

# Achieving Economic Security and Inclusion for Black Women



International Black Women's  
Public Policy Institute

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*When we speak about achieving economic security for Black Women, we speak of the ability to have stable and consistent resources and income to support an enhanced quality of living today and in the foreseeable future.*

*Barbara A. Perkins, Co-Founder and President, IBWPPI*

The economic legacy of women from the African diaspora is a rich and complex portrait that belies systematically imposed restraints, and illuminates the creativity, resilience, and survival of determined souls. Black female luminaries have ascended to high levels and shattered glass ceilings in education, entrepreneurship, government, law, science, media, and medicine. They have birthed nations, and in the United States, they are responsible for providing the human power that created America's wealth and financial advantages.

Globally, Black women continue to be the drivers of economical engines. From their food, hairstyles, scientific inventions, artistic contributions, and cultural traditions, Black women have brought the world greatness that has been monetized into mainstream products. They have shifted cultures and helped write our shared history and human narrative. This shift coupled with resiliency and creativity is what we call Black Girl Magic.

Despite being an impetus for economic growth, Black women continue to occupy the bottom percentiles in nearly every industry and social class. They are still restricted by earnings and are disproportionately impacted by racial and gender discrimination. The persistent barriers to educational and employment opportunities, financial security challenges, and lack of social safety nets continue to negatively impact Black women's livelihoods.

The International Black Women's Public Policy Institute's (IBWPPI) goal is to provide a platform for Black women's voices be heard and to achieve policy advancement that enhances Black women's quality of life. This paper will address the issues and solutions of four areas that are critical in elevating the economic status of Black women: Employment, Entrepreneurship, Education, and Wealth. We will review the economic issues that touch and concern Black women and their families and identify potential solutions for economic revival. We will look at different industries that have led to Black women's economic empowerment and how to increase access to emerging industries that remain untapped by Black women. Additionally, we will explore what policies and protections Black women need to guarantee their economic security.

As we address the economic security for Black women, we recognize our depth of experience is of women in the United States. We continue to build international relationships with women in Africa and the African diaspora to inform our global perspective. Through these relationships, we learn of our shared aspirations, needs, and the egregious disparities in many areas of our lives. This paper includes a collective call for urgent government interventions and policies that would address economic security as a fundamental right.

## **Historical Framework**

Black women have had a complicated history in the labor market since they arrived in the United States. From their unpaid labor to their current place in employment sectors, the compounding effects of racial and gender discrimination have followed them despite their contributions to the American economy for

centuries.<sup>1</sup> Stereotypes and negative representations of Black womanhood have reinforced discriminatory practices and harmful policies. While they have made gains in the most recent decades, the labor market's history of exclusion continues to impact them at disproportionate rates.<sup>2</sup>

Black women have participated in the labor market at greater rates than white women regardless of marital status, age, or presence of children in the home.<sup>3</sup> In 1880, 35.4 percent of married Black women and 73.3 percent of single women were in the labor force, in comparison to 7.3 percent of married white women and 23.8 percent of single white women. Historically, Black women's labor has extended throughout their lifetime at a higher rate than white women who have left the labor force after marriage. Even when they were married, Black women have had to serve as the sole financial provider or co-breadwinner for their families due to the precarious nature of Black men's position in the labor market.<sup>4</sup>

Historically Black women's jobs were mainly in domestic and low-wage agriculture as higher-paid positions were not open to them. When migrating to the urban north, Black women still were shut out of many industries and found themselves doing similar domestic work for white families.<sup>5</sup> In the 1970s, employment trends shift significantly as white women entered the labor market at higher rates, which led to the marketization of domestic work and cooking work that would be normally done in the household. Black women are still overrepresented in the service industry at nearly a third or 28 percent, compared to white women who are represented at one-fifth.<sup>6</sup>

The widely held notion that Black women are made to be workers rather than mothers is reflected in federal policies. Black women have had a history of not having access to welfare due to protective policies that enabled single white mothers to stay-at-home and care for their child, while Black women were undermined by the state and not approved for critical funds.<sup>7</sup> Up until the 1960s, caseworkers would routinely deny cash assistance as they expected that Black women were employable and not to be stay-at-home mothers.<sup>8</sup> With no financial means to support their families, this discriminatory practice pushed Black women to enter the labor market and work for lower wages.

During World War I, the Black middle class began to grow and become a significant segment of the consumer market. The federal government played a major role in giving Black people opportunities to well-paying occupations that were not available to them in the private sector.<sup>9</sup> When white workers were called to work military-related jobs, this gave way to the recruitment of Black workers in fields that they would not have normally had access. Black workers found openings in state and local government that provided more equitable opportunities to women and minorities. Although Black employees make up nearly 20 percent

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<sup>1</sup>Nina Banks, "Black women's labor market history reveals deep-seated race and gender discrimination," Economic Policy Institute, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-womens-labor-market-history-reveals-deep-seated-race-and-gender-discrimination/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Corey Williams, Black workers had long history with fed jobs before shutdown, ABC News, accessed October 24, 2020 <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/black-workers-long-history-fed-jobs-shutdown-60646033>.

of the federal workforce and 27 percent of the workforce at the United States Postal Service, more needs to be done to ensure full economic inclusion.<sup>10</sup>

While Black women have come far, they have a long way to go to receive fairness, equity, and parity in the labor market. For generations, Black women have experienced a higher incidence of racial discrimination in the workplace, lower wages for the same jobs performed by white men, and exclusion from higher-paying jobs and opportunities to generate wealth.<sup>11</sup> Bold solutions are needed to address systemic issues that have negatively affected Black women.

