



Urban League
of Louisiana

2018 POLICY PRIORITIES

ABOUT

The Urban League of Louisiana (ULLA) is an affiliate of the National Urban League that works to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights for African Americans and others seeking equity across Louisiana. Its expansive policy platform aligns closely with the work of its three Centers of Excellence: The Center for Education and Youth Development, the Center of Workforce and Economic Development and the Center for Policy and Social Justice.

This document outlines the League's 2018 legislative priorities and covers issues impacting African American families and others seeking equity across Louisiana, especially in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge Metropolitan areas where the League maintains its strongest presence. These policy priorities expand across the areas of criminal and juvenile justice, economic and workforce development and education, which coincide with ULLA's core work.



CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

While the State of Louisiana has made significant strides to enact reforms to its juvenile justice system that improve public safety, promote efficiency and facilitate rehabilitation of youth within the system, ULLA will continue to advocate for further reforms to maintain this momentum. As part of the Louisiana Youth Justice Coalition (LYJC), the Urban League of Louisiana is advocating for policy changes that reflect research-based, national, best practices. ULLA supports the following positions of the LYJC:

✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS SB102**, a measure that seeks to end “Vitter sentences” (i.e., mandatory sentences) for juveniles that keep children incarcerated, and in some cases, well beyond the point of their rehabilitation.

- Such restrictive sentences go against the goals of the juvenile justice system, which are to hold children accountable and prepare them to successfully reenter their home communities.
- “Vitter sentences” restrict judges from exercising their discretion and power to review juveniles’ progress toward rehabilitation and do less to promote public safety.¹
- Excessively long sentences actually increase recidivism and are counterproductive to their intent to promote public safety.²
- This measure calls for modifications to the Children’s Code that are cost-effective, fair, safe, smart and in the best interest of youth and the community.

✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS SB103** that bans the indiscriminate shackling of children and youth in court.

- Children as young as 10 years old are impacted by this practice, including those that pose no danger or flight risk.³
- ULLA supports the Louisiana Law Institute’s recommendation to ban this practice so that system-involved children are not further traumatized by this indignity.
- This measure calls for modifications to the Children’s Code that are cost-effective, fair, safe, smart and in the best interest of youth and the community.



ULLA SUPPORTS SB106 that guarantees timely hearings for eligible incarcerated youth and youth on probation who may be considered rehabilitated and ready for release, and raises the bar on standards used to determine that a less restrictive setting is not available.

- This policy measure ensures that eligible young people are able to access hearings in a timely manner, reducing the chance that they are held in custody or on probation beyond the point of rehabilitation, and reducing their chance of recidivism.

1 <http://www.laccr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-LYJC-Agenda-3-12-18.pdf>
2 ibid
3 ibid

**CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE** *continued*

- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS HB 482** a policy modification recommended by the Louisiana State Law Institute, which allows for a motion filed by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to release a juvenile from custody, to be tried with or without the support of the district attorney.
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS MEASURES TO RESTORE VOTING RIGHTS** for individuals under the supervision of the criminal justice system.
- ✓ **ULLA OPPOSES ANY MEASURE THAT WOULD DELAY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RAISE THE AGE ACT**, which extends the age of those in the juvenile system to 17.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Louisiana's underserved communities deserve access to economic opportunities that lead to wealth and prosperity. Unfortunately, low wage jobs and poor economic policies remain a barrier for many hardworking residents across the state. If the state legislature and local municipalities do not begin to create pathways to economic parity for ALL Louisiana residents, the state will continue to lag behind the nation in its economic rankings.

Louisiana's economy is ranked 44th in the nation by US News and World Reports and has an "Opportunity" rank of 50th due in part to its low household income (23% lower than the national average), high poverty rates (almost five percentage points higher than the national average), and high income gender gap (for which the state ranks 50th).⁴ The Urban League of Louisiana proposes the following:

- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS SB117/HB251** that require contractors who enter into contract with the state to adhere to the Louisiana Equal Pay Act for Women.
 - The Urban League of Louisiana also supports **SB118** that extends **equal pay protections to men** as well under the Louisiana Equal Pay Act for Women.
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS HB605** that establishes that in instances where evidence of pay discrimination has been found by the Human Rights Commission, yet goes unresolved, the complainant can pursue a civil suit at any district court of competent jurisdiction.





**ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** *continued*

-  **ULLA SUPPORTS minimum wage legislation including HB126, SB162 and SB252** that establishes/increases the state minimum wage and **SB159** that repeals existing laws that bar local municipalities from establishing a minimum wage.
 - Louisiana is one of five states that has no minimum wage and as such uses the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 by default.⁵ In 2016, a little under 8% of Louisiana employees make minimum wage or under. More than 68% of jobs in Louisiana pay less than \$20 per hour.⁶
 - Approximately 44% of employees in Food Preparation and Serving made \$7.25 per hour or less and almost 19% of all employees in Louisiana make less than \$10 per hour.⁷
 - The living wage for Louisiana is \$10.91 for one adult and \$23.43 for one adult with one child.⁸
-  **ULLA SUPPORTS SB158 and SB24** that creates opportunities for apprentices to access work experiences on projects supplemented through state economic development incentives, and on new state construction projects and existing state construction projects undergoing expansion.
-  **ULLA SUPPORTS HB328** that bans pay secrecy and retaliation by an employer.
 - Pay secrecy is the policy or practice of an employer to forbid or discourage employees from discussing their pay with their colleagues.
 - Almost half of workers in a pay secrecy/wage discrimination study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research/Rockefeller indicated that their employers enact some sort of pay secrecy policy. Among private sector employers the rates were higher (about 61%).⁹
 - This practice perpetuates wage inequities and must be abolished to help end the gender wage gap.



The participation of small businesses, especially disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) can be a major driver of economic development and economic parity in the state. Unfortunately, DBE and small businesses face several hurdles in accessing large, state development contracts. In order to promote small business and DBE participation in state projects, the Urban League of Louisiana proposes the following:

-  **ULLA PROPOSES A STUDY RESOLUTION** to examine the potential economic impact of mandatory inclusion of minority, women-owned and disadvantaged business enterprises on state contracts.
-  **THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE AND ULLA PROPOSE A STATE RESOLUTION** that urges Congress to pass legislation that supports efforts to build, modernize and maintain the United States' infrastructure that considers building for resilience, and creates apprenticeships, jobs and contract opportunities.

⁵ http://www.laworks.net/Downloads/LMI/WorkforceInfoReview_2016.pdf

⁶ http://www.unitedwaysela.org/sites/unitedwaysela.org/files/Final%202017%20ALICE%20REGIONAL%20SUMMARY_revised.pdf

⁷ http://www.laworks.net/Downloads/LMI/WorkforceInfoReview_2016.pdf

⁸ http://www.unitedwaysela.org/sites/unitedwaysela.org/files/Final%202017%20ALICE%20REGIONAL%20SUMMARY_revised.pdf

⁹ [https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/iwpr-export/publications/Q016%20\(1\).pdf](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/iwpr-export/publications/Q016%20(1).pdf)



EDUCATION

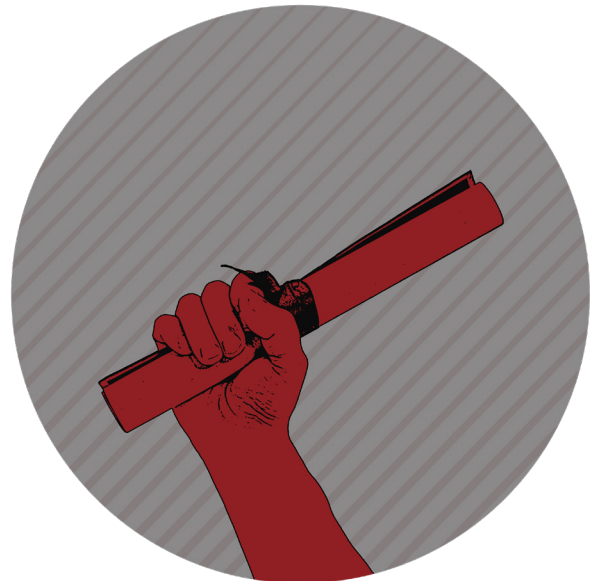
Education is the pathway to economic mobility and better quality of life. The Urban League of Louisiana works diligently to provide direct services and policy advocacy to support improvements to the education system from early childhood through postsecondary education. Access to high quality early childhood care and education is linked to long-term positive outcomes such as increased educational attainment, lower likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system and better health outcomes. Similarly, it is essential that K-12 systems of education provide all students with the preparation needed to compete in a knowledge-based economy. Postsecondary education attainment is linked to higher incomes, lower unemployment rates and better health outcomes. The benefits of education cannot be denied. Unfortunately, many people are being denied access to high quality education from early childhood through postsecondary education. The Urban League of Louisiana is focused on advocacy that promotes educational equity and excellence in Louisiana including the following:

- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS HB676** that establishes the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission, a 23-voting member, plus 11-non voting, member commission that sets the vision for accessible and quality early childhood and care across the state through “pilot programs established by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.”
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS HB513** that dedicates \$10 million from the Unclaimed Property Leverage Fund to assist families on the waitlist for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS SB89** that requires charter school governing boards to include at least one parent representative.
 - ULLA further encourages a measure that will require that the majority of a charter school governing board be based in the local area.
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS HB399** that prioritizes funding of TOPS awards for students with financial need (whose expected family contribution is no more than twice the amount to qualify for the Pell Grant), as well as students who earn an ACT composite score of 30+ in the event of insufficient funding.
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS SB199** that establishes the Advisory Council on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), an entity that will advise the Higher Education Commission on strategies to expand capacity of HBCUs to better serve their students and participate in federal and state programs.
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS HB175** that authorizes a rebate for donations to the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) for a postsecondary education scholarship or grant for students eligible to receive a Louisiana GO Grant.



**EDUCATION** *continued*

- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS HB711** that amends and reenacts the Louisiana Council on the Success of Black Men and Boys.
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS SB228**, which prohibits elementary and secondary schools that receive state funds from discriminating based on gender identity or sexual orientation.
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS SB381** that requires schools transitioning from the Recovery School District back under the auspices of their local school board to participate in the centralized enrollment system and establishes a geographic priority zone of no higher than 50% for these schools.
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS HCR12**, which establishes a task force to study issues concerning teacher shortages in Louisiana.
 - According to a report by the US Department of Education, Louisiana cites special education, middle and secondary subject areas (i.e., mathematics, English, foreign languages, science and social studies), elementary education (i.e., grades 1-5), arts and early childhood education (Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten) as its current teacher shortage areas.¹⁰
- ✓ **ULLA SUPPORTS SB345** that requires the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Advisory Council on Student Behavior and Discipline to create a research-based master plan to improve school climate and promote student social, emotional, and behavioral health. This measure further requires local school boards to create and submit their own master plans to BESE by December 2019.
 - This policy directly addresses ULLA's educational equity agenda regarding school discipline since African American students are 3.25 times more likely to be expelled and 7.8 times more likely to be suspended than their White counterparts.¹¹



¹⁰ <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oep/pol/tsa.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/district-support/alternative-education-study-group-report.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

¹² *ibid.*



EDUCATION continued

- ✔ **ULLA SUPPORTS PROPOSED CHANGES FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION IN LOUISIANA** outlined in the Alternative Education Study Group Report, including data transparency on school discipline rates accessible to parents and advocates, and the establishment of an appropriate accountability system for alternative education settings.
 - African Americans are overrepresented in alternative education settings at 85% (compared to 44% of the Louisiana public school population). Similarly, students with disabilities are overrepresented as well at 26% (compared to 11% of the Louisiana public school population).¹²
- ✔ **ULLA SUPPORTS LOUISIANA'S ADOPTED EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA) PLAN**, with particular focus on strong subgroup accountability, support for struggling schools (both Comprehensive and Targeted support schools), data transparency and accessibility, and teacher support and development.
- ✔ **ULLA OPPOSES ANY LEGISLATION THAT SEEKS TO LOWER THE VALUE OF STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON EDUCATOR EVALUATIONS.**
 - ULLA maintains that facilitating student academic growth is a central function of educators and should remain a centerpiece of the teacher evaluation system.
- ✔ **ULLA OPPOSES ANY LEGISLATION THAT ALLOWS SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO OPT OUT OF STATE CONTENT STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS**, as this compromises student preparation for a knowledge-based economy, and further compromises educational accountability at the expense of students.





Urban League of
Louisiana

***Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.***

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