



THE Gavel



The Official Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

State Representative Donna Bullock, *Chairwoman*

SUMMER 2021

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LEADING WITH PURPOSE



I am honored to be selected by my colleagues to chair the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC) this session, and to do so with an amazing executive team from across the commonwealth. Together, we are committed to leading or, when necessary, defeating legislation and policy that impacts Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) Pennsylvanians and their equitable access to opportunity, justice and democracy.

Each session, PLBC members introduce legislation on issues ranging from criminal justice reform to veterans affairs. Recognizing our diverse legislative priorities, I established several additional subcommittees to help us focus on each of these platforms. With the help of our Police Reform Working Group and subcommittees on Budget Equity, Education, Health Equity, Public Safety, Women and Girls of Color, and Voting and Democracy, we can focus on each issue separately and at their intersections.

Leading the PLBC during the convergence of a pandemic, economic crisis and civil uprisings requires me to be intentional about the work of the caucus. I believe we must collectively employ an anti-racist, equitable, restorative, and reform-minded approach to legislating. We must also engage statewide stakeholders in the legislative process through regional and statewide policy briefings, listening sessions and other conversations. This newsletter highlights some of that work and hopefully, informs the work for the upcoming months.

Yours In Service,

Rep. Donna Bullock



2021-2022 LEADERSHIP



Rep. Donna Bullock, Chair
195th District
North & West Philadelphia



Rep. Summer Lee, Vice-Chair
34th District
Braddock, Pittsburgh



Rep. Carol Hill-Evans, Secretary
95th District
City of York



Rep. Manny Guzman, Treasurer
127th District
City of Reading

Budgeting for Racial Justice and Equity

PLBC SECURES FUNDS FOR SCHOOLS, GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND MORE

The PLBC Subcommittee on Budget Equity led the charge on advocating for a budget that invests in Black Pennsylvanians and other communities of color.

Chair Bullock and Rep. Nelson participated in budget conversations across the commonwealth and hosted a Budget Information and Listening Session with the budget secretary and PLBC stakeholders. The subcommittee also worked with the Administration and our colleagues in the General Assembly to develop a list of shared priorities.

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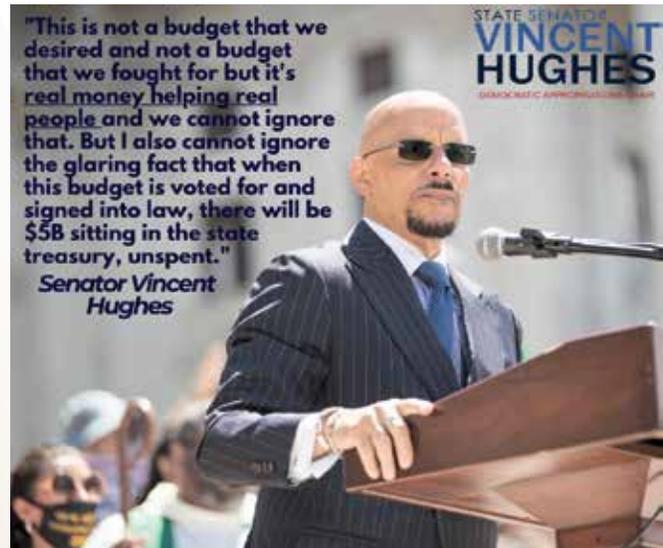
The Pennsylvania state budget is a valuable measure of our commonwealth's priorities and can be our best tool for racial equity.

PLBC CHAIR DONNA BULLOCK



While the final budget is a bucket of missed opportunities to help those most in need, our work delivered specific results for our communities:

- Newly created Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office to address systemic racism and bias in state government.
- \$100M in Level Up Funding for 100 of our most underfunded school districts, serving 65% of the state's Black students, and 58% of Latinx students. Level Up is modeled after a bill introduced by associate member Rep. Schlossberg.
- \$30M in new funding to support community violence programs, a framework outline in companion bills championed by Sen. Haywood and Chair Bullock.



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Leaders from these many communities came together to speak to their needs and seek our support. We have heard their call, and we will respond.

REP. NAPOLEON NELSON
CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON BUDGET EQUITY

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As lawmakers, it is our moral obligation to protect residents across this state, and the budget must reflect that. This will allocate the necessary funding to support and expand safety initiatives, to ensure no community in our commonwealth continues to live in fear, and it would save lives.

