



# 2021 RACIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE AGENDA

#THEBLACKAGENDA

# FROM THE DESK OF SPEAKER ADRIENNE A. JONES

Friends & Colleagues,

As the first Black speaker in Maryland history, I was unanimously elected with a mandate to move our State in a positive direction for all Marylanders – particularly for those who have been historically disenfranchised.

The current national conversation about how to address systemic racial inequality should not just be about how to fix policing for Black and Brown residents – but how to create better access and more pathways to economic opportunities.

I met with over three dozen local, state and national leaders to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing the implications of systemic racism. The 2021 Racial & Economic Justice Agenda (the “Black Agenda”) begins to address the most severe economic and health impacts that result from systematic oppression.

The “Black Agenda” includes policy initiatives targeting five key areas – Housing, Corporate Management, Banking, Health, Business and Government – that work to

- Create an equal path to homeownership for more Black Marylanders;
- Address underlying health conditions that stem from systemic health and social inequities;
- Encourage entrepreneurship through access to capital and assets to ensure expand wealth-building opportunities;
- Put a greater emphasis on gender and ethnic diversity on corporate boards and in C-suites;
- And increase minority business participation in public contracts.

With initiatives targeted to better support Black workers, Black businesses and Black executives, the 2021 Black Agenda will help end systemic racism and grow wealth in Black and minority communities across Maryland.

Sincerely,

Speaker Adrienne A. Jones



# HOUSING

Housing policy in the United States has disproportionately suppressed the ability for Black communities to build wealth through the most common large investment that any American family has: their home. Despite the passing of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, Black homeownership rates have not significantly improved. Redlining, mortgage rates, and banking investment strategies since the New Deal have left Black families in Maryland without this valuable wealth creation tool. By re-evaluating home appraisals, increasing credit access and putting a greater emphasis on estate planning, an equal path to homeownership will be afforded for more Black Marylanders.

## Legislation

- Prevent housing loan/credit applicants from being denied if applicants can provide alternate forms of credit worthiness including: a history of rent payments, utility payments, school attendance, work attendance
- Conduct a feasibility study to help with estate planning for those with incomes below \$50k per year
- Require the State to report to the General Assembly on the amount insurers are charging per square foot of a home by county and by census tract
- Create tax-free savings accounts for first-time homebuyers
- Conduct a study on inclusionary zoning requirements to determine its impact on affordable housing and ways to expand requirements

## More Actions

- Create a workgroup to determine how to conduct a historical disparity study on home appraisals in historically redlined districts
- Pressure commercial developers to include mixed income housing
- Work with the Maryland Commission of Real Estate Appraisers, Appraisal Management Companies and Home Inspectors to Create a marketing campaign to encourage more minorities to become appraisers





# CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

The pool of qualified candidates for corporate boards has become more diverse over the last few decades, yet minority women represent less than five percent of board members in the U.S. Until corporate boards start to look more like the community as a whole, the businesses they oversee will not be full community partners. Since corporate board decisions naturally impact employee and investment policies, different groups must be represented in the decision-making process. Diverse boards offer varying perspectives, backgrounds resulting in improved decision making about their employees and their communities. With a greater emphasis on gender and ethnic diversity on corporate boards and in C-suites, Maryland can begin to create a culture of equity and help improve the performance of businesses across the state.

## Legislation

- Phase 1 (2021): require reporting on racial diversity of corporate boards in Maryland
- Phase 2 (2022): mandate any company doing business (contracts, tax credits, grants) with the State of Maryland demonstrate racial diversity on their board
- Create a State equity scorecard for corporations through the Governor's Office of Minority & Small Business Affairs or Commerce, showing data on racial composition of senior leadership, employees and corporate governance, the percentage of procurement that goes to minority business contracts as well as diversity policies

## More Actions

- Meet with media corporations to determine ways to increase/incentivize diversity on their boards and influence how Black and brown residents are depicted



# BANKING

Financial stability is a necessary component in achieving racial equity. Access to capital and assets encourage entrepreneurship and provide a way to ensure people of color will have an equal opportunity to building wealth. Minority depository institutions (MDIs) and community development financial institutions (CDFIs) play a critical role in expanding the access to capital for minorities and their businesses, but they lack the supported needed thrive. The number of MDIs shrank by over 30% over the following decade nationwide; currently, there is only one active MDI in Maryland, Harbor Bank in Baltimore.

