

# 2019 **ANNUAL** REPORT

**FLORIDA COUNCIL ON  
THE SOCIAL STATUS OF  
BLACK MEN AND BOYS**





## MESSAGE FROM OUR ATTORNEY GENERAL

In 2006, the Florida Legislature established the Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, and housed the Council in the Office of the Attorney General. The Council consists of 19-members led by Chair, Dr. Eddy M. Regnier, to study conditions affecting black males across the state of Florida.

It is my pleasure to present the Council's 2019 Annual Report. This year, the Council concentrated its efforts on researching strategies to help increase the use of alternative education and workforce programs, and to reduce recidivism and negative health trends among black males.

It is the Council's hope that this report will increase awareness to citizens and leaders throughout Florida. I commend the Council for its hard work and commitment to alleviate and correct the underlying causes negatively affecting black males in our great state. I encourage policymakers and stakeholders to support the important work being done by the Council.

Sincerely,

Ashley Moody  
Attorney General



## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

On behalf of The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, I am honored to present this year's annual report to Governor Ron DeSantis, Speaker of the House, Representative Jose Oliva, Senate President, Bill Galvano, Attorney General Ashley Moody, Florida elected officials, state agency heads, community advocates, community organizations, and the citizens of the State of Florida. This report is the product of the Council's collaborative effort to find remedies for disparate conditions that continue to affect black men and boys across the state of Florida.

In 2019, the Council engaged in important research initiatives directed at better understanding conditions that impact the lives of black men and boys throughout the state. To better meet its mission, the Council has been diligently attempting to partner with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) across the state. HBCU partnerships will enable the Council to have a more robust research apparatus to address issues and make use of social determinants of health to solve health disparities for black males. The Council continues to research educational and economic disparities, a solution of which is the key to solving an array of problems that plaques black males across the state.

Finally, it remains a pleasure to serve as chairman of the Council. We offer this year's annual report with the hope that the information contained herein will motivate others to join the Council in researching ways to improve the lives of black men and boys across the state.

Sincerely,

Eddy M. Regnier, Ph.D.  
Chairman



## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (FCSSBMB) continues to be a catalyst in the search for best practices throughout our Country that assist in decreasing the epidemic of violence in black communities. Families, neighborhoods, and communities are all affected when violent crime occurs. Violent crimes cause physical harm and social and emotional distress, including injury, disability, premature death, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Racial and ethnic disparities within our legal system, including implicit bias and over criminalization of our black youth, can be found at the root of this epidemic.

One of the many solutions championed by the FCSSBMB for our youth is civil citations. This initiative addresses a youth's behavior at his or her first encounter with the juvenile justice system and provides an alternative to arrest. Authorized under Florida Statute Section 985.12, civil citations serve as a pre-arrest diversionary effort to address youth misbehavior. The purpose of the program is to provide "an efficient and innovative alternative to custody by the Department of Juvenile Justice for children who commit non-serious delinquent acts and to ensure swift and appropriate consequences."<sup>1</sup>

Juvenile civil citations are beneficial to youth and the communities in which they live by keeping children that pose no real threat to public safety out of the delinquency court system, reducing costs, and freeing up limited resources to focus on children who commit more serious and violent offenses.

Low utilization of civil citations can mean higher arrest rates. Studies have revealed counties that arrest youth rather than issue juvenile civil citations create more reoffenders who generate more crime. Because they are voluntary, common youth misbehaviors eligible for civil citations can vary for each county, city and agency. This could result in two youth committing the same civil citation-eligible offense, with one being issued a civil citation and the other being arrested. This would greatly depend on the city or county where the youth is located as well as the law enforcement agency that confronts them.

Research has concluded that higher utilization equals fewer reoffenders and more resources for serious crimes like felonies.

<sup>1</sup> F.S. Section 985.12

### Recommendations:

- ❖ The Council should continue to advocate for increased usage of civil citations statewide; but more importantly in those counties where utilization is low.
- ❖ The Council should advocate for continued legislative funding for increased utilization and program effectiveness.

## EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

### **Bridging the Achievement Gap**

For decades, many Black youth have had extreme difficulty bridging the cavernous achievement and opportunity gaps that exist between them and their counterparts. Despite decades of research, increased funding, and improvements in race relations, the achievement and opportunity gap between Black and White students remain relatively unchanged. Poor test scores for Black students has been linked to underachievement manifested by high drop-out rates, failure in public schools, failure to reach college, poor economic opportunities, poverty, and high crime rates.

