



OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

JOHN BEL EDWARDS

Louisiana Council on the Success of Black Men and Boys
Wednesday, May 8, 2019
Minutes

Success Council Members Present: Ryan Clark, Reginald Devold, Rep. Royce Duplessis, Trey Godfrey, Larry Green, Joseph Hollins (for Kenneth Burrell), Rep. Ted James (Chair), Raymond Jetson, Dr. Walter Kimbrough, Victor Lashley, Dr. Roland Mitchell, Terri Ricks (Vice Chair), James Windom, and Dr. Adren Wilson.

Success Council Members Absent: Rev. Eric Alexander, Sen. Wesley Bishop, Matthew Butler, Sen. Yvonne Colomb, Judy Reese Morton, Rep. Barbara Norton, and Rev. Eric Williams.

Success Council Advisor Present: Dr. Chaunda Mitchell

Success Council Advisor Absent: Niiobli Armah IV

Call to Order:

Ms. Terri Ricks, Success Council Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:42 AM. Chair, State Representative Ted James could not be present at the start of the meeting due to obligations with the legislative session.

Welcome and Introductions

CSBMB Members were asked to formally introduce themselves to open the meeting. There were a total of eleven members present at the time. Chair, Rep. Ted James and Rep. Royce Duplessis joined the meeting after introductions constituting a quorum after their arrival.

Opening Remarks

Vice Chair, Terri Ricks opened by acknowledging members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated who were sitting in on the Success Council meeting as guests. Following, representatives of both organizations were asked to briefly speak on their day at the State Capitol and future plans on their involvement with the Success Council of Black Men and Boys.

Shortly after, additional guests and pathway members were asked to introduce themselves and their affiliation with a specific pathway under the Success Council.

Review and approval of minutes

Vice Chair Ricks announced that the Council was one member short of quorum. Therefore, the review and approval of minutes were deferred.

Pathway Reports

Dr. Chaunda Mitchell (CSBMB Advisor) provided an overview of the Council and its' purpose. She informed everyone on the Pathways, stating that the Council Members collectively decided to select eight particular Pathways which would impact several aspects and issues in the African American community.

Dr. Mitchell pointed out the significant aspect of the Success Council, which is to focus on the challenges that Black men and boys may face in the state of Louisiana. The end goal is to create recommendations and plans that can be used throughout several regions within Louisiana.

Dr. Adren Wilson provided the public audience with a list of the Pathways: Community Mobilization/ Community Ownership, K-12 Mentorship/Academic Supports, Health & Wellness, Higher Education, Reentry/Reintegration, Wealth Literacy, Workforce Development, and Identity/Self-Image. He also informed the public that their involvement with the Pathways are highly recommended.

The Chairs/Co-Chairs were then asked to provide an updated report on the work that has been done so far within the Pathway.

1. Community Mobilization/ Community Ownership

Chair, Raymond Jetson began his report by discussing the Community Mobilization/Community Ownership Pathway. He stated that in order for work under the Pathway to be effective, it must be driven from a local standpoint. Mr. Jetson, along with Pathway members created a framework that would help mobilize issues within communities.

Beyond the framework, Mr. Jetson provided the Success Council with recommendations that would further support both the Community Mobilization/Community Ownership Pathway and the Success Council.

Recommendations:

- The experiences and outcomes of African American males in our community needs to be understood in the context of data and reports.
- Creating a statewide dashboard of the Success of Black Men and Boys in Louisiana.

- Identify point person in the Governor's Office to be efficient in regards to the execution of recommendations made by the Success Council. If not, the council may never make an impact on communities.
- The involvement of an entity or an organization that serves as a connector to the Success Council. This particular organization should be publicly recognized and have access to support a diverse plan and effort to the Success Council.

Following his recommendations, Mr. Jetson briefly spoke on understanding the Success of Black Men and Boys from a historical context. The reality of what happens to Black men and boys continues to take place simply because of history that is deeply rooted in local communities. The structural and institutional racism that is in play in several communities must be understood in terms of its long term impacts.

In summarization of his Pathway report, Raymond Jetson stated that the overall goal is to allow to work of the council to be data driven. Any organization or entity within the council must understand their role of being a convenience, planning, and coordinating discussions for black men and boys.

Mr. Jetson submitted a framework for the pathway and also provided the Success Council with a list of statewide organizations that the Governor's Office should reach out to in hopes of working with CSBMB.

2. K-12 Mentorship/Academic Supports-

Trey Godfrey (K-12 Pathway Chair) serves as Executive Director of The 100 Black Men of Metro Baton Rouge. This organization has contributed a tremendous amount of time, money, and effort into mentoring the youth, which correlates to the K-12 Mentorship/Academic Supports Pathway.

