

U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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COMMISSION ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF
BLACK MEN AND BOYS

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BUSINESS MEETING

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 2022

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The Commission convened via video teleconference at 1:00 p.m.
EST, Frederica Wilson, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT:

- FREDERICA WILSON, Chair
- JOYCE BEATTY, Commissioner
- JAMAAL BOWMAN, Commissioner
- JACK BREWER, Commissioner
- RICHARD CESAR, Commissioner
- KRISTEN CLARKE, Commissioner
- THOMAS M. COLCLOUGH, Commissioner
- MARSHALL DILLARD, Commissioner
- GERALD FOSTEN, Commissioner
- HAKEEM JEFFRIES, Commissioner
- JOSEPH E. MARSHALL, JR., Commissioner
- LUCY MCBATH, Commissioner

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LASHAWN MCIVER, Commissioner

O.J. OLEKA, Commissioner

CALVIN RICHARDSON, Commissioner

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STAFF PRESENT:

MONICA COOPER, Support Services Specialist

DAVID GANZ, ESQ., Attorney

MAURO MORALES, Staff Director

MARVIN WILLIAMS, Ph.D., Program Director

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1:05 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR WILSON: The meeting will now come to order. This is the administrative public meeting of the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys. It is 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, January 14, 2022. I want to extend a happy new year and sincere welcome to the Commissioners, to the Commission staff, and to our public audience.

I want to welcome you back to the platform. I had a wonderful opportunity at the last meeting to meet all of you and to hear from all of you and to listen to the wonderful contributions that you hope to make in this space. It was wonderful. And some of you have had some of the most heartfelt wonderful stories to tell and experiences. And so we're going to remain vigilant in combatting education, justice, and civil rights, health care, labor and employment, housing, and all of the other issues that stagnanate, and in the worst cases kill our Black men and boys.

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I don't know whether I had the opportunity to tell you, but I'm Frederica Wilson. I'm the Commissioner, your chair of this Commission. And when I was a school principal I had a school that was one-third African American, one-third Hispanic, and one-third Anglo. And for some reason with all of the children I had in my school my little Black boys were just like out of control. So I would go to school early every morning to meet them at the door to give them a hug hoping that they would behave all day long. But they wouldn't.

So I would meet with them every Wednesday and talk to them and try to find out -- so why you fighting? Why do you don't listen to the teachers? Why are you talking back? What is the matter with you? And they really didn't know themselves. So I began to do home visits and I began to find out that they did not have not one adult male in their space. Not a grandpa, not a daddy, no one to help them. So I began to call in men to my school to help move them forward. And they changed. They changed right before my eyes. So I was making good progress.

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And then ***** and ***** graduated and they went on to American Senior High School. So every day I would stay in my school very late. All the high school students would come back and they would tell me all the different things that was going on. Lo and behold, ***** killed, shot -- ***** shot *****. And when he shot him, I said that's it. I was 48 years old, school principal, making \$75,000 a year. I quit my job and ran for the school board with the express purpose of interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline.

The program is 30 years old -- was 30 years old in November. I'm almost 80 years old and I am determined for this nation to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline because I personally know that every African American family has some brother, cousin, daddy, grandfather, father, nephew, uncle who is embroiled in some kind of way in the criminal justice system. And we should be able to prevent this. So I'm all about prevention.

I have two cousins who are in and out of prison. They're in and out of prison and I -- their mother kept it a secret from me so long I didn't know until they were in prison. But I think that if I had known, I would have stopped them from even going to prison.

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So we've got to think about our own families, our own universe, our church children, our neighbors, and our -- especially our family members in preventing them from broaching the criminal justice system first and then we're going to think about this for the whole universe of Black America because it's everywhere. And everywhere I go and speak I challenge people in the audience to come and see me after this event and let me know that you do not have anyone in your family embroiled in this debacle. And I never get a soul to come.

So this Commission is not built on politics. This is a bipartisan Commission. It's built on humanity, empathy, unification, dedication, persistence, but most importantly the desire for change. So we must create stronger communities and a healthier society for everyone which includes Black men and boys. Today we can incorporate and strengthen our expertise to make this what we're going to call the year of Black men and boys.

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Every time I was elected, when I was elected to the school board, they say oh, you won because it's the year of the woman. I was elected to the Florida House of Representatives. They say oh, you won because it's the year of the woman. I was elected to the Florida Senate. They say oh, you won because it's the year of the woman. When I was elected to Congress, everybody said oh, you won because it's the year of the woman. So I have so many years of the woman and I am so proud of that. And we're going to declare that 2022 is the year of the Black man -- of Black men and boys. So we'll be talking more about that.

I'm going to now ask Mr. Mauro Morales to bring greetings to our Commission. He's the staff director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Mr. Mauro, welcome. How are you, my friend? And happy new year.

II. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL,

MR. MORALES: Same to you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words of welcome. I just want to congratulate you on the tremendous job you're doing and the work you're doing and all the staff is doing. We're trying to stand up and crawl to get this Commission running, so thank you for all that.

I just want to wish you and everybody a good afternoon. I wish all the Commissioners, the Commission on Social Status of Black Men and Boys, the staff, and the public when they get to see this live stream and they get to see it when we are able to post it.

