

THE Gavel

The Official Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

State Representative Donna Bullock, *Chairwoman*

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Leading Stronger Together



As chair of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, I believe that we have strength in numbers. Our collective leadership can advance systemic change in state government to benefit and empower Black Pennsylvanians.

Black leadership is often criticized from within and outside of our community, but our ability to deliver for our constituents is nuanced and complicated. Black elected officials carry the burden of fulfilling broken promises of others while facing the same discrimination, racism and barriers as those we serve. We often do this as “the first” or one of the few in the room, and without the same infrastructure or institutional resources as many white elected officials.

But as the number of Black state legislators grows in the Pennsylvania General Assembly, Black legislators are rising to leadership positions, our issues are being prioritized, and state funds are being invested in our communities. Our critical mass is having an impact.

We are also engaging our communities and inviting stakeholders to the table. From listening sessions to roundtables and briefings, we are listening to Black mayors, clergy, business owners and other Black voices. For years, we’ve met them in their neighborhoods, in the Capitol, and virtually. They have informed our legislative proposals and they have given us strength.

With this collective approach to policy, process, and progress, I believe that we can continue to build on Black leadership to improve the lives of Black Pennsylvanians across the commonwealth.



Members of the Black Women Policy Center are pictured with Chair Bullock and Rep. Curry at the K. Leroy Irvis Day of Action at the state Capitol in Harrisburg.

Advocating for Black Pennsylvania

K. Leroy Irvis Day of Action

On May 23, 1973, K. Leroy Irvis became the first Black speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. This past May, the PLBC commemorated the 45th anniversary of this historic moment with an inaugural day of action. Dozens of Black elected officials, clergy, business owners and advocates converged on the Capitol for a day of advocacy and kicked off a series of events there.

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As the newly elected representative for Speaker Irvis' district, I feel deeply the solemn responsibility we have as elected officials to work together, not just for the people in our own communities, but for every Pennsylvanian in our commonwealth.

REP. ABNEY



Black Gun Owners Participate in Joint Briefing with PLBC and 2nd Amendment Caucus



The PLBC invited members of the National African American Gunowners Association to the Capitol to discuss Second Amendment rights for Black Pennsylvanians, gun violence prevention initiatives, and economic participation in the firearms industry.

Black Clergy Rally for Budget Priorities



Sen. Street and Chair Bullock hosted the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity at the Capitol for a PLBC roundtable about gun violence prevention and education. Rev. Maxine Collier speaks at a news conference with Sen. Street and other clergy in the background.

Black Women Equal Pay Day



Chair Bullock stands with Reps. Parker, Lee, and Hill-Evans and others to advocate for equal pay for Black women at a rally at the Capitol on National Black Women Equal Pay Day.



Pennsylvania Black Mayors Convene in Harrisburg

Chair Bullock welcomes former state Rep. and current Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey along with other Black mayors from across the commonwealth at the Pennsylvania Black Mayors Alliance hosted by the PA Chamber of Black Owned Businesses.

Erie Policy Hearing on Youth Violence

Bishop Dwane Brock testifies at the PLBC and PA Democratic Policy Committee joint policy hearing on youth violence at the Eagles Nest in Erie.



Empowering Our Young People

Banned Books Week

When a group of students stood up against the Central York School District book ban, we stood with them. Many local efforts to ban books target books written by Black and other diverse authors, telling our stories.



Gov. Tom Wolf joins Chair Bullock and Central York Students Christina Ellis and Edha Gupta, executive officers of the Panther Anti-Racist Student Union, during Banned Book Week 2021.

Anthony David, a senior at Harrisburg University and a member of the Environmental Justice Advisory Board, testified at our environmental justice policy hearing on Oct. 5.



James R. Roebuck Scholarship

In June, the PLBC awarded 10 scholarships to students from across the commonwealth. This year's scholarship recipients included scholar-athletes, entrepreneurs, and student government leaders, and are shining examples of Black excellence.

In 2021, the scholarship was renamed the James R. Roebuck Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Scholarship after former state Rep. Jim Roebuck of Philadelphia. He is a former chairman of the House Education Committee and former member of the PLBC who represented the 188th Legislative District in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1985-2020.

PLBC Turns 50

Next year, 2023, will be the 50th anniversary of the PLBC. Though Black legislators met in secret for years, the PLBC became an official caucus in 1973. Please join us next year for a year of advocacy and celebration.

Honoring Our History

PLBC awards Crystal Bird Fauset Leadership honorees

The 2nd Annual PLBC Crystal Bird Fauset Leadership Awards were presented at a virtual ceremony during Women's History Month. The award is named in honor of former state Rep. Crystal Bird Fauset, the first Black woman elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

This year's honorees included our very own Leader McClinton; Estelle Richman, former secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare; and Lt. Col. Kristal Turner-Childs (pictured below greeting Rep. Kinsey at a budget hearing), the first Black woman lieutenant colonel in the Pennsylvania State Police.



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For too long, Black women and their accomplishments have been ignored. This award stands for the accomplishments that have been made, the accomplishments we are making, and the accomplishments that are coming.

