 children. Black Caucus leaders worked to ensure almost \$488 million of new funding was allocated to the Child Care Scholarship Program to address shortfalls in Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, and adequately fund the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. The Fiscal Year 2025 budget prohibits any increase in co-payments for families participating in the Child Care Scholarship Program above those in place on January 1, 2024.

2024 PRIORITY AGENDA ACCOMPLISHMENTS



JUSTICE REFORM & PUBLIC SAFETY

HB 92/SB 620: Resources and Education for All Prisons

Despite Black residents making up 32% of the general population of Maryland, we constitute 69% of all people incarcerated in Maryland's prisons. Mass incarceration negatively alters the life course of Black people in Maryland—diminishing employment opportunities, educational attainment, housing, and an overall decreased quality of life. The education of incarcerated individuals has been shown to reduce recidivism by 40-50%. HB 92/SB 620 mandates that the Department of Public Safety and Corrections Services (DPSCS) assist inmates in accessing Pell Grants to receive tuition and school supplies. This bill also requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MDOL) to track the progress of each incarcerated individual as well as the number of participants who enroll and/or complete college courses. This bill was sponsored by Delegate Marlon Amprey and Senator Jill Carter.

HB 297/SB 134: Office of the Correctional Ombudsman - Establishment and Funding

Oversight of Maryland correctional facilities is critical to the welfare of our communities inside and outside of the walls. Maryland houses 531 people per 100,000 in our state's prisons and jails, an international outlier when compared to NATO member countries such as the United Kingdom (129 per 100,000), Portugal (111 per 100,000), and Canada (104 per 100,000). HB 297/SB 134 creates a brand new government oversight entity that is tasked with overseeing investigations, reviews, and administrative actions to provide accountability and transparency on behalf of those who are incarcerated, their families, and employees of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections Services (DPSCS). The bill also creates the Correctional Ombudsman Advisory Board, which will help to operationalize the new entity. The Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit, today a part of the Office of the Attorney General, will also be incorporated into the new entity. The bill was sponsored by Delegate Debra Davis.

HB 550/SB11: Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and Maryland Judiciary – Information Technology – Partial Expungement

HB 550/SB 11's partial expungement provisions provide a pathway to lessen the adverse effects on individuals resulting from criminal records that are covered under the bill. Expungement can be helpful to impacted individuals in obtaining employment and other related benefits. National and State data show significant negative effects of a criminal record on employment outcomes, and while specific data is not available to measure the extent of these impacts, Black individuals could benefit the most from the bill as they are significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. This bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to include system upgrades necessary to allow for the automated expungement of charges and partial expungement of charges. The bill was sponsored by Delegate Nicole Williams and Senator Jill Carter.

HB 1037: Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services – Establishment

Maryland releases 7,400 people from prison annually, but they often have trouble accessing services to help them transition back to civilian life. A lack of transitional services for those released in our state contributes to diminished job opportunities, housing access, educational attainment, poorer overall health, and an overall drop in quality of life. HB 1037/SB 1036 establishes a Task Force assigned to streamline resources and support available to help returning citizens access re-entry services to help them transition back into their communities. This bill was sponsored by Delegate Kym Taylor.