

FLORIDA COUNCIL ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF BLACK MEN AND BOYS



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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## 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 2020 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.

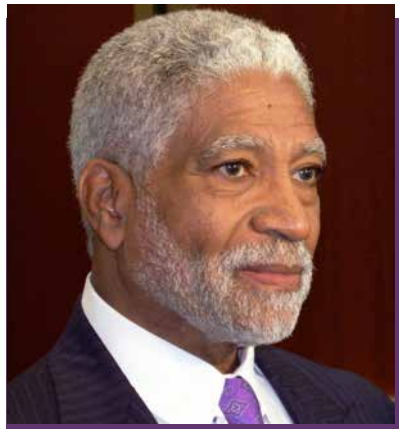
It is the Council's hope that this report will increase awareness to citizens and leaders throughout Florida. I commend the Council for its hard work

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, it is my pleasure to present this year's annual report. As a result of the COVID-19 virus, many black communities suffered extreme difficulties, including disproportionate rates of infections, deaths, and high unemployment. Due to the state's period of lockdown, many were also subjected to extended periods of social isolation, creating unhealthy mental health conditions with few resources to help cope. Likewise, this crisis negatively affected the Council, by forcing us to shut down and learn to work remotely.

Last year, on an invitation from the good people of Belle Glade, Florida, the Council focused its full attention on this sugar producing community to study educational problems, employment disparities, poor housing, problems with health care and infant mortality. This report is the product of the Council's collaborative effort to find remedies for disparate conditions that affect black men and boys across the state of Florida.

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

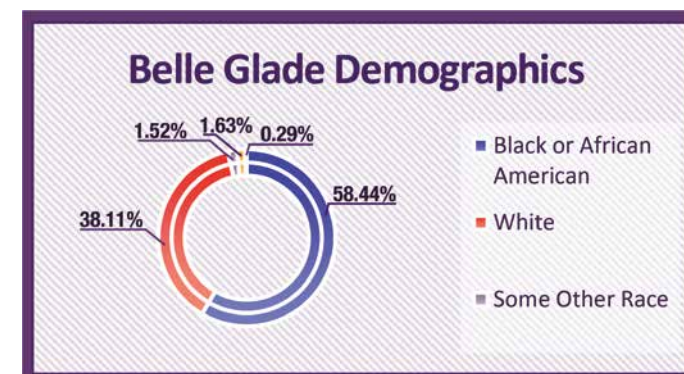
## SUBCOMMITTEE COMMITTEE UPDATES

### EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (FCSSBMB) is committed to the intellectual development of black youth and the economic empowerment of the Black community. Creating economic opportunities for black men and boys, as well as the opportunity to enter and remain in the workforce, increases economic growth, peace, and stability for all. When black families are empowered to participate in civic and economic life, their communities and families give way to a healthier and more prosperous way of life. The Council supports and values these opportunities.

The Council had the opportunity to visit Belle Glade, Florida and meet some of its citizens and community leaders. Belle Glade is a small town that maintains its agricultural roots. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the current population is a little more than 20,000 residents. The Black community makes up approximately 58% of Belle Glade's population.<sup>1</sup>

During the Council's visit, the CareerSource Palm Beach County, Belle Glade's career center was also toured. The career center is staffed with incredible people who care for their community. These knowledgeable career coaches and consultants are dedicated to assisting jobseekers with entering, remaining or advancing in the workforce. They have also customized their services to meet the needs of the community. For example, due to Belle Glade being an agricultural community, they have an abundance of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. To ensure that community's needs are met, CareerSource Palm Beach County has dedicated outreach workers who are charged with going directly into the fields (and other areas where migrant and seasonal farmworkers live, work or congregate) to provide workforce services and ensure farmworkers are aware of their rights.



\*Figure 1. Demographics in Belle Glade Florida in 2019

Like many other agricultural communities, Belle Glade is facing impacts resulting from increased automation in the agricultural industry. Automation reduces the need for an abundance of human workers. These circumstances directly impact unemployment, which in turn, effect the number of employment opportunities available to the Black community in this area. Therefore, entities like CareerSource Palm Beach County, Palm Beach State College, West Technical Education Center and other workforce development programs are vital to the sustainability and overall economic growth for this community.

