The Fifth Annual Black Policy Day is scheduled for February 24, 2026 at the State Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia. Black Policy Day brings together hundreds of West Virginians from all over the state to advance civic engagement, raise our collective understanding of the decisions made by our state lawmakers, and advocate for policies from the community-sourced Black Policy Agenda.

ABOUT

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

We are excited to share the Black Policy Day brochure, created to spark meaningful conversations in our communities. Let's come together to shape a future where all community members have the opportunity to thrive.

BLACK BY GOD THE WEST VIRGINIAN

BLACKBYGOD.ORG

Black Voter Impact Initiative VOTING + ACTION = POWER www.bviiwv.com

BVIIWV.COM

PFAE PARTNERSHIP FOR FURTHERING ARTS & EDUCATION

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FIFTH ANNUAL BLACK POLICY DAY

From left to right Black Policy Day organizers Katonya Hart, Crystal Good, and Dr. Shanequa Smith at the West Virginia Capitol in 2025.

Building on the Blocks of Collaboration

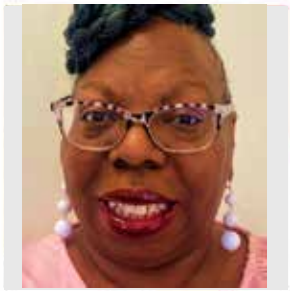
The Fifth Annual Black Policy Day at the West Virginia State Capitol will highlight the powerful impact of direct engagement and advocacy. This year's event on Feb. 24 will bring together hundreds of students, community leaders, sororities, fraternities, and organizations from across the state, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening civic engagement. Building on the strong foundation of collaboration laid in previous years, attendees participated in legislative meetings, the Crown Act Rally, and networking opportunities that deepen connections and strengthen collective efforts. By sharing experiences and perspectives with lawmakers, participants play a critical role in advancing policies that support equity and opportunity. Each year, the presence of more than 100 young people emphasizes the importance of nurturing new leadership and uplifting community voices to continue moving this work forward together.

ORIGINS AND ORGANIZERS

Black Policy Day evolved into a prominent event and now represents a powerful movement. The key organizers driving this initiative are Crystal Good (BBG), Katonya Hart (Partnership for Furthering Art and Education), and Dr. Shanequa Smith, a founding co-collaborator for Black Voter Impact Initiative.

These visionary leaders believe in the strength of shared power and are dedicated to creating inclusive spaces for all West Virginians. They envision a future where all West Virginians can actively participate in shaping their destinies through policy change and collaborative efforts.

Crystal Good
Black by God



Katonya Hart
Partnership for Furthering Art and Education

Dr. Shanequa Smith
Black Voter Impact Initiative

SIGN UP FOR THE BLACK POLICY DAY NEWSLETTER!

The Black Policy Day team publishes a monthly newsletter with upcoming events, learning opportunities, and timely stories and articles about community members in West Virginians.

Stay in touch with Black Policy Day West Virginia by signing up for our monthly newsletter at bit.ly/BPDnewsletter or with our QR code.

On behalf of the Black Policy Day team, thank you for your generous support and partnership in making the 2025 Black Policy Day a success. Your contribution was essential to creating a powerful space for civic engagement, advocacy, and community-building. Black Policy Day continues to grow each year because of partners like you who are committed to uplifting voices and driving change throughout West Virginia. It's the work we all do year-round—organizing, educating, and showing up—that inspires people to attend and be part of this movement. Your support helps us keep that momentum going and ensures that Black Policy Day remains a space where community members feel seen, heard, and empowered.

We look forward to continuing this work together.

Thank you for being part of the movement.

BLACK POLICY DAY 2025

Thank You!!!

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY AND BPD PHOTOS

Not Just a 'Day' at the Legislature

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 else you'd like to see prioritized in the Black Policy Agenda by visiting bit.ly/Blackpolicysurvey.

