



Herbert Henderson
Office *of* Minority Affairs

2025 **ANNUAL** **REPORT**

Presented to
Governor Patrick Morrisey

Prepared by
Jill Upson, MBA
Executive Director

Table of Contents

2	Table of Contents
3	Mission Statement
4	Message from the Executive Director
5	Sponsorships
6	2025 Highlights
10	Hope Scholarship Stats
11	Acknowledgments



Herbert Henderson
Office *of* Minority Affairs

Mission Statement

The Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs is committed to serving and assisting all underserved citizens across West Virginia and developing innovative ways to address issues affecting minority populations through conversation, education, leadership, and collaboration.

Executive Director
Jill Upson, MBA

Executive Assistant to the Director
Open

Part-Time Administrative Assistant
Open

This annual report is hereby submitted to the Governor of West Virginia, the Honorable Patrick J. Morrisey and the members of the Joint Select Committee on Minority Issues of the West Virginia Legislature. As part of the public domain, this report also serves the purpose of informing all agency stakeholders and interested members of the public of the activities and goals of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs.

This report is available in electronic format at:
<https://minorityaffairs.wv.gov>

Message from the Acting Executive Director



This year has been one of significant change and adaptation to new challenges and opportunities. Having served as your executive director since 2018, in July I became acting executive director. The annual budget allocation for the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs (HHOMA) was removed and strict constraints were placed on the use of existing agency reserves.

As the remaining part-time staff position ceased, the agency's efforts shifted to virtual outreach through a social media presence. Although HHOMA's public presence was limited due to operational and programmatic restrictions, the longstanding commitment to serving the people of West Virginia remained steadfast.

As circumstances continue to evolve, HHOMA is poised for growth and renewal in the coming year. I remain ready to reengage communities, resume in-person outreach, and advance the mission that I have carried out during my entire tenure.

Looking ahead, I am eagerly approaching the future with optimism, determination, and an unshakable commitment to serving West Virginia's most marginalized citizens. Thank you to all who have supported the work of the agency and have extended grace as new waters of change have been carefully navigated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill Upson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jill Upson, MBA
Acting Executive Director

Sponsorships

Per West Virginia State Code 5-26-1, HHOMA identifies and promotes best practices in the provision of programs and services to minorities. Occasionally, this will include providing sponsorships to community-based organizations when funds are available. The requests that were received and funded in 2025 include:

Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission

Annual MLK Day Ecumenical Service, Symbolic March, and Bell Ringing Ceremony

Multifest 34

Multi-Cultural Festival of West Virginia

West Virginia Foreign Language Teachers Association

West Virginia World Language Showcase

2025 Highlights

January 2025

MLK Ecumenical Service, Celebration of Unity Awards & Bell-Ringing Ceremony

HHOMA supported and promoted the 2025 MLK Ecumenical Service, Celebration of Unity Awards, and Bell-Ringing Ceremony.

For the Bell-Ringing, the MLK Commission partnered with members of the Divine Nine — historically Black fraternities and sororities who were featured prominently in this year’s ceremony, highlighting their historic role in service, leadership, and civil rights advocacy.



February 2025

Black History Month Recognition

HHOMA kicked off Black History Month with a commemorative video recorded at the Booker T. Washington monument located on the State Capitol grounds. Throughout the month, HHOMA shared educational content highlighting significant Black historical figures and events across its active social media platforms.

Public Engagement & Economic Policy

Executive Director Jill Upson served as a featured speaker at the Berkeley County Development Authority’s Boost Berkeley: Lunch and Learn event. Her presentation focused on the impact of public engagement in shaping economic policy and fostering widespread community development.