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I am Mauro Morales, the Commission of Civil Rights Staff Director. I'm honored that we are able to house the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys within the structure of the Commission and we serve the administrative functions for it. We look forward to continuing to support the endeavors and priorities of the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys. And with that I thank you and I'll turn the meeting back over to you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR WILSON: Thank you. Thank you so much.

And now, Dr. Williams, will you call the roll so we can establish a quorum?

DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Madam Chair.

Per the statute, a majority of the members of the Commission, that is 10 members, constitute a quorum. To establish a quorum each member's name will be called. Please note your presence by saying "here."

Representative Joyce Beatty?

COMMISSIONER BEATTY: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Representative Frederica S. Wilson?

CHAIR WILSON: Yes.

DR. WILLIAMS: Representative Hakeem Jeffries?

COMMISSIONER JEFFRIES: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Representative Lucy McBath?

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COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Representative Steve Horsford said that he is out sick today, so I know he will not be on the call.

DR. WILLIAMS: Representative Jamaal Bowman?

COMMISSIONER BOWMAN: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Jack Brewer?

COMMISSIONER BREWER: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Elder said he had a conflict today; he will not be at the meeting.

Commissioner Joseph Marshall?

COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: Present.

DR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Al Sharpton, Reverend Al Sharpton?

CHAIR WILSON: He will be late. Reverend Al Sharpton is tuning in late.

DR. WILLIAMS: Okay, ma'am.

Commissioner O.J. Oleka?

COMMISSIONER OLEKA: I am here. I'll have to leave early at 2:00 p.m.

DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Noted, sir.

Commissioner Marshall Dillard?

COMMISSIONER DILLARD: Here.

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DR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Kristen Clarke?

COMMISSIONER CLARKE: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Calvin Johnson?

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner LaShawn McIver?

COMMISSIONER McIver: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Great. Thank you, ma'am. I know you were calling in. Thank you, ma'am.

Commissioner Christian Rhodes said that he would not be able to attend because of an urgent matter.

Commissioner Richard Cesar?

COMMISSIONER CESAR: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Thomas M. Colclough?

COMMISSIONER COLCLOUGH: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Gerald Fosten?

COMMISSIONER FOSTEN: Here.

DR. WILLIAMS: Fantastic. Thank you, everyone.

Ma'am, for the record please note that a quorum of the Commissioners is present, and I will turn it back over to you, ma'am.

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CHAIR WILSON: Thank you. Thank you so much.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 9, 2021 INAUGURAL MEETINGS AND
APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

CHAIR WILSON: Each of you received a copy of the inaugural meeting minutes by way of email. Are there any corrections to the minutes as distributed?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR WILSON: If there are no corrections, we will approve the minutes as so distributed.

CHAIR WILSON: The next order of business will be -- well, we have Mr. Sharpton. We'll move on.

We have a motion -- I need a motion to approve the agenda. Will someone approve the agenda?

COMMISSIONER OLEKA: So moved.

COMMISSIONER BEATTY: I move. So moved. Or second.

CHAIR WILSON: Okay. So it's been approved by Commissioner Oleka and seconded by our Chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Ms. Beatty. Without objection, this agenda for the meeting is adopted.

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ct establishing our Commission requires that we meet quarterly, at least four times a year. In addition to the required meetings we have been given the task of completing an extensive and comprehensive annual report that will include recommendations to address current conditions affecting Black men and boys. You have been provided potential dates for the next three meetings from the program manager for consideration. I'm now opening the floor for a motion to adopt the proposed dates and for discussion.

IV. BUSINESS MEETING

A. DISCUSSION ON A CALENDAR FOR COMMISSION MEETINGS FOR FY 2022

CHAIR WILSON: January 14th, which is today. That will not count as one of our meetings, so we will begin with April 22nd, 2022; July 8th, 2022; November 4th, 2022. And we will notify you of a new date when we roll out the official beginning of the Commission. Once COVID relaxes itself we will have an official roll-out in Washington, D.C. with all of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Commission, and our Civil Rights partners.

So right now we are voting on April 22nd, July 8th, and November 4th, 2022. I need a motion to accept those dates.

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COMMISSIONER MCBATH: I move to accept the dates for the quarterly meetings for the Commission.

COMMISSIONER DILLARD: And I second.

CHAIR WILSON: Moved and seconded. Moved by Commissioner McBath and seconded by Commissioner Dillard.

COMMISSIONER DILLARD: Yes.

CHAIR WILSON: So those dates we will submit to the staff for us to work towards.

B. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON CREATION OF SUBCOMMITTEE TO WRITE FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

CHAIR WILSON: Given that the tentative dates for the Commission's statutorily required meetings have been determined, we will now discuss the importance of subcommittee areas.

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I have moved for -- and just from my knowledge of what we should do as far as keeping this Commission moving, because four meetings is not enough. So I have divided you into committees. And you will meet with those -- the people on your committees. We're hoping you will begin to meet once we staff up to where we should be and we're going to be looking at -- we're going to need Mr. Jeffries' help in this for sure, and also Ms. Clarke for sure. Commissioner Jeffries and Commissioner Clarke for sure because we want to use the judiciary space for our hearings.