Empowerment

At its core, Black Policy Day provides a platform for historically oppressed and ignored Black and marginalized individuals to have their voices heard. It emphasizes the significance of unity in driving positive change and advocates for the active involvement of Black West Virginians in shaping policies that impact their lives.

Comprehensive Engagement

The event spans four years and includes a variety of activities such as webinars, strategy meetings, and training sessions, that culminates in a pivotal "Day" at the West Virginia state Capitol. During this Day, attendees have the opportunity to interact with policy experts and speakers who share their experiences on crucial matters affecting Black communities.

Key Policy Issues

The issues discussed during BPD are wide-ranging and touch on various aspects of Black West Virginians' lives. All these issues are interconnected and centered around the concept of social determinants of health.

Black Policy Day mirrors the community's knowledge, gaps in understanding, needs, wants, and opportunities.
The framework is guided by the concept of Social Determinants of Health, which recognizes that the conditions in our environments significantly impact various aspects of our lives, including where we live, learn, work, play, worship, and age.

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

GET ACTIVE

GET ACTIVE ON

Now more than ever, it's time for us to come together and raise our voices. When we stay connected and engaged, we can shape the future we deserve.

Our Get Active campaign is about building power as a community—through voting, speaking up, learning about the issues, and showing up for one another.

JOIN US AS WE GROW OUR CIVIC STRENGTH, SUPPORT EACH OTHER, AND MAKE LASTING CHANGE RIGHT HERE AT HOME. LET'S GET ACTIVE—AND STAY ACTIVE— TOGETHER!

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

LET'S GET ACTIVE, TOGETHER

GET ACTIVE ON
bviiwv.com

Now more than ever, it's time for us to come together and raise our voices. Our Get Active campaign is about building power as a community—through voting, speaking up, learning about the issues, and showing up for one another. When we stay connected and engaged, we can shape the future we deserve. Join us as we grow our civic strength, support each other, and make lasting change right here at home. Let's get active—and stay active—together!

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO GET ACTIVE

1 Wear a Black by God or Black Voter Impact Initiative Tee

Show your support for the "Get in Where You Fit In" campaign with these t-shirts.

Visit: blackbygod.shop

2 Social Media Sensation

Be a social media champ and spread the word about the campaign's goals and events.

3 Word-of-Mouth Wizard

Let's talk about Black Policy Day (BPD) and Black Policy Agenda (BPA) with friends and fam.

4 Stay in the Loop

Follow BBG and BVII for all the latest updates, events, and actions.

5 Local Tour Explorer

Join the campaign's events in your neighborhood to support and learn more

6 Interims, the Interactive Forum Engage in exciting discussions on civic engagement and policies.

7 Webinars for Wisdom

Tune into webinars to build your civic engagement knowledge.

Register to attend: https://tinyurl.com/BPD2025webinars

8 Host the Action

Organize a "Get Active" community meetup and get talking

9 Join the Engagement Committee

Make a difference by joining the Building Civic Engagement through Black Policy Day Committees around the social determinants of health.

For more information, contact bviiwv@gmail.com

10 Power of the Ballot

Register to vote and shape your future in local and national elections.

Register online: ovr.sos.wv.gov/

11 Community Changemaker

Volunteer with local organizations to drive positive change.

12 Contact Your VIPs

Reach out to elected officials and share your opinions for a better tomorrow.

13 Peaceful Protest Pro

Join protests and be a voice for important issues and change

14 Support Black-Owned Biz

Boost your community by backing Black entrepreneurs.

15 Town Hall Explorer

Attend town hall meetings — let leaders hear your voice.

16 Educate and Elevate

Share resources on civic engagement and social justice.

17 Voting Duo

Team up and bring a friend to the voting booth for a stronger democracy.

18 Civil Discourse Champ

Have respectful conversations, even with different views.

19 Youth Empowerment

Inspire young ones to join civic engagement activities.

20 Run for the Challenge

Make change from within ... run for local office.

21 Community Project Pro

Volunteer for projects that uplift communities and ensure everyone has a fair chance to thrive.