### **Equal Pay for Equal Work**

When making a case for equal pay for equal work, we must acknowledge numerous systemic inequities including discrimination in recruitment and promotion, the undervaluation of work in occupations where many Black women work, and their underrepresentation in the jobs that pay the most. Black women are more likely to report discrimination, including sexual harassment.<sup>12</sup> When they are employed in these higher-paid fields, they earn two-thirds or 66.9 percent of what White men earn. They are also overrepresented in lower-paid service industry roles at 24 percent compared to fewer than one in ten or 9.5 percent of white men.<sup>13</sup>

Because Black women are likely to be breadwinners and single heads of households, the pay gap makes children and families more vulnerable to experiencing poverty. On average, Black women earn 61 cents on the dollar of White men.<sup>14</sup> A study showed that nearly half of Black women do not receive a steady income from a stable job that allows them to pay their bills, have savings, and be healthy. This is in comparison to slightly a quarter of White men that feel the same.<sup>15</sup> Workplace mistreatment, job segregation, and a lack of workplace policies that support family caregiving further contribute to greater structural issues including, housing insecurity, food insecurity, and poor health status. A recent report published by the Institute for Women's Policy Research showed that it would take Black women until the year 2130 to reach equal pay for White men.<sup>16</sup> If Black women cannot achieve pay equity until the year 2130, what are the net losses for their families and communities impacted by unearned wages?

With lost wages, Black women have less money to spend on goods and services, to sustain themselves and their families financially and to save and invest for the future. Black women, on average, earn \$38,036 per year, compared to median wages of \$61,576 a year for White men.<sup>17</sup> This equates to a loss of \$23,540 each year.<sup>18</sup> If the wage gap were eliminated, Black women, on average with a full-time salary, would be able to afford essential things that would greatly benefit their personal and families' quality of life. The National Partnership for Women and Families reported that if Black women workers were able to receive

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Nina Banks, "Black women's labor market history reveals deep-seated race and gender discrimination," Economic Policy Institute, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-womens-labor-market-history-reveals-deep-seated-race-and-gender-discrimination>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> "Black women to reach equal pay with white men in 2130," Institute for Women's Policy Research, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Black-Women-Equal-Pay-Day-Policy-Brief.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

equal pay for equal work, they would be able to afford two and a half years of childcare, twenty-two more months of rent, fifteen additional months of the mortgage, three years' worth of food for her family, 16 additional months of premiums for employer-based health insurance or enough money to pay off student loan debt.<sup>19</sup>

Black women are deserving of fair treatment and opportunities for advancement in their workplaces. Inclusive workplaces make Black women feel respected, valued, and welcomed. In a study researching Black women CEOs, it was found that sponsorship and informal and formal mentorship were found to be among the main drivers of their success in the workplace. The mentorship was mentioned as a contributor to a woman's confidence and career progression.<sup>20</sup> Black women are more likely to find success in an organization where they feel included, have a voice, and envision having a progressive future with their employer.

Black women need more advocacy at the state and national levels to close the racial and gender wage gaps, ensure there are protections against workplace discrimination, and open more opportunities for career advancement. Additionally, Black women would greatly benefit from programs that offer mentoring, executive-level sponsorship, and professional development for employees at all levels.

## Education

Black women are graduating with bachelors and advanced degrees at a higher rate than any other group; however, education is not the equalizer that previous generations had hoped would happen. According to the National Education Center for Education Statistics, Black women enrolled in college at the highest percentage at 9.7 percent in comparison to Asian women (8.7 percent), white women at (7.1 percent), and white men (6.1 percent).<sup>21</sup> The impressive education status of Black women has not translated to upward mobility in the workforce. While Black women are the highest educated group in the United States, pay disparities continue to persist, resulting in a loss of an estimated \$1 million in earnings over a lifetime.<sup>22</sup> Deep-seated structural inequities continue to impact Black women in the workplace post-graduation negatively.

The landscape for Black women in education, shows significant gains and progress. Black women earned many degrees awarded to Black students with 68 percent of associate degrees, 66 percent of associate degrees, 71 percent of master's degrees, and 65 percent of all doctorate degrees.<sup>23</sup> While there

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<sup>19</sup> "Black Women and the Wage Gap," National Partnership for Women and Families, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/fair-pay/african-american-women-wage-gap.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Nobuhle Judith Dlamani, "The Impact of the Intersection of Race, Gender and Class on Women CEOs' Lived Experiences and Career Progression: Strategies for Gender Transformation at Leadership Level in Corporate South Africa," accessed October 24, 2020, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/19Uc1WO7Thhcl11A8wJOq6vj\\_9DYd4jNm/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/19Uc1WO7Thhcl11A8wJOq6vj_9DYd4jNm/view?usp=sharing).

<sup>21</sup> Angela Broner Helm, "Black Women Now the Most Educated Group in US," The Root, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://www.theroot.com/black-women-now-the-most-educated-group-in-us-1790855540>.

<sup>22</sup> Taryn Finley, "The Wage Gap Costs Black Women Nearly \$1 Million In Their Lifetimes," Huffington Post, accessed October 24, 2020, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/black-womens-equal-pay-day-2019\\_n\\_5d5d4bc6e4b09e2b9fe4e415](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/black-womens-equal-pay-day-2019_n_5d5d4bc6e4b09e2b9fe4e415).

<sup>23</sup> Angela Broner Helm, "Black Women Now the Most Educated Group in US," The Root, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://www.theroot.com/black-women-now-the-most-educated-group-in-us-1790855540>.

is still a major gap in college achievement among Black students; the gap is closing amongst women of various racial groups. Within racial categories, women are now outperforming men with obtaining four-year college degrees by five to seven percentage points. Black Americans are still less likely to get an undergraduate degree, with the gap looking stark for Black men.<sup>24</sup> Nearly 50 percent of white women completed four years of college compared to just 17.2 percent of Black men.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the educational disparities that still exist, receiving a college degree protects Black women from living in poverty. Women without high school diplomas are six times more likely to live in poverty than women with college degrees or higher. Education has increased earnings for Black women as the median earnings for Black women is \$50,000 compared to just \$27,000 for those with a high school diploma.<sup>26</sup> Conversely, the financial returns for Black women college graduates are significant as college debt takes up a higher proportion of their earnings in comparison to their counterparts in the largest ethnic and racial categories. Black students rely more on student loans due to their families having lower incomes and fewer savings.<sup>27</sup> Twenty years after graduating, Black students still owe 95 percent of their college debt compared to White students, who only owe 6 percent of their total debt.<sup>28</sup>

Because Black women make up a significant portion of college graduates, there is an opportunity to leverage educational attainment as capital. Education, particularly post-secondary education, affords students the opportunity to gain meaningful credentials, expand their social networks, and gain social capital. consider: Black women would greatly benefit from college affordability programs, student loan reduction policies, and curricula that focus on building real-world skills to prepare them for future jobs.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, apprenticeships and vocational schools in specialized fields could serve as pathways to fields that have a significantly lower representation of Black women. Occupations in the construction, natural resources, and maintenance fields employ less than one percent of Black women but are open to workers via apprenticeships and hands-on training programs.<sup>30</sup> By focusing on the gaps that currently exist in Black women's educational attainment, we can better equip this demographic for future economic success.