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys is dedicated to serving and partnering with Florida's institutions of higher education, the workforce development system and economic development councils to increase opportunities for black men and boys, so they may attain self-sufficiency and be meaningful contributors to their local economies. The Council focuses on issues that negatively affect the economic welfare of black men and boys and impedes their path to prosperity. We will continue to provide information and encourage partnerships that enhance the relationship between higher edification, the workforce development system and economic development for black men and boys.

#### Recommendation(s):

- Increase funding for career change/advancement and professional development (workplace and soft skills) training.
- Increase local marketing and outreach efforts to help increase awareness about training opportunities that are available.

<sup>1</sup> (Source: U.S. Census Quick Facts for Belle Glade, Florida. (2019, July) Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/bellegladecityflorida>)



**EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT**



**Council members pictured with area officials and staff from Palm Beach State College**  
Photo provided by Palm Beach State College

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (FCSSBMB) strives to close the educational achievement gap which has historically, and disproportionately affected black men and boys. Unfortunately, these systemic conditions continue. However, there have been flickers of bright spots and newfound optimism within the State of Florida. The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys met with local educational representatives from the Belle Glade Campus of Palm Beach State College. Palm Beach State College's Belle Glade campus serves the far western communities of Palm Beach County by providing post-secondary learning, continuing education needs, and business occupational training. The college boasts the lowest in-state tuition rates in the State of Florida (among four-year public institutions) and houses the Technical Educational Center, which provides advanced technical programs and is career focused on workplace skills. Palm Beach State College's Belle Glade campus has expanded general education, occupational training, student services and community outreach to meet the diverse educational needs of Belle Glade, South Bay and the Pahokee region. In addition, the Belle Glade Campus offers an Associate in Arts degree for transfer to four-year institutions, as well as an Associate in Science degree in Nursing, high school dual-enrollment courses and various career program pathways. With the support and guidance of local educational, community and civic leaders, the Palm Beach County Library System is providing adult, teen and children's programs. Palm Beach State College's Belle Glade campus is poised to meet the challenges of the Lake Region, still grappling with a multi-faceted wage, economic and affordable housing crisis.



**"The Florida Council On The Social Status Of Black Men And Boys (FCSSBMB) Strives To Close The Educational Achievement Gap."**

**Council members pictured meeting with area officials and staff from Palm Beach State College**  
Photo provided by Palm Beach State College

In April 2020, U.S. News and World Report annually highlights education in America and publishes a report ranking the top colleges, graduate schools, online colleges, global universities, community colleges, and high schools. In coordination with North Carolina-based RTI International, a global nonprofit social science research firm, U.S. News ranked approximately 17,790 public high schools out of more than 24,000 reviewed. Out of those reviewed, 598 Florida schools made the rankings. According to this metric, the high schools of the Lake Region (Pahokee Senior High and Glades Central High School) illustrate work needs to be done to close the achievement gap.

Glades Central High School is ranked 473rd within Florida. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement® coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at Glades Central High School is 23%. The total minority enrollment is 98%; and 93% of students are economically disadvantaged.<sup>2</sup> Pahokee Middle-Senior High is ranked 361st within Florida. The AP® participation rate at Pahokee Middle-Senior High is 34%. The total minority enrollment is 99%; and 94% of students are economically disadvantaged.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, the number one public high school in the Palm Beach area, Suncoast Community High School, students took at least one AP® Exam for a 100% participation rate. The above statistics show a greater need for further participation and engagement in AP® coursework and examinations.

The Council considers reimagining education at a time when educational requirements are rising over the technological and scientific spectrum. Moreover, with the damage Covid-19 has inflicted on the global markets and job sectors, competition is as challenging as ever and can only create a larger deficit for a marginalized group that struggles to deal with poverty and a lack of meaningful resources to move upward to equality.

**Recommendation(s):**

- Mandate early elementary institutional practices to create and concentrate on real-time avenues for technology driven coursework with an emphasis on submersion of science and math.
- Increase local college and university presence in the first stage of middle schools to begin preparatory inclusion for dual enrollment opportunities and technical skill pathways.
- Providing more entry points for participation in music education to assist with cognitive development, as well as, student buy-in and ownership of their own learning.



