CLAIMING THE PROMISE OF HEALTH AND SUCCESS FOR BOYS AND MEN OF COLOR IN CALIFORNIA


Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color in California
INTRODUCTION

California’s future prosperity and health depend on all Californians having a fair chance to thrive and succeed. As the proportion of Californians over 65 grows and fertility rates decline, a greater share of the population will depend on fewer working adults.1 And the state population, once mostly non-Hispanic white, is now a majority of people of color, with the young population changing fastest. More than 70 percent of Californians under 25 identify as people of color, according to the 2010 Census. Amid these demographic shifts, improving opportunities for all young adults, particularly those of color, is a state imperative.

Most adolescents successfully move to adulthood, but some young people, a disproportionate number of whom are African American, Latino, Native American, and Southeast Asian males, are trapped in a cycle of poverty, prison, and disadvantage. Deteriorated schools and neighborhoods, poor health, dysfunctional social support, and limited job opportunities hamper their progress.

Addressing racial disparities and the systemic barriers that limit the success of Californians is not merely a matter of fairness and equality—it is essential to the economic strength and competitiveness of the state. Meanwhile, maintaining the world’s largest and most expensive prison and jail system, which is disproportionately filled with young men of color, now prevents our state from meeting many essential services all Californians count on.

Concerned that this dynamic not only puts boys and young men of color in jeopardy but that it also poses a serious threat to California’s health and success, the leadership of the California Assembly established the Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color (BMoC) in January 2011. The bi-partisan committee’s primary focus over the last year and half has been to seek advice to better understand what is needed to address this state crisis.

From January 2011 to August 2012, the Committee commissioned research, hosted policy development workgroups, held four regional hearings (Oakland, Los Angeles, Fresno, and the Coachella Valley), and two hearings in the Capital to develop a policy and system reform agenda in partnership with a diverse cross section of youth, community, system, research, and philanthropic leaders. The resulting recommendations in the Action Plan seek to harness the strengths and assets young men of color possess and build on the most promising community and system led program models that are already underway in neighborhoods and cities across the state.

ACTION PLAN

EDUCATION

As early as Kindergarten, nearly 25 percent of African-American boys – three times more than their white counterparts – are already convinced that they lack the ability to succeed in school. Explanations for this early lack for school “readiness” vary, but most researchers draw a causal line directly to the effects of childhood poverty and the stress that this places on families. California has experienced higher child poverty rates than the country as a whole since the early 1980s. In particular, African-American and Latino children in California experience the highest rates of child poverty—each at about 27 percent. As well, in California, the odds of being a substantiated victim of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect as a child (maltreatment) are 2.5 times greater for African-American children than for white children. Latino children in California are 1.3 times as likely to be the victims of substantiated maltreatment compared with white children. Yet, from the very outset, our schools lack the human and institutional capacity to respond effectively to the needs of these youth. And so, an achievement gap begins to develop and to grow throughout the elementary school years. By the 4th grade, 58 percent of African-American children and 61 percent of Latino children in California score “below proficient” on the 4th grade reading test of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. These scores are more than twice the “below-proficiency” rate of non-Hispanic white students in California at the same grade. By the 8th grade — a critical transition year for students heading into high school — black and Latino youth are beginning to disconnect from school altogether: 24 percent of African-American and 23 percent of Latino 8th graders are absent from school three or more days per month. By high school, black and Latino boys disproportionately drop out of California schools and make up a disproportionate number of youth referred out to alternative schools where they receive a generally inferior educational opportunity. Ultimately, only about 55 percent of Latino boys and 54 percent of African-American boys graduated from California schools in 2007. We must support our schools and hold them accountable for doing better by our boys of color.