So each of these committees we're hoping will have a hearing so that we can use that particular space. And these hearings will include witnesses that the committees will come up with and we will have our staff staffing these, and also members of the Congressional Black Caucus will be invited to testify and to serve on these committee hearings.

For Education we have Rhodes, Oleka, Marshall, Bowman, and Dillard. We're going to ask Rhodes to chair and Oleka to chair that particular meeting. Mr. Marshall, Bowman, Dillard, Oleka, and Rhodes. So I'm hoping that you all will set up a group text. Mr. Bowman, I'm going to charge you with that, setting up a group text so that you can keep in touch with these Education Committee members and plan a hearing so that we can work towards helping our youth. It has to do with school performance and retention, mentorship, disparate treatment and discipline, the gap between college graduates and employment and pay. So that's what you will be focused on.

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And then the next one is criminal justice and civil rights. So we have Clarke, Jeffries, Sharpton, McBath, and Foster. So Mr. Clarke, Commissioner Clarke and Jeffries, I want to task you with setting up a group text so that you can keep up because we will -- when we deal with criminal justice and civil rights, we're going to be talking about violence, drug abuse, arrest and incarceration rates, homicide rates, police reform, and sentencing disparities. This is the subcommittee that I'm hoping will take us on a field trip to a federal prison and a juvenile detention center.

I'm just doing this off the top of my head. If you would like to participate on one of these committees that you have not been assigned, please feel free to do so.

Then we have Healthcare and Housing. McIver, Johnson, Beatty, and Brewer. This has to do with drug abuse, health, life expectancy, death rates, fatherhood, housing, household structure, and COVID-19 effects.

Ms. Beatty, I don't want to put nothing on you because you got your hands full, so -- but I want you participating on this.

And we're going to ask McIver and Johnson to co-chair this committee for sure.

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And then we have Labor and Employment. We have Horsford, Elder, and Colclough as members, and Cesar. This has to do with disparate income, wealth, upward mobility, workforce participation, and financial literacy.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER OLEKA: Yes, Madam Chair, I've got a quick question.

CHAIR WILSON: Who is it? Who is that speaking?

COMMISSIONER OLEKA: This is Commissioner Oleka.

CHAIR WILSON: Oleka? Okay.

COMMISSIONER OLEKA: Just for clarification, you have put me on the Education Committee. I'm very happy to serve. I want to make sure that I got my position right. I think I'm a co-chair with Representative Bowman. Is that correct, or is it just him as chairman?

CHAIR WILSON: No, you are a co-chair with him. Commissioner. You can say representative now. You have to say --

COMMISSIONER OLEKA: Yes, ma'am. Commissioner. That's right. You charged us. We are all Commissioners. Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

CHAIR WILSON: Okay. And --

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COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: Commissioner Wilson, may I ask a question?

CHAIR WILSON: Who is that asking?

COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: Commissioner Marshall. Thank you for (telephonic interference). I have a question: Is there a chance to serve or at least be part of more than one committee? Aside from being an educator I was on the Police Commission out here for 14 years, so I'm very interested in police reform and also working with young people in the institutions. I'll defer to you. Just tell me if that's possible.

CHAIR WILSON: So, yes, Commissioner Marshall, we would love to have you serve on more than one committee. So that would be the Criminal Justice and Civil Rights. So we'll put Dr. Joseph Marshall -- Commissioner Marshall on that committee also.

COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: Thank you.

CHAIR WILSON: Yes.

Okay. Any other questions or concerns?

COMMISSIONER BREWER: Madam Chair, this is Jack Brewer.

CHAIR WILSON: Yes?

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COMMISSIONER BREWER: I just wanted to offer my services particularly when it comes to criminal justice. I don't need to be on the actual committee, but I do oversee the human rights in dozens of prisons across the country, so I'm more than happy to offer my expertise, support, or help in anything that you're doing in that regard.

CHAIR WILSON: Thank you. And these committees won't operate in a silo. They're going to operate as a whole. They'll plan the hearing, but all of us will participate in the hearing. And if we have suggestions or people that we want to refer to them to serve as witnesses -- and normally in our hearings we have five-minute presentations and five minutes for questions.

These are going to be three minutes because we want to get as many people there -- we want to have some -- a young man from a juvenile detention center to speak to us, a young man from a high school to speak to us, we want to have someone who has served time in prison to speak to us. I know many who will speak to us.

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We're going to talk about -- have police reform, people who have -- and we -- of course the civil rights community will be helping us with those. I have formed an ad hoc committee with Reverend Sharpton and Commissioner Beatty. And I will be chairing that. She's busy right now, but I'll let her know.

Okay. All of us will be moving in the same space. And so Labor is -- Cesar and Horsford are the co-chairs. Did you all get that?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR WILSON: Okay. So we won't need -- I'm not expecting you to do all of this now because we have not staffed up. And you're going to need staff to help you with this, but we're in the process of hiring. And once we're staffed up, we'll send out a notice. Then you can begin having your committee meetings.

And right now we're going to -- I'm going to ask for the -- I think I approved -- had you to approve the minutes as they were -- yes, Mr. Oleka approved the minutes.