**"The Council considers reimagining education at a time when educational requirements are rising over the technological and scientific spectrum."**

**Council members pictured touring Palm Beach State College with area officials and college staff.**  
Photo provided by Palm Beach State College

<sup>2</sup> (Source: Best High School Rankings. (2020, April) Retrieved from <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/florida/districts/palm-beach/glades-central-high-school-5385>)  
<sup>3</sup> (Source: Best High School Rankings. (2020, April) Retrieved from <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/florida/districts/palm-beach/pahokee-middle-senior-high-5393>)



**PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**



**Council members pictured with area officials and staff from Palm Beach State College**  
Photo provided by Palm Beach State College

This year, the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (FCSSBMB) continued their focus on the areas identified in 2019. These areas included increasing economic stability, housing, education, health services and reducing violence and crime rates in the Black communities. The Council concentrated its efforts on the Belle Glade area, in Palm Beach County, which includes Belle Glade, South Bay and Pahokee. The Council took a deep look at the current situation through research and engagement with community leaders, including the mayor, and area hospital leaders from both the private and public sectors. This research included inquiries into selected social determinants of health (economic, education, housing, built environment and poverty) and comparing Palm Beach County and the Belle Glade area. The analysis found that the Belle Glade area fared drastically worse in these categories, which negatively impacts the quality of life for these residents. The table below highlights some of these disparities between two census tracts in the Belle Glade area and the rest of Palm Beach County. Of note, the proportion of people living below the poverty level was 2.9 times higher (39.1% vs. 13.4%) and those with less than a 9th grade education were 3.6 times higher (21.8% vs. 5.9%) for these census tracts compared to the rest of the county.

| Indicator                                   | Census Tract 82.01 | Census Tract 82.02 | Palm Beach County |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Black or African American                   | 83.7%              | 93.0%              | 18.1%             |
| Median household income                     | \$14,000           | \$16,000           | \$57,000          |
| People Under 100% Poverty rate <sup>4</sup> | 60.4%              | 49.5%              | 13.4%             |
| Severe rent burden <sup>5</sup>             | 42.6%              | 50%                | 30.4%             |
| Families with female head of household      | 55.8%              | 58.8%              | 23.1%             |
| Renter occupied units                       | 82.5%              | 78.7%              | 31.4%             |
| 9th-12 Grade <u>NO</u> Diploma              | 19.3%              | 18.1%              | 6.0%              |

\*Figure 2. Disparities in social determinants of health between two census tracts in Belle Glade and the remainder of Palm Beach County

<sup>4</sup> \*Concentrated Poverty: When over 40% of a designated census tract lives below 100% of the federal poverty threshold

<sup>5</sup> \*Severe Rent Burden: Occurs when over 50% of an individuals/families gross income goes towards paying

The Belle Glade area has a rural hospital, Lakeside Medical Center which is part of the Health Care District Palm Beach County, consisting of a 70-bed single-occupancy inpatient room facility. This hospital is fully equipped, including a helipad and imaging equipment, to provide the services that the Belle Glade area needs. In addition, this facility also hosts a 3-year residency family medicine program. In 2019, the program graduated its seventh class of family medicine residents and through the success of the program hopes to continue the development of future family physicians. Using Hospital Compare, a Center for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) tool, subcommittee members found that this hospital had 8 of 10 measures above average for Florida hospitals and 5 of 10 measures above the national average. Additional comparisons on other measures are available at: <https://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/search.html>.



**Council members pictured touring Palm Beach State College with area officials and college staff**  
Photo provided by Palm Beach State College

The current CEO is a lifelong community member with over 35 years of experience in public health and healthcare administration. She has a clear vision and commitment to the community. The hospital continues to serve as a beacon in the community as the facility is in excellent condition, and the emergency room department maintains a positive working atmosphere and the community continues its support of the facility.

After completing the research, site visits and meetings with community representatives, the Council would like to continue its efforts to support the improvements of the Belle Glade area knowing that the work may take years and will require multidisciplinary partnerships to create and implement a plan by and for the community of Belle Glade.

In 2019, the FCSSBMB, in partnership with the Florida Department of Health and the Palm Beach County Health Department, provided funds to implement a Protocol for Assessing Community Health Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE-EH) project with the Belle Glade community for FY 2019-2021. The subcommittee reports, in alignment with PACE-EH protocols, that an action plan for FY 2019-2020 was developed for the Belle Glade community to address housing, economic stability and poverty. As a result of this action plan, two new community members have been hired with a third position planned. Communication between the hospital and the Department of Health is ongoing and the subcommittee has forwarded grant opportunities and other resources to the hospital to add other evidence-based interventions addressing health programs in the area.

