THE WEST VIRGINIA

BLACK POLICY AGENDA 2025

The West Virginia Black Policy Agenda is community-rooted and community-driven—a roadmap to a thriving West Virginia where every person can live a happy, healthy life in safe and flourishing communities.

It is a living document that we are continually refining and adding policies to based on input from Black West Virginians from all over the state.

You can tell us what you'd like to see prioritized at **bit.ly/Blackpolicysurvey**.

The Black Policy Agenda framework mirrors the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), which are the conditions in our environment that impact our health, functioning, and quality of life in our communities.

WE BELIEVE IN A WEST VIRGINIA THAT:

Ensures economic dignity and opportunity for all.

- **Create a state Child Tax Credit** to increase economic security for families with children
- **Pass the CROWN Act**, which provides legal protection against hair-based discrimination at work and school
- **Establish a commission to study the impact of slavery and racial discrimination** on the economic security, health, and well-being of African American West Virginians
- **Empower the Economic Development Authority** to fulfill its mission to encourage minority small business development and provide technical advisory services in minority neighborhoods through robust funding and oversight
- **Prioritize Black, minority, and female job advancement and training** through a population-focused pipeline for growing industries
- **Fully fund the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs** to empower its mission of recommending changes to law, policy, and allocation of resources to serve the state's minority population by providing appropriate staffing, resources, and leadership as needed

Invests in an equitable and well-funded public education system.

- Establish a **Youth Advisory Council for Civic Engagement**
- **Increase funding for child care development** to make child care more affordable for families and pay workers a living wage
- **Adjust the state's school aid funding formula** to provide districts adequate funding for the recommended ratio of professional support staff including school counselors, social workers, and nurses
- **Implement mentorship programs and restorative practices** in schools that increase cultural competency and school staff diversity
- **Keep public funds in public schools** by fully funding our public schools rather than diverting existing resources to vouchers
- **Create an ombudsman role in the Department of Education** to investigate discrimination claims
- Address years of underfunding at the state's historically-Black land-grant university, West Virginia State University, by committing to **increased funding on an ongoing basis**

WE BELIEVE IN A WEST VIRGINIA THAT:

Shrinks the criminal legal system.

- **Refuse efforts to increase penalties**, which do not deter crime but do contribute to the state's aging prison population
- **Enact Second Look Sentencing policies** that allow those with long sentences to petition for reconsideration after having served a significant portion of their sentence
- **Reduce technical parole and probation violations**, which are responsible for 25% of admissions to prison each year
- **Prohibit charging incarcerated persons for basic services** like medical copays and phone calls, which create a barrier to remaining healthy and connected to loved ones
- **Invest in the re-entry supports** needed for those returning to their communities to succeed, including affordable housing, access to health care, and jobs

Prioritizes the health of its people.

- **Provide adequate school-based mental health supports and substance use treatment**
- **Protect and expand funding and benefits in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)**
- **Increase access to prenatal and birth care** by requiring Medicaid and PEIA to cover doula care services and provide Certified Professional Midwives a path to licensure in West Virginia
- **Enact paid family and medical leave for all workers** to ensure no one has to choose between work and caring for themselves or a loved one
- **Increase state funding for the Marshall Minority Health Institute** to fully realize their mission of coordinating statewide efforts to improve and protect the health and well-being of racial and ethnic minorities

Builds healthy communities, housing, and environments.

- **Ensure all West Virginians have clean drinking water** in their homes and communities
- **Create a West Virginia Community Development Equity Fund** to support equitable projects
- **Invest in restoring and replacing dilapidated properties**
- **Increase the supply of affordable housing in minority neighborhoods** by bolstering funding for the Neighborhood Housing and Economic Development Stabilization Program

Has abundant food security.

- **Provide state funding for SNAP Stretch**
- **Enact a Food Desert Produce Pilot Program** to increase access to quality, affordable produce in food deserts
- **Fund supports for Black farmers and growers**
- **Protect funding and eligibility for programs that increase food security** like SNAP and Free and Reduced School Meals