As well, California is unique among states in providing a legislatively mandated system of alternative education for student sixteen years and older who have fallen behind academically and face multiple challenges. State law requires that any school district with a high school that enrolls over one hundred students must establish a Continuation High School. These schools are crucial to ensure that those neediest students who despite early intervention, are still behind by age 16, get the specialized and service intensive help they need to graduate. They are also a key to reintegrating those young people who have already left high school and are now interested in reconnecting. In order to improve the quality of instruction, health, and social services, the weak accountability system under which these schools functioned must be reformed. In addition, funding formulas and district oversight must shift so these schools can truly provide the connections to services and education required to ensure the success of these students. Finally, there are islands of excellence in this system; a small number of


4. Davis, et al, Reparable Harm, at p.55

5. Davis, et al, Reparable Harm, at p.64.


alternative schools are making real progress. We must elevate the best practices from these and other model schools and push to replicate their success throughout the state.

**BROAD POLICY GOAL**

All children and youth, including boys and young men of color, will have access to strong effective schools designed to build the persistence, skills and capacities needed for healthy social, academic, and career success.

System Indicators:

1. State school accountability systems create incentives and hold schools accountable for improving successful completion rates for all students, including BMoC.

2. School finance and resource allocation system targets adequate resources to address student needs and promote achievement of state goals for all students.

3. All students have access to a rigorous and relevant standards-based curriculum and effective instruction.

4. All students have access to adequate and appropriate support services: tutoring, after-school programs, remediation, and mental health services.

BMoC population-level Indicators

1. 100% graduation from High School

2. 100% of graduates are college and career-ready for effective post-secondary transitions those goals.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**IMPROVING THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS SERVING BMoC**

1.1 Revise the school accountability system (Academic Performance Index, API) to emphasize and reward individual student academic growth measures and graduation rates (rather than school-wide proficiency percentages).

1.2 Authorize an Early Warning System for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) using existing data, and authorize the use of CAHSEE remediation funds in Intermediate or Middle Schools.

1.3 Continue to support full implementation of California’s longitudinal student data system (CALPADS); and shape legislation to create a “statewide data warehouse” that would integrate CALPADS with data from post-secondary institutions, workforce data, and data from other agencies that serve BMoC, including pre-K, foster care, health, and criminal justice.
POLICY OR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS TO REMOVE EDUCATION BARRIERS

1.4 Require the State Board of Education to direct all districts to articulate a coherent set of identification, placement, and school intake procedures that are applicable to all alternative schools and programs in the district, including continuation schools, and independent study.

1.5 Eliminate Involuntary Transfer of Students into Continuation High Schools.

1.6 Provide all students placed into Continuation Schools with the option of a state-supported full-day of instruction.

BUDGET LEVERS FOR TARGETING OR REDIRECTING, EXISTING FUNDING OR ACCESSING NEW FUNDING

1.7 The legislature should work with the Governor to find alternative ways and means to increase over-all funding for education in California. The current level of funds available to schools and districts greatly constrains efforts of system leaders to address the needs of BMoC and other vulnerable students.

1.8 The legislature should adopt an equitable state school finance formula that will ensure that additional funds are allocated based on regional costs and the needs of students in schools. At a minimum, the funding allocation formula should include equitable targeting of funds to account for individual student poverty, poverty concentration in neighborhoods, English learner status, and transportation costs.

INCENTIVIZE ADOPTION OF BEST PRACTICE MODELS TO IMPROVE BMoC OUTCOMES

1.9 Support local efforts to recruit and retain experienced and effective teachers to high poverty schools serving BMoC.

1.10 Pursue Legislation to Ensure Equitable Access and Effective Implementation of the Common Core and “A-G” Curricula in Every California School.

1.11 Support innovations in “Linked Learning” Career and Technical Education Pathways that provide a Rigorous, College and Career-ready Education for all Students, especially Boys of Color.

1.12 Support the implementation of Full Service Community Schools and Promise Neighborhood Initiatives, both of which aim to provide the necessary infrastructure and systems leadership necessary for the provision of integrated comprehensive social, mental health, and academic supports to BMoC in California Schools.

Researchers estimate that 115,000 California youth attend one of the state’s 490 Continuation High Schools each year. Two thirds of these students are youth of color and more than half are boys. The number of BMoC in Continuation schools thus rivals the total high school enrollments of any of our largest school districts except Los Angeles.