Overcoming the achievement gap could help solve a myriad of ills that still exist between the two racial groups. Improved test scores that are competitive with other European descent students could mean higher numbers of Black students who complete high school and then college, as well as better race relations and better economic opportunities. However, it is quite obvious that educational underachievement has no easy solution.

The challenge of educating Black youth is increasingly difficult in a world that is in a state of constant change, forcing educators to find untested strategies and innovations. The educational underperformance of Black males in the public-school system across Florida continues to be of great concern particularly now that technological innovations challenge even the privileged. Perhaps one way of mitigating the achievement and opportunity gap is to expand the bevy of options available to Black students. Rather than being framed as the "best" option, the higher education/college/graduate school track should be one of many options available to Black youth. For some Black youth, being exposed to career and technical education programs early provides them with an option that requires less time, less financial resources, yet still embodies the potential for professional salaries that can help the youth of today realize the American Dream.



Given the rapid changes occurring in Florida and across the world, the lack of a relevant technical education options for youth can result in unemployment, which consequently presents an undue burden on Florida's economy. In this environment, Black youth cannot rely solely on the basic skills of the past that thus far have failed to propel many of them to a better life. The Council has the belief that a possible solution to this educational/achievement conundrum is for Black youth to be exposed to the idea that for some, college may not be the best option for them to achieve the American Dream. Black students should explore all options available to them, and for some, a technical education pathway should be among possibilities considered. To become a viable and contributing citizen in Florida, Black youth must become proficient in new emerging technologies. The Council believes that by embracing technology, Black youth can be in a better position to close the achievement and opportunity gaps.

Black youth who can embrace the idea of Career and Technical Education (CTE) can prepare themselves for various high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand careers in established and emerging industries. The Council is committed to working with educators, industries and Black community stakeholders to promote the exposure of Black youth to CTE programs across the state. (Visit <http://www.csmbm.com> for full report.)

#### Recommendations:

- ❖ Consider drafting legislation that provides incentives for Black males who chose particular CTE tracks that service industries where a dearth currently exists. The incentive that can be realized upon completion of the track (i.e. Job placement in state departments, fees for classes waived, etc.)
- ❖ Invest in a statewide promotional campaign, specifically tailored to the mission of increasing minority participation and completion of CTE programs, with a focused concentration on Black males through various mediums including social media, television, YouTube, Twitch, radio, and community-based forums.

#### COMMITTEE UPDATES

### PHYSICAL/BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND FAMILY STABILITY

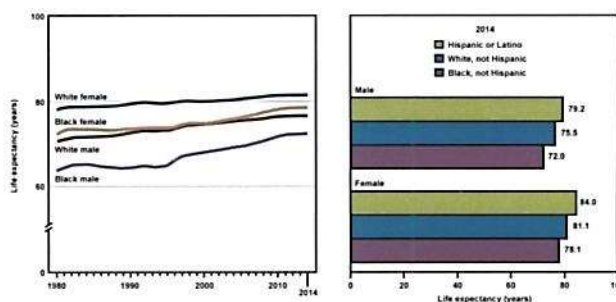
For 2019, the Physical & Behavioral Health and Family Stability subcommittee identified the most significant health problems for black men and boys in Florida and updated its goals as part of the overall strategic planning for the Council. The subcommittee assessed that major health problems for Blacks continue to include:

- ❖ insufficient violence prevention measures,
- ❖ high rates of homicides,
- ❖ lack of access to healthy food (food desserts) and affordable housing, and
- ❖ the need for more education, outreach, and prevention programs that specifically target Black health issues and the historical stigma around utilizing health and counseling services.

To best address many of these critical issues, the subcommittee is collaborating with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), appropriate state agencies, and local community stakeholders to research and expand the most effective programs that will alleviate these conditions.

The subcommittee is working with researchers affiliated with Florida HBCUs, as well as national experts on the social determinants of health, to continue identifying and publicizing promising practices in Florida. In addition, the subcommittee will also work with agriculture agencies and nutrition organizations on healthy food access issues, and with the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity on physical and behavioral health equity concerns. Finally, this subcommittee will seek to increase community collaborations with local health organizations to provide professional development to community stakeholders focused on promoting and maintaining a healthy lifestyle for men of color.

