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Legislative Updates from the Office of Rep. Nasif Majeed

Representative Nasif Majeed [majeedla@ncleg.net]

Sent: Thursday, June 13, 2019 3:01 PM

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June 13, 2019

Representative Nasif Majeed



Representing District 99 Mecklenburg County

NC General Assembly: If You Visit, Here are the Basics



Legislative Updates:

PEACE. This week Governor Roy Cooper highlighted the state's progress in addressing the opioid epidemic over the last two years, but also highlighted the need to do much more particularly in the area of closing the mental health care coverage gap through Medicaid Expansion.

In the last two years opioid dispensing has decreased by 24%. Prescriptions for drugs used to treat opioid use disorders increased by 15% in that time frame, and opioid use disorder treatment specifically for uninsured and Medicaid beneficiaries is up by 20%. There were nearly 10% fewer emergency department visits for opioid overdoses in 2018 than in 2017.

Governor Cooper announced renewed focus on three areas to fight the epidemic: prevention, reducing harm and connecting people to care:

Prevention

- Cutting supply of inappropriate prescriptions and illicit opioids.
- Supporting youth through targeted programs to reduce youth misuse of the drugs.
- Improving maternal and prenatal care for women battling substance abuse.

Reducing Harm

- Training systems and pharmacists to connect people to harm reduction services.
- Making the naloxone kits more widely available to the most burdened communities.

Connecting to Care

- Expanding access to treatment and recovery support.
- Addressing the needs of justice-involved populations.

Close the Coverage Gap for North Carolinians with Disabilities, Chronic Illnesses, and Complex Medical Needs

Thirty organizations and individuals, including health care providers, advocates, and caregivers for people with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and complex medical needs support closing the coverage gap. For many North Carolinians living with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and complex medical needs, health insurance coverage is unaffordable and out of reach. Thousands of us, our patients, our clients, and our loved ones are uninsured because they fall into the coverage gap, earning too little to afford a private insurance plan but unable to qualify for Medicaid despite their disability or illness. Living without health insurance coverage prevents these North Carolinians from accessing the care and treatment they need.

It prevents them from living full and independent lives, and from experiencing the peace of mind and financial security that comes with protection against large medical bills. For some, lack of access to health care makes it difficult to work, go to school, or care for their family. For many of them, access to health insurance can even mean the difference between life and death in managing their chronic illness or disability. For a healthier North Carolina, a stronger workforce, and a thriving health care system, the undersigned advocates and providers of care for North Carolinians living with disabilities and chronic illnesses support closing the health insurance coverage gap.

Statement Signatories:

Disability Rights North Carolina
The Adaptables Center for Independent Living
Addiction Professionals of North Carolina
Advocates for Medically Fragile Kids NC
Alliance of Disability Advocates
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association/American
Stroke Association
Autism Society of North Carolina
The Brain Injury Association of North Carolina
CaroMont Medical Group
Community Based Care, LLC

Community Bridges Consulting Group

F I R S T

First In Families of NC

Hemophilia of North Carolina

I/DD Medical Health Home Initiative

i2i Center for Integrative Health

Jean Andersen, Advocate, Caregiver, Mom

The Licensed Professional Counseling

Association of North Carolina (LPCANC)

Mental Health America of Central Carolinas

NAMI North Carolina

NAMI Wake County

National Association of Social Workers

North Carolina National Multiple Sclerosis Society

NC Coalition on Aging

NC Pediatric Society

North Carolina Brain Injury Advisory Council

North Carolina Providers Council

North Carolina Psychiatric Association

North Carolina Psychological Association

To view the full statement and/or download the PDF, please click [here](#).



At HBCUs, crushing student loan debt is a symptom of even bigger problems — by Dartunorro Clark (for NBC News)

Last month, when billionaire philanthropist Robert Smith thrust historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) into the national spotlight by pledging to eliminate up to \$40 million in student loans for Morehouse College's almost 400 graduates, his gift was heralded as both historic and likely life-changing for those students.