## Wealth Creation and Assets Development

While Black women have contributed to the success, productivity, and economic vitality of the United States, the growing wealth gap signals the undervaluation and inequitable treatment that have held this group back for centuries. Despite making up 12 percent of the population, Black people own three percent of

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<sup>24</sup> Richard V. Reeves and Katherine Guyot, "Black women are earning more college degrees, but that alone won't close race gaps," Brookings, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2017/12/04/black-women-are-earning-more-college-degrees-but-that-alone-wont-close-race-gaps>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> "The Status of Black Women in the United States," Institute for Women's Policy Research, accessed October 21, 2020, [https://www.domesticworkers.org/sites/default/files/SOBW\\_report2017\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.domesticworkers.org/sites/default/files/SOBW_report2017_compressed.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Congressman Don Beyer, Joint Economic Committee, The Economic State of Black America in 2020, accessed October 21, 2020, [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/ccf4dbe2-810a-44f8-b3e7-14f7e5143ba6/economic-state-of-black-america-2020.pdf](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ccf4dbe2-810a-44f8-b3e7-14f7e5143ba6/economic-state-of-black-america-2020.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> "Black Women Entrepreneurs: Past and Present Conditions of Black Women's Business Ownership," National Women's Business Council, accessed October 21, 2020, [https://cdn.www.nwbc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/13134825/BWFullReport-FinalV4\\_NWBC-Revised-10.07.16.pdf](https://cdn.www.nwbc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/13134825/BWFullReport-FinalV4_NWBC-Revised-10.07.16.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> "Black women to reach equal pay with white men in 2130," Institute for Women's Policy Research, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Black-Women-Equal-Pay-Day-Policy-Brief.pdf>.

the wealth.<sup>31</sup> Land, home, and business ownership have long been the keys to achieving generational wealth, but the American dream has remained unrealized for too many Black Americans.

### Home and Land Ownership

Fifty years after the Fair Housing Act was passed, Black Americans are still being pushed out of the housing market and facing discrimination in housing sales, rentals, or financing based on religion, race, or national origin.<sup>32</sup> Residential segregation in the United States is still widespread. Fifty of the major cities in the United States are rated at 60, from 0 to 100, with 100 representing full integration.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Black homeownership has remained stagnant after housing discrimination was outlawed in 1968. In 1968, 42 percent of Black Americans were homeowners compared to 41 percent in 2017.<sup>34</sup> Housing discrimination is attributed to multiple variables.

The undervaluation of assets in neighborhoods with Black residents and discriminatory lending practices has contributed to widening the wealth gap. Homes in majority-Black neighborhoods are often placed at a value of \$48,000 on average less than homes in neighborhoods with no Black residents even when controlling for home quality and neighborhood amenities.<sup>35</sup> The devastation experienced during the Great Recession with unfair targeting of Black homeowners for subprime loans widened the wealth gap between white and Black households.<sup>36</sup> The median wealth of Black families (\$17,000)—is less than one-tenth of White families (\$171,000).<sup>37</sup> More importantly, Black women’s wealth is significantly low with \$200 compared to \$300 for Black males, \$15,640 for White women, and \$28,900 for White men.<sup>38</sup> The economic impact of the Great Recession and other systemic injustices have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Black homeownership is downward trending due to younger generations opting not to become homeowners. Black millennials (ages 21-36) had homeownership of 16 percent compared to 46 percent of non-Hispanic White millennials.<sup>39</sup> The homeownership gap between Black and White millennials is the widest since World War II. Black millennials and their families would greatly benefit from first-time home buyer programs and tax incentives for home and property ownership. Incentivizing young adults to purchase homes will positively contribute to local economies.

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<sup>31</sup> Don Beyer, The Economic State of Black America in 2020, Joint Economic Committee, accessed October 21, 2020, [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/ccf4dbe2-810a-44f8-b3e7-14f7e5143ba6/economic-state-of-black-america-2020.pdf](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ccf4dbe2-810a-44f8-b3e7-14f7e5143ba6/economic-state-of-black-america-2020.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Janelle Jones, John Schmitt and Valerie Wilson, 50 years after the Kerner Commission, Economic Policy Institute, accessed November 13, 2020, <https://www.epi.org/publication/50-years-after-the-kerner-commission>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> “Women and the Racial Wealth Divide,” Inequality, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://inequality.org/racial-wealth-divide-snapshot-women>.

<sup>39</sup> Don Beyer, Joint Economic Committee, The Economic State of Black America in 2020, accessed October 21, 2020, [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/ccf4dbe2-810a-44f8-b3e7-14f7e5143ba6/economic-state-of-black-america-2020.pdf](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ccf4dbe2-810a-44f8-b3e7-14f7e5143ba6/economic-state-of-black-america-2020.pdf).