REP. MORGAN CEPHAS



Promoting Health and Public Safety

RACE AND COVID-19

Certain social determinants of health, such as poverty, food insecurity, and the lack of safe, affordable housing have important health implications in BIPOC communities. PLBC members continuously raise awareness on sickle cell disease, maternal health, HIV and AIDS, mental health, medical research, and other health conditions in our community. We support the efforts of Black-led and trusted providers, like The Black Doctors Consortium in Philadelphia. PLBC also focused on COVID-19 by coordinating vaccine and testing clinics in our districts, hosting a statewide vaccine access roundtable, and leading a policy hearing on the impact of COVID-19 on communities of color.



The Other Public Health Crisis: Gun Violence

In addition to securing \$30M in the state budget, the PLBC advocates for additional public health resources to address the causes and symptoms of gun violence. The PLBC is working with our PA SAFE Caucus and state and local officials to have a coordinated response to gun violence as the public health issue it is. We must also provide direct assistance to the impacted families who are burdened with long-term psychological and financial consequences. That's why Chair Bullock and Sen. Street hosted a webinar providing resources for gun violence survivors and their families, and why Rep. Davis introduced a bill that would provide financial relief for grieving families.

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Collaboration and trust will be imperative to give Black and Brown communities the tools necessary to make it through this pandemic safely.

REP. STEPHEN KINSEY
CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON HEALTH EQUITY

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Often times, these parents experience additional difficulties throughout the grieving process, and it may take several years before they can truly begin to heal, at which point the economic damage may already be done. This legislation would permit these grieving parents to either defer debt payments or apply for a grant program that can provide financial assistance.

REP. AUSTIN DAVIS

WHAT'S NEXT

August 18th – Policy Hearing: Police Labor Organizations and Police Reform

The focus of this hearing will be how discipline of officers is influenced and at times restrained by labor contracts and how that same system can be used to better hold officers accountable.

October 5th – PLBC Fall Harrisburg Reception

October 27th – 30th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Environmental Justice Principles

May 23, 2022 – 45th Anniversary of K. Leroy Irvis Speakership

UPCOMING EVENTS

Honoring our Legacy, Investing in our Future



Black History Month Floor Display



PLBC joined PA House Archives, Messiah University and other nonprofits from the city of Harrisburg to curate and present a Black History Month display at the back of the House chamber. The display highlighted the accomplishments of Black legislators and the history of Harrisburg's old 8th Ward, a predominately Black community that once stood where the Capitol Complex is today.

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From the Underground Railroad to the Black Lives Matter movement, Black women have led the way. Too often their contributions to society are minimized or ignored. That is why we named this award after the first Black woman elected to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, Crystal Bird Fauset. The three women we are honoring embody the spirit of Fauset and have made a significant impact in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through their leadership in state government.

PLBC CHAIR DONNA BULLOCK

In 1938, Crystal Bird Fauset became the first African American woman elected in any state legislature when she was elected to represent her West Philadelphia neighborhood in the Pennsylvania House. In March, the PLBC celebrated Women's History Month by honoring her and many other women of color who served our state.

The Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Presents The Virtual

Crystal Bird Fauset Leadership Award

2021 Honorees



Rosita Youngblood
The first Black woman elected to leadership in the PA General Assembly.



Leanna Washington
The first woman to chair the PLBC.



Gladys Brown Dutrieuille
Chair of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

Renaming the PLBC Scholarship



This year the PLBC honored former state Rep. James R. Roebuck by renaming our scholarship after him. Mr. Roebuck is a former chair of the PLBC. He also served as the Democratic chairman of the Pennsylvania House Education Committee for 18 years. On June 23, 2021, Mr. Roebuck joined us for a virtual event as we presented the inaugural namesake scholarships to 10 amazing students from across the commonwealth. The scholarship is made possible with the assistance of the PLBC Foundation and its donors.



I am very pleased that the PLBC has recognized my work as a legislator and educator and am truly grateful for this honor.

FORMER REP. JIM ROEBUCK



PLBC Scholarship awardee, Abronah Taylor, shadowed Chair Bullock and met with PLBC members.

Help Us Tell Our Story



The PLBC teamed up with PA House Archives to tell the story of the PLBC and we need your help. Let's make sure our history in the state Capitol is not forgotten. Do you have story to tell about the PLBC? Are you a former member or staffer? Reach out to Jesse Teitelbaum, Director of Archives, PA House of Representatives at (717) 783.3866, or by email at jteitelbaum@pabmc.net.



Accountability and Transparency in Policing

A year after George Floyd's murder and the PLBC moving two police reform bills to the governor's desk, policing legislation remains one of PLBC members' key priorities. Now is the time to advance bills that center on police accountability and transparency. Such legislation and policy include establishing a certification process for police (Wheatley), special prosecutors for police-involved shootings (Lee, Hughes), banning chokeholds (Kinsey), refining the standard for use of force (Lee, Hughes) and reforming Act 111 and discipline arbitration (Chair Bullock).