Mr. Godfrey explained the importance of closing the mentoring gap which is imperative because young men must be serviced by those who are qualified to do so.

In regards to the Success Council, Godfrey expressed his concern on challenges that may be faced. He believes that the challenges of the Success Council is to develop more of a systematic view of mentoring programs that helps determine how to best support the work of organizations to impact as many young Black boys as possible. He the Success Council that he has started working with several individuals from around the state to contribute to the Pathway and share their insights.

Following, he stated that the Success Council must recognize and acknowledge that all eight of the pathways must work together in order to improve the Success of Black Men

and Boys in Louisiana. In agreement with Mr. Jetson, he expressed that there must be an entity that is tasked with the success implementation and execution of recommendations of the Success Council.

Mr. Godfrey then proceeded to provide the Success Council with recommendations, which were to:

- Contextualize the issues facing young Black boys and promote the work of mentoring as a positive interventional endeavor for young Black men.
- Collaborate with funders to bring financial resources to various organizations. (Dollars make a difference in terms of the scale of programs)
- Create a context informed research based, evidence based curriculum for mentor training.
- Launch local regional, statewide efforts to raise public awareness for the benefits of mentoring.
- Develop a research guide for organizations that includes potential referrals for services.
- Develop data tracking tools for success and promote parental involvement within mentoring programs.

Mr. Godfrey went on to state that the Success Council must invest in the parents and guardians just as much as children. He made a final recommendation which was to create a strategic plan to ensure that all work is guided and executed.

3. Health & Wellness

Vice Chair, Terri Ricks (Health & Wellness Pathway Chair), informed the Success Council on the recent work of the pathway along with co-chair, Ryan Clark. The Pathway met and is seeking additional individuals who are open to working heavily with Health & Wellness. The Pathway consists of qualified individuals ranging from pediatricians to the Deputy Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health.

She explained that health equity was a major topic within the Health & Wellness Pathway. Ms. Ricks then proceeded to provide the Success Council with recommendations on additions to the Health & Wellness Pathway that can benefit the Success Council

Recommendations:

- The Health & Wellness Pathway should serve in an advisory role to the Louisiana Department of Health's initiative on health equity.
- The Success Council should focus on efforts for those aged ten to twenty-five. This particular focus will be heavily associated with the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Behavioral Health.
- There should be a sub-committee to provide input on the Pathway to ensure that their work is statewide.
- Youth ranging from ages ten to twenty-five should be included the Pathway to provide a different perspective for the Success Council.
- Someone from the Department of Education should work closely with the Success Council to bring clarity to educational initiatives.

Vice-Chair Ricks informed the Success Council that the Health & Wellness Pathway will host another meeting on May 18, 2019. She would like to ensure that the Health & Wellness Pathway becomes practical to practitioners and doctors in several medical facilities throughout the state to those of all races.

Dr. Adren Wilson acknowledged this pathway's work and also briefly spoke on the involvement of the Department of Health and stated that it would help contribute to the overall statewide impact of the Success Council.

4. Higher Education

Pathway chair, Dr. Roland Mitchell, began his report by acknowledging the members of the Higher Education Pathway and the work that has been done thus far in terms of higher education. He also informed the public audience on the purpose of the Higher Education Pathway, which is to educate postsecondary institutions on how valuable it is to have Black men participate on their campuses. He wants to focus on Black men being dominant at their institutions.

The Higher Education Pathway has focused heavily on systematic issues in education because of the struggles Black men have faced. The Higher Education Pathway plans to look at ways the Success Council can increase success and informing institutions on the importance of serving African American students.

Dr. Mitchell provided the Success Council with three recommendations and ideas that would greatly benefit both the Higher Education pathway and Success Council.

- The Success Council should educate postsecondary institutions on why they should educate Black men. Inform these institutions on focusing specifically on the unique aspects of their institution that appeals to Black men and celebrate those institutions who represent and support men of color, while also keeping documentation.
- Systematically map out a full pathway that students take to postsecondary education with a detailed catalog that can benefit them. The Success Council must also map out a list of places where black men face challenges in life.
- Someone in the Governor's Office must be accountable for work taking place within the Success Council. Additionally, there must be someone at an institution as well to ensure that work is being done for Black men.

After Dr. Mitchell completed his report, Chair Ted James and Rep. Royce Duplessis joined the meeting. Chair James acknowledged the distinguished guests at the meeting and tremendous amount of work from each Pathway.

