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BODY:

A state commission that has spent three years studying the social and educational problems of young black males proposed a wide-ranging set of solutions today, from offering more drug treatment to eliminating standardized testing in public schools.

The 123-page report, released by the Governor's Commission on Black Males, urges a broad effort by the state, businesses and volunteers to reduce disproportionately high rates of unemployment, arrest, imprisonment, AIDS infection and school failure among young black men.

Both Gov. William Donald Schaefer and commission Chairman Elijah E. Cummings, a Democratic state delegate from Baltimore, acknowledged that some of the report's recommendations may face opposition, particularly those that call for financial commitments from state government. The report contains no cost estimates for its recommendations.

"Implementation's going to be very difficult," Schaefer said at a news conference.

But Cummings added, "This report is the beginning of change." He noted that the report urges that many costs be borne by the private sector rather than the state.

Several General Assembly leaders, saying they have not seen the report, said the recommendations likely will be received sympathetically, but items costing money will have trouble getting approval.

The commission's report speaks largely in generalities about the need to reverse the "erosion of [black male] self-esteem" and the "attitude of despair" caused by blacks' "exclusion from the larger society."

Among other things, it urges equal government expenditures on drug treatment and drug enforcement, emphasizing "treatment of the root causes of the substance abuse problem and resulting capture and confinement of drug offenders."

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Cummings said the commission had no figures on current state funding of drug treatment compared with drug enforcement, but he said most of the money goes to enforcement.

The commission's report also recommends that the state develop a way to restructure public education to better serve black males. Such a restructuring might include abolishing standardized testing that the report says discriminates against students from low-income families, especially blacks.

In addition, the report calls for: Expanding numerous state-run programs to improve health treatment and medical insurance for young blacks.

Emphasizing male role models and African American cultural pride.

Tapping the black business sector for resources in training young black men.

Expanding the state's paramilitary prison boot camp for young offenders.

In voicing general support for the report, several legislative leaders cautioned that money for new or expanded programs is scarce.

"We have a task force going on education funding," said Sen. Laurence Levitan (D-Montgomery), chairman of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, "and I think the conclusion is going to be that dollars don't solve [all] the problems."

Del. Joseph F. Vallario Jr. (D-Prince George's), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said the proposal to put equal emphasis on the root causes of drug abuse and law enforcement sounds good but may be unrealistic.

"We only have so many dollars to spend," he said, "and law enforcement and education are the keys at this point."

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, GOV. WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER.

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