By almost every available indicator, California is under-spending on its schools in comparison to other states: as a measure of tax-effort per resident, or by professional estimates of the resources needed to help students meet state performance standards.
HEALTH

Latino, Asian Pacific Islander, African-American and Native American Californian’s, especially those who are low-income (e.g., under 200% of the federal poverty level) suffer disproportionately from diseases and unhealthy conditions in their communities, including inadequate schooling, and exposure to youth gangs, and neighborhood violence. Moreover, the prolonged Great Recession of the last four years has exacerbated all of the above factors, limited the State’s capacity to respond, left far fewer job opportunities for the low-income unemployed, and has decimated the capacity of families, extended families and communities to heal.

The health related statistics are glaring. For example, Latino and African American youth have higher death rates due to firearm homicide than their White counterparts; three times as many Latinos were murdered in California than Whites (2007). Twenty-two percent of Latino youth lose access to their primary care provider compared to 15% of non-Hispanic whites. Asthma in Latino and African American youth, ages 5-17, runs up to five times the rate for non-Hispanic whites, particularly in rural agricultural and dense urban core areas.

As noted in the Education section, California has experienced higher child poverty rates than the nation as a whole. In particular, California’s African-American and Latino children and youth experience rates of poverty at about 27 percent. These conditions lead to higher rates of obesity and child onset diabetes, and higher rates of asthma and all forms of infectious diseases, whether influenza or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). These conditions are all manageable, if not largely preventable. Yet, California had the nation’s sixth highest rate of uninsured in 2011 (21.9%) and consecutive State budget cuts over the last decade have eroded safety net protections for all vulnerable populations. In this context, the state’s BMoC have continuously lost ground with respect to access to health services.

The following recommendations, taken together, lay out a strategy that builds on prior State and county efforts to address the health needs of vulnerable populations, including its boys and young men of color. The recommendations also take into account the many innovative programs that have developed in local communities with support from public and foundation resources. Finally, these recommendations reflect the billions of federal dollars that are coming into California for health reform that could, on their own, address the most dire health problems that face children and young men of color.

BROAD POLICY GOAL

All boys and young men of color will have access to health care and live in communities in which their whole health is addressed through direct interventions that prevent the negative impact of trauma induced conditions and promote healthy communities rooted in recognition of their cultural and history based assets.

System Indicators:

1. All boys and young men of color have access to affordable health care coverage, including behavioral health services, through public and private health plans.

2. State and local systems, and public and private agencies will develop incentives and implement system re-design to address the health and health care needs of boys and young men of color.

3. State and local finance and resource allocation systems will target adequate resources to address the health and health care needs of boys and young men of color and take maximum advantage of federal resources, including those under federal Health Reform.

4. State decision makers in the Legislature and Executive branch will create incentives to bring together public and private sector resources, including from foundations and businesses, to join together with leading community-based BMoC stakeholders to promote healthy neighborhoods which address the trauma induced conditions disproportionately impacting boys and young men of color.

BMoC population-level Indicators

1. 100% health care coverage for BMoC through public and private health plans.

2. Reduction of health disparities in BMoC moving towards parity with the non-Latino White population.

3. Coordination of programs that address trauma-induced conditions among BMoC in every highly-impacted county in California.

IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE OF HEALTH SYSTEMS SERVING BMoC

2.1 The Legislature should request that the Secretary of California’s Health and Human Services Agency prioritize the recommendations in this report for all California Department of Public Health (CDPH) programs and initiatives.

2.2 Require incorporation of BMoC-targeted strategies in all components of ACA and Medi-Cal implementation; in the short term, it is important to prioritize outreach and enrollment efforts, including the use of community health workers (CHWs) in these efforts.

2.3 Require health plan and provider-based assessments on an annual basis to close disparities in health outcomes for BMoC through ACA programs with support provided by the State and academic institutions.