Raymond Jetson spoke on the correlation between the Health & Wellness and Higher Education Pathways. He stated that the number of African American males in medical school was at an all-time low. Dr. Wilson stated that in terms of Higher Education, it is essential that we inform young men about the legacies of HBCUs.

5. Reentry/Reintegration

James Windom informed the Success Council that the Reentry/ Reintegration Pathway met three times since the last meeting. He also stated that the Pathway's initial plan was to look at issues that were already occurring statewide.

The Reentry/Reintegration pathway constructed a plan that would look at practices and evidence based program that effectively worked reentry. Mr. Windom mentioned that Pathway members wanted to look at children with incarcerated parents and the efforts to reunite those parents with their children. He also informed Success Council members that poverty is a major issue in terms of recidivism. The pathway has been working to find various initiatives that can address these problems.

Mr. Windom expressed his concerns about the Success Council providing services that are needed for previous offenders such as employment, housing, and social interaction with the public. He recognized the services that are doing work to address these issues but also stated that it is imperative that they provide data to show that the work is actually making a change.

James Windom spoke on the Department of Corrections and its recent creation of the Louisiana Prison Reentry Data Initiative. This program intensifies the interaction with criminals that provides training and services while they are incarcerated. This particular program has helped indicate the things that offenders need to be successful post-release and also produces an assessment tool that has been proven to be the most successful at indicating if an individual will ever recidivate.

Mr. Windom informed the Success Council on the importance of data and mentoring are key factors in making change. Although there is no data to prove it, reentry and reintegration programs all have some type of mentoring initiative.

The Reentry and Reintegration Pathway informed the council of their research in family reconnection and statewide programs. Council member Windom pointed out that several states have reentry programs while others lack these initiatives. The lack of programs produces a likelihood of individuals recidivating. James Windom also informed the Success Council that several programs are looking at children but not looking at children reconnecting with their parents. He believes that this should be addressed to avoid potential behavioral issues.

Following the full report, Terri Ricks expressed that the Reentry/ Reintegration Pathway can serve as a great resource to the federal government by providing reentry programs with guidance and input with collaboration with children and family services.

6. Wealth Literacy

Due to pathway chair, Matthew Butler's absence, Dr. Chaunda Mitchell provided the Success Council with the Wealth Literacy Pathway report. She introduced pathway members who have worked with Mr. Butler to help establish an effective plan to impact the community.

Dr. Mitchell informed the Success Council of areas that the pathway planned to tackle. Mr. Butler established that the Wealth Literacy Pathway should have an objective which was to increase awareness and to build a pathway for Black men and boys to increase their wealth. The ultimate goal is to increase assets by reducing liabilities.

Pathway members identified two key terms that they planned to keep in mind which were financial literacy and wealth obtainment. In regards to financial literacy, Mr. Butler posed the question, “How do we provide knowledge and skills that allow black men and boys to make effective decisions about financial resources?” As for wealth obtainment, “How is the process for an individual to obtain an abundance of financial assets?”

Dr. Mitchell proceeded to provide the Success Council of the Wealth Literacy Pathway goals, which were to: promote wealth literacy and wealth obtainment, build awareness, and recognize the problems and barriers that are keeping black men and boys from wealth obtainment.

She also provided the Success Council with a plethora of questions posed by Matthew Butler which were:

- How do we increase access to banking?
- How can the council fund recommendations?
- How can the pathway create public and private funding organizations?

Following, Pathway member Blaine Grimes informed the Success Council on the lingering effects of under banking. He stated that the plan for the Wealth Literacy pathway is to look at those who lack the resources go gain financial literacy or simply open a bank account. He spoke on under banking in terms of individuals who simply don't have the time to access their accounts.

Dr. Mitchell provided the Success Council with barriers that the wealth literacy pathway plan to tackle which are education, training, access to banking, check cashing outlets, and asset management.

7. Workforce Development

Pathway chair, Kenneth Burrell could not be present; therefore, Joshua Hollins provided the Success Council with an update. He informed everyone that there was one other individual besides himself that has been working with Mr. Burrell. Mr. Hollins made a public announcement that the workforce development pathway is seeking additional members who are willing to work.

Mr. Hollins began his update by informing that the Success Council that Mr. Burrell decided to focus specifically on the age group of sixteen to twenty-four. He decided to focus on this particular group of individuals because they tend to have the greatest barriers and are at risk of being homeless or incarcerated.