22 Workshop Warrior

Attend workshops for civic engagement and policy advocacy.

23 Advocate with Dollars

Support social justice through donations to advocacy organizations.

24 Vote Smarts

Educate others about voting and its impact on society.

25 Stay Engaged, Always

Civic engagement is a year-round adventure for lasting impact.

Remember, civic engagement can be both impactful and enjoyable

2025–2026 VOTER READINESS

Want change? Start by knowing who represents you.

Find your lawmakers so you can call, email, or show up and make your voice heard. It starts with knowing their name!

Your voice matters– make sure you're registered to vote!

It only takes a minute, and it's first step to having a say in what happens in your community.

Life gets busy, but don't lose your voice

If you haven't voted in a while, you could be taken off the rolls. Take a minute to check your voter registration–It's quick and it keeps you ready to vote!

Want to run for office?

Candidate filing Period:
January 12-31, 2026

Deadline for filing: **January 31, 2026**

NATIONAL POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT DAY

TUESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2025

DEMOCRACY NEEDS YOU!

Poll workers are essential to fair and smooth elections. From setting up polling places to helping voters cast their ballots. **YOU** help make the vote happen!

WHY IT MATTERS:

- Ensure every vote counts
- Support your community
- Get paid and get trained
- Help protect our democracy

GET INVOLVED

Sign up at:

https://tinyurl.com/wv2025pollworker

Training is provided — no experience needed!

UPCOMING WV ELECTIONS:

- Primary Election: **May 12, 2026**
- General Election: **November 4, 2026**

GET ACTIVE. GET INVOLVED. GET TRAINED.

Be the reason your community can vote!

Why is it important to vote in primary elections?

Primary elections determine which candidates will be on the ballot in the general election. By voting in the primaries, you help decide who will represent your party and your values — often in races that are decided by very small margins. Primaries are also where bold, community-focused ideas can take hold, since candidates are more likely to listen closely to engaged voters.

WV ELECTION LAWS SET FOR MAJOR CHANGES

STRICTER VOTER ID

You must show ID with a photo to vote.

VOTER REGISTRATION PURGES

You could get taken off the voter rolls if you haven't voted in 2 years or more.

MUNICIPAL ELECTION DATES

Town and city elections will now be held at the same time as regular statewide elections. It starts in 2032.

RANKED CHOICE VOTING BAN

Ranked choice voting is now outlawed.

SAME COUNTY ADDRESS UPDATES

You can update your address for voting without voting on a provisional ballot

How to Spot a Deepfake

A deepfake is a video, image, or audio clip created using artificial intelligence to falsely make someone appear to say or do something they never did. These digital forgeries are becoming more sophisticated - and more dangerous to ignore.

How to Spot a Deepfake: A Quick Guide for Digital Citizens

1 Screenshot & Reverse Image Search

- Pause and screenshot for signs at 0s, 10s, 20s, 30s
- Upload each image to Google Reverse Image (QR code)

Red flag

- No matches from credible sources

2 Look for Physical Inconsistencies

Play back in slow motion, watching for signs like:

- No blinking or unnatural eye movement
- Extra fingers, distorted hands, or missing shadows
- Strange mouth or tongue motion
- Glitches in physics (e.g. floating jewelry, odd water flow)

3 Try a Free Deepfake Detector

- Easy to Use
- Results not always accurate: use with caution

4 Consult a Media Forensics Lab

Gold Standard: University at Buffalo's Media Forensics Lab (QR code)

- Ideal for journalists or high-stakes verification
- Provides expert analysis and credibility

Final Tip:

Deepfakes are evolving fast – but so are our tools.
When in doubt: Do your research.

www.blackbygod.org

SHARING OUR STORIES

Why Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor Matter for Black West Virginians

For Black West Virginians, sharing our stories and opinions in public forums isn't just important—it's essential. Op-eds (short for "opposite the editorial page") and letters to the editor give us the power to shape conversations, influence policy, and document our history in real time. Yet too many of our voices go unheard, buried behind paywalls or never published at all.