2.4 Require health plans and providers under ACA to meet all language and cultural competency standards articulated under State and federal law.

2.5 Coordinate applications for multiple State public benefits for individuals and families.

2.6 Require coverage parity for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment services targeted to BMoC by all health plans that provide such care with support from federal ACA and State health and mental health funding initiatives.

2.7 Establish local public commissions on BMoC issues to support services.

The health status of California’s boys and young men of color bears a direct causal link to school dropout rates, attendance, academic performance and school behavior. By carefully considering where and how schools provide health services to BMoC, policymakers can take immediate low-cost steps to improve the health of young men of color and promote their academic achievement.
POLICY OR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS TO REMOVE HEALTH BARRIERS

2.8 Coordinate care through Safety Net providers and health plans for undocumented persons and other immigrants deemed as “unqualified” for coverage under federal law, and for those who are eligible and are part of immigrant households.

2.9 Fully implement AB 922, Office of the Patient Advocate Act, particularly the funding of the Patient Advocate Trust Fund for

2.10 Maintain essential Safety Net programs serving BMoC populations, including Family Pact, CHDP and EPSDT.

2.11 Require a linguistically and culturally appropriate social media outreach and enrollment effort directed at promoting greater BMoC participation in eligible services.

BUDGET LEVERS FOR TARGETING OR REDIRECTING EXISTING FUNDING OR ACCESSING NEW FUNDING FOR BMoC

2.12 Relax State requirements to 60% for voter support of local initiative revenues, including those efforts directed to BMoC.

2.13 Require Medi-Cal coverage for BMoC inmates while in detention facilities.

2.14 Extend health plan coverage to young adults to age 26 for those ageing out of State Foster Care.

INCENTIVIZE ADOPTION OF BEST PRACTICE MODELS TO IMPROVE BMoC OUTCOMES

2.15 Promote expanded number of School-Based Health Clinics (SCHCs) directly and through support of Community Health Clinics (CHCs), School Districts and Counties.

2.16 Support Health Workforce Development Council’s 2011 State Workforce Plan, which promotes BMoC opportunities within entry-level positions in the health field.

2.17 Establish Demonstration Projects related to BMoC in the State’s ACA programs.

2.18 Establish a Professional Development Institute to train health and human services practitioners in leadership approaches to support BMoC-based service delivery.

2.19 Require the creation of a BMoC oriented Health Homes– portals for preventive and primary care services that are consciously tailored to the gender, culture, language, race, ethnicity and life experiences of communities– by requiring financial reimbursement to health plans for BMoC designed prevention services based on evidence-based standards.
EMPLOYMENT & WEALTH

As the country and our state struggle to recover from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, business leaders warn that our economic recovery, competitiveness, and prospects for sustained prosperity will depend on having a highly educated and trained workforce. Given their growing numbers here in California, the imperative to prepare young men of color for success in the workplace and in the marketplace cannot be overstated.

Young men of color face the highest unemployment rates in the state and nation. Though educated males of color are faring better than lesser-educated young men, they remain unemployed at rates nearly twice that of college-educated Caucasian males.9 In June 2012, 31.9% of young African-American males, aged 16-24, were jobless – almost four times the national unemployment rate of 8.2%.10 In California during that month, unemployment rates approximated 11 percent among Latino males and topped 15 percent among African-American males.11

Increasing employment among these males should be a priority of local and state policymakers in their efforts to get the economy moving and increasing productivity in California. As a first step, policy leaders must strengthen our public education and workforce systems and ensure these systems adopt and expand the program models and institutional practices that have proven to boost the success rates of young men of color. As well, leaders must take proactive steps to undo the barriers that impede young Californians as they try to stay connected to education and workforce programs, employment, and their families and communities.

Unfortunately, high rates of incarceration are contributing to the disconnection of young men of color from education system or the workforce. In California, 30.5 percent of 15- to 24-year-old males in juvenile facilities were African-American even though African-Americans comprise only seven percent of those age groups in the state. Latinos are also over-represented in juvenile facilities; while Latinos account for 45 percent of the state’s 15- to 24-year-olds, they make up 53.6 percent of youth in juvenile facilities.