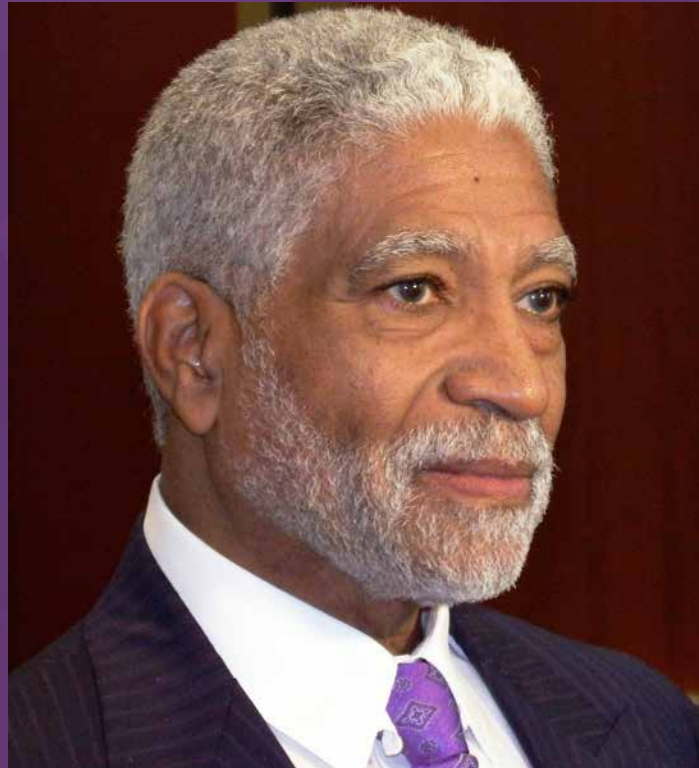


**Recommendation(s):**

- Allocate annually \$50,000.00 in funds for five years to create a multisector coalition that will develop and implement a 5-year plan to improve economy, housing, education, and health for the Belle Glade area.
- Provide two years of emergency funds to address the most critical housing repairs in the Belle Glade area.
- Recommend that state programs consider opening offices in Belle Glade and other rural areas and/or employ residents of the Belle Glade area face-to-face or virtually.



# COUNCIL MEMBERS



**Council Chairman**  
**Eddy M. Regnier, Ph.D.**  
 Clinical/Forensic Psychologist  
 Assessment and Psychotherapy



**Ramon Alexander**  
 Representative  
 Florida House



**Byron Donalds**  
 Representative  
 Florida House



**Javier Enriquez**  
 General Counsel  
 Department of Children and  
 Families



**Dekayen C. Graham, Ph.D.**  
 Executive Director for the  
 Office of Independent  
 Education and Parental  
 Choice  
 Department of Education



**Joe Gruters**  
 Senator  
 Florida Senate



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



**Keantha B. Moore**  
 Workforce Program  
 Administrator  
 Florida Department of  
 Economic Opportunity



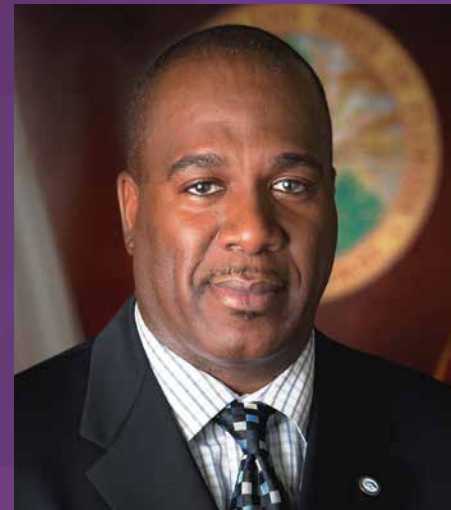
**Owen Quinonez, M.D.**  
 Senior  
 Health Equity Officer  
 Florida Department of Health



**Council Vice Chairman**  
**Jerome Hill**  
 Program Operations Administrator  
 Florida Agency for Health Care  
 Administration



**Council 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman**  
**Justine D. Patterson**  
 Director  
 Regional 4 Director for Community  
 Corrections  
 Florida Department of Corrections



**Council 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman**  
**Ben F. Shirley, Jr.**  
 Regional Economic Self Sufficiency  
 Director  
 Florida Department of Children and  
 Families, Suncoast Region