What Are Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor?

Both op-eds and letters to the editor are short pieces of writing that appear in newspapers and online publications.

- Op-eds are opinion essays that explain your perspective on an issue, offering argument and insight. Think of them as a public letter to your community, written to persuade or educate.
- Letters to the editor are usually shorter (150-250 words) and respond directly to recent news coverage or public issues, often clarifying a fact, offering a counterpoint, or urging action.

Why They Matter

For generations, Black West Virginians like Rev. Matthew Watts, Rev. Ronald English, and David Fryson have shaped community conversations through sermons and local leadership. Between them, they've published an estimated 300 op-eds and letters — many of which now sit behind paywalls, hidden from the very communities they were written to serve. Their words contain history, advocacy, and wisdom that deserves to be accessible.

Op-eds and letters to the editor help Black voices challenge harmful narratives, highlight local achievements, and push for systemic change. They also create a public record — one that future generations can learn from.

At a time when there's a serious lack of Black reporters in West Virginia — and few journalists covering our communities from a Black perspective — your voice is more important than ever. Submitting an op-ed or letter to your local paper can help fill that gap. Sharing your lived experience matters.

Tips for Writing Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor

- Be Clear and Direct. Say what you believe, and explain why it matters to your community.
- Stay Focused. Choose one main point. Whether it's healthcare access, voting rights, or celebrating local leaders, focus your message.
- Keep It Timely. Respond to current events or recent news stories for higher chances of publication.
- Include a Call to Action. Tell readers what you hope will happen next—whether that's calling a legislator or attending a community event.
- Respect the Word Count. Op-eds generally run between 600-750 words. Letters to the editor should be 150-250 words.
- Use Your Voice. Don't be afraid to write the way you speak. Your authentic voice matters.

How to Submit

Most newspapers accept submissions by email or through online portals. Below are major outlets serving West Virginia:

- Charleston Gazette-Mail
  Letters: letters@wvgazettemail.com
  Op-Eds: commentary@wvgazettemail.com
  Include your full name, address, and phone number for verification.
- Huntington Herald-Dispatch
  Letters: hdletters@hdmediallc.com
  Op-Eds: Use their website submission form or email editor.
- Beckley Register-Herald
  Letters: editor@register-herald.com
- Bluefield Daily Telegraph
  Letters: bdteditor@bdtonline.com
- The Black By God Community Editorial Desk
  Submissions welcome at: infor@blackbygod.org
  We help develop, edit, and amplify voices from Black Appalachia.

The Vision: Freeing Black Thought from Paywalls

Today, too many of our leaders' reflections remain locked behind subscriptions. Voices like those of Watts, English, and Fryson offer not just opinions, but a living record of Black West Virginian thought leadership. At Black By God, we envision a future where these insights are free and accessible—a digital library of Black Appalachian wisdom.

Until that day, every new op-ed or letter written by you helps build that record.

Your Voice Belongs in the Public Record

We encourage you to submit to your local paper—but remember, Black By God always has an open door for your submission. Whether you're writing your first letter or your fiftieth, your words deserve to be seen and heard.

Our opinions belong to us—and to the future.

~ Crystal Good
Founder/Publisher Black By God

WHAT IS THE CROWN ACT?

CROWN Act, stands for "**C**reating a **R**espectful & **O**pen **W**orld for **N**atural Hair" and provides legal protection against hair-based discrimination at work and school.

Black and brown people- especially Black women- regularly face discrimination in schools and the workplace based on the texture and style of their hair.

Recent data from the WV Department of Education shows that Black students are suspended at twice the rate of their white peers, in some cases due to hair-based discrimination.

CROWN Act legislation does not interfere with OSHA standards. or workplace safety rules.