In 2007, almost one in 10 Latino and one in six African-American males between 16 and 25 years of age were “disconnected”: incarcerated, out of work or out of school. Latinos are two times more likely to be out of school, out of the labor force or incarcerated than non-Hispanic whites and African-Americans are three times more likely than whites to be out of the labor force or incarcerated.

Despite these serious obstacles, there are good reasons for optimism. As noted in the introduction of this Action Plan, over the course of the last year, the Select committee heard from hundreds of youth, community, business, and workforce system leaders that are successfully preparing and engaging young men of color in good jobs.

The recommendations that follow seek to harness the strengths and assets that young men of color possess, build on the most promising community and system led program models that are already underway. These recommendations further reforms focused on removing the systemic barriers and advancing the goal of

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improving the numbers of young men of color who successfully complete workforce and career oriented high school programs, community colleges, and other workforce training programs that lead to good jobs and careers.

### BROAD POLICY GOAL

The state will align and strengthen career technical education and workforce training programs that serve as career pathways for all Californians to jobs in high growth, high value industry sectors that are critical to the competitiveness of regions and the state’s economy. Toward this end, the state will set a specific goal to increase the numbers of young men of color who are prepared for middle skill jobs and professional careers in the health, education, and infrastructure (green) sectors.

#### System Indicators:

1. The State Board of Education, the Community College Board of Governors, the State Workforce Investment Board, and other state systems with purview over workforce training have accountability systems in place to hold career technical education and workforce training programs accountable for increasing the participation and success rates of BMoC in existing career pathway programs.

2. The State’s finance and resource allocation system ensures career technical education and workforce training program have adequate resources to meet the needs of BMoC and other Californians that face barriers to employment.

3. Increases in the number of state funded career technical education and workforce training programs that adopt program models and system practices that have proven to increase the participation and success rates of BMoC. System practices and financial incentives are provided to encourage the replication and expansion of these proven career pathways to opportunity and productivity.

#### BMoC population-level Indicators

1. Significant increases in the numbers of young men of color that complete state supported career technical education and workforce training programs.

2. Significant increases in numbers of young men of color that secure middle skill and career ladder jobs that pay family sustaining wages, provide benefits, and offer a path to continuing educational and career advancement in the health, education, and infrastructure sectors.


### IMPROVING THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE OF WORKFORCE PROGRAMS SERVING BMoC

3.1 The Legislature and Governor should take steps to ensure governing bodies that oversee workforce programs set performance goals for improving access and success rates of boys and young men of color in state funded programs.
POLICY OR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

3.2 The Legislature and Governor should work together to ensure that greater numbers of young men of color are healthy and ready to succeed as students in the state’s impressive array of career pathway education and training program.

3.3 The Legislature and the Governor should work with other state officials and state and local system leaders to remove policy and system barriers that impede formerly incarcerated young men of color in their efforts to access career pathway training programs and secure good jobs.

BUDGET LEVERS FOR TARGETING OR REDIRECTING EXISTING FUNDING TO ACCESS TO WORKFORCE TRAINING AND JOBS FOR BMoC

3.4 The Legislature and Governor should work with state and local departments and agencies to increase the number of public agencies that adopt targeted hiring policies and programs that specify goals for hiring of young men of color with multiple barriers to employment.

3.5 The state should use realignment monies to increase access to workforce training and employment opportunities for the reentry population.

3.6 The Legislature and the Governor should facilitate expansion of social enterprises that serve as first employers to BMoC who have historically faced barriers to employment.

INCENTIVIZE ADOPTION OF BEST PRACTICE MODELS TO IMPROVE BMoC OUTCOMES

3.7 In recent years the Legislature and Governor have mandated system planning and reform to ensure that state funded workforce training programs serve as pathways to goods jobs in high growth industry clusters that are critical to maintaining the competitiveness of every region of the state. These efforts to align and strengthen workforce training in regions should be supported; and steps should be taken to mandate attention and priority is given to the goal of connecting and moving greater numbers of BMoC through these pathways to opportunity.