#### Life expectancy at birth



NOTE: Life expectancy data by Hispanic origin were available starting in 2006 and were corrected to address racial and ethnic misclassification  
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, *Health, United States, 2015*, Figure 18. Data from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS)

#### Recommendations:

- ❖ Increase funding for the Department of Health's Office of Minority Health and Health Equity to address physical and behavioral health equity concerns.
- ❖ Increase funding to expand minority youth violence prevention training in schools and community centers.

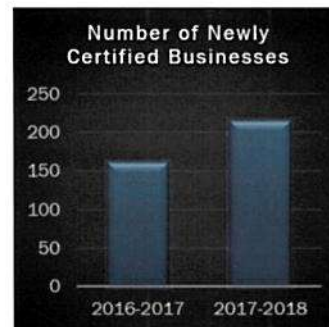


## EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Office of Supplier Diversity Certified Black Owned Businesses

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys supports and values the opportunities economic empowerment activities and entrepreneurship programs provides to minority populations. Empowering black men and boys through education and workforce programs allows them to gain the skills needed to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Entrepreneurship is just one of many strategies that creates a ladder out of poverty and provides a creative space to individuals who are seeking other options.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act recognizes entrepreneurial skills training as an allowable workforce development service. Entrepreneurial skills training provides the basics of starting and operating a small business and develops the skills associated with entrepreneurship.



*Entrepreneurs help drive change with innovation, where new and improved products enable new markets to be developed.*

### State of Florida Entrepreneurship Resources

The Office of Supplier Diversity (OSD), a specialized team within the Department of Management Services under the Division of State Purchasing, is available to help improve business opportunities for Florida-based women-, veteran- and minority-owned small businesses. OSD manages the certification program for Florida-based women-, veteran-, and minority-owned business while providing marketing, education, and training to help certified businesses learn about government procurement opportunities. Currently, there are more than 5,400 firms certified by OSD. Of those, more than 1,200 are minority-owned businesses. A list of all certified firms can be found online at OSD's Certified Directory.

Entrepreneurial skills training programs are available through Florida's network of local workforce development boards. To locate the workforce development board in your area, visit <http://lcd.floridajobs.org/>.

*Entrepreneurship is important as it can improve standards of living and create wealth, not only for the entrepreneurs, but also for related businesses.*