COMMISSIONER DILLARD: Chairperson Wilson, this is Marshall Dillard.

CHAIR WILSON: Yes?

COMMISSIONER DILLARD: Can I have the list of names again for those who are on the Committee for Education there?

CHAIR WILSON: Okay. For Education -- let me find Education.

DR. WILLIAMS: I have that for you, ma'am.

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CHAIR WILSON: Okay. Who is Education?

DR. WILLIAMS: Ma'am, it's Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Oleka, Commissioner Marshall, Commissioner Bowman, and Commissioner Dillard.

CHAIR WILSON: So you're on Education.

COMMISSIONER DILLARD: Thank you.

CHAIR WILSON: Would you like to be on something else, too?

COMMISSIONER DILLARD: Well, if you'd like to put me on something else, I wouldn't mind, but that's fine.

CHAIR WILSON: It's up to you. After reading your bio and everything, I think education is a good fit, however --

COMMISSIONER DILLARD: Yes. Yes, I agree.

CHAIR WILSON: -- (telephonic interference) you want to stir the pot, you can.

Okay. We will now turn the meeting over to the Program Manager for the Program Manager's Report.

C. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT

DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

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I just want to offer a few words or comments in my report as I manage the day-to-day activity of the Commission. So again I want to say good afternoon.

There are three items I want to highlight and bring to your attention: One is staffing; two is general support; and three, the current studies and research on Black men and boys.

In terms of staff, as Chair Wilson has already spoken of, I have one full-time support services specialist who you have been in contact with and one full-time attorney who is a contractor. Also I have one part-time contractor responsible for media communications and outreach.

Within the next couple of months or so I will attempt to hire a full-time media communications director and a full-time administrator, and that will help us a long way in getting to where we need to be as a Commission.

CHAIR WILSON: What? I'm sorry.

DR. WILLIAMS: That said, please note -- ma'am? Did you have a question, ma'am?

(No audible response.)

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DR. WILLIAMS: No? Okay. That said, please note that our staff is here to support you in every way possible. Feel free to contact us by email or phone. Should you have any inquiries regarding study and research, I will respond within 24 hours.

My final comments are basically food for thought. Each week I spend a considerable amount of time keeping up with current studies relating to Black men and boys in America. On 8 December, 2021 the Center for Economic Policy and Research published an article outlining the national economic impact of the employment disparity among Black men. Some of you may have already read that article.

In short the article concluded that joblessness among Black men costs the U.S. approximately \$50 billion in revenue to Black families and communities. Closing the gap will make a significant reduction in Black poverty. I raise this as something to think about as the Commissioners approach the work that is in front of you.

Thank you for your time this afternoon and I look forward to working with you, Madam Chair and Commissioners. Ma'am, back over to you.

COMMISSIONER BOWMAN: I think you have to un-mute, Madam Chair.

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CHAIR WILSON: Okay. I'm going to open the chair up for any comments, any input. I know that we do have several people who want to share ideas with us and I know Commissioner Brewer sent me a very comprehensive package. Is he still on?

Commissioner Brewer?

COMMISSIONER BREWER: Yes, Madam Chair, I'm here. Present.

CHAIR WILSON: Want to tell us a little bit about your organization and what you do? And we'll look at that and move forward for the next agenda, but we're into new business now.

V. NEW BUSINESS

COMMISSIONER BREWER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, for the past 16 years I have been the founder and executive director of the Jack Brewer Foundation. Our core mission is driven by helping the most underserved Black communities in the world. And so that includes work, extensive work in Africa and Haiti through our orphanage programs, food security initiatives, and particularly helping folks get raised out of poverty. Over the past decade we've had a heavy focus here in the United States in regards to our Black male population.

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As a former NFL player I was able to avoid many of my ups and downs. When my family members were going to prison I was going to college and I was able to live the American dream through sports. And really the difference that I started to do more research. And as our organization started to do more research, everything really pointed back to fatherlessness, just as Madam Chair pointed out with her organization. I think we all would agree that particularly a Black boy needs a man, needs a fatherly influence, but more importantly needs discipline and respect, to respect their elders and understand really what it takes to raise a family and be a productive member of the community.

And so we can get that in all different ways. At our organization, we've established a serving institute which now we work in the communities here across South Florida and taking these young boys and giving them an opportunity to play sports and giving them an opportunity to have mentorship and actually somebody to help them with their homework, something that basic, or to put some discipline behind them when they don't go to school or when they don't act right and teach them how to treat women and how to respect their communities through service.

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And so we take these kids out and have them where they clean up trash in their own communities, go help their elders in their communities. And we really believe that through service it will bring the humility and respect, and we've had great results.

But more importantly, over the past five years we've done extensive research on fatherlessness, both in our criminal justice system where I've been able to serve in prisons across America. I actually spend one day a week inside prisons here in South Florida, and that really is the catalyst to bring me humility and more understanding on some of the issues that are causing so many of our brothers and sisters to be incarcerated.

And I got to tell you, it's overwhelming when you see the amount of folks incarcerated that didn't have a father figure in their lives. I mean, overwhelming, sadly both in prison and in our juvenile population. For us it's almost 90 percent of these kids that don't have a real male influence.