When it comes to land ownership, the landscape is even more dire for Black Americans. In a United States Department of Agriculture report, it was found that Black Americans own eight million acres. This equates to less than one percent of rural land in the United States and is worth a mere 14 million dollars. White Americans own 856 million acres or 98 percent of U.S. land, which equates to a trillion dollars.<sup>40</sup> The history of Black land ownership is complicated and tragic. Black land ownership was at its peak in 1910, but in 1997, it was reported that Black farmers only owned 1.5 million acres of farmable land.<sup>41</sup> In several instances, the land that Blacks owned in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was taken. Unfortunately, it was sold through acts of violence, sabotage, and racist attacks.<sup>42</sup>

## Reparations

In recent years, there has been more of a concerted push for reparations amongst constituents, advocacy groups, and elected officials as a viable strategy to address systematic injustices committed against Black Americans. To date, the United States has not issued any reparations for descendants of African slaves despite them enduring more than 250 years in chattel slavery and Jim Crow. The lasting effects of these systemic policies and practices are in the forms of housing discrimination, the disproportionate incarceration of Black adults and youth, and other institutionalized policies and practices that have prevented Black Americans from building wealth.<sup>43</sup>

Proposals for reparations vary in size and scope but fundamentally address wealth generation and economic security for Black Americans. In the late 1800s, former slaves proposed pension funds but that was not realized.<sup>44</sup> Since the 1960s, grassroots groups called for cash and land payments. Others have called for reparations proposals that target health care, housing, and education, which are pillars that are inextricably linked to economic security. The Movement for Black Lives Matter proposes access to free healthcare, free education, and open admissions at public universities and technical schools, and federal tax exemptions.<sup>45</sup> Members of the Congressional Black Caucus have introduced bills calling for establishment of a commission dedicated to the study of reparations. United States Representative John Conyers introduced the first bill H.R. 40, in 1989 and introduced subsequent bills, although none have become law. This was followed by U.S. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee's introduction of the same bill H.R. 40, in 2019.

## Entrepreneurship as a Sustainable Goal

The number of Black women entrepreneurs is rapidly rising as they are the fastest-growing segment of business owners in the United States. Seen as an act of self-determination, the expansion of Black women's ownership signals progress in America, but the challenges they face are vast. Increasing the body of knowledge of the unique challenges Black women entrepreneurs face will help foster an understanding of resources needed to support them.

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<sup>40</sup> Antonio Moore, #BlackWealthMatters: The 5 Largest U.S. Landowners Own More Land Than All of Black America Combined, Huffington Post, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ted-turner-owns-nearly-14-b-8395448>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> "The Status of Black Women in the United States," Institute for Women's Policy Research, accessed October 21, 2020, [https://www.domesticworkers.org/sites/default/files/SOBW\\_report2017\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.domesticworkers.org/sites/default/files/SOBW_report2017_compressed.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



Women have been a driving force in the rise of Black businesses in the United States as they own 58.9 percent of all Black-owned enterprises.<sup>46</sup> Black women-owned companies increased by 66.9 percent from 900,000 in 2007 to 1.5 million in 2012. This exceeds the 34 percent growth of total Black-owned enterprises between 2007 to 2012 from 1.9 million to 2.6 million.<sup>47</sup> It also outpaces the 2.0 percent growth of total businesses during the same timeframe. On the contrary, when one looks at the revenue generated by Black women-owned businesses, disparities put Black women at the lower end of the gender spectrum. Black women entrepreneurs generated 42.2 billion dollars in receipts in 2012. Approximately two-thirds (66.7 percent) of \$150.2 billion in revenues that were earned by Black or African-American businesses were generated by male-owned corporations.<sup>48</sup> Black women-owned companies earned 17 percent less in average annual revenues than white women-owned businesses. This signals that more needs to be done to address equity gaps in the business ownership landscape.<sup>49</sup>

Research shows that Black women are motivated to pursue entrepreneurship as a result of the negative experiences they have had in the workforce. It is a deliberate choice to invest in themselves by taking control of their career trajectory. Margot Dorfman, CEO of the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce stated that "the lack of fair pay, fair promotion and family-friendly policies found in corporate America," has fueled this business segment's growth in an attempt to shatter glass ceilings and ascend to leadership positions that they normally would not have had access to.<sup>50</sup> Black women face numerous barriers as they pursue entrepreneurial ventures such as obtaining capital and financial credit; access to networks; finding sponsors and mentors that can connect them to resources; and experiencing racial and gender discrimination in industries that males dominate.

Black women business owners face challenges and systemic barriers that limit their ability to open or expand their business. Walker's Legacy, a non-profit organization benefiting black women entrepreneurs, found that Black women heavily rely on their kinship networks of family and friends to launch and sustain their businesses. Yet, these individuals may not be the best suited in providing the adequate information, capital and support necessary to start-up a new venture.<sup>51</sup> Black women would greatly benefit from networks that are cross-cultural, cross-economic, cross-gender lines to increase their social capital. Scarce funding opportunities have been a persistent challenge for Black women business owners.<sup>52</sup> The Small Business Administration found that not only do women and minority business owners choose not to apply for loans due to fear of rejection, but even when controlling for different types of business structures and credit scores, women and minority-owned businesses were less likely to get approved for loans.<sup>53</sup>

## **Black Women Entrepreneurs in Africa**

Black women entrepreneurs are opening up businesses at high rates globally. According to the World Bank, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest growth of women-owned businesses than any other region in

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<sup>46</sup> "Black Women Entrepreneurs: Past and Present Conditions of Black Women's Business Ownership," National Women's Business Council, accessed October 21, 2020, [https://cdn.www.nwbc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/13134825/BWEFullReport-FinalV4\\_NWBC-Revised-10.07.16.pdf](https://cdn.www.nwbc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/13134825/BWEFullReport-FinalV4_NWBC-Revised-10.07.16.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

the world. This is in stark contrast to neighboring regions in North Africa and the Middle East where there are larger gaps in women business ownership. Entrepreneurship is vital to women's livelihoods as it represents more than 50 percent of women's non-farm participation.<sup>54</sup> The strong surge of entrepreneurship participation is driven partly by there being fewer wage-earning opportunities afforded to women in Africa.<sup>55</sup>

Black women in the United States and Africa face similar challenges. Black women-owned businesses face funding challenges as the World Bank reported that the funding gap in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at \$20 billion with younger women being impacted the most.<sup>56</sup> Access to bank accounts is scarce as Findex reported that only 30 percent of women have bank accounts in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>57</sup> Women business owners in the region are more likely to work alone and less likely to have employees, which indicates the small size of their businesses can be a limiting factor in scaling enterprises.<sup>58</sup> Firms owned by women tend to underperform those owned by men on a number of dimensions including profitability, survival rates, average size, and growth trajectory.<sup>59</sup>

Women entrepreneurs in the region noted that they lack a strong support network of mentors and advisers that can help them navigate constant decision-making and provide wisdom to help them avoid mistakes. This can also help with self-limiting factors creating a lack of confidence and assertiveness in ongoing business dealings. Additionally, societal norms, patriarchy, and breaking through "old boys networks" were acknowledged as deep-seated structural issues that women entrepreneurs are challenged by.<sup>60</sup> These factors are coupled with internal fears of failure of starting or running a business.

