



COMMISSION ON WOMEN, CHILDREN, SENIORS, EQUITY & OPPORTUNITY

African American Sub Commission



African American Sub Commission

African American Sub commission focuses its efforts on issues affecting constituencies of underrepresented and underserved populations in the African American communities by improving and promoting the economic development, education, health, and political well-being of these populations.

Through best practices models and partnerships with local, state, and national organizations, using a cross-cultural lens to inform public policy and involve traditionally underserved populations in the legislative process to unite minority communities in the policy arena.

The sub commission must advise on policies affecting their constituencies.

Denise Drummond, Legislative Policy Analyst

Alphonse Wright, Chairperson

Advisory Board Members:

- **Dr. Clifton Watson**
- **Tiheba Williams-Bain**
- **Tiana Victoria Hercules**

African American Sub Commission 2022 Legislative Priorities

Education

- Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers
- Address the Impact of Mask Wearing in Schools on Social and Emotional Development
- Special Education Reform

Criminal Justice

- Stop Solitary Confinement
- Primary Caretakers Sentencing Reform

Health

- Encourage programs that will address the disparity gap in health care for African Americans
- Support programs and medical services for the elderly and low income
- Address the disproportionate impacts of COVID19 on the African American community



Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention

The lack of minority representation in the educational field continues to be a concern. All children should have access to positive teaching, learning experiences, and role models with educators from various backgrounds to be successful in an increasingly racially and culturally diverse society. Connecticut public school students should have the opportunity to engage with teachers of color.

Improve minority teacher recruitment and retention in the state by:

- Establishing the minority candidate certification, retention or residency year program.
- Developing a plan to promote the teaching profession as a career option to students in high school.
- Develop and require school district personnel responsible for hiring educators to complete a video training module relating to implicit bias and anti-bias in the hiring process.