### **Recommendations:**

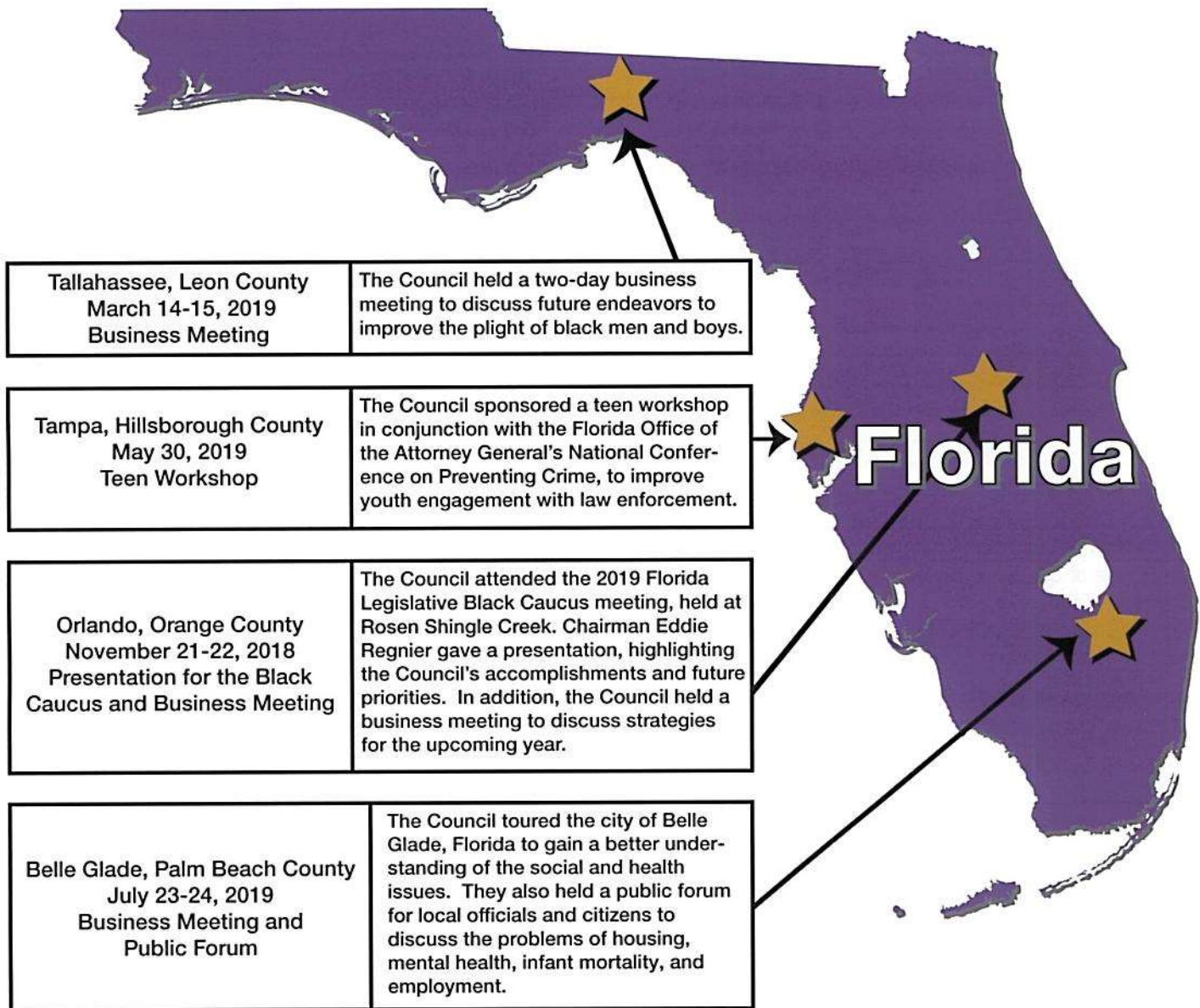
The Employment and Economics sub-committee recommends:

- ❖ The Council continue to support efforts that promote educating black men and boys about education and workforce entrepreneurship skills training programs.
- ❖ Over the next year, the Council will partner with federal, state, and local entities offering programs that create ladders out of poverty through economic empowerment to:
  - lend support,
  - enhance marketing and outreach, and
  - increase awareness about these opportunities.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LEADERSHIP...EMPOWERMENT...ACCOUNTABILITY...DIGNITY



**MISSION:** to research and propose measures that improve conditions affecting black men and boys.

**VISION:** Florida is committed to engaging, equipping and encouraging all black men and boys to successfully achieve their full potential.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



Council Chair  
Eddy M. Regnier, Ph. D.  
Clinical/Forensic Psychologist  
Assessment and Psychotherapy Services



Council Vice Chair  
Paul Wilson, Senior Associate  
PCG Education Consulting



Council Vice-Chair  
Jerome Hill, Program Operations Administrator  
Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration



Council Vice-Chair  
Shila Salem, Bureau Chief  
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity



Ramon Alexander, Representative  
Florida House



Paul O. Burns, Ed.D.,  
Deputy Chancellor for Educator Quality  
Florida Department of Education



Byron Donalds, Representative  
Florida House



William Hardin, Manager  
Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Rules  
Florida Department of Children and Families



Ken Lawson, Executive Director  
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity



Robert A. Major, Stakeholder Manager  
Florida Department of Management Services



Justine D. Patterson, Director  
Regional 4 Director for Community Corrections  
Florida Department of Corrections



Dr. Owen Quinonez, Officer  
Senior Health Equity  
Florida Department of Health



Argatha Rigby-Gilmore  
Chief of Police  
Lake City Police Department



Ben F. Shirley, Jr., Director  
Regional Economic Self Sufficiency  
Florida Department of Children and Families



Albert Simpson, Jr., Ph.D., Reverend  
Pastor  
Philemon Worship Center



Marcus Smith, Programs and Policy Chief  
Office of Prevention and Victim Services  
Florida Department of Juvenile Justice



Shawn E.E. Thomas, MDiv., Reverend  
Mt. Zion Progressive Missionary Baptist Church



Perry E. Thurston, Jr., Senator  
Florida Senate



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