### **Challenges of Raising Funds and Operating a Start-up**

Black women continue to experience racial and gender biases held by venture capitalists and loan providers. They are often advised to fully develop products and services before being eligible for funding, as funders want to fund products and services rather than just ideas.<sup>61</sup> Other challenges include fear of seeking financial support outside of their familiar circle, fear of discrimination practices, negative perceptions of hiring from within their communities and the absence of having business mentors and sponsors. Barriers to funding equality are one of the most significant challenges Black women entrepreneurs face. At least 83 percent of entrepreneurs do not receive bank loans or venture capital (VC) funding for their business start-ups, and a smaller group of 0.5 percent receive VC.<sup>62</sup> The Black community historically has had a negative relationship with banking institutions and venture capitalists. Black women

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<sup>54</sup> Francisco Campos and Marine Gassier, Gender and Enterprise Development in Sub-Saharan Africa, World Bank, accessed October 21, 2020, <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/326061510086379739/pdf/WPS8239.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs, Africa, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://africa.com/challenges-faced-women-entrepreneurs-africa>.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Jessica Guynn, Good ol' boys network, meet black girl magic: Black, female entrepreneurs are changing Silicon Valley, USA TODAY, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/01/24/black-women-entrepreneurs-changing-face-silicon-valley-technology/2575786002>.

<sup>62</sup> Anne Kniggendorf, The barriers to funding equality persist for Black women, Kauffman, <https://www.kauffman.org/currents/barriers-to-funding-equality-persist-for-black-women>.

received 0.0006 percent of VC funding between 2009 and 2017.<sup>63</sup> That gap is a stark reminder that systems of oppression continue to hold women back from achieving financial freedom.

Black women-owned startups have begun to emerge in industries that have a lower representation of women and people of diverse backgrounds. This is a positive advancement that signals progress. Black women are finding ways to enter new industries with greater barriers of entry outside of hair salons, catering, daycares, and consulting services. Black women founders have sprouted up in Silicon Valley, but not without challenges.<sup>64</sup> A *USA Today* article that featured Black women founders in technology, illuminated the sheer tenacity of Black women founders and their fight to be trailblazers despite the grim realities of their industry. Julia Collins, who has a robotic food prep company in Silicon Valley that is valued at \$2.25 billion, says she still has visitors that mistakenly ask her to grab water, not realizing she is the founder.<sup>65</sup> Jean Brownhill shared her humiliating experience meeting with a potential investor who inquired about whether or not her father played an active role in her life. She described the feeling she got as a “gut punch to her stomach.”<sup>66</sup>

Entrepreneurship is a viable alternative and a way to take control of Black women’s economic security. It is a pathway to freedom, independence, and means to build wealth for themselves and their families. Progressive public policies and alternative measures are needed to ensure that Black women’s businesses are sustained. Crowdfunding and local funds are viable options for Black women founders. Additionally, flexible, and alternative funding resources through community enterprise resource programs with clear, transparent and parameters can prove to be advantageous for Black women business owners.<sup>67</sup> Public funding for community-based institutions such as Community Development Corporations, local entrepreneurship, business resource centers, and Minority Business Development Centers will allow for more mentoring, training, and support services for Black women-owned businesses.<sup>68</sup>

Black women business owners have a heightened awareness of their direct connection to the community. They are more likely to give back and to hire individuals from their communities. However, these values do not change or influence positive business growth or outcomes.<sup>69</sup> If Black women received more funding, they would be better positioned to hire employees from their communities and serve as positive role models to others. In turn, the community would greatly benefit from the fledging success of Black women enterprises in cities across America.

## **Governments’ Responsibility in the Global Economic Security of Black Women**

Taking a human rights approach to advocating for Black women globally will empower Black women and bring more gender equality to our world. Women have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 crisis and are

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Jessica Guynn, Good ol' boys network, meet black girl magic: Black, female entrepreneurs are changing Silicon Valley, USA TODAY, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/01/24/black-women-entrepreneurs-changing-face-silicon-valley-technology/2575786002>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> "Black Women Entrepreneurs: Past and Present Conditions of Black Women's Business Ownership," National Women’s Business Council, accessed October 21, 2020, [https://cdn.www.nwbc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/13134825/BWFullReport-FinalV4\\_NWBC-Revised-10.07.16.pdf](https://cdn.www.nwbc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/13134825/BWFullReport-FinalV4_NWBC-Revised-10.07.16.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

reeling from the damaging effects on their economic status and quality of life. All women have a right to fair pay and safe working conditions, an adequate pension in older age, health care, and clean and safe water, without discrimination based on factors such as socioeconomic status, geographic location, and race or ethnicity.<sup>70</sup> Until international policymakers and leaders commit to the economic advancement of women; economies will continue to face widespread shortfalls.