27 States and DC have CROWN Act laws or executive orders

172k West Virginians have affirmed CROWN Ordinances

2/3 of Black women have changed their hair for a job interview

20% of Black women aged 25-34 report they've been sent home from work because of their hair

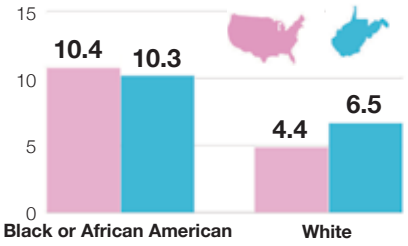
2.5x Black women's hair is 2.5 times more likely to be perceieved as unprofessional

Want to learn more or get involved?
Reach out to crown.act.wv@gmail.com

Black Infant and Maternal Health in West Virginia

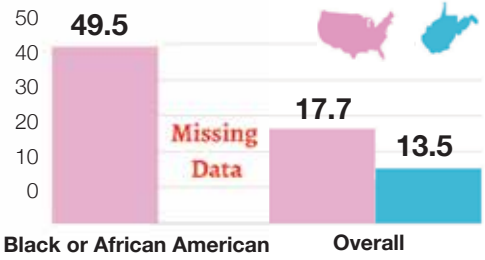
Infant and maternal mortality rates are often considered an indicator for the overall health and well-being of a community. In West Virginia, we have a great opportunity to improve infant and maternal health.

West Virginia's infant mortality rate exceeds the national average for Black and white infants



In 2021, the most recent years of data publicly available, nearly one-quarter of infant deaths in West Virginia were due to Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID). Other prominent causes of infant death were birth defects, prematurity, and medical-related issues.
Researchers found that about one-third of infant deaths were preventable.

West Virginia is missing critical data for Black maternal mortality



In 2022 there were 15 pregnancy-associated maternal deaths in West Virginia. Top causes included overdoses and other accidents, medical complications, and suicide. Nationally, researchers believe two-thirds of maternal deaths are preventable.

Citations available at bit.ly/WVBIMH

Proactive policy can strengthen data collection and improve infant and maternal health in West Virginia

Collect stronger data by empowering West Virginia's infant and maternal mortality review panels

- Disaggregate data by race; and
- Incorporate family member interviews into investigations.

Increase access to culturally appropriate care

- Recognize Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) as healthcare professionals by giving them a path to licensure;
  - CPMs can be licensed in 38 states and the District of Columbia.
- Allow doulas to be reimbursed by Medicaid and PEIA; and
- Implement population-focused recruitment policies that create a pipeline of diverse health care workers.
  - When providers represent the diversity of the communities they serve, barriers to care are reduced and all providers report more cultural competence.

Increase supportive resources for families

- Increase state funding to evidence-based home visitation programs; and
- Ensure all new parents have access to paid family and medical leave.

Overall infant mortality in West Virginia exceeded the national average according to the most recent data available. Black West Virginia infants were twice as likely as white infants to die before turning one year old.

2x

Nationally, the maternal mortality rate is about 2 times greater for Black mothers then white mothers.

Mortality is the tip of the iceberg. For every maternal death, there are an estimated 75-100 cases of life threatening complications during or after childbirth.

BLACKPOLICYDAYWV.ORG

SNAP STRETCH

SNAP STRETCH, BY THE WEST VIRGINIA FOOD AND FARM COALITION, MATCHES SNAP/EBT BENEFITS FOR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. CUSTOMERS RECEIVE A 1:1 MATCH AT PARTICIPATING MARKETS. IF A CHILD OR SENIOR IS PRESENT, THE MATCH IS 2:1, AND FOR A "GRANDFAMILY" (SENIOR AND CHILD), IT'S 3:1.

"LOVE SNAP STRETCH" T-SHIRTS ARE HERE! FIND YOUR MARKET AND CHECK OUT THE DESIGNS SO YOU CAN WEAR YOUR SUPPORT PROUDLY!

SCAN HERE

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP!

If you are interested in supporting and advocating for SNAP Stretch at the State Capitol or your own County, please contact Cordel Bostic at the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition at cbostic@wvfoodandfarm.org or call (304) 926-0567.

