



Gilbert T. Bland is a business and civic leader. Mr. Bland began his career as a commercial lending officer for the Continental Bank of Chicago and served as a Vice-President for the Independence Bank of Chicago. Mr. Bland was an owner/operator of restaurants for over 30 years, as a franchisee of Burger King, Pizza Hut, and Mrs. Fields Cookies. In this capacity, he owned, constructed, and operated over 70 restaurants in Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC., and employed over 2000 team members annually. Bland is the President/CEO of the Urban League of Hampton Roads (ULHR).

Mr. Bland has been active in business and civic activities on a regional, statewide, and national level. On a national level, Mr. Bland served on the Board of the National Franchise Association and was elected as national President of the Burger King (BK) Minority Franchise Association for five 2-year terms representing Black franchisees across the nation and the Caribbean. Bland was a charter member of the BK Inclusion Council which represented Black, Latino, and Asian franchisees. Bland is a member of the National Community Advisory Board for Truist Bank. Also, his national service includes the Center for Excellence in Education. CEE is a global organization operating one of the premier STEM programs for youth in the world. In the healthcare field, Mr. Bland is a founding member and Treasurer of the BDHEA (Black Directors Health Equity Agenda). Mr. Bland also serves on the Board of Sentara Health (10 years). Bland is a board member of NCRC (National Community Reinvestment Coalition).

Mr. Bland's statewide service included the Small Business Finance Authority, Board of Visitors for Old Dominion University, James Madison University Foundation (12 years), and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, (twice elected Chairman). Presently, Bland serves on the Board of Randolph Macon College, Norfolk State University, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA), Executive Committee of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and Virginia Learns. Bland has served as Treasurer of Elevate Early Education (E3), a statewide advocacy group to advance early education initiatives, and is on the Community Advisory Board for Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind (CVOW).

Mr. Bland was the catalyst in the formation and served as the inaugural Chairman of a statewide board established in 2019 by the Virginia General Assembly—Virginia African American Advisory Board (VAAAB).

Regionally, Bland has served on the boards of the Hampton Roads Community Foundation (9 years), Food Bank of Hampton Roads, President and Chairman of



Healthy Neighborhood Enterprises CDC; South Hampton Roads YMCA, and the Tidewater Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Mr. Bland is the recipient of numerous awards and community recognition for volunteerism, contributions, and leadership.

Mr. Bland has received an honorary Doctorate from Longwood University. In November 2022, Mr. Bland received the Darden Civic Award for distinguished civic service. In 2021, Mr. Bland was inducted into the Hampton Roads Business Hall of Fame. Also, in 2021, Mr. Bland was recognized by Volunteer Hampton Roads to receive the region's Lifetime Achievement Award for Volunteerism. In 2020, Mr. Bland was named to the inaugural selection of the Virginia 500, the 2020 Power List. Burger King Corporation has recognized Mr. Bland with the James McLamore Founder's Award for outstanding contributions as a franchisee and endowed a scholarship in his name at James Madison University (JMU). Bland is a recipient of the Outstanding Alumnus award for the School of Business for JMU. The Senate of Virginia has commended Mr. Bland for his civic work.

For the past ten years, including 2023, Mr. Bland has been chosen by Virginia Business Magazine as one of the 50 Most Influential Virginians.

In January 2023, Mr. Bland was chosen in the inaugural class for the Virginia Business Black Leaders Hall of Fame. Mr. Bland is married (Joyce) and they are the proud parents of 5 children.