

Maryland faces school bias

By Zenitha Prince
Special to Sentinel-Voice
BALTIMORE (NNPA) -

In a move that hails back to the education battles of the last century, a local coalition filed a lawsuit in Baltimore Circuit Court on Oct. 5, alleging the state of Maryland had not fulfilled its obligations under an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education to equitably fund and enhance historically Black colleges and universities with an eye to removing vestiges of legal segregation.

The Maryland Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Higher Education names Gov. Robert Ehrlich Jr. and Higher Education Secretary Calvin Burnett as two major defendants.

The suit was filed on the heels of a report sent to USDE's Office for Civil Rights by the Maryland Higher Education Commission, which claimed that the state had lived up to the terms of its desegregation commitment. The coalition said it tried contacting OCR to address the matter but was ignored.

"The coalition enthusiastically embraces this action to resolve the matter of the lack of parity and equity between Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or HBCUs, and traditionally White institutions and is resolved in making this a launching pad for a national discussion," said coalition President David Burton. "Previous actions to address this matter did not result in responsive action that satis-

fied our understanding of current law; therefore, a lawsuit is in order."

The suit is based on premises laid out in the Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Fordice*, the higher education equivalent of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The law prohibits states from duplicating programs already established in HBCUs at proximate traditionally White institutions and requires equitable funding of Black and White state schools among other requirements.

The intent of the law is to build up and raise HBCUs to a level playing field to draw White, Black and other students and complete the process of integration. Successful examples of that process are Howard University's School of Medicine and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore's hospitality management program.

Burton said MHEC's recent approval of two duplicative programs—the Towson State University/University of Baltimore master's of business administration program and the transformation of UB from a two-year to a four-year university—and chronic underfunding of the state's HBCUs fly in the face of that law and reflect a similar pattern nationwide.

"We believe this is an issue that is larger than the state of Maryland and underlies subtle and insidious action nationally to undermine the important role that HBCUs play in providing education

to minorities and others," he said.

Kenneth Johnson, a long-time civil rights lawyer and former Circuit Court judge and the attorney representing the coalition in this case, said this suit is necessary since Maryland and other states have never upheld *Fordice*.

"They have never fully complied with *Brown v. Board of Education*. Never, ever. And we colored folks have sat around and let them get away with it," he said.

Johnson, 69, said though somewhat retired, he felt compelled to take on this case because of its impact on HBCUs.

"I had to take this on because I'm a friend of HBCUs, and it's my goal to keep the doors open for young Blacks to get the education which has traditionally been denied them by White institutions," he said. "If it

had not been for an HBCU, I would still be pulling corn and baling hay in Mississippi."

When the case is assigned to a judge, the state will have 30 days to file a response. Johnson said they are pushing to have the case heard before the end of the year. He said he feels confident about the outcome of this case and that a win will send a ripple effect across the nation. The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is investigating a possible federal suit.

"The law and the facts are on our side. If they weren't, I would not file. Assuming we get a fair trial, and I expect we will, I think we will win. I intend to win," he said. "I think a victory in Maryland will bode well for victories across the country."

Zenitha Prince writes for *AFRO Newspapers*.

Officials challenge AIDS funding ruling

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Bush administration sought Tuesday to overturn a court decision that lets nonprofit AIDS groups apply for federal funding without signing a pledge opposing prostitution and sex trafficking. At least one of the groups, DKT International Inc., has refused to sign the pledge because it helps distribute condoms to prostitutes and other sex workers in Vietnam.

DKT last year sued the U.S. Agency for International Development, contending their free speech rights were violated by a 2003 law requiring that they explicitly oppose prostitution and sex trafficking to qualify for part of a \$15 billion AIDS program.

In May, U.S. District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan sided with DKT, saying the funding conditions insist that groups "parrot" the U.S. government's position on prostitution. But the Justice Department, in a recent appeal, called the funding condition "highly germane" to the overall goal of fighting the spread of AIDS and HIV.