Secondly, Mr. Hollins spoke on the pathways work with apprenticeships. He stated that apprenticeships were targeted because can help teach individuals trades that they can actually make a career out of. He also spoke on several possible occupations that can be appealing to young individuals in low income areas. Mr. Hollins informed the Success Council that the overall goal is mentorship due to apprenticeships having some type of mentoring program while also providing individuals with job training.

8. Identity/Self-Image

Pathway chair, Mr. Ryan Clark spoke on the perception of the positive image of a black man. He stated that he believes perception starts with education and that one must understand the history of their background. Mr. Clark stated that there must be a formal education in schools that allows students to learn about black men year round, rather than once a month.

Ryan Clark provided the council with recommendations which included educating lawmakers and authorities who keep and protect the laws simply because this can serve as an influence on the perception of black men. He also recommended the support of families as parents must help their children become aware of their identity at a young age. He then informed the council that he has everything in place to move forward with his pathway, along with a great panel of leaders but would like to have a political standpoint to actually make changes locally.

Chair Ted James informed Mr. Clark of different programs under the state that goes into schools and help with the identity of students. He also spoke on Rep. Duplessis' idea of creating a Civil Rights Museum locally to educate our youth on their history. Lastly, Ted James spoke on the struggles within the state to help get the opposing race on board with what needs to be done in the African American community.

Vice-Chair Ricks stated that the Success Council should bring in several young black boys into the council meeting so that they can see what is being done to help impact their future. She also briefly spoke on the statement of purpose and its significance.

CSBMB Council Member Recommendations

Terri Ricks informed the Success Council on the importance of everyone being involved. She stated that everyone should feel included and does not have to serve as a chair of a pathway to work heavily within the council. Ms. Ricks then proceeded to ask council members for recommendations and suggestions that would best benefit the Success Council.

Council member, Larry Green stated that it is important to build relationships within the communities that revolve around mentoring our youth. He also included that he would like to work heavily with the Identity/Self-Image pathway, as this is a great way to help provide the youth with positive role models at a young age.

Dr. Walter Kimbrough addressed previous comments regarding leaning away from HBCUs. He explained the importance of getting the higher education pathway involved heavily in HBCU attendance. Dr. Kimbrough expressed that we should support our black men and boys in their efforts to attend HBCUs because these institutions were initially founded for them.

Chair Ted James thanked Dr. Kimbrough for the amount of intensity and passion that he provided with his statement, as it shows that council members truly care about making an impact on black men and boys. He also spoke in agreement of black boys attending certain schools because it can benefit them long term.

Victor Lashley expressed his opinions in regards to the wealth literacy pathway. Mr. Lashley stated that a potential goal of his is to prepare providers to offer products that actually address their needs. He believes that working with providers will help them understand how to serve the community in a more efficient manner.

Rep. Royce Duplessis recognized Chair James for organizing the council and expressing its' importance in Louisiana. He then proceeded to speak on his work with mentoring and included that it is a vital key in our communities. It is important that we focus on outputs and actually understand the importance of building a connection with underprivileged individuals.

Mr. Duplessis also agreed with Dr. Kimbrough's statement on HBCU attendance. He also informed council members that he filed a resolution to create a study about what's being done to help children with parents who are incarcerated.

Lastly, council member Reginald Devold stated that as a former correctional worker it is extremely important to prevent recidivism. He also suggested implementing a program for grades Kindergarten to the fourth grade that zones in on skills that will help children in the real world. Mr. Devold expressed that providing students with positive influences will help them understand what it means to gain a positive self-image.

Public Comments

Chair James, along with Teri Ricks, expressed their eagerness to hear from the public being that they both received several recommendations on work that should be done within the Success Council.

John Square III, Higher Education pathway member, expressed his concern on having student voice and youth presence on the council. He stated that the youth can provide the council with different perspectives and outlooks on what works best to serve their population. Following, Reverend Phillips asked, "How can the community connect with the council more to provide them with connections and resources that can greatly benefit them?"

Terri Ricks stated that the council has invited several individuals that may be interested in working heavily with the council. Dr. Adren Wilson also informed Reverend Phillips that council members are willing to come out and serve the community heavily.

Lucas Spilfulger, Baton Rouge Youth Coalition employee, informed everyone of this organization and how it can greatly serve the K-12 Mentorship pathway. He stated that the program is seeking individuals who are willing to work heavily with the youth.

Updates

Dr. Chaunda Mitchell provided the Success Council with a brief update from the previous meeting. She informed everyone that since the last meeting, a student intern has been hired to work heavily with the council under the Governor's Office. Dr. Mitchell always informed Success Council members that a list of recommendations will be sent out via email, along with documents that were not placed in binders.

Meeting Adjournment

Vice-Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:32 PM