3.8 The Governor and the State Health and Human Services Agency should provide the leadership and financial support needed to implement the 2011 State Health Workforce Plan developed by the State Health Workforce Development Council.

3.9 The Legislature and Governor should support the Community College Chancellor’s efforts to continue and to expand the reach of Career Advancement Academies that serve young men of color and other Californians with barriers to employment.

3.10 The Legislature and the Governor should take needed action to expand Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways that connect youth and adults in underserved communities to competitive and emerging industry sectors—with the goal of increasing the numbers of individuals that complete the training.

3.11 The Legislature and Governor should support efforts to continue and to expand the California Teacher Pathway program that prepares young men of color and other young adults from low-income communities for employment in the afterschool workforce, provides them post-secondary academic support and creates meaningful career pathways leading to K-12 teaching careers.

A significant number of young men of color must overcome serious health problems before they are ready to enroll and succeed in workforce training programs. Drug and alcohol dependence rates are often high and education preparation rates lower for this population …particularly if they have been involved in the justice system.
JUVENILE JUSTICE AND SAFETY

A growing body of recent research now confirms what has always been evident from direct observation: children and adolescents benefit in very consequential ways from developmentally appropriate adult guidance and good parenting until they are fully mature. Many children, however, particularly those in the foster care or juvenile justice systems, have been removed from the people who would most naturally support their development. As well, neither of these public systems approaches the care of children in their custody from a youth development or trauma-informed perspective. This is especially true for boys and young men of color. These children receive inadequate or no effective parenting at critical developmental points and are influenced more by peers than caring adults. The result is an increase in violent behavior, school failure, inability to connect with others and unaddressed health and mental health needs. Without addressing the youth development of children in these systems generally, and boys and young men of color specifically, California will never effectively stem the epidemic of youth violence.

Research also confirms that harsh juvenile justice policies do not protect communities; but instead they deepen the damage in the very communities these policies are designed to protect by putting more children on a dropout track. This further widens racial and ethnic inequality because dropouts are more likely to appear in the criminal justice system down the road. Between 1987 and 2007, as harsher criminal justice policies took hold, the nation’s prison population nearly tripled. From 1974 to 2001, the percentage of African-American adults who have ever been incarcerated jumped from 8.7 percent to 16.6 percent; for Latinos, the rate increased from 2.3 percent to 7.7 percent. Both groups are overrepresented in prison, when compared to whites. And it affects the young as well as adults: In California, in 2003, 25 percent of incarcerated juveniles were African American in a state where 8 percent of the youth population was African American. Overall, the number of youth held in adult prisons has grown by 208 percent since the 1990s.

Racial disparities are also evident in the way that our justice system responds to youth violence: Latino youth are 40 percent more likely than white youth to serve time in an adult correctional facility; in fact, one of every four Latino youths who are locked up are incarcerated in adult institutions. Similarly, African-American juveniles are nine times more likely than whites to do time in adult detention facilities. Consequently, more young (20 to 34-year-old) African-American men without a high school diploma or GED are currently behind bars (37 percent than employed (26 percent). Yet, studies have demonstrated that prosecuting youths as adults contributes to higher rates of recidivism and that teenage boys serving time alongside grown men are at increased risk for sexual assault and suicide.