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And so as we do more research and we see what their reading and math proficiency levels being what they are it's really sad, I mean, when you see five, six, seven-year gaps for kids that can't read and write properly on their school level. And so when we talk about it, as Marvin mentioned, Mr. Williams, the unemployment -- I mean, it's hard to get employed if you don't have basic skills and you don't have that fatherly influence. So I think if we look across our society, we'll all see that the majority of our issues stem back to fatherlessness. And it's a sad scene.

So, Madam Chair, what I have done I've done extensive research, as you saw. I sent you some of the research that we have put together and our data. We're constantly working on trying to figure out ways to promote folks to join organizations like yours, incentives for other means, because I'm a big believer in God, and the Bible teaches us to go out and serve. And there's a reason why the fatherless and the widow is often spoken about in the Bible is because it will break down a society if you don't support the fatherless children. And I think that's what we see so often.

And so we always encourage folks to go out and break out of their bubbles. Our families go beyond our kids and our own homes. I think it's time for our nation to call upon Black men first to go out in our communities and start mentoring the boys that need us the most. I think it's a time to call all people really to go out and serve the most underserved, and that is our African American boys right now.

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So for me I am so honored to serve on this Commission. I feel like God has brought me here. I'm humbled to serve with each one of you. And our organization is committed, whether it's through research, whether it's through ideas, brainstorming, events, promotion, whatever we can do. I have access to several professional athletes and different community leaders and people that really care about this issue and I believe -- as the Chairwoman described earlier, I think this is the catalyst.

I think right now this Commission and everything that we're discussing -- I think we're going to promote fatherhood. And when we talk about racial disparities and racial divide, I think this is the one area that's going to bring everybody together because we can all agree that something has to be done to stop this crisis. When 71 percent of our high school dropouts are fatherless --

CHAIR WILSON: Thank you. (Telephonic interference).

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COMMISSIONER BREWER: Yes, 71 percent of our high school dropouts are fatherless. We have over 1.7 million high school dropouts in America every year. I mean, those numbers are staggering. They're staggering. We've got over 18 million fatherless children in our nation right now. And we know -- we look at mental health issues. You're two-and-a-half times more likely to have a mental health issue if you're fatherless. We look at teen pregnancies and our poor young girls. We look at sex trafficking and all of these things.

And just quickly; I won't take up too much time, but I had a -- just a heart -- I had a heart-wrenching story and I -- it tears me up when I even think about it. I got a group of girls that come to our program and I started to require them to show me their social media and the things that they're exposing themselves to. And I'm telling you, these kids have their own society now on these social media platforms where they go back and forth. And these little girls, these four little girls are showing themselves. And the culture that's being created that most of us probably never see because we're not there in that world, it really is sad.

And I think that it starts with the father. It starts with the fatherly influence. And I truly believe that we can help heal this land. So, Chairwoman, whatever I can do, I would love to present to the entire Commission some thoughts and ideas and our research to see how we could come and have a bipartisan unifying approach to this issue.

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CHAIR WILSON: Thank you so much. Thank you.

And my experience; I've just about moved on. My goal is to make a generation of new fathers because it's hard. I tried with fathers, trust me. I tried with Dwayne Wade and all of them here to change men, to make -- but that's hard. But what we can do is we can build brand new -- a next generation of fathers. Ask Commissioner Bowman. He knows.

I want you to know that I serve on the Commission -- or the Council for Women and Girls, and the Congressional Black Caucus also. And I am the champion for bringing back our girls. These are young girls who were kidnapped in Nigeria. And I have gotten most of them back. I have a new group that I'm sending to college who live in Virginia. They're going to be going to Virginia State on a full scholarship.

So I do research -- yes, it's a bunch of them. Hundreds. So I do research on boys and girls.

But let me just share this with you, Mr. Brewer. This is what I have from Florida and it's -- I personally founded a female prison in Miami-Dade County, Dade Correctional Female Prison. It was founded by Congresswoman Frederica Wilson in 1999.

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So this is how the prison population stacks up for the State of Florida: Male prisons, 139 prisons; female prisons, 6. That shows you the disparity. Incarcerated Black males in Florida, 39,874, 45.4 percent of the prison population in the State of Florida. Incarcerated Black females, 1,653, 1.9 percent of the prison population. So the disparity is huge. And we're on the right track with making a difference with all of this.

So I want all of you to join me and we're going to roll out virtually next month on the year of Black men and boys. And I will be sending you a package of information that you can send out, your communications staff can send out; this is the virtual roll out, and get everybody sensitized to what we're doing. This is Black History Month. So during Black History Month we will be sensitizing people to the fact that it's time. It's long overdue. These Black boys need to be checked.

We have a staff member --

COMMISSIONER BREWER: Amen.

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CHAIR WILSON: -- at the Commission who was on with us yesterday and she -- her son was murdered by another Black boy. So this is -- it's time. How long are we as Black people going to close our eyes and pretend that this is not a problem? That it's okay? It's alright? But it's not okay. So we're going to work this out.