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



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



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



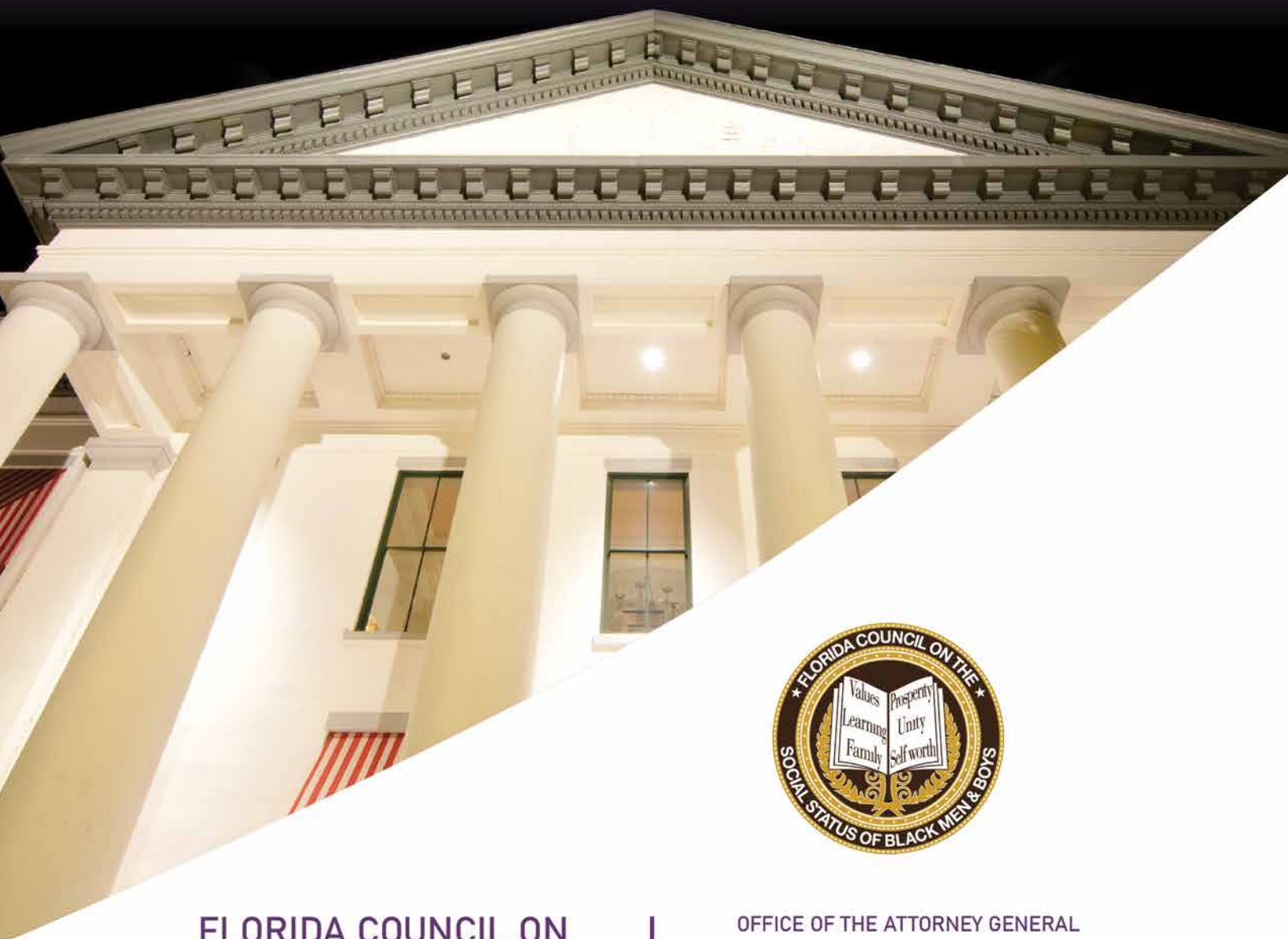
**Perry E. Thurston, Jr.**  
 Senator  
 Florida Senate



**Paul Wilson**  
 Senior Associate  
 PCG Education Consulting



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THE SOCIAL STATUS OF  
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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
PL-01, THE CAPITOL  
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-1050  
(850)414-3300  
[www.cssbmb.com](http://www.cssbmb.com)