

Helen Butler Leads Black Women In Call For Legislative Action & Accountability At GA Capitol



Credit: Jeanean Lockett, Jus4LovePhotos

ATLANTA – Georgia Black Women’s Roundtable (GA BWR), a women’s initiative of the Georgia Coalition for the People’s Agenda (People’s Agenda), convened over 200 Black women from diverse organizations and communities at the Georgia Capitol for BLACK WOMEN U3: UNITED. UNAPOLOGETIC. UNSTOPPABLE, an event focused on leveraging their collective power to shape the legislative agenda and drive accountability from lawmakers. It began with a live broadcast of WAOK’s morning show, “The Wake Up with Dee,” followed by a press conference unveiling the Georgia Black Women’s Agenda, a report

addressing critical challenges facing Black families across Georgia, and concluding with a luncheon featuring a lively discussion.

Helen Butler, convener of GA BWR and executive director of the People's Agenda, notes that it's fitting that the women assembled during Atlanta's week-long celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth to send a message that Black women will stay laser-focused on justice and equity for Black families. Butler said, "Black women across Georgia are standing together, making it clear to legislators and stakeholders that we are united, unapologetic, and unstoppable. We intend to shape the policy agenda by raising the visibility of issues important to Black women, building political power, and driving accountability from lawmakers."

Host of "The Wake Up Call with Dee," Dr. Dee Dawkins-Haigler proclaims, "God has assembled us together at this state capitol for such a time as this. We are here on the very first day of session to let everyone know that Black women are concerned about things that are important to us." The former state representative adds, "Today you are on notice that Black women are here to stay. Our time is now."

GA BWR convened women in Macon in 2024 to create a comprehensive agenda for Black women, focusing on the issues most crucial to the Black community coupled with actionable solutions to drive meaningful change. After extensive planning sessions and surveys, the women crafted the GA Black Women's Agenda, outlining the key issues they are advocating for at the Georgia Capitol today.

Highlighting the alignment of these issues with the mission of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), Dr. A. Lois Keith, national chair of NCNW, stated, "We are pleased to be a part of this historic event to address things such as education, health and wellness, women's rights, and human trafficking."

Darlene McGhee Whittington, national president of Jack and Jill of America, Inc., added, "Jack and Jill of America is proud to stand in solidarity with our sisters."

The GA Black Women's Agenda prioritizes critical areas such as economic development, entrepreneurship, and education. The white paper calls for increased investment in education, particularly in underserved areas, to address Georgia's below-average student funding.

In public and mental health, systemic inequalities that disproportionately impact Black women, including alarming disparities in maternal mortality rates and reproductive rights, are emphasized. The agenda also raises concerns about Project 2025, which threatens economic stability, restricts access to essential services, and weakens healthcare and civil rights protections. Additionally, it warns of the exacerbation of environmental injustices due to the rollback of climate action, increasing pollution, and disproportionately harming Black communities.

Voting rights remain a crucial focus, with ongoing efforts to combat voter suppression and safeguard democratic participation. The agenda underscores the pivotal role of Black women in the electoral process and calls for stronger protections to ensure their voices are heard. With the inauguration of a new president approaching, Andrea Young, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, reminded the audience of the importance of elections, stating, "What we do matters. We've got to start working now to make sure our folks understand the consequences. Voting has consequences."

GA BWR is an initiative of the People's Agenda and the Georgia affiliate of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation's Black Women's Roundtable. In March 2025, the organization will take a Georgia delegation to the 14th Annual BWR National Conference in Washington, D.C., where they will

present the GA Black Women's Agenda to national representatives. The People's Agenda is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization focused on year-round voter registration, education, and mobilization in Black communities throughout Georgia.