Analyzing global economic policies through a racial and gender lens will help us confront global poverty and improve women and girls' life chances. Generally, macroeconomics has been seen as "gender-neutral" but in fact, there is a great deal of power that is unrealized when setting monetary policies that benefit women at large.<sup>71</sup> Economists have often looked at the policy tools available to them through a narrow lens, but in fact, macroeconomics can be the impetus to drive social change for disadvantaged women.<sup>72</sup> In the arena of fiscal policy, countries can raise resources for gender-sensitive social protection and social services by enforcing existing tax obligations, reprioritizing expenditures, and expanding the overall tax base, as well as through international borrowing and development assistance.<sup>73</sup>

A solution for ensuring women's economic needs is being met is gender responsive budgeting (GRB). Gender responsive budgeting is the process of analyzing economic and fiscal policies with the goal of inclusion and equitable distribution of resources for all. GRB works for everyone, including men, women, boys, and girls as it is the pathway to gender justice and fiscal justice.<sup>74</sup> It looks at how public funds are raised through tax measures, fees and fines; how those funds are spent on public services and programs; and intentionally looks at the unique needs of women, men, girls, and boys. While policies may appear to be gender-neutral and heavily informed by data, they can have unintended consequences on women and men. Data may not consider informal labor, unpaid work such as caretaking, cleaning, and domestic food production. The GRB approach in Ghana is a great example of how women stakeholders could be actively involved in all areas of the budget-making process. With the help of Oxfam, a needs assessment was produced in advance of the budget being published, a rapid assessment of the budget was made to feed into media and parliamentary discussion.<sup>75</sup> In general, consistent monitoring and gender analysis of budgets and fiscal policies is a great value add to the public at large and helps close the gender gap.

The gender pay gap is a global problem that will require global solutions. Globally women earn 24 percent less than men. Over the course of their entire lifetime, women earn 50 percent less than men. In sub-Saharan Africa, the gap widens to 30 percent, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, the gap decreases to 19 percent. Globally women are overrepresented among individuals in precarious, informal, and low-wage employment.<sup>76</sup> On a global scale, 63 percent of women work in clerical or support positions while 33 percent hold managerial roles.<sup>77</sup> Promoting education, including basic literacy for adult women, on-the-job training, including non-traditional skills, and mentoring to enable women to move up the occupational ladder will greatly improve the economic status of women.

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<sup>70</sup> Mary-Ann Stephenson, A Guide to Gender-Responsive Budgeting, Oxfam, <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620429/gt-guide-gender-responsive-budgeting-280218-en.pdf;jsessionid=222CB3CE76856FBA39447A2345E95C28?sequence=13>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

Scaling up resources for women-owned companies will increase the world's GDP and help revitalize the global economy. Globally, women own 6.2 percent of all established businesses. The highest rates are in sub-Saharan Africa at 11.3 percent, followed by 9.1 percent in Asia, 5.7 percent in North America, and 6.5 percent in Latin America. In the COVID-19 crisis, bailouts should not only serve large to medium-sized businesses, but also small and micro-sized businesses to ensure more women entrepreneurs are being supported.<sup>78</sup> Financial support and access to credit should be made available equally to men and women. Additionally, a special focus should be placed on increasing women entrepreneurs' access to credit and assisting them in increasing the profitability of their businesses, scaling their businesses, and navigating other business challenges.

A comprehensive agenda for key policy factors including advocates, international governments, and multi-lateral organizations is needed to push for women's full economic inclusion and to champion women's rights from an economic context. International human rights treaties—such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)—offer a vision and action plan to create positive outcomes for the world's most vulnerable women.<sup>79</sup> Powerful global players from international governments to transnational corporations have a role to play in advancing women's economic rights.<sup>80</sup> The full inclusion and integration of women in the global economy can only be realized if each accept that the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill human rights extends beyond borders.

### **The Impact of COVID-19 on Black Women's Economic Security**

There is an old adage that says if America catches a cold, then Black America catches the flu. The multitude of inter-connected pandemics, including the Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, the economic crisis, and the ongoing crisis of racism has wreaked havoc on Black America and has left communities standing on the brink of devastation. The COVID-19 pandemic first emerged as a health emergency that disproportionately affected Black lives but soon ravaged Black communities with forthcoming national economic policies. Black businesses, workers, mothers, and families have been left behind with the federal government's COVID-19 response. Because Black women stand at the intersections of race and gender, they are acutely affected by this global health emergency in unique ways that government leaders should pay special attention to when designing and implementing emergency relief efforts.

With the federal bailout, Black businesses were left empty-handed and forced to fend on their own in the current economic crisis. In 2020, Congress passed the trillion-dollar relief package, Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES ACT). The Congressional Black Caucus negotiated \$10 million in grants to go towards Black businesses, but that resulted in \$4 for each of the 2.6 million Black-owned businesses.<sup>81</sup> Historically Black businesses have had complicated relationships due to unfair and biased lending practices and that legacy reared its ugly head in the height of the economic recession. It was reported that an estimated 90 percent of women and minority-owned businesses did not receive funds from the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program. Diverse small business owners

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<sup>78</sup> Mary-Ann Stephenson, A Guide to Gender-Responsive Budgeting, Oxfam, <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620429/gt-guide-gender-responsive-budgeting-280218-en.pdf;jsessionid=222CB3CE76856FBA39447A2345E95C28?sequence=13>.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Jennifer Cunningham, News One, Will COVID-19 Be The Death Knell To Black Businesses? Accessed October 21, 2020, <https://www.newsone.com/3927243/covid-19-black-businesses-effect>.

applied for the funds only to learn in hindsight that they did not qualify for the program, or the funds had already been exhausted.<sup>82</sup> The recipients of the funds tended to skew towards white-owned businesses.

One major obstacle that came to light was financial institutions issued loans to businesses that were already their clients to speed up the process to access the funds.<sup>83</sup> This placed Black-owned businesses at a clear disadvantage because banks viewed them as riskier. Black-owned businesses are in desperate need of more bailout funds at the national and local government levels in the form of grants and loans as they were more likely to be categorized as “distressed” or “at-risk” before the pandemic, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.<sup>84</sup>

Black women workers are essential in the current global pandemic, but they lack the protections, health benefits, and income security to ensure their safety and security in the COVID-19 crisis. Black workers are overrepresented in front-line jobs in childcare, schools, hospitals, home aide providers, housekeeping services, restaurants, and grocery stores. They make up one in six front-line industry workers. By industry, they make up 14 percent of workers in grocery, convenience, and drug stores; 26 percent of workers in public transit; 18 percent of workers in trucking, warehouse, and postal service; 17.5 percent of workers in healthcare; and 19.3 percent in childcare and social services.<sup>85</sup>

Black employees employed in positions with low hourly wages have more restrictions with flexible work schedules, medical benefits, paid medical leave, paid time off, and telecommuting policies. Furthermore, Black women are less likely to have savings to take a leave of absence from work to care for their children, elders, or ill family members. Black women workers have taken a hit in job losses, and as the unemployment rate rose as high as 16.7 percent in April 2020, compared to the white unemployment rate of 14.2 percent.<sup>86</sup> Black women make up a significant segment of essential workers, their needs should be prioritized in short-term and long-range economic recovery efforts.

