

SHANEKA HENSON  
Legislative District 30A  
Anne Arundel County

Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 152  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3045 · 301-858-3045  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3045  
Shaneka.Henson@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 8, 2021

Chair Maggie McIntosh  
Vice Chair Mark S. Chang  
Room 121  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

The law field is one of the least diverse industries. 4 percent of active attorneys identified as Black or African American in 2007 and 4 percent identified as Hispanic or Latino. By 2017, those numbers rose only slightly to 5 percent each. Be it the high costs of law schools, the restricted pipeline for minority students getting to law schools, or the lack of minority representation in the lawfield to act as an inspiration to the next generation, the population who defends our rights is not reflective of the diverse America.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities are instrumental in expanding the diversity in the law field. HBCU alumni account for 80% of black judges, 50% of black lawyers and doctors, and 25% of graduates in the STEM fields. In a 2015 study by Gallup-Purdue that compared the wellness of black students who attended an HBCU vs a non HBCU, it was recorded that the % of Black US graduates thriving in various areas of well being were significantly lower for students that went to a non HBCU. The largest gap was in financial well being with 40% of black graduates from HBCU thriving, and only 29% of black graduates from non HBCUs thriving. The community and cultural focus at HBCUs help increase the diversity in the law field by supporting students.

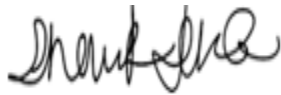
HB 1268 aims to support the 102 universities that make the biggest difference in the law fields by establishing a Legal Education Success Collaborative to require institutions to develop and administer programs and cooperatives related to the Collaborative, and beginning in fiscal year 2023, requiring appropriations to be made each year to certain institutions and programs and to support a certain coordinator position. This will be accomplished through financial support, academic success, professional development and mentoring.

This initiative will not just benefit one race. Diversity in the law field means diversity in race, gender, background, and perspective. Although HBCUs were originally founded to educate

Black students, they enroll students of other races as well. This diversity has increased over time. In 2018, non-Black students made up 24 percent of enrollment at HBCUs, compared with 15 percent in 1976 .The percentage of HBCU students who were either white, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Native American was 17% in 2015, up from 13% in 1980. Hispanic students, in particular, have seen their overall shares grow on HBCU campuses, increasing from 1.6% in 1980 to 4.6% in 2015. These colleges are supportive environments for diverse students to learn and HB1268 will act as an additional support to the institutions.

As much as our legislature should reflect the population of our country, our law field should too. Lawyers and judges are the champions of human rights: they are the defenders of justice and the voices for the silenced. They need to be representative of the people that they are defending. It is with this in mind that I ask for your favourable vote for HB1268.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaneka Henson', written in a cursive style.

Shaneka Henson, District 30A Delegate