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As a related issue, recent studies on other vulnerable populations, like Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth, indicate that finding solutions to the challenges we face in the juvenile justice system will require that we dig deeper to unpack other challenges that relate to gender and gender orientation. LGBT youth and adults face harsher punishment than straight people for the same crimes. LGBT youth are more often expelled from school, arrested and convicted of a juvenile offense compared to their straight counterparts. At least 15 percent of the population in juvenile detention is LGBT.20

As California grapples with a budgetary crisis, as well as with the re-alignment of the criminal justice system, we will need to identify opportunities and implement strategies to ensure that dramatically lower numbers of boys and young men of color find themselves languishing in our local jails and state prisons at an expense to taxpayers that far exceeds the costs of sending them to the most expensive private universities in the world. We urgently need to identify and strengthen the programs that can ensure young men who are incarcerated receive the counseling and education needed to become productive citizens upon their release.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

BROAD POLICY GOALS

1. Ensure that our law enforcement, gang abatement, incarceration, and community re-entry policies and practices are aligned with the goal of promoting economically thriving healthy communities.

2. Ensure that criminal justice realignment in California provides local jurisdictions with incentives, opportunities, and supports to take proactive action and promote national leadership in progressive criminal justice reform.

System Indicators

1. Law enforcement, gang abatement, incarceration, and community re-entry policies and practices are aligned with the goal of promoting economically thriving healthy communities.

2. The criminal justice realignment in California provides local jurisdictions with incentives, opportunities, and supports to take proactive action and promote national leadership in progressive criminal justice reform.

BMoC Population-Level Indicators

1. Substantially reduction in the number of boys of color that end up in the criminal justice system.

2. More effective Youth Pathways for School and Community Re-Integration after Incarceration.

IMPROVE SYSTEM PERFORMANCE THROUGH GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE REMOVAL OF BARRIERS TO SCHOOL AND WORKFORCE RE-ENTRY

4.1 The legislature should prioritize strategies that reduce the number of boys of color that end up in the criminal justice pipeline.

4.2 Improve supportive interventions for foster youth both while in foster care, and for an appropriate period after they age out of foster care system.

4.3 Design legislation that authorizes and supports local health, education, and other youth-serving agencies and state-supported community-based service providers to incorporate trauma-informed and restorative justice approaches to care and programing.

4.4 The Legislature should review and reform gang-abatement laws that create racially/ethnically biased gang registries and sentencing enhancements.

4.5 Authorize and Support more Effective Youth Pathways for School and Community Re-Integration after Incarceration

4.6 Authorize and support the revision of detention practices in California to ensure that youth of color receive fair and equitable treatment while detained, including access to effective continuing education services.

4.7 The Legislature should support counties to provide non-incarceration options to handle warrant and probation failures; and should work to expand community-based alternatives to detention in appropriate cases.

4.8 Set Goals for and Require Counties to Document Recidivism under the new Realignment

4.9 Foster Transparency through Uniform Reporting under Strengthened SB 678 Realignment Provisions

4.10 Align Realignment Incentives to Promote the Goal of Reduced Incarcerations

Reducing adolescent contact with the justice system requires that health system and school leaders, police, judicial and probation authorities and other community stakeholders share a common set of goals and strategies for intervening with youthful offenders.

INCENTIVIZING ADOPTION OF THE BEST PRACTICES/MODELS IN PRISONER RE-ENTRY AND PRIORITIZE SUPPORT TO COMMUNITIES THAT ARE SHOWN TO IMPROVE BMoC OUTCOMES

4.5 Authorize and Support more Effective Youth Pathways for School and Community Re-Integration after Incarceration

Foster Care is often one of the most significant, if unintended, pathways into the juvenile justice system for boys of color.

4.6 Authorize and support the revision of detention practices in California to ensure that youth of color receive fair and equitable treatment while detained, including access to effective continuing education services.

4.7 The Legislature should support counties to provide non-incarceration options to handle warrant and probation failures; and should work to expand community-based alternatives to detention in appropriate cases.

4.8 Set Goals for and Require Counties to Document Recidivism under the new Realignment

4.9 Foster Transparency through Uniform Reporting under Strengthened SB 678 Realignment Provisions

4.10 Align Realignment Incentives to Promote the Goal of Reduced Incarcerations
In California, far too many young men of color will reach age 25 without receiving a high school diploma or successfully transitioned to independent adulthood. At an age when most young adults are benefiting from full-time work and close interpersonal relationships, these youth will not have connected to the labor force; most will lack social support systems. An overwhelming majority of these unemployed youth will be males of color; of these, over half will be in prison, while the remaining young men will be mired in protracted spells of long-term unemployment. Almost all of these youth will have spent their childhoods in families at the lowest level of the income distribution and will likely spend much of their own adult lives in poverty, unemployed or marginally employed. From an educational, economic and social perspective, these young people will be “disconnected.”