And then we will have our in-person kickoff of Black Men and Boys in D.C. as soon as COVID allows us to. There are so many protocols right now. So we'll give you enough time in advance so you'll know when to roll out.

In the meantime during this new business I need the staff to prepare a budget and ensure that that budget is submitted to my office by March 1st. And we're going to ask Mr. Jeffries to help us with this. We're going to send this budget to Appropriations. We're going to increase our budget from last year so that we can get most of this work done. Mr. Bowman called me up and he wanted to beat up everybody in Appropriations this year to increase it and I told him hold on. Hold on. We'll do it next year. So we got that going.

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And then we need to find out who pays for travel. We need to know that by next Friday so that the Committee can begin to think how they're going to plan their work. I need to know if the Department of Education will pay for their appointee, or how is this going to work? Who pays for travel? We know that travel and per diem is included for the members. They get no salary, but they get travel and per diem. I'm sure that the members, they won't pay for your travel, but maybe not even the different agencies. I'm not sure. But we will expect to know that by next Friday at least so that we can send that out to the chairpersons of these committees and to the members of the council, the Commission.

We want to make sure that we can activate an independent social media account by February 1st because we're going to need that to get the social media out about the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys.

As Commission members you will begin to receive press clips regarding Black Men and Boys at least by February 1st. They can work in tandem with my congressional office if we do not have a communications person by then, but hopefully we will. But as a Commission we want to be fully read up and -- most of you -- all of us are, but I'm not going to play like I know about the children on the internet.

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And that's a new thing now, that they actually threaten children on the internet and then go and kill them. We've had several instances right here in Broward County where a boy was threatened on the internet and they told him they were coming to kill him. He told his mother and they came and killed him right in front of the mother. And these children don't -- these are girls and boys, a whole gang of them. And it was all about a girl loving a boy and the boy not loving her. And it was -- it's all these new things that's affecting these children that we've got to get a hold of.

And when we have our hearings we've got to bring in the right experts to help us understand and help the nation understand so we can get a hold of this.

I'm with you, Mr. Brewer, trust me.

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Okay. So hopefully by February 1st I'll be able to interview a new communications director and a new legislative and policy director. Now I know that the Congressional Black Caucus, Mr. Jeffries has a list of people who -- and the caucus has a list of people who are qualified. So if you can help us search for the right person to work for the Commission who knows all of the bills, who's familiar with all of the bills that have been filed that adversely affect Black men and boys like the crime bill, like the welfare reform bill, know your bill, your First Step Act. All of these bills we need to know about. And so -- or the George Floyd Act. Everything we need to know about so that we can plan how we are going to recommend to the Congressional Black Caucus legislative priorities and bills that members of the Congressional Black Caucus will file.

The only members of the legislature that serve on this committee are members of the Congressional Black Caucus. So we have a responsibility as members of the Congressional Black Caucus to file all of the legislation -- Lucy, Mr. Bowman -- Commissioner Lucy, Commissioner Bowman, Commissioner Jeffries, to file all of the legislation that comes out of this Commission. So this is a heavy lift. Okay. All right. That's why I wrote the bill like this.

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Okay. So we're all going to also -- I will be establishing an ad hoc committee of civil rights, I guess you would call them legends who will be on call to help us with all of this, with our committee work and everything. And the chair will be me and Reverend Sharpton and Chairwoman Beatty. I'm going to ask that -- you know that I will serve on every committee. I will serve on all four of your subcommittees and I intend to attend all four of your subcommittee meetings. That's just how important this is to me. I'm putting everything else on the back burner except this Commission.

I told you how old I was, so I don't have much time. So I got to get this right and you have to help me get it right because this is a very serious issue. To me this is the most serious issue for this country. If we can get a handle on Black men and boys and lift them up and give them opportunity, do you know how this will change this nation? Think about it. Just think about it.

You think it was some Jewish boys running around carrying AK-47s through the street shooting up everybody that this nation would be quiet? No, they would be saying what can we do? Can we get them scholarships? Can we send them to college? What can we do? Can we love them? Can we hug them? Can we buy them some Sean John suits? Can we get them some sneakers? Get them some AirPods? What can we do? We got to stop this. We got to stop this. And that's the urgency that we as a Commission must be on the same track, the same urgency.

Any comments before I close the meeting?

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COMMISSIONER BOWMAN: I just want to say I agree with you 100 percent. I'm here smiling because I'm so fired up by you and so appreciate your passion. And what you just said people don't usually say out loud about Jewish boys, or any other group of boys for that matter, running around inflicting harm and how the country would respond differently to that. So I just want to thank you for your leadership, your honesty, and your passion.

And I want to underscore what Mr. Brewer said earlier about the importance of father figures, importance of fathers, but father figures are almost as important in terms of mentors, teachers, role models. I didn't realize when I became a teacher in 1999 -- I didn't know beforehand -- when I got into the classroom I realized it immediately when I walked into the room, but beforehand I didn't realize that my role was bigger than just the role of a teacher. It was going to be teacher, role model, mentor, and father figure. And I felt that very strongly as soon as I stepped in front of my fourth grade class in 1999.