Because Black women are employed at a higher rate than any other racial category, childcare remains one of the biggest barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the labor market. National political figures such as former Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, have championed childcare as national issue in the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of his presidential campaign, Joe Biden proposed a \$775 billion plan to make childcare more affordable and accessible to parents.<sup>87</sup> Many American families find childcare unaffordable due to rising costs that can amount to \$1,000 per month.<sup>88</sup> Without affordable childcare, the economic system cannot be stabilized and there will be a slower economic recovery post COVID-19 crisis.

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<sup>82</sup> Megan Cerullo, Up to 90% of minority and women owners shut out of Paycheck Protection Program, experts fear, CBS News, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/women-minority-business-owners-paycheck-protection-program-loans>.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Jocelyn Frye, On the Frontlines at Work and at Home: The Disproportionate Economic Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Women of Color, Center for American Progress, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/04/23/483846/frontlines-work-home>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Christina Wilkie, Biden announces \$775 billion plan to fund universal child care and in-home elder care, CNBC, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/21/biden-to-unveil-775-billion-plan-to-fund-child-care-and-elder-care.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

The pandemic hits Black women squarely at the crossroads where they are the most vulnerable, and their needs should not be ignored or minimized when addressing structural inequities. Any economic disruptions for Black women would have magnified effects especially for those who are both essential workers and single parents that have dependents that are relying on them to put food on the table. Elected officials at the local, state, and national levels should introduce new policies and strengthen existing policies to ensure that Black women have the social safety nets and supports to sustain themselves and their families.

## **Conclusion**

The four pillars that guide the work of IBWPPI include human trafficking, health, education, and most notably, economic security. These four issues are largely interconnected in affecting one's overall life circumstances. One's employment opportunities, entrepreneurial options, educational level, and overall personal wealth directly determine a person's or family's trajectory. Too often, women and communities of color are precluded from vigorous development.

Individuals who are impoverished, uneducated, lack job skills, or do not have strong social networks- are more likely to fall into the cycle of human trafficking. There is a direct correlation between poor health outcomes and economic outcomes, as low-income individuals are less likely to have access to quality health care coverage, paid sick leave, and childcare. Individuals who do not have educational opportunities find themselves locked out of higher-paying careers or white-collar jobs that offer more financial security.

When examining Black women's success and trajectory over time, the persistence of Black women is a phenomenon that continues to emerge. Whenever opportunities are provided, they blaze trails and establish pathways to success in the spirit of excellence. Whether they are overcoming barriers inside existing industries they occupy or moving into new business arenas to determine their economic future; they offer a framework for self-determination.

To support Black women's economic security, IBWPPI makes the following recommendations:

### **Social Safety Net and Income Security**

**Increase the federal minimum wage.** If the federal minimum wage were increased to \$12 by 2020, more than one-third of Black and Latinx workers would receive a raise.

**Supporting federal laws that protect Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs to create a social safety net for low-income Black women and families that live below the federal poverty line.**

**Supporting paid family and medical leave programs at the federal and state levels that can effectively combat the health and economic disparities experienced by Black women.** Black women face barriers to access and protections that can be critical in meeting family and medical needs, despite being key breadwinners as well as caregivers for their own and, sometimes, others' families.

**Addressing the racial and gender pay gap by supporting or enhancing new federal and state laws that seek to eliminate pay differentials on the basis of sex and race.** We urgently need policy solutions that

reduce inequality and improve earnings, combat systemic barriers that incubate discrimination, and create greater sustainability for Black women and families.

## Entrepreneurship

**Encourage entrepreneurship curricula at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and encourage universities and colleges that currently have entrepreneurship programming to expand and incorporate diverse curricula.** Opportunities exist for HBCUs to encourage entrepreneurship curriculum integration across disciplines and establish campus-affiliated entrepreneurial centers and incubators.

**Increase Black women’s representation in emerging fields.** According to a recently released report on Black women in the technology field, only .02 percent of Black women in tech successfully receive angel or venture capital. Therefore, there remains a need to address this gap and the possibility for great opportunity in focusing on this important sector.

**Improve and develop local community enterprise resource programs.** A need for more flexible and alternative funding sources and funders who understand the needs and realities of Black women business owners is vital.

**Increase the number of Black women investors.** Given the lack of angel investors who are both women and of color, qualified Black women should seek to become accredited angel investors for Black women-owned businesses.

**Conduct in-depth research on Black women business owners.** Research could also include investigations of need-based entrepreneurship, the impacts of fear on business start-ups, and loan application processes.

## List of Federal Legislation

Bill	Lead Bill Sponsor	Bill Status	Bill Summary
S.1083 / H.R.4832 Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act	Sen. Booker, Cory [D-NJ] and Rep. Jackson Lee, Sheila [D-TX]	<i>Pending - Introduced both in the Senate 4/10/19 and in the House 1/3/19</i>	This bill establishes the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans. The commission shall examine slavery and discrimination in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. Among other requirements, the commission shall identify (1) the role of federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery, (2) forms of discrimination in public and private sectors against freed slaves and their descendants, and (3) lingering negative effects of slavery on living African-Americans and society. <a href="#">Continue reading here.</a>