"Congress could reasonably determine that the government's efforts to stamp out prostitution and sex trafficking would be most successful if HIV/AIDS services are provided by organizations that affirmatively oppose two underlying causes of the disease," the government said. The case now heads to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. A date for arguments has not yet been set.

Your Horoscope Says... Oct. 19-Oct. 25

ARIES

Stay adaptable, and all will be fine. Flexibility is easy for you when you want it to be. The situation you'll face this week will require that you alter your way of thinking about someone with whom you're involved in business or friendship.

Soul Affirmation: Facing down challenges makes me feel good about myself.

Lucky Numbers: 19, 29, 48

TAURUS

Modesty doesn't mean cowardly. It can mean gracious. Let a friend have the credit for something that you did. Be cool. It's good exercise. Tooting your own horn doesn't get you the biggest notice. The people you want to impress this week will be more impressed by your graciousness.

Soul Affirmation: I am willing to do more than my part to get the job done this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 12, 53

GEMINI

Give birth to some new impulses about love. The ones you've been using have led you to a place you do not wish to be. Give yourself a break. Change. Be less critical. Accept love even from those you do not completely agree with.

Soul Affirmation: I keep in mind the practical side of life this week.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 13, 24

CANCER

Be modest! Don't just be smug and cool about your greatness. This week get in touch with your limitations and acknowledge them. You're not doing it in order to fix anything. You're just enlarging your capacity for self-acceptance.

Soul Affirmation: I am a giver of good words this week.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 17, 22

LEO

This could turn out to be the most argument-filled week you've had for a while. Your feelings could be deeply hurt if you try to force your sense of rightness off on anyone else. Chill. Remember that in the past when people were cantankerous you could find pleasure in nature or animals.

Soul Affirmation: I put my charm to work for me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 39, 55

VIRGO

Your good will and intentions towards others will reap you an inheritance of abundance and wealth. You will be blessed with many good wishes and enjoy them in the company of family and friends.

Soul Affirmation: I appear to others what I know myself to be.

Lucky Numbers: 30, 32, 33

LIBRA

Your dignity and composure is a sure asset this week. Be Mr. or Ms. Cool Breeze. In touchy situations, you have the ability to maintain a high level of emotional balance and a calm disposition. Use these qualities to the fullest this week. You have the know-how to re-direct negative feelings into a positive solution.

Soul Affirmation: Superficiality is often the best route to clarity.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 28, 31

SCORPIO

Start this week to make a difference for tomorrow. You can determine the prosperity of your future by making difficult decisions in the present. Rearrange your priorities and decide what things are important to you. Make a list. Write them down and act on it now!

Soul Affirmation: As chances come around again, I take advantage of them.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 50, 54

SAGITTARIUS

You are often superb at exercising good judgment and rational decision-making. Yet sometimes you are rash. Flip to the observant side of your mentality this week. You will soon find yourself in a situation where there will be strife if you are not careful.

Soul Affirmation: A cheerful soul should be wrapped in a cheerful package.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 36, 44

CAPRICORN

Just to prove to yourself once again how lucky you are, you should fly in the face of bad predictions. Gamble this week in business, relationships, love — something. Remain truly confident that things will come out in a way that will satisfy you.

Soul Affirmation: Change is my middle name.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 28, 37

AQUARIUS

Move through your social environments and festive occasions this week without stopping, even for a little while to listen to rumors. Rumors are often untrue. And for goodness sake, believe only good things about friends and your lover.

Soul Affirmation: I keep my eyes open for business opportunities this week.

Lucky Numbers: 15, 30, 45

PISCES

Nothing stands in your way except yourself. How do you get yourself out of the way? One thing you can do is rid yourself of thoughts hanging over from the past. Realize that these thoughts are not really a part of you. They do not have to go everywhere you go. Move into universal love. They cannot follow you.

Soul Affirmation: I move my spirit to a place where trouble cannot follow.



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