West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition • 6503 Roosevelt Ave. | Charleston, WV 25304 304-926-0567

ISSUE

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THE USE OF SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION TO ADDRESS BEHAVIORAL ISSUES:

- **NEGATIVELY IMPACTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**
- **INCREASES THE CHANCES OF STUDENTS REPEATING A GRADE OR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL**
- **INCREASES INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM**

SOLUTIONS

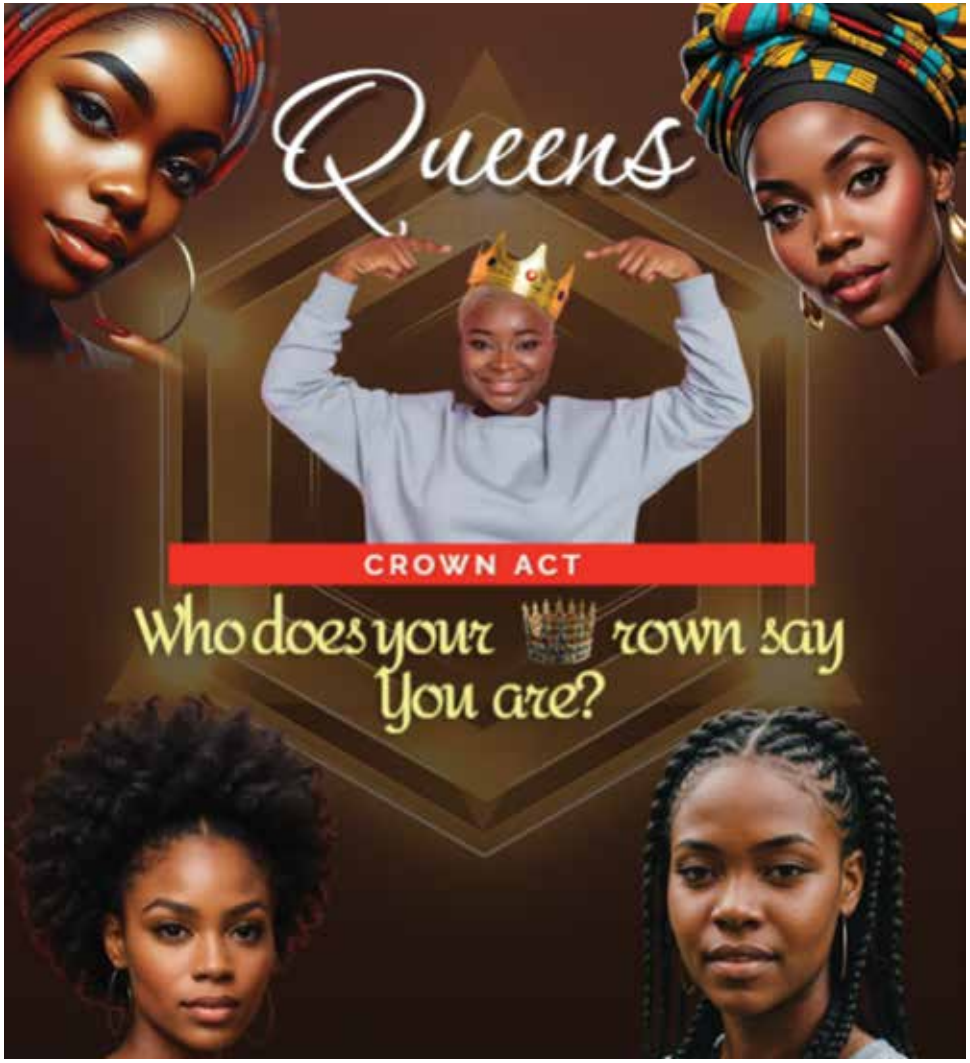
STATE — MODIFY STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION DISCIPLINARY POLICY TO LIMIT SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION. THESE ACTIONS DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACT BLACK STUDENTS.