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So for me -- I know I'm biased, but I think the answer to every question is education and the more we could get Black men in education, or people of color period in education to support our Black boys, it's a really powerful recipe and tool towards solving this problem in addition to just engaging with Black male role models, male role models of color and overall role models of color in different industries is really important for our Black boys.

Before coming to Congress seeing Hakeem Jeffries be a leader in Congress as a Black man was very inspirational to me. Seeing Colin Powell before Barack Obama -- no one knew who Barack Obama was, but seeing Colin Powell, even though I don't agree with all his politics, but seeing him reach that level of leadership in our country was just powerful for me.

And I know Chairman Jeffries, Commissioner Jeffries feels this way as well. A lot of hip hop artists growing up, particularly during my era, which was the golden age -- to see these men talk about knowledge of self, education, history, uplifting your people, you know, shout out to Chuck D and Public Enemy, Brother J and X Clan, KRS-One. I mean these men were like superheroes for me, and I grew up without a father. So I just want to underscore that point.

And I share your passion. And this is my life's work as well I believe and my calling to do this. And obviously as a girl dad, my daughter is now seven, never going to forget our girls. And I have four sisters and no brothers, so I'm always going to be for my Black women.

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But our boys, if they could -- if we can give them the opportunity to unlock their magic and brilliance and strength and excellence and potential, it's over for White supremacy, it's over for settler colonialism, it's over for all this stuff that's been keeping us down once we provide the space for them to just be who they truly are.

CHAIR WILSON: And I just want to thank you so much, my brother, commissioner.

COMMISSIONER FOSTEN: Madam Chair?

CHAIR WILSON: And I just want to say that the 5000 Role Models Program that I founded is multi-racial. It is an in-school mentoring program. So I have Jewish boys in the program, so I know them very well. And I know the gentleman next door to me is a rabbi, so I know what would happen if the example that I just gave -- because he sometimes asks me the same thing: How does this go unchecked? So that's why I use that as an example, because I have all kinds of boys in the program. The 5000 Role Models is not a Black boy program. Because from Title IX -- and it's in the school district, so it is very much integrated.

So was someone else trying to speak?

COMMISSIONER FOSTEN: Yes, Madam Chair. That's me, Commissioner Fosten. If I may, could you add me to the Education Commission?

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CHAIR WILSON: What?

COMMISSIONER FOSTEN: It's me, Madam Chair, Commissioner Fosten. I concur with everything Commissioner Brewer and Commissioner Bowman have said and if you may could you add me to the Education Committee, please?

CHAIR WILSON: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Commissioner Williams, I hope you have that added.

Okay.

COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: Commissioner Wilson, may I speak?
Commissioner Marshall.

CHAIR WILSON: Huh?

COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: May I speak? This is Commissioner
Marshall.

CHAIR WILSON: Yes. Yes.

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COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: A couple things: First of all, I really appreciate the remarks of Commissioner Brewer and Commissioner Bowman. I'm a little bit older than you, but can we bring those rappers back because we ain't got nothing like that right now? I know Chuck and we can use a healthy dose of Chuck D, X Clan, Poor Righteous Teachers, and all of them right now because the guys we got running around out there now -- well, put it like this: my young people don't listen to them, which is a problem.

I want to say thank you, Commissioner Wilson, for having people on the Commission who actually are having success with young men because a lot of us have ideas and know what produces that success. So we may be working with a population that is having some challenges, but a lot of us have ideas about -- and have successes with young people and can identify things that make that success happen. So thank you for having folks like myself on the Commission that are having success.

And I'd like to say is it possible for us to get contact information for everyone? I don't have that. Is that possible, or is that taboo?

CHAIR WILSON: What we can probably do is it's only 19 of us, so we're going to set up a group chat. So on that group chat we will be able to talk to each other. You will have all the information of everybody and you could go back and forth. Because it's a lot of things that it would save me time from having to call each and every one of you if I could -- if we could set up a group chat. So that would be perfect.

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COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: That would help because I would like to contact each of the Commissioners individually. I think the closer we get the more we're able to flesh out each other's thoughts will only benefit the whole group.

CHAIR WILSON: And another thing: If you have (telephonic interference) that you would like to send to the -- to fellow Commissioners, you can also forward those to me and I'll make sure that they get them by way of email, because we're going to be sending out -- every morning I get press clips regarding -- and it's not just press clips, but it's information regarding Black men and boys. So if you have information regarding Black men and boys that you want us to disseminate to everybody, we can really do that.

COMMISSIONER MARSHALL: Last thing I'd like to say, Dr. King's birthday is coming up next Monday and I think he would be very happy with what we're doing here to continue the work of the dream that he worked so hard for. So I just want to mention that. And it's not a small thing. A lot of folks worked hard to make that a national holiday. He gave his life for this, so again in honor of Dr. King thank you.

CHAIR WILSON: Thank you.

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COMMISSIONER MCBATH: And, Chair Wilson, in that regard, because it is MLK celebration and acknowledgement all over the country, would it be befitting for this Commission to put out a statement --

CHAIR WILSON: Yes, we can --

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: -- in celebration and support of MLK Day?

