

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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

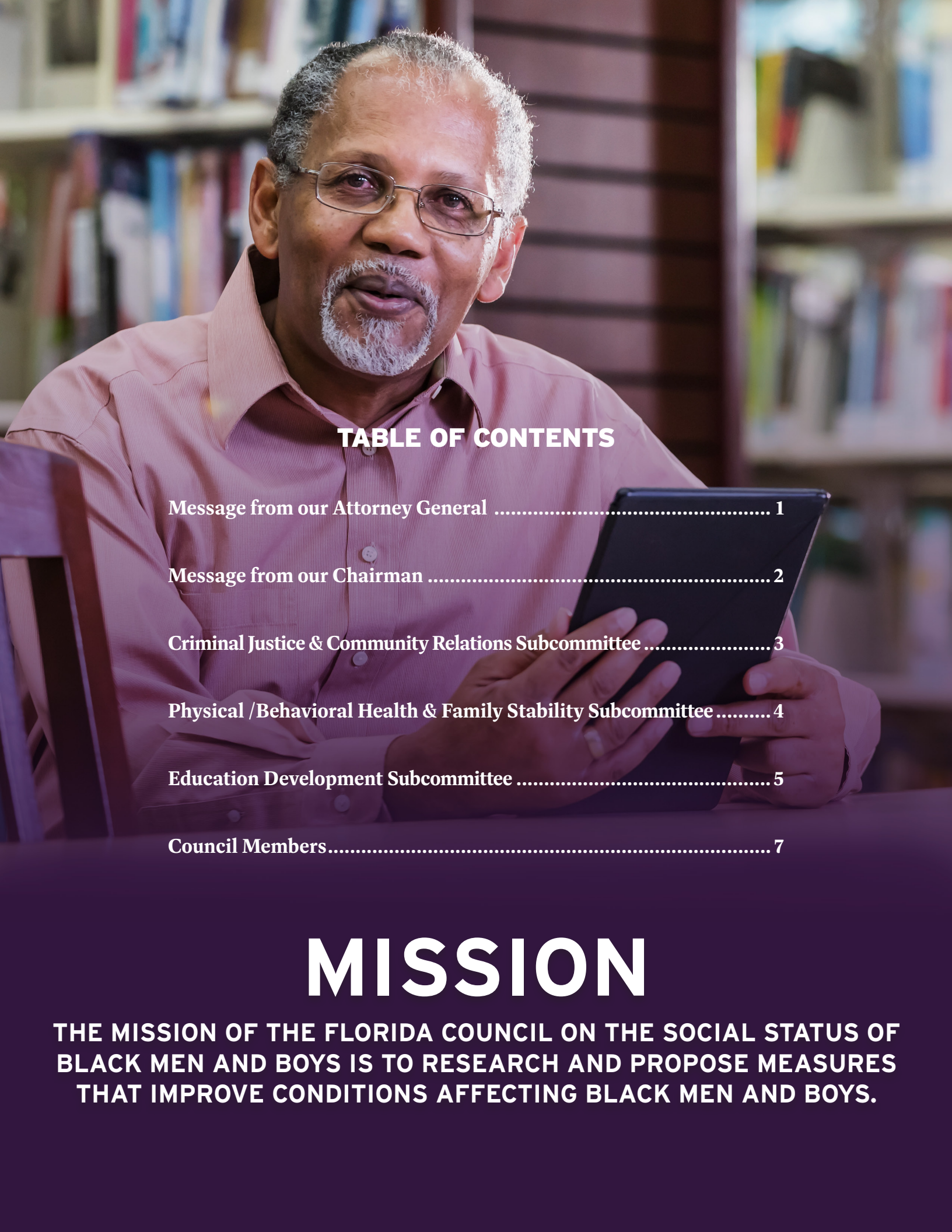


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MISSION

THE MISSION OF THE FLORIDA COUNCIL ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF BLACK MEN AND BOYS IS TO RESEARCH AND PROPOSE MEASURES THAT IMPROVE CONDITIONS AFFECTING BLACK MEN AND BOYS.



MESSAGE FROM OUR ATTORNEY GENERAL

I am pleased to present to you the annual report for the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys for 2021.

Established within the Department of Legal Affairs in 2007, the Council is a 19-member body that is designed to study the conditions of black men and boys across the state of Florida. Created by the Legislature, it has worked together to become a board of hope and impact. Since its inception, the Council has concentrated its efforts on researching strategies to help reduce high dropout rates in schools, violent crime rates and incarceration rates among black males. It has also brought awareness of these issues to both citizens and the leaders of Florida.