2025 Ecumenical Service
First Baptist Church
Sunday, January 12, 2025 – 3:00 pm

PRESIDER
Deputy Commissioner Jacqueline A. Proctor,
Bureau of Senior Services
Commissioner Martin Luther King Jr. State Holiday Commission



Praise and Worship	Atmosphere First Baptist Church Praise Team
Welcome	Commissioner Jacqueline Proctor
Call to Worship	Rev. Roberta Smith President, Black Ministerial Alliance
Invocation	Dr. Sue Barazi Vice President, Islamic Association of West Virginia
Congregational Hymn	"Lift Every Voice and Sing"
The Occasion	The Honorable Jill Upson, Executive Director Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs Chair, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission
Musical Selections	Martin Luther King Jr. Male Chorus
Presentation of Living Legacy Award Presentation of Living the Dream Awards	Mrs. Patricia Wilson Commissioner, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission Chair, Living the Dream Awards Committee
Musical Selections	Martin Luther King Jr. Male Chorus
Introduction of Keynote Speaker	Esteemed Guest (To Be Announced)
Presentation – STAND	Breaking Ground Dance Ministry First Baptist Church
Keynote Speaker	Reverend Paul Anthony Dunn, Pastor First Baptist Church, Charleston, WV
Hymn of the Movement 'Total Praise'	Martin Luther King Jr. Male Chorus
Benediction	Reverend Paul A. Dunn



12:00 p.m.	Lunch Served
12:30 p.m.	Greetings & Introduction The Honorable Jill Upson Chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission Executive Director, Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs
12:35 p.m.	Special Remarks Randall Reed Smith Cabinet Secretary West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture, and History
12:45 p.m.	Musical Selection Main Course Miss Black West Virginia USA Talented Ten See the Day (by Liz Rice)
12:50 p.m.	Presentation of Poster Awards Patricia Wilson Retired Chair of Education Department, West Virginia State University Commissioner, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission
1:05 p.m.	Presentation of Essay Awards Patricia Wilson
1:20 p.m.	Essay Readings
1:30 p.m.	Presentation of Film Awards Patricia Wilson
1:45 p.m.	Short Film Screenings
1:55 p.m.	Closing Remarks and Acknowledgements
2:00 p.m.	End of Ceremony



Women of Distinction Keynote

Executive Director Upson was also the keynote speaker at the Women of Distinction Luncheon held in Harrison County, where she addressed leadership, volunteerism, and community impact.

March 2025

Women's History Month

HHOMA honored Women's History Month with a special message from the Executive Director and highlighted impactful women throughout the month across HHOMA's social media platforms.

April 2025

WV World Language Showcase

HHOMA proudly served as a sponsor of the 2025 West Virginia World Language Showcase held at Fairmont State University, supporting cultural awareness, language education, and global engagement among students.



May 2025

Heritage & Appreciation Month Recognitions

HHOMA recognized and promoted:

- Jewish American Heritage Month
- Military Appreciation Month
- Asian American and Pacific Islander(AAPI) Heritage Month

These recognitions emphasized the importance of honoring heterogeneous histories, cultures, and contributions.



June 2025

Juneteenth Proclamation

HHOMA supported and shared the Juneteenth Proclamation, commemorating the end of slavery in the United States and reaffirming a commitment to education, reflection, and continued progress toward unity.

November 2025

Arts, Education & Youth Engagement Initiatives

HHOMA announced its annual Essay, Music, and Film Contests, encouraging creative expression and civic reflection among students and community members. Additionally, HHOMA promoted the annual Poster Contest, further engaging youth through visual storytelling.

ANNUAL PROJECT ON RACISM
ESSAY, MUSIC, & FILM CONTESTS

The contest accepts essays, music, and five-minute films!

ALL ENTRIES

NOV. 17 2025

BASED ON THE QUOTE

"FORGIVENESS IS NOT AN OCCASIONAL ACT; IT IS A CONSTANT ATTITUDE."

CONTEST ENTRY REQUIREMENTS: GO TO MINORITYAFFAIRS.WV.GOV

ANNUAL MLK STUDENT POSTER CONTEST

THE POSTER MUST FOCUS ON THIS QUOTATION BY DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR:

"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

Cash prizes will be awarded to first, second and third place winners.

All entries must be received by Friday, December 5, 2025

Living the Dream Awards

HHOMA issued a call for nominations for the annual Living the Dream Awards, recognizing individuals and organizations whose work exemplifies service, leadership, and commitment to equality and justice.



