



PRESS RELEASE
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**Arkansas Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Announces Study:
*Civil Rights and the Right to Counsel in Arkansas***

**** EVENT REGISTRATAION: <https://shorturl.at/ioyJX> ****

The Arkansas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is conducting a study to examine the right to counsel as provided through the state system of public defenders in Arkansas. In this ongoing study, the Committee will consider public investment and funding available to support the right to counsel for those who cannot afford it and the impact the availability of such counsel may have on persistent disparities throughout the criminal justice system based on race, color, sex, disability, and national origin. The Committee will examine the extent to which specific state or local policies may contribute to identified challenges, as well as alternative practices or recommendations with the demonstrated potential to address such concerns.

The Committee will hear testimony through a series of public briefings, as follows:

Panel I: Monday March 11, 2024 from 11:00 am-1:00pm CT

Panel II: Tuesday March 12, 2024 from 11:00 am-1:00pm CT

Panel III: Friday March 15, 2024 from 11:00 am-1:00pm CT

Registration is available at: <https://shorturl.at/ioyJX>.

All meetings are free and open to the public. Members of the public will be invited to speak during an open-comment period near the end of each meeting. The Committee also invites written testimony from all who wish to contribute. All written testimony must be submitted to the Committee by **Wednesday May 1, 2024**, via email at mwojnaroski@usccr.gov.

Closed captions will be provided. Individuals requiring other accommodations should contact the regional program unit at (202) 618-4158 five business days prior to the meeting to make their request. Committee Chair Robert Steinbuch said, "*The right to effective counsel is central to the promise of equal protection of the laws, including the right of all accused to face a fair and speedy trial. The Committee hopes that through this study, we will be able to be able to make recommendations that will strengthen these rights for all Arkansans.*"

The Committee will issue its findings and recommendations in a report to the Commission after all testimony has been received, anticipated Fall 2024.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information about the Commission, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).