DISTRICT — ESTABLISH A DIVERSE AND CULTURALLY COMPETENT WORKFORCE BY EMPLOYING MORE BLACK EDUCATORS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL.

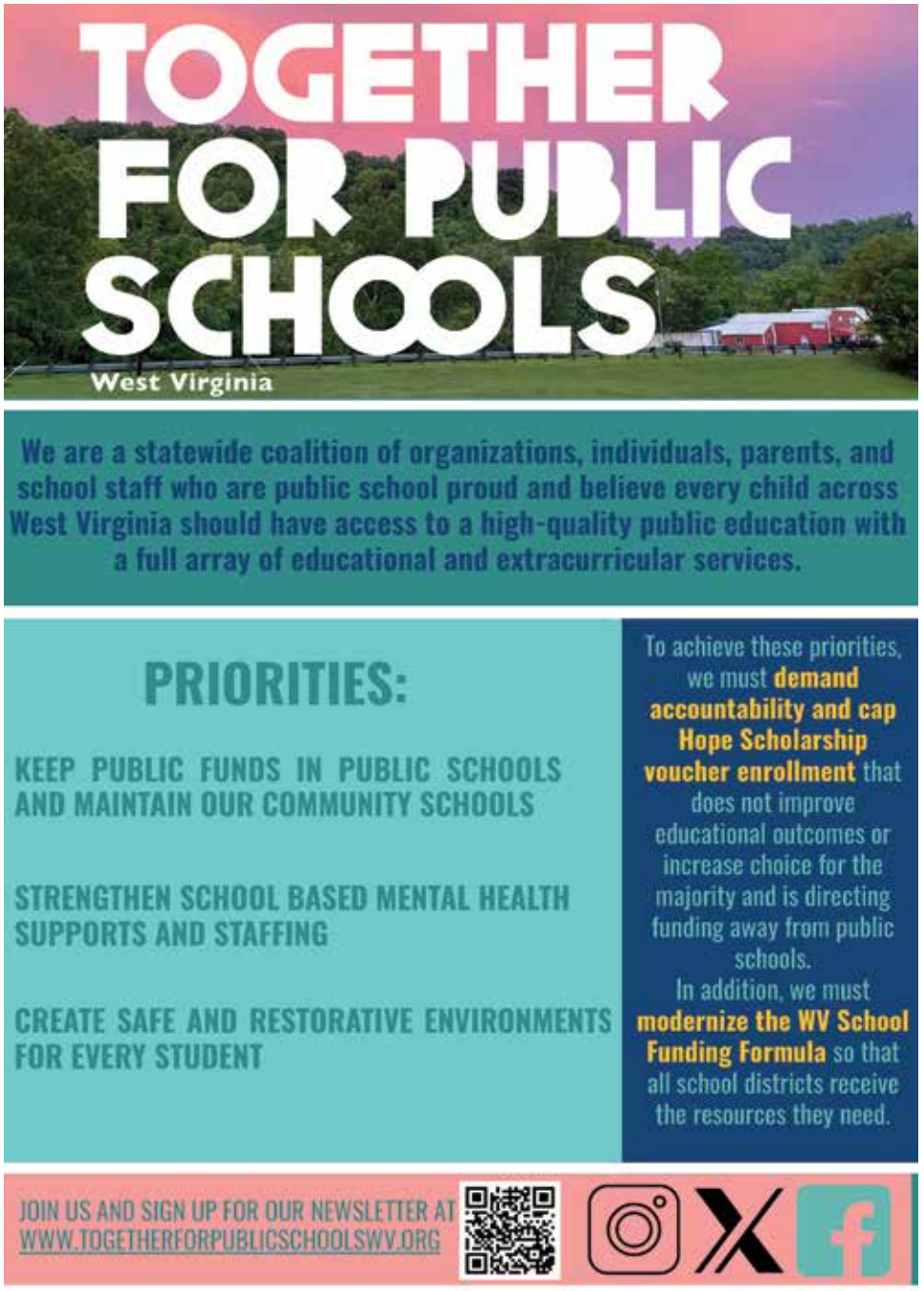
SCHOOL — UTILIZE A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH IN DISCIPLINARY DECISIONS TO RECOGNIZE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, COGNITIVE AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.

