

2011 LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES

EDUCATION

Results from the most recent statewide standardized tests continue to show a wide gap in student achievement between students from low-income school districts and students from wealthier school districts. The high school drop out rate for African-Americans has been twice that of Caucasians since 1998. This trend is especially troubling for young black males who without early intervention may end up in the criminal justice system.

AAAC's Position:

- *Support school finance reform*
- *Provide safer school environments that enhance academic achievement.*
- *Support efforts to prepare students for college through programs such as KnowHow2Go & College Goal Sunday*
- *Develop classroom assessment tools to enhance instruction and learning*

HEALTH

Eliminating racial disparities in healthcare delivery remains a top priority for the Commission considering that as group African-Americans suffer disproportionately from a number of health care conditions. Conditions such as diabetes, cancer, infant mortality, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular illnesses are rampant in the African-American community. These conditions are compounded by the lack of comprehensive health care for many African-Americans. Roughly 17.3 percent of Connecticut's African-American population remain uninsured.

AAAC's Position:

- *Support a universal health care plan - Sustinet*
- *Institute cultural competency requirements in health care*
- *Support education initiatives for lupus awareness*

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The asset poverty rate of minorities in Connecticut is almost 4 times that of white families. Research shows that generations of slavery, segregation, disinvestment and discrimination have left African-American communities well behind in their capacity to generate wealth. For instance, the struggle to provide equal opportunity to minority contractors in state contracting has been with us for many years. While the legislature has taken steps and implemented measures in addressing the problem of contracting, nothing comprehensive has been implemented to examine the issue.

AAAC's Position:

- *Support initiatives to promote minority businesses in the state through fair contracting procedures.*

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Research shows that the gap in median income between African-American families and Caucasian families has actually increased since the last census was reported. To this end the Commission is committed in supporting policies that deliver living wages, provide career ladders and offer quality job training and skill enhancement opportunities for the underserved communities.

AAAC's Position:

- ***Enhance work support systems for recipients transitioning from welfare to work***

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

An estimated 75 percent of juveniles in state detention facilities are minorities and African-Americans make up 43 percent of Connecticut's prison population. This overrepresentation is apparent at various levels of the criminal justice system, arrest, detention, prosecution and may escalate as juveniles continue through the criminal justice system. The effects of incarceration are well documented. Incarceration hinders the ability of offenders to secure gainful employment upon release.

AAAC's Position:

- ***Support efforts to institute measures to prevent and deter the racial profiling of motorists***
- ***Support legislation that will eliminate the disparity between youth of color and whites who are transferred as juveniles to the adult system.***

HOUSING

The financial crisis that hit a couple of years ago hurt people from different social and income classes, however the impact was felt hardest in communities with high rates of sub-prime lending, mainly minority populations. The projected foreclosures in our state for the period between 2009 and 2012 is estimated to be 80,031. Unfortunately African-Americans will bear the brunt of these foreclosures and more will continue to lose their homes unless effective interventions are put in place to reverse the trend.

AAAC's Position:

- ***Strengthen the foreclosure mediation process to ensure that more homeowners can keep their homes.***

ENVIRONMENT

Lead poisoning is often referred to as the "silent epidemic" In some communities, the rate of exposure is about five times the national average, which is estimated at 1.6 percent of children aged 1-5. In Connecticut, children from poor families are more likely to be poisoned than those from higher income families. African-American children are also at increased risk, when compared with both Hispanic and Caucasian children.

AAAC's Position:

- ***Support efforts to reduce childhood lead poisoning in the state especially in urban communities***

5/4/2011