



Sam Ashby, managing principal for Speed of Thought Consulting, LLC, brings his voice and experience to a grass roots initiative for black males in Portland to address education, employment, family stability and criminal justice.

inhibits employment opportunities," he said.

The Black Male Achievement Initiative will use a data-driven approach to highlight disparities and hold systems and leaders accountable for ensuring black men and boys have sufficient access and opportunity to the factors that lead to good health, safety and success.

The mayor's office has committed \$150,000 of funding to boost additional monies that were already set aside to fund summer youth employment. Additionally, there will be on-going discussions with philanthropic organizations for financial support to sustain the program.

My Brother's Keeper

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Initiative by the National League of Cities is designed to address education, employment, family stability, and criminal justice.

The Portland effort will include the participation of men of color from 20 local organizations who will act as conveners, facilitators, policy guides, and collective voices to exert influence and push for change for the better treatment of males from Portland's African-American community.

Mayor Charlie Hales took a lead in the project which will be carried out through the city Office of Equity and Human Rights. He joined supporters to explain the details of the initiative during a Jan. 26 press conference at Self Enhancement Academy, the public charter school serving the black community on North Kerby Avenue.

"I believe that it is possible to move from disparity to possibility, and that's what the Black Male Achievement Initiative is about," Hales said, "I do believe that with support from the community, support from elected officials, like those who are here today, and with community leadership, that it is truly possible."

A two-year process of community engagement and visioning was undertaken to gain feedback, clarity, and direction for the work planned by the initiative. Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith attended the announcement ceremony and has pledged her office's support for jobs and mentoring.

Dante James, director at the Office of Equity and Human Rights, said black males face unique and persistent systemic barriers that demand a focused, holistic response.

"Those barriers have created outcomes that are unacceptable, outcomes that are keeping families in poverty, maintaining an educational atmosphere that does not allow for success, promotes the continuation of the school to prison pipeline, and

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