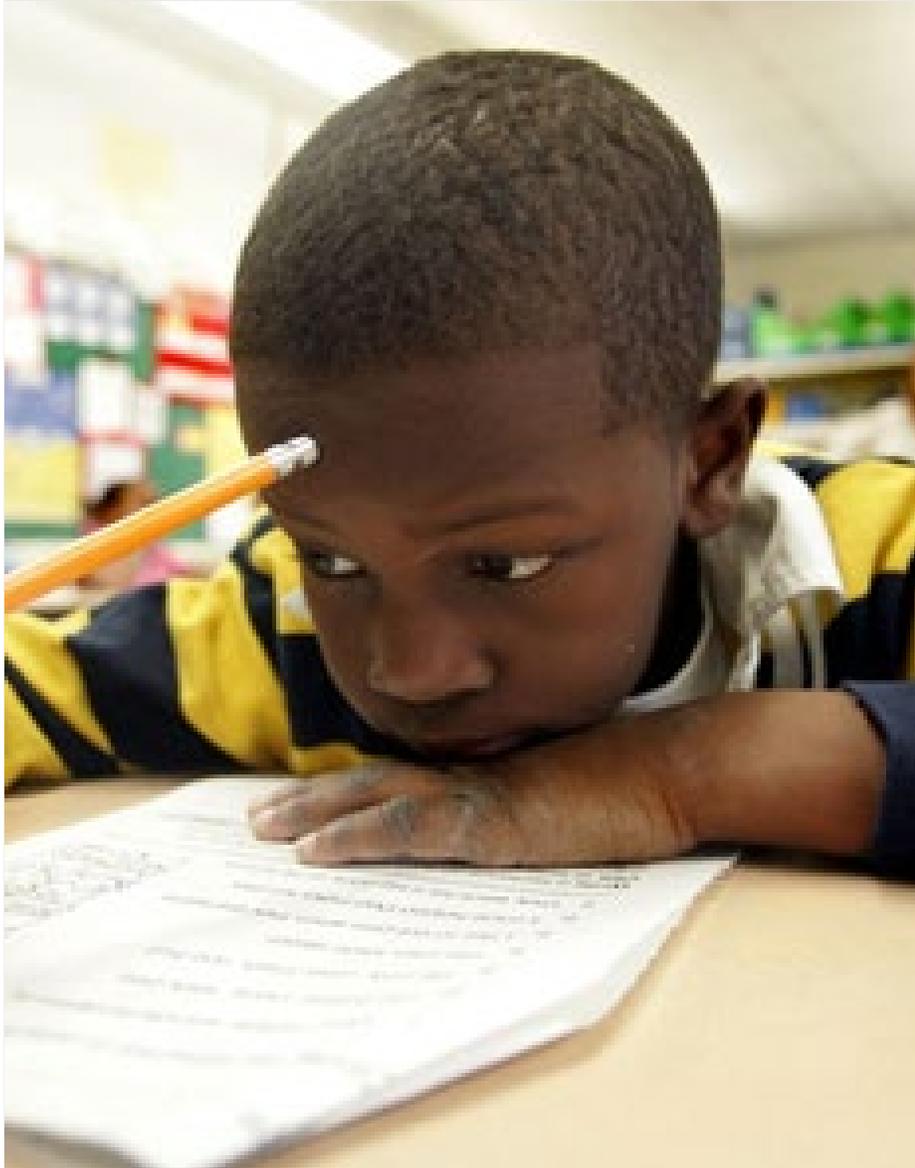


Impact of mask wearing in schools on social and emotional development

Social-emotional learning is a top priority for educators and is vital to helping students cope with the anxiety and disruptions caused by the pandemic. Face masks can get in the way of students learning emotions.

- Wearing a mask complicates building relationships among peers as well as with teachers.
- One concern that has risen out of the debates over whether children and teachers should be wearing masks in schools is whether the practice inhibits the development of social and emotional skills.
- It's clear COVID has affected our kids academically while learning remotely but now that they are back in person wearing masks are having an effect on social emotional learning.





Special Education Reform

Black and economically disadvantaged students are more likely than their peers to be identified for special education and are twice as likely to be identified as having an emotional disability, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities.

Regarding individuals with disabilities and special education, inclusion secures opportunities for students with disabilities to learn alongside their non-disabled peers in general education classrooms.

Reform movement in the Special Education environment is focused on creating tools and programs that benefit students with disabilities.

Stop Solitary Confinement

Last Legislative Session The PROTECT Act, S.B. 1059 was introduced to end solitary confinement and abusive restraints.

In Connecticut, people of color are more likely to be punished with solitary confinement and Connecticut was the worst state in the nation for disproportionately assigning Black men to solitary confinement. Solitary confinement harms people and is counterproductive and cruel.

The bill passed with bipartisan support in both chambers. But was vetoed by the Governor, stating that it puts the safety of incarcerated persons and correction employees at risk.





Primary Caretaker Sentencing Reform

Providing safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children and families is valuable. Criminal justice practices that separate children from their mothers and fathers are harmful.

The justice system's default approach tears apart families, hurts children and parent-child relationships, and harms health. Increasing judges' discretion to authorize alternatives to incarceration that include treatment instead of prison or jail, where appropriate, can keep families intact. Alternatives like Community-based sentencing is better for children and parents than incarceration.

Benefits: Avoiding Trauma, More secure parental attachment, Healthier child development, Improved parenting skills and Reduced substance abuse.



African Americans should have equal opportunities to pursue healthy lifestyles.

Connect with programs to reduce disparities and barriers to create opportunities for health.

Work with other sectors, such as faith and community organizations, education, business, transportation, and housing, to create social and economic conditions that promote health starting in childhood.

Encourage communities to pursue regular and follow-up medical visits.

Connect with organizations that provide trainings for healthcare professionals to understand cultural differences in how patients interact with providers and the healthcare system.



Intersectional Priorities

- Focus on children's mental and behavioral health for youth
- Address regression of student achievement in reading as part of the pandemic
- Address chronic absenteeism in schools
- Juvenile crime and how to address juveniles who are involved in crime
- Safety and security of students in school and the involvement or non-involvement of school resource officers
- Mental Health (address barriers to behavior + mental health treatment)
- Housing
- Transportation
- Small Business Matters