Virtually all youth who find themselves outside of the labor force and not connected to educational institutions by their twenties began the process of disconnection much earlier, most often in adolescence. In our society, almost all youth require support until they have connected successfully with the labor force, which generally does not occur until their mid-twenties. Most young adults experience detours on the road to independence, which may include periods of unemployment and periodic interruptions in their education. The majority of youth are embedded in networks—families, friends, and communities—that provide guidance, support and help, both financial and otherwise, when they face the crises that are an inevitable part of this transition.

Quite the opposite is true for most disconnected youth, particularly if they are male. These youth have extremely limited support systems, including family support, to help them through the difficult transition to adulthood. There is a compelling need to create a system of support and opportunity for those youth least likely to make a successful transition by age 25 and to provide incentives for youth to access these opportunities. Those less likely to connect have lower basic literacy and fewer years of formal schooling. Many have a history of behavioral problems that result in suspension, expulsion and arrest. They are more likely to suffer from untreated mental illness, substance abuse or other disabilities, more likely to reside in neighborhoods where many other residents are unemployed, and, more likely to have experienced child abuse or neglect. Youth Development programs and policies designed to serve the general population of adolescents or unemployed young adults are not likely to adequately serve the needs of those at highest risk of long-term disconnection.

BROAD POLICY GOALS

1. Prevent the Disconnection or “push-out” of boys and young men of color from California’s public schools.

2. Re-connect disconnected youth – those who are out of school, have no high school diploma, and are not working – including the formerly incarcerated, to education opportunities and workforce participation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL 1 – REDUCE SCHOOL PUSH-OUT

ACCOUNTABILITY MANDATES TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE OF SYSTEMS THAT SERVE BMoC

5.1 Reduce the use of harsh school policies and practices that “push” boys out of school and expand the use of school discipline models that promote retention and academic engagement among boys and young men of color in California’s public schools.

5.2 Provide a rich array of targeted afterschool and out-of-school time programs to keep boys of color developmentally on the pathway to success.

5.3 Provide support for on-site mental health services for boys and young men of color in public schools, particularly for those youth who suffer chronic trauma and its associated effects on psychosocial development.

5.4 Promote greater accountability and transparency by requiring the state and districts to report suspension, expulsion, and law enforcement referral data at the school level by race, ethnicity, gender and offence.

INCENTIVIZE ADOPTION OF BEST PRACTICE MODELS TO IMPROVE BMoC OUTCOMES

5.5 Authorize and support the implementation of evidence-based positive interventions that aim to improve the social, emotional and academic success of all pupils, especially boys and youth of color.

GOAL 2 – PROMOTE RE-ENTRY OF DISCONNECTED YOUTH

ACCOUNTABILITY MANDATES TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS THAT SERVE BMoC

5.6 Adopt legislation that would create incentives for districts to re-enroll dropouts, including those that have had contact with the juvenile justice system, and to provide targeted services to ensure the academic success and social emotional learning of boys and youth of color.

5.7 Create a coordinating body for youth programs, services, and data sharing that effectively targets programs and services to boys and young men of color, especially those who are involved in multiple “systems” or who are disconnected from family, public systems, and the workforce altogether.

BUDGET LEVERS FOR TARGETING OR REDIRECTING, EXISTING FUNDING OR ACCESSING NEW FUNDING

5.8 The legislature should adopt legislation that allows for flexible state funding across systems (portability) to support the recovery/reengagement of disconnected youth.

Full text of the Final Report and Action Plan of the Assembly Select committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color in California can be found at: http://www.allianceforbmoc.org/