



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Advisory Memorandum on Racial Disparities in Policing**

On June 1, 2021, the Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Committee) issued an [Advisory Memorandum](#) on police practices in the state, and its impact on individuals and communities of color. The Memorandum was issued after a series of public hearings and with testimony provided by researchers, law enforcement officials, community advocates, and government officials.

Incidents of police deadly use of force witnessed in the summer of 2020 and the subsequent protests raised fundamental questions for the Committee not only about the prevalence of police use of force in communities of color throughout the state, but also the broader issue of the way law enforcement interacts with such communities. The Committee sought to examine whether such law enforcement conduct, along with the practices and procedures that guide it, disproportionately impact communities of color throughout the state.

The Committee releases this advisory memorandum to commemorate the one-hundred-year anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre. The memorandum captures how this historic event still impacts Oklahoma. The Tulsa Race Massacre is one notable example of the influence of history on the relationship between police and community today. Other key findings include:

- There is a current state of distrust and resentment between many police departments and the Black community, and a perception exists that aggressive and intimidating police practices target minority populations.
- Police fill many roles that are not traditionally meant to be performed by police, including providing mental health services, responding to homelessness, addiction and substance abuse treatment, immigration enforcement, and collecting court fines and fees.
- There are known racial disparities in police interactions in Oklahoma, including arrest rates, incarceration, use of force, and stops and searches. Some of these disparities seem to be growing.

Considering these findings, the Committee agreed unanimously to make recommendations to a variety of stakeholders from the local to federal level on how to improve police practices and strengthen community trust of law enforcement. Some of the recommendations include

implementing a statewide registry to track officers with a history of discrimination, allocating more funding for mental health care providers that work with police departments, and establishing meaningful community oversight to independently monitor police misconduct complaints.

Committee Chair Vicki Limas stated, “I thank the Oklahoma Advisory Committee and staff of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights for their tireless work on this timely and critical project. I also thank all who provided testimony to educate and assist the Committee in understanding the various issues and perspectives. The Committee hopes that its recommendations will help foster more trusting relationships between law enforcement agencies and communities of color in Oklahoma.”

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing an annual federal civil rights enforcement report. The Commission, by Congressional mandate, establishes Advisory Committees in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Committee members conduct reviews and produce reports and recommendations concerning local civil rights issues, including justice, voting, discrimination, housing, education, and other important themes. For information about the Commission and our Advisory Committees, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).