But student loan debt is merely a symptom of a systemic problem that dates back to the schools' beginnings, according to Marybeth Gasman, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and an expert on HBCUs.

"When these institutions were created they weren't created on equal footing with historically white institutions," she said. "So what happens is basically you end up with a

situation where the majority (white) institutions continue to get wealthier because wealth begets wealth, and the HBCUs are behind.”

1901:30

HBCUs were founded and subsidized by states, the federal government, philanthropists or churches to educate black Americans who were barred from attending majority-white colleges. But in recent years, financial woes, among other issues, have forced a number of the schools to the brink of closure or put their accreditation at risk. And, lacking large endowments for generous scholarships compared to many non-HBCUs, much of the burden can fall on the students to depend on substantial loans to make up gaps in aid. Gasman said that more than 70 percent of those who attend HBCUs rely on federal Pell Grants, which is aid for students who demonstrate financial need. But for these students, there's usually still a gap between the Pell Grant money and the aid the school offers — which is where loans come in.

Student borrowers owe close to \$1.5 trillion in student loan debt nationwide. However, when race is factored in, black college graduates owe, on average, \$7,400 more than their white peers, and that number is expected to more than triple to \$25,000 in the next few years, according to the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think tank.

A 2016 United Negro College Fund (UNCF) report also found that a higher percentage of students at HBCUs — 80 percent — used federal loans to pay for college compared to 55 percent of students not attending an HBCU. It also found that a higher percentage of students — 12 percent — at HBCUs combine federal, state and private loans to finance their education, compared to 8 percent of non-HBCU students.

HBCU students also borrow more money and are more likely to tap into unsubsidized federal loans and rely on their parents to also take out loans, according to Gasman.

“And so if we could get more of an investment in HBCUs, they could have more institutional aid,” Gasman said, referring to federal and state funding inequities.

Advocates say a concerted effort from lawmakers is needed to ensure HBCUs get equal and consistent access to federal funds — though being so reliant on government dollars has its pitfalls.

Since the Higher Education Act of 1965, HBCUs have received funding from the federal government — called Title III funding — to, in part, make up for past discrimination in higher education. States also provide funding to some of these institutions. However, those sources of funding have not been steady because of unequal funding in state budgets and largely stagnant funding at the federal level.

Democratic Sens. Kamala Harris of California, who attended historically black Howard University, and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts have proposed plans to boost HBCU funding on the 2020 campaign trail. Warren has one of the boldest, proposing an unprecedented \$50 billion investment in HBCUs.

Victor Santos, the director of government relations at the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, said that these plans are admirable, but HBCUs need a long-term funding solution.

Researchers from the UNCF raised those concerns in a report for the American Council on Education earlier this year in which they found that HBCUs are more dependent on federal, state and local dollars than their counterparts. For instance, those resources make up 54 percent of revenue at HBCUs compared to 38 percent at other colleges and universities. Because of this, the report warned, HBCUs are particularly “susceptible to

economic downturns, state divestments from higher education, or policy changes.”

Santos said that one way the government could help HBCUs is to steer federal research contracts to many of these schools, which could pump big dollars into not only student aid but also the infrastructure of the school for long-term sustainability.

“So basically what we’re doing right now with Title III is we’re keeping the house clean on the outside. We’re able to, basically, keep the doors open with this money but we need some money to help us build a stronger foundation,” he said.

“We need some research dollars that help us push off. Because once we get that, then we can start actually building new floors on the house. We can start adding new bedrooms. What Title III is doing is really keeping the lights on and keeping us going.”

Ivory Toldson, a professor at Howard University, agreed. He runs the group Quality Education for Minorities, which aims to address the disparity in research funding. He noted that Johns Hopkins University, for instance, received, more research funding than all HBCUs combined.

“We know that if HBCUs can build up their research apparatus they can not only get more money for their research and also lead to things like patents. But they could also contribute more knowledge to our society,” he said.



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