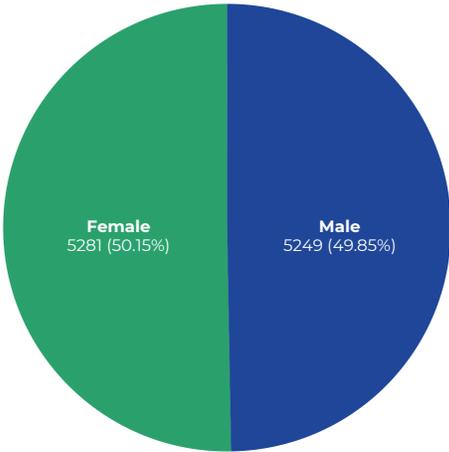
2024 - 2025 Hope Scholarship Stats

Acting Executive Director Upson continued her work as a member of the HOPE Scholarship board of directors. She has been a longtime advocate for equal access for all in education and improved student outcomes. The most recent data below shows how expanded school choice is impacting minority students in West Virginia.

Recipient Diversity

Every child deserves access to an educational path that fits their individual needs. The charts below break down the key demographic data for 2024-2025 Hope Scholarship recipients.

RECIPIENTS (by Gender)

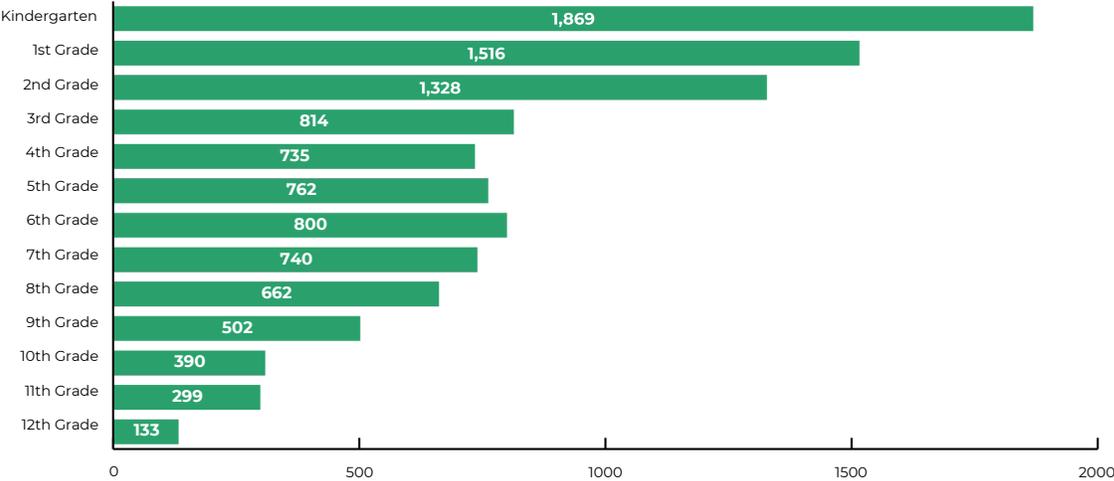


RECIPIENTS (by Ethnicity)

Ethnicity	# of Recipients	% of Recipients	% of WV Population*
Hispanic American	328	3.11%	2.20%
Indian or Alaska Native	31	0.29%	0.30%
Black or African American	488	4.63%	3.80%
Asian	169	1.60%	0.90%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	16	0.15%	< 0.50%
White	9,275	88.08%	92.80%
Race Not Provided / Unknown	223	2.12%	-
Total	10,530	100%	100%

Note: West Virginia general population racial breakdown according to 2023 U.S. Census estimates. U.S. Census population estimates include 2.1% of population as "Two or More Races" which is not factored into Hope Scholarship demographic data.

RECIPIENTS (by Grade)



Acknowledgments

Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission

Office of the Governor

West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services

West Virginia Department of Economic Development

West Virginia Department of Human Services

West Virginia Human Rights Commission

West Virginia Secretary of State's Office

West Virginia Small Business Administration

West Virginia Treasury

West Virginia Women's Commission

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