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Democrats Have Strong Response to Ivey's State of State Address

Montgomery, AL- Following Alabama Governor Kay Ivey's annual State of the State Address to the Alabama Legislature, Rep. Jeremy Gray D- Opelika, delivered a strong response, highlighting key Democratic legislative priorities and offering a glimmer of hope for bipartisanship when possible.

Gray's speech identified how Alabama's COVID-19 response exposed and exacerbated foundational weaknesses in the state's healthcare system plagued by multiple hospital closures, lacking in adequate mental health resources, and suffering financially due to the Republicans' stubborn, partisan refusal to expand Medicaid.

The address expressed the urgency for educational reforms including, needs-based funding for struggling schools, universal access to broadband/ high-speed internet, and addressing school performance gaps. Gray said, "Finally, facing a poverty gap, an achievement gap, and a digital divide, we must remember that we are all still one. We are an Alabama and we're an America where every child deserves the opportunity to be taught to their highest potential."

Democrats are seeking to bolster Alabama's economy by significantly reducing the Unemployment Tax and putting more money into the Unemployment Trust Fund. "We support the Growing Alabama Tax Credit and the Alabama Jobs Act to drive economic development and stimulate job creation and growth.", Gray said on behalf of Democratic legislators.

Gray raised concerns over the Republican approach to solving the state's prison problems, "We cannot build our way out of the systemic failures of our criminal justice system – failures that have led to federal lawsuits and civil rights violations. Our prison system is broken because we have not or will not adequately address the underlying and complex issues at play..."

After listing key policy proposals, Gray concluded by remarking, "The fact is the virus itself is not solely to blame for the vast, widespread, diverse, and significant series of challenges currently facing Alabama. The pandemic may not have brought them about, but it made them significantly worse. Failures in healthcare, education, support for our economy, and our criminal justice system made this crisis longer, deeper, more dangerous, and more deadly."

Gray's address ended on an aspirational note, "And so today, I call on the governor, my fellow legislators, and all Alabamians to not let this pandemic define us. But rather to learn from it. To change. To unite. And to do what it takes to conquer the coronavirus, so that all of Alabama can emerge from this crisis stronger, wiser, healthier, and more resilient for generations to come."

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