<p>S. 2126, Promoting Robust Opportunities for Minority Institutions and Strengthening Entrepreneurship Act or the PROMISE Act</p>	<p>Sen. Scott, Tim [R-SC]</p>	<p><i>Pending - Introduced in the Senate 7/16/19</i></p>	<p>This bill requires the Small Business Administration (SBA) to report on various aspects of its relationship with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the number of small business development centers located at HBCUs,</li> <li>• the number of women's business centers and Veteran Business Outreach Centers that have partnerships with HBCUs, and</li> <li>• the number of hours of training and education provided by a program overseen by the Office of Entrepreneurial Development of the SBA to students and graduates of HBCUs. Continue reading <a href="#">here</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>S. 1981 / H.R.3633, Women and Minority Equity Investment Act of 2019</p>	<p>Sen. Cantwell, Maria [D-WA] and Rep. Kelly, Robin L. [D-IL]</p>	<p><i>Pending - 07/09/19</i></p>	<p>This bill modifies eligibility requirements for Small Business Administration (SBA) contracting opportunities available to a woman- or minority-owned business.</p> <p>Currently, to be eligible for certain SBA programs, a woman or minority business owner must own an unconditional majority (at least 51%) of their business. However, the bill allows a woman- or minority-owned small business to maintain its contracting eligibility in the event a venture capital or private equity firm purchases an ownership stake in the business, so long as the purchasing enterprise is also owned by either a woman or minority. Read more <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p>H.R.2981 - Parren Mitchell Minority Business Education and Empowerment Act of 2019</p>	<p>Rep. Cummings, Elijah E. [D-MD]</p>	<p><i>Pending - Introduced 05/23/19</i></p>	<p>This bill requires the Small Business Administration to award grants through FY2022 to historically black colleges and universities to (1) establish entrepreneurship curricula for undergraduate or graduate studies, and (2) place small business development centers on the physical campuses of such institutions. <a href="#">Continue reading here</a>.</p>

Unlocking Opportunities in Emerging Markets Act of 2019	Sen. Cardin, Benjamin L. [D-MD]	<i>Pending - Introduced 7/31/19</i>	This bill establishes the Office of Emerging Markets within the Small Business Administration to oversee the planning, coordination, implementation, evaluation, and improvement of efforts to enhance the economic well-being of small business concerns in emerging markets. <a href="#">Continue reading here.</a>
H.R.1432 — Minority Business Development Act of 2019	Rep. McNerney, Jerry [D-CA-9]	<i>Pending – Introduced 2/28/19</i>	This bill permanently authorizes the Minority Business Development Administration to assist socially and economically disadvantaged business concerns.  Specifically, the bill redesignates the Minority Business Development Agency as the Minority Business Development Administration (MBDA). The MBDA shall (1) assist disadvantaged business concerns entering domestic and foreign markets by providing education and training, management and technological assistance, a skilled labor pool, and financial and marketing services; and (2) encourage such businesses to establish joint ventures and projects among themselves or in cooperation with public or private sector organizations. <a href="#">Continue reading here.</a>
H.R.41 — RESCUE Act for Black and Community Banks	Rep. Rush, Bobby L. [D-IL]	<i>Pending – Introduced in the House 1/3/19</i>	This bill establishes programs and requirements related to minority banks, black banks, community banks, women's banks, and low-income credit unions.  The bill establishes the Office of Black and Community Banks in the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) to oversee black and community banks. The OCC and the Securities and Exchange Commission must exempt these banks from specified securities and federal banking regulations in certain circumstances.  The bill also establishes the Minority Bank Deposit Program. The Department of the Treasury must certify a depository institution or credit union upon successful application as a minority bank, a women's bank, or a low-income credit union. Every federal department and agency is directed to implement standards and procedures to ensure the use of such institutions to serve the financial needs of the department or agency. <a href="#">Click here to learn more.</a>
S.2466 - Water Justice Act	Sen. Harris, Kamala D. [D-CA]	09/11/19	The Water Justice Act will make a \$250 billion critical investment in safe water, affordable water, and sustainable water. Funds are appropriated to the expansion of minority-owned businesses to support the next generation of water infrastructure contractors. <a href="#">Click here to learn more.</a>

S.3167 / H.R.5309 CROWN Act of 2019	Sen. Booker, Cory A. [D-NJ] and Rep. Richmond, Cedric L. [D-LA]	Introduced in the House on 12/5/19 and in the Senate on 01/08/20	<p>This bill prohibits discrimination based on a person's hair texture or hairstyle if that style or texture is commonly associated with a particular race or national origin. Specifically, the bill prohibits this type of discrimination against those participating in federally assisted programs, housing programs, public accommodations, and employment.</p> <p>The bill stipulates that a person shall have equal rights and shall not be subjected to prohibited practices based on their hair texture or style.</p> <p>The bill provides for enforcement procedures under the applicable laws. <a href="#">Click here to learn more.</a></p>
H.R.6409 - ABLE Act of 2020	Rep. Omar, Ilhan [D-MN-5]	<i>Pending - Introduced in the House on 03/27/20</i>	This bill establishes the Emergency Social Insurance Program to coordinate and deliver direct payments to small businesses and workers affected by COVID-19 (i.e., coronavirus disease 2019). <a href="#">Continue reading here.</a>
H.R.7301 - Emergency Housing Protections and Relief Act of 2020	Rep. Waters, Maxine [D-CA-43]	<i>Pending - Introduced in the House on 06/30/20</i>	To prevent evictions, foreclosures, and unsafe housing conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and for other purposes. <a href="#">Click here to read more.</a>
Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act	Rep. Lowey, Nita M. [D-NY-17]	<i>Pending - Introduced in the House on 03/23/2020</i>	<p>This bill responds to the COVID-19 (i.e., coronavirus disease 2019) outbreak and its impact on the economy, public health, state and local governments, individuals, and businesses.</p> <p>The bill provides FY2020 supplemental appropriations for federal agencies to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. The supplemental appropriations are designated as emergency spending, which is exempt from discretionary spending limits. <a href="#">Click here to read more.</a></p>
H.R.6460, To provide funding for needed child and adult care so that essential workers can report to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Rep. Davis, Danny K. [D-IL]	<i>Pending – Introduced 04/07/20</i>	To provide funding for needed child and adult care so that essential workers can report to work during the COVID-19 pandemic. <a href="#">Read more here.</a>