## Legislation

- Create a revolving loan program that provides technical assistance grants to MDIs and CDFIs used to facilitate new mentoring relationships between low-income-designated credit unions and small MDIs that help those credit unions better serve their communities
- Codify and strengthen Community Reinvestment Act laws to apply to non-bank institutions including mortgage companies, financial technology companies, and credit unions

## More Actions

- Incentivize banks and credit unions to create programs that provide greater financial literacy so that once families are able to build wealth, they can invest for longevity
- Dissuade bankers from tying property values to zip code



# HEALTH

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the severe health disparities in Black and other minority communities to the forefront. Minority groups are disproportionately dying from the coronavirus largely due to underlying health conditions that stem from systemic health and social inequities. Economic justice cannot be achieved without access to quality healthcare. Studies have linked health disparities to racial bias, health care access and lack of economic resources. Moving toward greater health equity requires that we expand access to fresh, healthy foods, provide better tracking to get the full scope of the issue, require diversity and inclusion training for healthcare workers.

## Legislation

- Declare racism a public health crisis
- Require health equity and bias training as part of the accreditation and licensing process including for all health care providers including registered doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners to work to lower the Black maternal mortality rate
- Build money into hospital rates to improve health outcomes for Black and brown patients
- Prioritize Program Open Space funding; provide more funding for Community Parks and Playgrounds in historically redlined districts
- Incentivize fresh food at corner stores, convenience stores and other community retail opportunities to begin to diminish food insecurity
- Establish Health Equity Resource Communities (HERC) to provide a range of services in four designated areas – food insecurity, healthcare, access to recreation and behavioral health

## More Actions

- Encourage insurers to provide demographic data (specifically racial/ethnic data) on the insured.
- Incentivize hospitals and private practices to create/implement/participate in community based-programs like Total Access Partnership that work to advance health equity.
- Encourage MedChi to become more collaborative across their networks and work with healthcare facilities across the state to include their bias training simulation.
- Continue to monitor the Department of Health for evidence of racial bias during the COVID-19 vaccine dissemination.



# BUSINESS & GOVERNMENT

Minority businesses are underrepresented in government contract projects. State governments must play a decisive role in accelerating racial and economic equity. Increasing minority business participation in public contracts will help minority entrepreneurs get a fair shot at doing business with the state governments.

## Legislation

- Expand the reach of State and local government contracts that include minority participation beyond primarily construction by creating a Certified Business Enterprise Program (CBE) program. Businesses with CBE certification will receive preferred procurement and contracting opportunities. The State must meet, on an annual basis, the goal of procuring and contracting 50 percent of the dollar volume of its goods and services, including construction goods and services, to Small Business Enterprises (SBEs)
- Require by FY23 that in order to qualify for capital funding over a \$1M, state tax credits or grant programs, companies need to demonstrate racial diversity in leadership and in mission
- Expand TEDCO's Builder's Fund (re-direct MTIF funding - \$10M) to provide more meaningful venture opportunities for minority businesses and increase racial diversity
- Restructure the Governor's Office of Minority & Small Business Affairs to be a more effective advocate with the ability to provide more technical resources to minority businesses. Have a liaison that reports to the office in every State agency
- Improve the State's procurement process to ensure that sub and prime contractors are paid on-time.
- Create a need-based Pell grant program to those in state and federal prisons who want to advance their education
- Provide land grants through the Department of Agriculture of up to 160 acres to existing and aspiring Black farmers

## More Actions

- Work with local governments to determine new ways community and recreation centers can be used during the day.