On July 16th, Gov. Wolf announced that the statewide police misconduct database is now active. Rep. Rabb introduced a bill to establish the database after the police fatally shot 17-year-old Antwon Rose in 2018.



Justice is not a here nor there occurrence. It's not an event, or a verdict, or a single piece of legislation. Justice is dismantling the systems of white supremacy that perpetuate inequality and injustice through the abuse of power.
REP. SUMMER LEE

Defending Our Democracy

We are seeing some of the most restrictive voting legislation since Jim Crow. So far this session more than 20 voter suppression bills have been introduced. The Voting and Democracy Subcommittee hosted briefings about judicial gerrymandering and voting access to help inform members about legislative attempts to disenfranchise voters.



In addition to protecting voter rights, the PLBC used its platform to call out and examine racism and nepotism in our courts. Chair Bullock, Rep. Lee, Sen. Williams and Sen. Street joined the Senate and House Democratic Policy Committees to host a policy hearing on racism in the courts. Pervasive racism and bias in our courts impacts jury selection, sentencing disparities, and public confidence.

We will not stand for this misleading misdirection and we wanted to bring this issue into the spotlight so we can examine the ways in which access to voting must be expanded and voting rights upheld.
REP. RICK KRAJEWSKI



Sen. Williams called for the hearing following an alarming equity organizational assessment of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania.

Investing in Equity and Economic Opportunity

From job fairs to small business grants, PLBC members believe we must invest in Black workers and entrepreneurs. This includes demanding equitable practices in new and emerging industries. That is why Reps. Wheatley and Parker are pushing for Black ownership opportunities in the cannabis industry, Rep. Burgos is fighting for a new generation of diverse farmers and Chair Bullock is challenging the green economy.

We must also invest in systems that foster equity and equal access to government services and opportunities. The Invest in Systemic Equity Legislative Package includes bills that would create a Racial Equity Task Force (Wheatley), an Office of Health Equity (Bullock, Kinsey), a Socially Diverse Farmers Commission (Burgos) and a Joint Legislative Equity Committee (Bullock). Other bills would provide bias and cultural training for public employees, study bias in automated decision systems and otherwise address racial bias and systemic equity.

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This agenda is a road map for changing the way we deliver services, distribute resources and otherwise do business in the commonwealth. If we want equity, we have to remove the barriers formed by generations of racism and replace them with inclusive and fair systems.

PLBC CHAIR DONNA BULLOCK



Connecting Black Workers

At the end of 2020, Pennsylvania had the highest state Black unemployment rate. 1 in 5 Black Pennsylvania workers were unemployed. In June, the PLBC and Temple University hosted the neighborhood job fair to connect job seekers with over 50 employers.

Support Black-Owned Businesses



PLBC members threw their support behind a new statewide business association for Black-owned businesses.



Donna Bullock
Chairwoman
195th Legislative District



Summer Lee
Vice-Chair
34th Legislative District



Carol Hill-Evans
Secretary
95th Legislative District



Manny Guzman
Treasurer
127th Legislative District

2021-22

PLBC OFFICERS AND MEMBERS



Amen Brown
190th Legislative District



Danilo Burgos
197th Legislative District



Morgan Cephas
192nd Legislative District



Angel Cruz
180th Legislative District



Austin Davis
35th Legislative District



Jason Dawkins
179th Legislative District



Isabella Fitzgerald
203rd Legislative District



Edward C. Gainey
24th Legislative District



Jordan A. Harris
186th Legislative District



Art Haywood
Senate District 4



Vincent J. Hughes
Senate District 7



Malcolm Kenyatta
181st Legislative District



Patty Kim
103rd Legislative District



Stephen Kinsey
201st Legislative District



Brian J. Kirkland
159th Legislative District



Rick Krajewski
188th Legislative District



Joanna E. McClinton
191st Legislative District



Napoleon Nelson
154th Legislative District



Darisha Parker
198th Legislative District



Chris Rabb
200th Legislative District



Nikil Saval
Senate District 1



Sharif Street
Senate District 3



Jake Wheatley, Jr.
19th Legislative District



Anthony H. Williams
Senate District 8



Dan Williams
74th Legislative District



Regina Young
185th Legislative District



Maureen E. Madden
115th Legislative District
Associate Member



Mike Schlossberg
132nd Legislative District
Associate Member



Peter G. Schweyer
22nd Legislative District
Associate Member