FAMILY — ATTEND MEETINGS OF YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL (LSIC) AND BOARD OF EDUCATION.

West Virginia Department of Education Discipline Data, https://zoomwv.k12.wv.us/Dashboard/dashboard/28497.
Melanie Leung-Gagne et al., "Pushed Out: Trends and Disparities in Out-of-School Suspension", Learning Policy Institute, September 30, 2022, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/crdc-school-suspension-report.
Katherine deCourcey et al., "Improving teacher diversity is key to reducing racial disparities in academic outcomes and addressing the teacher shortage", Economic Policy Institute, August 20, 2024, https://www.epi.org/blog/improving-teacher-diversity-is-key-to-reducing-racial-disparities-in-academic-outcomes-and-addressing-the-teacher-shortage/.
Rethink School Discipline Toolkit, Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, https://www.studentadvocacycenter.org/rethink-discipline-toolkit/.


Queens
CROWN ACT
Who does your crown say You are?

JOIN OUR
FOLK reporters
PROGRAM
CONTACT: JACKIE@BLACKBYGOD.ORG


TOGETHER FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
West Virginia
We are a statewide coalition of organizations, individuals, parents, and school staff who are public school proud and believe every child across West Virginia should have access to a high-quality public education with a full array of educational and extracurricular services.
PRIORITIES:
KEEP PUBLIC FUNDS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND MAINTAIN OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
STRENGTHEN SCHOOL BASED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS AND STAFFING
CREATE SAFE AND RESTORATIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR EVERY STUDENT
To achieve these priorities, we must demand accountability and cap Hope Scholarship voucher enrollment that does not improve educational outcomes or increase choice for the majority and is directing funding away from public schools.
In addition, we must modernize the WV School Funding Formula so that all school districts receive the resources they need.
JOIN US AND SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER AT WWW.TOGETHERFORPUBLICSCHOOLSWV.ORG

REAL ID IS HERE ARE YOU READY?

WHAT IS A REAL ID

A driver's license or ID card with a star, meeting new federal standards

WHY IT MATTERS

Required for domestic flights and access to federal facilities

HOW TO GET A REAL ID

Bring documents to DMV

FOR MORE INFORMATION

https://www.usa.gov/real-id

Black By God, The West Virginian

EXTRA!! EXTRA!!

TIRED OF YOUR VOICE GOING UNHEARD?

SHARE YOUR STORY.
SHARE YOUR TRUTH.
SHARE YOUR VOICE.
SUBMIT YOUR LETTER OR OP-ED TODAY!

FOR MORE INFO: INFO@BLACKBYGOD.ORG

BLACK BY GOD

Why engage in legislative interim meetings?

Legislative interim meetings are when lawmakers study issues, review data, and discuss potential bills before the regular session. They're a critical time to build relationships, educate lawmakers, and shape ideas before they become formal legislation. Engaging during interims helps ensure that policies reflect the real needs and experiences of our communities.

Why is training important?

A training on how to engage in interims equips community members and advocates with the knowledge, confidence, and strategies to effectively communicate their priorities. It helps people understand the process, learn when and how to provide input, and build the skills to influence policies that impact us all.

JOIN US FOR THE 5TH ANNUAL

BLACK POLICY DAY

ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

WV STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA

02.24.2026

KANAWHA BLVD.
CHARLESTON, WV

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

OUR AGENDA FOCUSES ON EMPOWERING ALL WEST VIRGINIANS THROUGH POLICY REFORMS THAT PROMOTE EQUALITY AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL.

- ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE ON ISSUES
- LEARN CRUCIAL LEGISLATION AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITIES
- HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE FOR OUR YOUTH AND GENERATIONS
- BE INFORMED & ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY

Scan QR code to attend