



**DONNA BULLOCK**  
*Chair*

328 IRVIS OFFICE BUILDING  
P.O. BOX 202195  
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2195  
(717) 787-3480

WWW.PAHOUSE.COM/PLBC  
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PALEGISLATIVEBLACKCAUCUS  
WWW.TWITTER.COM/PALEGBLKCAUCUS  
WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/PALEGBLKCAUCUS  
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WWW.TWITTER.COM/REPDONNABULLOCK  
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/REPDONNABULLOCK

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(717) 787-1914

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(717) 787-7514

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(717) 443-1679

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# Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

January 19, 2021

The Honorable Tom Wolf  
Governor of Pennsylvania  
225 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: **PLBC Focus on Equitable Budget**

Dear Governor Wolf,

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC) subcommittee on Budget Equity and in preparation for the 2021-2022 legislative budget season, we would like to outline a strategy inclusive of Pennsylvania's Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities. The state of our commonwealth has drastically changed since your last budget address, in particular for BIPOC communities. In response, we respectfully request a General Fund budget that addresses racial inequities that have plagued this commonwealth since its inception.

The Pennsylvania state budget is a valuable measure of our commonwealth's priorities and can be our best tool for racial and structural equity. Unfortunately, the budget sometimes adversely, even if unintentionally, impacts BIPOC communities. When resources and services are distributed and delivered through inherently biased systems and institutions, as the current pandemic and economic crises have highlighted, it only exacerbates longstanding racial disparities in health, education, and financial security. The budget presents a shared opportunity and responsibility to right these historical and ongoing injustices, to break down the systems that facilitate racism and oppression, and create an equitable future for all Pennsylvanians.

Your budget address on February 2nd will set the tone for our recovery. The PLBC strongly encourages you to directly address the inherent barriers in our system that need to be broken down and replaced with equitable, not equal, solutions. The budget should meet the basic needs of our most vulnerable communities, maintain critical infrastructure, and boldly focus on unfairly impacted people to ensure the health and safety of *all* Pennsylvanians. It must continue to invest in the PLBC's ongoing priorities such as pre-k education, career technical training, HBCU's, gun violence prevention, targeted grants and loans for BIPOC businesses, rental and utility assistance, and Black maternal health programs.

It must also progressively raise revenues and minimize cuts in an economic climate ravaged by the pandemic. This effort requires an equitable lens.

Governor Inslee of Washington State recently released a budget proposal that unabashedly and intentionally invests in racial and structural equity by directing all state agencies to center budgetary decisions and legislation around equity and efforts to eliminate racial disparities. This initiative included a fully-funded equity office designed to uproot racism and discrimination in state government.<sup>1</sup> We can do the same, and more, in our commonwealth.

In the coming weeks, the subcommittee on Budget Equity will propose specific budget priorities and strategies for BIPOC communities and look forward to working with you and the General Assembly to advance equitable, anti-racist budget proposals as part of the final budget package. We applaud your commitment to equity and justice, but the events of 2020 have proven that there is more work to be done. Together we can take this moment to implement strategic investments in a commonwealth that embraces and uplifts all of its people.

Sincerely,



State Representative Donna Bullock  
PLBC, Chair



State Representative Napoleon Nelson  
PLBC, subcommittee of Budget Equity

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<sup>1</sup> Inslee announces Washington's historic commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, <https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-washingtons-historic-commitment-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>