This year, the Council focused primarily on addressing the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the lives of black men and boys. Overall, it is my hope that this report will be used as a resource when examining the internal and external effects of this terrible disease and to better the lives of black males statewide.

I would like to personally thank the Council Chair, Jerome K. Hill for his expert leadership and all of the members of the Council for their dedication to the process of improving the lives of black men and boys across the state of Florida. I look forward to another successful year.

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 distinct honor and privilege to present this year's annual report to Governor Ron DeSantis, Speaker of the House Chris Spowls, Senate President Wilton Simpson, Attorney General Ashley Moody, state agency heads, community advocates and the citizens of the State of Florida. This year's annual report was developed during a year when COVID-19 continues to be disruptive and has cost the lives of so many fellow Floridians. We remember those who have lost their lives and give our continued support to the family, friends and associates who bear with these tragedies. At the same time, we want to give thanks and honor our brave troops, first responders, and our health care practitioners, who have battled this insidious disease.

The collaborative nature of this report is to shine a spotlight on the disparate impact this global pandemic is having in our field of education, health, and public safety; with an eye toward implementing recommendations to achieve success through our stated measures. The sub-committee reports illustrate pre-pandemic markers and how they have declined through this health crisis. In addition, our focus continues to assess key social determinants of health and create a scalable course of action.

The Council approved a public service announcement (PSA) to encourage the community to get COVID-19 vaccines to help protect against severe disease and death. The PSA also promotes best practices to minimize future exposure or infections as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and our governing state health agency.

This year, the Council is humbled that community leaders from Manatee County became inspired and emulated our "Day of Dialogue" to engage black men and boys in discussion to promote improved outcomes in housing, financial literacy, education, and health. Moreover, the Council takes immense pride in being the model for the creation of The Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys. This federal bipartisan 19-member commission, introduced by Congresswoman Frederica S. Wilson and Senator Marco Rubio, will examine the social disparities that affect black males in America and issue policy recommendations to Congress, the White House, and federal agencies.

Finally, this Council is committed to researching methods to improve the lives of black men and boys while inspiring more individuals and organizations to become involved in future endeavors that provide opportunity, reform, and lay the groundwork for life-changing mentorship across the state.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome K. Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Jerome K. Hill
Chairman

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (FCSSBMB) continues to be a catalyst in proposing measures to specifically alleviate and correct underlying causes of negative conditions affecting black men and boys, by providing timely statistical data regarding arrests and incarceration rates and fostering community dialogue regarding arrest data provided.

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, COVID-19 had a major impact and presented unique challenges in every area of our lives and throughout every community. It is no difference for crime rates and our criminal justice system. Oddly enough, it is being considered a contributing factor in the decrease of crime rates within our state and country. It has been called an equal opportunity virus; however, it has devastated the most vulnerable in society. Under normal circumstances, police records capture violent arrests or the changes in routine activity; however, the pandemic has affected both the incidence of violence and the police' response to it. There has been a de-emphasizing of certain types of crimes, such as drugs and with citizens sheltering in place, this combination may have contributed to a concentration on more serious crimes.

New statistics released in the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's annual crime report reveal that while crime overall was down in 2020, violent crime increased. The breakdown shows that there were 1,285 murders across the state in 2020. This is an increase of 260 murders from 2019.¹ Florida's crime rate has consistently decreased each year for the past 50 years and shows the total crime volume dropped 14.1 percent, compared to 2019. Property crimes dropped 17 percent, while violent crimes went up 2.3 percent (1850). Murder and aggravated assault have increased; while rape, robbery, burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft crimes have decreased.²

While the increase in violence cannot be attributed to any one reason, the pandemic has now been added as one of the main causes with the lack of individual coping skills. This holds true for black men and boys, in addition to the already established hurdles they face daily. The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys remains committed to engaging, equipping, and encouraging all black men and boys to successfully achieve their full potential.



VISION

THE COUNCIL COMMITS TO ENGAGING, EDUCATING, EQUIPPING, AND ENCOURAGING BLACK MEN AND BOYS TO SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

Recommendation(s):

- Increase local outreach efforts by encouraging family and individual counseling/coping skills amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increase community policing for better community interaction and ensure that resources are available to serve their area of assignment.

¹ The 2020 Annual Uniform Crime Report, including county-by-county breakdowns, retrieved from FDLE's website at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/CJAB-Home/Uniform-Crime-Report/Data-Archives>.

² Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Florida Uniform Crime Report, 2020 [Computer program]. Tallahassee, FL: FDLE, Florida Statistical Analysis Center.