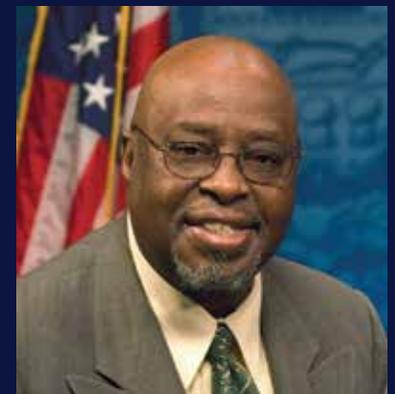
CHAIRWOMAN BULLOCK

Celebrating Juneteenth

On June 19, 2019, Gov. Tom Wolf signed legislation that designates June 19 as “Juneteenth National Freedom Day” in Pennsylvania. Former PLBC Chair Rep. Kinsey advocated for the state holiday and had introduced an annual resolution to recognize the day.



In May, PLBC members joined the Pennsylvania Tourism Office to announce grants to support Juneteenth celebrations across the commonwealth and encourage tourism centered on the holiday.



In Memoriam

**Former PLBC Chair
Harold James**

August 7, 1942 (b.) – April
28, 2022(d.)

PA House 186th District
1988-2008, 2012-2013

In June, PLBC members hosted a Juneteenth event at the state Capitol that included guest speakers from local organizations and a dance and drum ensemble.

Legislating Our Issues



Environmental Justice Legislative Package

Chair Bullock and Reps. Kenyatta and Rabb introduced an environmental justice legislative package to empower environmental justice communities. Together, the bills will codify the Office of Environmental Justice and the Environmental Justice Advisory Board, as well as create a process for the Department of Environmental Protection to consider cumulative impacts when issuing permits. Introduced in October 2021 during the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the recognized Principles of Environmental Justice, the PLBC hosted a policy hearing on the bills this year.

Rep. Williams questions panelists testifying at a PLBC joint environmental justice policy hearing with the PA Democratic Policy Committee.

The CROWN Act

Leader McClinton, PLBC Vice Chair Lee and Sen. Hughes introduced legislation to end hair discrimination. Known as the CROWN Act, HB1066 would prohibit discrimination based on an individual's texture or a style of hair. Such discrimination is often targeted at Black people. Black women are 1.5 times more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair. Young Black girls are also experiencing hair discrimination in school, sports, and other activities.



Leader McClinton was joined by PLBC members and advocates to demand the CROWN Act be considered for a vote.

Dignity for Incarcerated Women Passes the House

Rep. Cephas led the charge for the Dignity for Incarcerated Women legislation that had been introduced in previous sessions, and finally passed the House in September 2022. The bill would regulate how pregnant people are treated in Pennsylvania's jails and prisons. The bill is now with the Senate.

The bill passed the House unanimously, and would improve visitation rights for incarcerated parents, ban shackling pregnant people and enhance restraint documentation, along with other provisions.

The bill also would provide for free period and incontinence products for incarcerated individuals and would allow three days of post-delivery bonding time between mother and newborn child. It would require the implementation of trauma-informed practices and documentation from all corrections officers interacting with pregnant and postpartum women.

Promoting Our Health



PLBC members prioritized health and wellness during Black History Month and year-round. The Women and Girls of Color Subcommittee hosted “Protect Your Heart,” a virtual education event for Black women on heart disease prevention, and the Health Equity Subcommittee participated in the PA Black Health Matters Conference’s Health on the Hill Day. We also advocated for resources to support our community health doctors and equitable health initiatives across the commonwealth, including WIC- a family nutrition program, maternal health initiatives and more.



Leader McClinton joins Rep. Parker and Sens. Hughes, Street, and Haywood at a check presentation at the Dr. Ala Stanford Center for Health Equity in North Philadelphia.

Sickle Cell Awareness and Education

PLBC members regularly meet with the sickle cell community, a statewide network of people living with sickle cell anemia, their family members, medical professionals, public health educators, and advocates. Members participated in the virtual Pennsylvania Sickle Cell Providers Network Annual Sickle Cell Advocacy Day and in September, Rep. Kinsey and Chair Bullock introduced a resolution recognizing Sickle Cell Awareness Month as members attended a briefing with the sickle cell community.

Healthy in Harrisburg

Like most working people, PLBC members don’t always take the time to relax and do a wellness check. That’s why we launched our “Healthy in Harrisburg” initiative to encourage our members to practice healthy habits while away from home. This initiative focuses on the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of our members.

Budgeting for Black Pennsylvania



Our Budget Equity Committee and leaders in both chambers of the General Assembly worked to bring resources back to our constituents. We held a budget listening session in Spring 2022 to hear directly from Black Pennsylvanians, and then we focused on affordable housing, gun violence prevention and education.

This year’s budget made significant investments in areas we believe will benefit all Pennsylvanians, with significant impact on Black Pennsylvanians, including:

- \$105 million for violence intervention and prevention programs
- \$430 million invested in housing initiatives, including \$125 million to establish the Whole Home Repair Program introduced by Sen. Saval
- \$1.1 billion increase for education





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



Aerion A. Abney
19th Legislative District



Amen Brown
190th Legislative District



Danilo Burgos
197th Legislative District



Morgan Cephas
192nd Legislative District



Martell Covington
24th Legislative District



Angel Cruz
180th Legislative District



Gina H. Curry
164th Legislative District



Austin Davis
35th Legislative District



Jason Dawkins
179th Legislative District



Isabella Fitzgerald
203rd 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



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