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## PRESS STATEMENT

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## The LLBC Scores Many Legislative Victories in the 2021 Regular Session

**Baton Rouge, Louisiana.** The Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus presented an aggressive legislative agenda for the 2021 Regular Session that yielded multiple successes in the areas of police reform, criminal justice reform, marijuana decriminalization, voting rights, women's health, fiscal policy, racial equity, and honoring Black history and veterans.

The LLBC passed multiple police reform bills including SB 34 by Senator Cleo Fields that will ban chokeholds and no-knock warrants and HB 430 by Representative Ted James that will increase transparency in complaints against officers. Unfortunately, a bill by Representative Edmond Jordan, HB 609, failed in Senate Judiciary B Committee that would have provided much-needed restrictions on qualified immunity for officers in cases of wrongful death, personal injury, or the use of excessive force. Although we are disappointed by its failure to pass, we are committed to reintroducing the same legislation next year to have even more fruitful conversations surrounding government sanctioned misconduct against Black people in Louisiana and produce positive outcomes in the way of reform.

The LLBC also prioritized criminal justice reform and the reintegration of the formerly incarcerated with the passage of HB 145 by Representative Marcus Bryant, HB 84 by Representative Denise Marcelle and HB 678 by Representative Royce Duplessis. HB 145, which has been sent to the Governor for his signature, increases the possibility of parole for older prisoners based on time already served and the original conviction. HB 84 will allow people convicted of felonies to serve on juries if they have been off of probation or parole for four years, which previously was only allowed with a Governor's pardon. HB 678 will create the Louisiana work opportunity tax credit, which encourages businesses to hire re-entrants participating in work release programs.

The LLBC also championed clean slate legislation, HB 604 by Representative Ted James, which would have made it easier to remove criminal convictions from public records and increase employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals. Although HB 604 failed to pass, all four pieces of legislation remain a cornerstone of our criminal justice reform platform, which stems from the belief that people who have served their time deserve a fresh start and full reintegration into society.

Representative Cedric Glover passed HB 652, monumental legislation that will decriminalize small amounts of marijuana. This was a common sense, common ground piece of legislation with bipartisan support that the LLBC will build upon to further expand decriminalization and legalization of marijuana.

The LLBC commitment to voting rights was illustrated by the passage of HB 285 by Representative Ted James and HB 286 by Representative Fred Jones which will increase time allotted in the voting booth from three minutes to six minutes and expand early voting by three days for presidential elections respectively.

The LLBC also focused on women's health with the passage of SB 133 by Senator Regina Barrow to create the Office on Women's Health in the Louisiana Department of Health and HB 190 by Representative Matthew Willard to expand health insurance coverage for maternity services to include doulas and midwives.

The LLBC tax policy initiatives prioritized the youth and working families of Louisiana. HB 680 by Representative Jason Hughes, which has passed both the House and the Senate, will create a Louisiana Youth Jobs Tax Credit and an Apprenticeship Tax Credit, building employment and growth opportunities for our youth. In addition, Representative Duplessis worked with Senator Ward to extend the sunset on the earned income tax credit increase of 1.5% for another five years, bringing the permanent total allowable credit to 5%. An initiative by Representative Willard, HB 659, would have created the Strong Families Tax Credit and benefited the one in four children living below the poverty line in Louisiana. Although it failed to pass, we believe that long term investment in our families will pay long-term dividends for all of Louisiana and we will keep pushing for progress in this area.

Another piece of legislation focused on our youth is SB 10 by Senator Cleo Fields which makes kindergarten mandatory, because, as Representative Jason Hughes stated, "Education is the mortal enemy to poverty."

In addition, the LLBC focused on passing legislation to create policy with practical solutions to move forward in racial fairness and equity. HCR 19 by Representative Ken Brass will create a task force to study how to develop a more diverse group of candidates for head coach and athletic director positions at public universities and colleges. The LLBC also introduced multiple bills to prohibit discrimination based on natural hairstyles, or the CROWN Act. Although none of the anti-hair discrimination bills ultimately passed, we are committed to reintroducing this legislation in the following session and continuing this important conversation.

Finally, the LLBC passed legislation to highlight the history and contributions of African Americans in Louisiana. Representative Larry Selders passed HB 554 which designates Juneteenth as a state holiday, commemorating the true end to slavery in the United States. SB 105 by Senator Gerald Boudreaux will create an African American military service members monument in the Louisiana Veterans Memorial Park. And HB 635 by Representative Cedric Glover provides that a course in African American History will fulfill certain TOPS requirements.

The LLBC firmly holds that understanding, teaching and honoring Black history and the Black experience in the United States is a vital component of healing racial divides and moving forward together as a state. The national and local attempts to censor such

conversations only serve to divide us further by silencing the voices of so many of our citizens. The idea that simply acknowledging hard truths will drive a wedge between Louisianians who as a people thrive in community and are always there for each other is the most divisive concept introduced this Session. The LLBC does not accept that false premise and will continue to trust in the people of Louisiana to find ways to love and honor each other while also acknowledging the diverse lived experiences of their neighbors.

Chairman of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus, Representative Ted James, said, “In the face of opposition and much distraction, the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus claims victory with the passage of many vitally important pieces of legislation in the 2021 Regular Session. These new laws will aid the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus in accomplishing our mission, which is to raise the quality of life for African Americans in Louisiana. Although there were some setbacks and disappointments, we know that the stories and voices that came through in the process will only get stronger and more unified next year and every year after to work together and affect real change in Louisiana.”

Full list of bills from the LLBC 2021 legislative agenda that have been signed by the Governor:

- HB 32 by Representative Larry Selders, now Act 5
- HB 84 by Representative Denise Marcelle, now Act 121
- HB 145 by Representative Marcus Bryant, now Act 122
- HB 285 by Representative Ted James, now Act 22

Full list of bills from the LLBC 2021 legislative agenda that have passed the House and Senate and are awaiting the Governor’s signature:

- HCR 19 by Representative Ken Brass
- HB 46 by Representative Ted James
- HB 60 by Representative Ken Brass
- HB 190 by Representative Matt Willard
- HB 271 by Representative Denise Marcelle
- HB 286 by Representative Fred Jones
- HB 374 by Representative Royce Duplessis
- HB 430 by Representative Ted James
- HB 554 by Representative Larry Selders
- HB 635 by Representative Cedric Glover
- HB 652 by Representative Cedric Glover
- HB 678 by Representative Royce Duplessis
- HB 680 by Representative Jason Hughes
- HB 707 by Representative Matt Willard
- SB 10 by Senator Cleo Fields
- SB 34 by Senator Cleo Fields
- SB 94 by Senator Jimmy Harris
- SB 105 by Senator Gerald Boudreaux
- SB 128 by Senator Katrina Jackson
- SB 130 by Senator Katrina Jackson
- SB 133 by Senator Regina Barrow
- SB 140 by Senator Jimmy Harris

- SB 211 by Senator Katrina Jackson
- SB 215 by Senator Regina Barrow

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*Established in 1977, the primary purpose of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus is to raise the quality of life for those underrepresented, the indigent and working people through legislation, education and economic development.*