

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF BLACK LAWYERS  
REPORT TO THE MN STATE LEGISLATURE  
JANUARY 30, 2025



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January 31, 2025

Elizabeth Lincoln, Director  
Minnesota Legislative Reference Library  
645 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1050

Re: 2025 MABL Legislative Report

Dear Director Lincoln:

The Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers (MABL) submits MABL's Law School Pathways Program (Pathways Program) report (pursuant to 2023 Minnesota Law Chapter 53, Article 20, Section 2, Subdivision 3) to the Commissioner of the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and the Minnesota Legislature and its relevant legislative oversight committees.

**Overview**

MABL was founded as a Minnesota non-profit organization in September 1995 by Black lawyers who believed in the principles of the National Bar Association and wanted to establish a local chapter in Minnesota. MABL's mission is to:

- Promote and support the professional of Black lawyers, judges, and law students in Minnesota,
- Address legal issues affecting the Black community in Minnesota, and
- Advance education, excellence, and racial equity in the pursuit of justice.

Since its inception, MABL has made progress in achieving its mission as its membership ranks now include judges within the highest federal and state courts in Minnesota, leaders in the private and public legal departments, as well as leaders in the business, education, and non-profit sectors.

MABL hosts an annual fundraising Gala in part to support local Black law students in completing their legal education. MABL has recently seen a decline in the number of Black law students attending local law schools. MABL is interested in supporting more Black college students considering obtaining a legal degree.

MABL received a two-year annual \$350,000 appropriation to address underrepresentation of Black individuals in the legal profession. The legislative appropriation called for MABL to create a program for ten to twenty Black students attending a Minnesota postsecondary institution in which the students would:

- (1) receive an academic scholarship of \$4,000 per academic year,
- (2) attend events and programming about law school and legal careers, and

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(3) receive Law School Admission Testing (LSAT) preparation support.

**Implementation**

We launched our outreach efforts to local Minnesota postsecondary institutions in the spring of 2024. Applicants were asked to provide a writing sample and fill out an application identifying their past educational success, interest in obtaining a legal degree, and career aspirations. Consistent with the enabling legislation, we enrolled fourteen undergraduate students in the inaugural class of the Pathways Program.

The Pathways Program began on May 29, 2024, and had the following components:

- Classes to improve writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills,
- Overview and workshops regarding law school student experience,
- Trips to meet with members of Minnesota’s congressional delegation, the Minnesota Supreme Court, State Capitol, and local courthouses,
- Networking events for students to connect with legal professionals and learn about their careers using their legal degrees, and
- One-on-one mentoring with legal professionals to provide guidance and support.

We provided a summer stipend to each of the students to allow them to focus on the information, education, and experiences provided to them through the Pathways Program. Several, but not all, students also took advantage of the transportation, food, and housing assistance that MABL provided.

At the end of the ten-week program, we held a recognition event for the students to celebrate their completion of the program. The past and present MABL Presidents provided a certificate to each student. Students invited family members to the event. At the end of the program, students offered words of praise and a gift of appreciation to Petry. One student noted, “The financial support and mentoring I received through this program has been instrumental in my journey towards law school.”

All fourteen students who participated in the Pathways Program received a 4,000 academic scholarship from the MABL Pathways Program to pay their college tuition and educational expenses for the 2024-2025 academic school year. All students who participated in the Pathways Program enjoyed academic success during the fall semester.

Legal Professors, educators, and MABL members expressed great satisfaction in working with the Pathways students. At the end of the 2024 Calendar year, MABL had expended \$370,000 in implementing the Pathways Program. MABL believes the Pathways Program is well poised for long-term success.

All students who participated in the Pathways Program during the summer of 2024 and who are on schedule to finish their undergraduate degree in 2025, were offered the opportunity to participate in

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the inaugural Pathways Program LSAT Cohort (LSAT Cohort). Nine students accepted the opportunity to participate in MABL's LSAT Cohort<sup>1</sup>.

Students participating in the LSAT Cohort will receive: (1) funding for LSAT classes and LSAT test preparation materials, (2) LSAT tutoring (3) funding the LSAT exam, (4) LSAT exam support from MABL members, and (5) costs associated with submitting LSAT scores to law schools. Students will be able to sit for the LSAT exam beginning in the spring of 2025. MABL anticipates that it will expend approximately \$260,000 for the LSAT Cohort portion of the Pathways Program in 2025.

MABL has sufficient remaining funds to successfully conduct the 2025 Pathways Program. MABL has already begun its marketing effort for the 2025 Pathways Program. We anticipate that we will easily be able to secure between twelve and twenty students given the interest we have received from our post-secondary partners.

Based on the feedback we received from our students, MABL will modify the 2025 Pathways Program to expand the number of mentoring sessions for students, expand the variety and number of support services available to students, and provide more time in between field trips and networking events.

**Conclusion**

MABL is excited about the progress that has been made with the Pathways Program and its possible expansion in the future. We extend our gratitude to all mentors, educators, lawyers, judges, and supporters who contributed to the success of the Pathways Program.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Aisha Richardson*

Aisha Richardson  
MABL Law School Pathways  
Program Administrator

*/s/ Rick Petry*

Rick Petry  
MABL Law School Pathways  
Program Director

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<sup>1</sup> The five remaining students in the inaugural class were not eligible to participate in the LSAT Cohort as they were not scheduled to finish their undergraduate degree until 2026.