

## Open Letter from Representative Carl Gilliard, Chairman of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus (GLBC)

Dear Members of the Democratic Party, Stakeholders, and the Citizens of Georgia,

In the last election cycles, Georgia's Black community turned out in record numbers to support Joe Biden, John Ossoff, and Raphael Warnock. Their faith in the democratic process, and the belief that their voices matter, propelled them to brave long lines, unpredictable weather, and mounting systemic barriers. Yet, today, there is no discernible benefit that African Americans have derived in our great state. The margin by which President Biden won Georgia was just over 10,000 votes, and Black voters, constituting 30% of the voting population, were pivotal. These voters, our voters, need something substantial to vote *for*, not just a boogeyman to vote *against*.

Georgia is unquestionably trending in the right direction, but the question arises: for whom? If our Black community does not witness discernible, measurable benefits from their unwavering support, the motivation to persevere against the increasing voting barriers will wane. We've fought tooth and nail in the past three election cycles, yet the dividends of our hard work and unmatched commitment remain to be seen.

True friends stand beside each other, helping one another to reap quantifiable benefits. Yet, our dear Black community, which has so staunchly supported the Democratic principles, finds itself on the cusp of disillusionment. Our traditional "friends" should remember this: relationships thrive on reciprocity. Disenchantment is inevitable when one pours in effort and receives little in return.

The Georgia Legislative Black Caucus is the largest in the United States. Our members represent districts instrumental in securing President Biden's victory in Georgia, a feat not achieved since 1992. Over three decades have passed since then. Surely, this alone speaks volumes of the commitment and belief of our Black community in the promise of a brighter, inclusive future. We have shown our allegiance. It's time we're recognized, not with words but with actionable plans and deliverables.

While we greatly respect President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, Beyonce, Jay-Z, Oprah, and LeBron James, we cannot solely rely on their charisma and star power come to every election. Their appeal, while effective, is transient. We are left to grapple with the aftermath, the unchanged conditions, once they depart. We value their support but demand more than the tokenism they inadvertently represent. We demand *substance*.

The Contract with Black Georgia is our attempt to ensure a substantive, measurable approach to progress. It's an embodiment of the aspirations and dreams of Black Georgians, demanding what's due, not as charity, but as the rightful compensation for years of dedication and hard work.

Georgia's future and identity are closely tied to its Black community. If we are to continue being a beacon of Democratic principles, we cannot afford complacency. The time to act is now, not at the eleventh hour before the next primary election. Our loyalty to the party demands genuine reciprocation. We need everyone, from local, state, and federal leaders to community stakeholders, to rally behind the Contract with Black Georgia.

We stand at a crossroads, poised to drive Georgia into a future of inclusivity and progress, or let the inertia of complacency drag us down. It's high time we rejuvenate our approach, breathe life into our strategies, and truly recognize the potential of Black Georgia. Token gestures no longer suffice; we need and deserve *real change*.

Sincerely,

Representative Carl Gilliard, Chairman of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus (GLBC)