For 2021, the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (FCSSBMB) continued its efforts of promoting health equity by focusing on research and initiatives that show promise at being effective in addressing the “Social Determinants of Health”, including economic stability, housing, education, health services, violence, and crime reduction. Health equity is best achieved at the community grassroots level where black men and boys live, work and play. During the later part of 2019 and much of 2020, the FCSSBMB concentrated its efforts in the Belle Glade area of Palm Beach County, which includes Belle Glade, South Bay and Pahokee. Efforts included continued engagement with community leaders, health facilities, and public and private partners. This also included an updated analysis of selected social determinates of health (economic, education, housing, built environment and poverty) data. An analysis of census track data for the period of 2015-2019 found that the Belle Glade area continues to fare worse than the greater Palm Beach County.³

Indicator	Census Tract 82.01	Census Tract 82.02	Palm Beach County
Black or African-American	87.4%	95.0%	18.7%
Median Household Income	\$11,845	\$21,301	\$63,299
Families Under 100% Poverty Rate	57.6%	36.5%	8.4%
Civilian Labor Force Unemployed	24.6%	21.1%	5.9%
Female Head of Household	62.0%	51.4%	19.3%
Renter Occupied Units	88.8%	78.0%	31.1%
9th-12th Grade <u>NO</u> Diploma	17.9%	18.3%	5.8%
Occupied Housing Units- <u>NO</u> Vehicle Available	46.1%	34.1%	6.1%
Households with Cash Assistance Income	33.9%	18.4%	2.1%
Households with Food Stamps/SNAP Benefits	51.9%	47.5%	9.8%
Work Commuters Using Public Transportation/ Excluding Taxi	12.6%	12.3%	1.6%

Like much of the country, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on the Belle Glade community, disproportionately affecting its African-American residents. Through research, the FCSSBMB discovered that there has been a reluctance among its residents to receive the COVID-19 vaccination with misunderstanding and mistrust being the primary reasons for the lack of vaccine acceptance. To help educate residents on the importance of the vaccine and promote acceptance, the FCSSBMB focused efforts on facilitating the development and airing of Public Service Announcements (PSA's) specifically targeted to African-American and other minority residents of the Belle Glade community. The FCSSBMB will attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the PSA's by assessing vaccine acceptance pre-PSA and again post-PSA.

Recommendation(s):

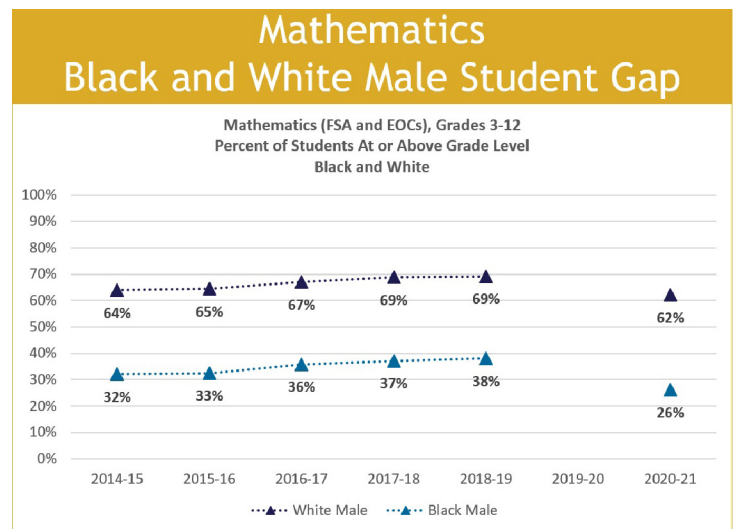
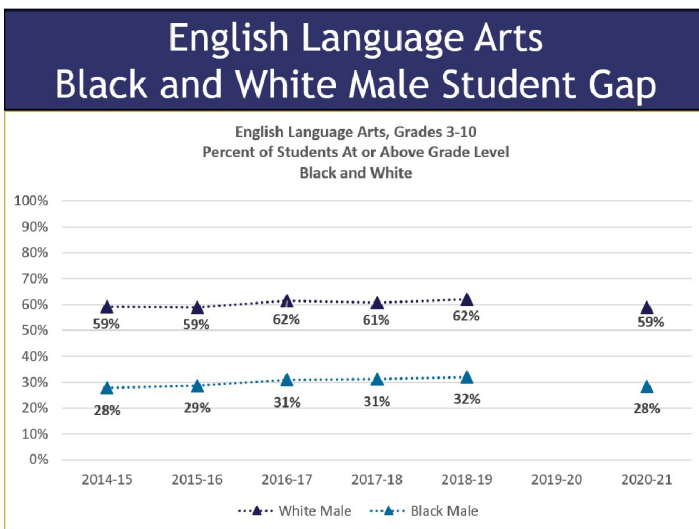
- Promote the formation of partnerships within Florida communities between local leaders, health facilities, and public and private partners to address the “Social Determinants of Health” (economic stability, housing, education, health services, violence, violent crime reduction).
- Promote collaborative efforts within Florida communities to implement a protocol for Assessing Community Health Excellence in Environmental Health projects.
- Encourage communities within Florida that are disproportionately effected by the COVID-19 pandemic to foster the development of PSA's to targeted populations.

³ Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



As America emerges from a nationwide quarantine and battling the COVID-19 pandemic, it is evident that the opportunity and achievement gaps for Black men and boys have widened, specifically regarding academic achievement in mathematics and English language arts. According to the Florida Department of Education (2021), the pre-pandemic mathematics achievement gap between black males in relation to their white counterparts remained steady at a 32% average difference over the course of the previous 5 years; the pre-pandemic ELA gap remained somewhat consistent as well at 30%. Post-pandemic assessments reveal an increased mathematics gap of 36% and an ELA gap of 31%. This trend is reflected nationally in a recent report from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), a nonprofit organization that measures the growth and performance of students from grades pre-K to 12, which demonstrates that marginalized students, particularly Black and Hispanic students, are falling further behind in reading and math in grades three through eight, from across 46 states, since the onset of the pandemic (Kuhfeld et al., 2020).

The challenge of educating Black youth is becoming increasingly difficult, particularly in the ever-evolving world that is seemingly in a state of constant change. This past academic year presented a myriad of challenges for Florida school districts, particularly ensuring digital equity and access to the curriculum and resources for students learning virtually. As most schools transitioned to virtual and remote learning, many home settings were not prepared or able to provide a comparable learning environment for children. Many parents were unable to stay at home and assist, nor provide the necessary tools and resources for their children to be successful. According to research, only 66% of Black households in the U.S. had home broadband service in 2019, which is a higher percentage than the 45% of Black Americans who owned a desktop or laptop computer in 2015 (Slay, 2020). In the absence of the access to a digital device or internet service within the remaining approximate 34%, many Black parents struggled to assist with educating their children during this past academic year. It is also important to note that access does not necessarily equate to an understanding of how to knowledgeably implement the digital tools necessary to navigating an at-home learning environment.



Moreover, the pandemic also uncovered various deficiencies within health and technology-related fields, thus reinvigorating the discussion around the dearth of Black males participating in and completing Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, as well as, focusing on STEAM-based professions as a career path or area of study. According to data reported by Advance CTE (2020), Black learners are under-represented in the following high-enrollment programs: Air Conditioning, Refrigeration and Heating Technology, Medical Administration, Practical Nursing, and Professional Culinary Arts and Hospitality. Opportunities within other developing technologically driven fields also continue to avail themselves, which is noted through the increasing accounts regarding a deficiency in cybersecurity. According to the International Consortium of Minority Cybersecurity Professionals (ICMCP) and the U.S. Department of Labor, African-Americans make up a scant 3% of infosec analysts in the U.S. today (Must, 2021). Preparation for participation in these areas is vital to the development of Black males as they are preparing to compete globally in this ever-evolving technological society.

It is imperative that the data relating to Black males enrolling in STEAM related programs be analyzed and considerations be made to create or enhance pathways and post-secondary opportunities, whether through incentives or otherwise, to encourage Black males to pursue these specific areas of study in which they have been traditionally underrepresented.



STEAM

Recommendation(s):

- Encourage the participation and completion of CTE courses for Black males in the state of Florida, specifically in the realm of cyber and digital security and technology.
- Examine the number of Black males involved in STEAM related programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics).
- Examine and identify post-secondary pathways and possible incentives at state and technical universities that focus on increasing the number of Black males in STEAM related fields of study.

Florida Council on the Social Status of Boys and Men

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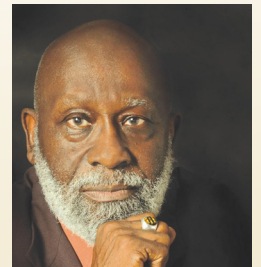
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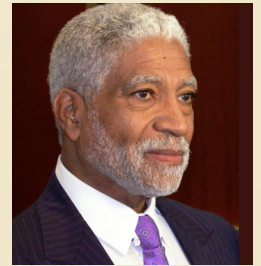
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