



**NJ BLACK EMPOWERMENT COALITION ACTION FUND RELEASES  
THE "NEW JERSEY EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY SCORECARD"  
FOR EACH ELECTED MEMBER OF THE NEW JERSEY ASSEMBLY AND SENATE**

***Statewide Rating System to Provide Greater Accountability In Addressing the  
Priorities of Black and Brown Voters, While Providing a Needed Voting Tool for  
the '23 Election***

<https://njbecan.org/>

[New Jersey - July 12, 2023] In anticipation of the closing months of the 2023 New Jersey election, the [NJ Black Empowerment Coalition Action Network \(NJBECA\)](https://njbecan.org/), a 501c4 dedicated to advocating for racial justice policies that cultivate equitable opportunity for advancement, released today a comprehensive report card of every current elected official in the New Jersey Assembly and Senate. The inaugural ***New Jersey Equitable Opportunity Scorecard*** aims to empower voters across the state with an independent and unbiased assessment of elected officials' voting records on critical issues that create equitable opportunity while also providing the state's electorate with a needed watchdog to ensure greater accountability in prioritizing key issues that matter to Black and Brown voters. In conjunction with today's launch, NJBECA will begin an aggressive multi-platform statewide promotion and engagement campaign for the Scorecard, which will continue through Election Day 2023. The Network will provide these scorecards before every political cycle for future election years. New Jersey Voters can access the '23 Scorecard at <https://njbecan.org/>.

The New Jersey Equitable Opportunity Scorecard utilizes a transparent scoring system to assess lawmakers' contributions toward fostering equitable opportunities for all citizens. It was developed in partnership with the minority-owned, independent research and data firm [HIT Strategies](#), who have created similar national initiatives for organizations such as the NAACP, Black Lives Matter, the Human Rights Campaign, the New Georgia Project, and Black Economic Alliance. HIT reviewed hundreds of pieces of New Jersey legislation connected to seven policy pillars between 2020 and present day: *Economics, Education, Healthcare, Housing, Criminal Justice, Environmental Justice, and Open & Fair Democracy. Using meticulous research, analysis, and data collection examined voting records and legislative initiatives, for every member of the New Jersey Assembly and Senate.*

"New Jersey's Black and Brown voters must hold all elected officials in Trenton accountable and create a needed multi-racial coalition," stated **NJ Black Empowerment Action Coalition Action Network Executive Director Tomas Varela, Jr.** "By sharing clear and concise information regarding Trenton's electeds, the New Jersey Equitable Opportunity Scorecard will empower constituents to make informed decisions, gain valuable insights into how their representatives prioritize equitable opportunity, and will enable voters to hold their elected officials accountable for their actions. The Action Fund created the New Jersey Equitable Opportunity Scorecard because the times demand it. In the last ten years, our country has seen a dramatic increase in racist activity. More importantly, [several reports](#) have concluded that the economic performance of the United States would be stronger by addressing racism and discrimination. Here in New Jersey, we must come together to invest far more in equity and opportunity, specifically by creating policies that helps all New Jersey neighborhoods, supports black and brown-owned businesses, and addresses key issues such as healthcare, education, and housing."

"To produce this scorecard, HIT examined over 900 legislative bills introduced into the New Jersey State Legislature since 2020, focusing on NJBEC Action's policy pillar policy domains," stated **Lauren Goldstein, Research Director at HIT Strategies.** "Using objective metrics—vote history and bill sponsorships—we combed through the records and graded each legislator based on a cumulative numeric rating from these two factors, and then letter-graded each one on a curve with quintiles corresponding to A, B, C, D, and F."

In addition to the individual ratings of each Trenton elected official, some of the key findings of this year's report include:

- 3 out of 4 New Jersey bills that align with the policy pillars of the Scorecard never make it to a committee vote. Across the seven issue areas, HIT Strategies analyzed and focused on 997 pieces of legislation. Of these bills, 75% were introduced by a State Senate or State Assembly member and had no further legislative action. That means a majority of legislation that would increase equity and improve the lives of Black people in the state is not even making it to the initial stage of the legislative process. Several of these bills that never make it beyond the introduction phase are policies that could have transformational impacts on the lives of many Black New Jerseyans. For example, bill A5029 from the 2020/2021 session would have created a public option in health insurance. For another, bill S2617 from the same legislative session would have banned law enforcement officers from using chokeholds.
- New Jersey's Black legislators are leading the way in advocating for legislation that will benefit Black people. Several Black members of the legislature stand out as the biggest advocates for the Black community in New Jersey. Of the 20 legislators who did not score below a B across all issue areas, 9 of those 20 are Black, and another five are people of color. Two Black women, Assemblywoman Angela McKnight, and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, the only two legislators to score an A grade in every category. Some Black legislators were not as productive when sponsoring bills, showing that even among Black legislators, there is significant variation in the attention given to a racial justice agenda.

Voters can access New Jersey Equitable Opportunity Scorecard customized digital platform by going to <https://njbecan.org/>. Features include:

1. **Comprehensive Analysis:** The report card thoroughly evaluates lawmakers' voting records on key equitable opportunity issues, providing a holistic understanding of their commitment to promoting a fair and just society.
2. **Transparent Scoring System:** Each politician is assigned a letter grade on their voting patterns and bill sponsorship, allowing citizens to compare and contrast candidates objectively.
3. **User-Friendly Format:** The report card is designed to be easily accessible to the general public, presenting the information clearly and understandably, ensuring that everyone can engage with the content regardless of their level of political expertise.
4. **Non-Partisan Approach:** The Equitable Opportunity Scorecard is strictly non-partisan, ensuring assessments are conducted without bias or favoritism. The focus is solely on evaluating politicians' commitment to equitable opportunity, irrespective of their party affiliation.

### **About New Jersey Black Empowerment Coalition Action Network**

New Jersey Black Empowerment Coalition Action Network is a 501c4 nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for racial justice policies that cultivate equitable opportunity for advancement. Through research, education, and community engagement, we strive to create a society where everyone has equitable access to opportunities and resources to create generational wealth. For more information, please visit <https://njbecan.org/>.

### **About HIT Strategies**

As Washington's leading millennial and minority-owned public opinion research company, HIT Strategies helps leaders and organizations translate their target audiences' values into real-time insights. We understand America's fastest-growing electorate and consumer groups and specialize in targeting communities under-represented in public opinion data, including Black Americans, Latino Americans, Millennials + Genz, LGBTQ+, Women, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders. For more information, visit [hitstrat.com](http://hitstrat.com) and follow [@HITStrat](https://twitter.com/HITStrat) on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

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Contact: Matthew Frankel, MDF Strategies, (917) 617-7914. [Matthew@MDFStrategies.com](mailto:Matthew@MDFStrategies.com)