CHAIR WILSON: Right. And I thought I sent to each of you a flyer for you to join the 5000 Role Models of Excellence breakfast, virtual breakfast that we will have Mr. Emhoff, the husband of the Vice President, and Don Lemon as the headliners. Did any of you get that?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR WILSON: You got that? Okay. But we will put out a statement from the Commission acknowledging Dr. King's birthday and if possible a -- well, I don't know if everybody's on here; it's the majority of us, but I would say a screenshot of this meeting to say -- just how you do your Christmas cards with the family? So this is our family. Can somebody take a copy -- a picture of the screen?

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Marvin, is there somebody in the office who could take a picture of this screen so we can include this in our Martin Luther King greeting?

Hold your head up, Congresswoman Beatty.

Okay. Smile. Everybody smile. They're going to take a picture.

You got it? They have it? Mr. Williams, Commissioner Williams.

DR. WILLIAMS: (Telephonic interference).

CHAIR WILSON: Okay. All right. Any (telephonic interference)?

Ms. Beatty, I don't -- yes, I think you had left, but I did announce that you, Reverend Sharpton, and I will be chairing an Ad Hoc Committee of Civil Rights. You heard me?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR WILSON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER BEATTY: Yes, I did. And thank you for adding me to that. And let me just echo all of the words that were said by my fellow commissioners about the importance of this committee, but more importantly about saving the lives of young Black boys and men. Thank you.

CHAIR WILSON: Thank you. Thank you.

All right. Any other comments?

COMMISSIONER JEFFRIES: Madam Chair?

CHAIR WILSON: Wait. We got Ms. McBath and then somebody else said Madam Chair instead of Commissioner Wilson.

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(Laughter.)

CHAIR WILSON: Commissioner McBath?

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Commissioner Wilson, thank you so very much.

In regards to everything that we've talked about today is there a way possible that we might be able to have a copy of just all the standing committees and all those individuals that have been assigned to those standing committees sometime so that -- I'd like to be able to connect with those individuals that are on the committee. So having like their email addresses, or at least know that we're assigned to the committees would be really good, because if we are expected to go ahead and begin working together, then I think we need to connect as quickly as we possibly can.

CHAIR WILSON: Yes, and I'm hoping that you all together will set up a group text. You're on the Criminal Justice one.

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Yes.

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CHAIR WILSON: The Criminal Justice Committee will be -- think about it: we can't really do much now because of COVID, because we want to have these in-person kinds of things in the judiciary space, so we're hoping that COVID would dissipate after a while. This new variant has ravaged by own personal family, so --

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Well, Commissioner Wilson, there's another question. May I ask? I'm sorry. But in regards to the fact that we know that COVID is still a problem right now and we don't want anything to infringe upon our ability to be able to do our work, whether COVID is raging right now or not, like specifically in our committee, Criminal Justice and Civil Rights, we will have the ability to be able to do Zooms with those entities, those organizations in the event that we're not able to physically be able to get on the ground? Because I think it's still being able to establish relationships, start those communications and start building what this looks like and our relationship to the work that we're going to be doing with these entities. We can still go ahead and start doing that, correct?

CHAIR WILSON: Well, what we were waiting for is to hire up. Okay? We're not fully hired up with staff. So if we get staff hired, then you can start to do that. Because someone has to staff your committee.

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Right.

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CHAIR WILSON: Yes, so we have to -- we don't have that right now. So that's what I intend to -- that's why I was asking Hakeem about a list of people who -- and if you know of people who will serve in these different openings we have on the Commission. Because we have the budget; we just need the staff to be --

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Okay. So then do we just tell you if we know of individuals that might be willing to assist or help?

CHAIR WILSON: You can tell me and I'll tell the -- Commissioner Williams, or you can tell Commissioner Williams.

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Okay.

CHAIR WILSON: Tell us both.

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR WILSON: But it doesn't stop you from communicating and planning with your cohorts. And it's not a lot of you. It's just like five.

COMMISSIONER MCBATH: Right.

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CHAIR WILSON: But this is going to be a great way to address all of the issues affecting these young men. And I'm going to say this, and this will kind of piggyback on what Mr. Bowman said: Whenever there's a high -- through the years -- now this -- my -- the role models is 30 years old, was 30 years old in November.

So through the years whenever there was a high-profile murder regarding a Black boy in my community, I always got permission from the attorney, from the public defender, from the state attorney and from that person's attorney to visit them in jail, in jail after -- and in prison after they had been sentenced, or many I met with in jail. And I would always ask them one question: What could I have done -- and you know I've been a senator, whatever, House member, all of this. I say what could I have done as a school principal or as a member of the Florida Senate to help you or prevent you from being where you are today?

And without question they all say if only I had somebody who would listen to me and that I could turn to and confide in and who would guide me. And it's all back to what Commissioner Bowman said, a teacher, a mentor, a neighbor. Nobody. So these kids are raising each other, the peers. They have nobody. So that's what we're going to create and bring this kind of sensitivity to our nation.

Do we have another --

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COMMISSIONER JEFFRIES: Commissioner Wilson, as we wind down; this is Commissioner Jeffries, just wanted to thank you for your leadership, your vision, and your execution. I look forward to working closely with you, all of the distinguished Commissioners, certainly my colleagues, fellow Commissioners from the Congressional Black Caucus. And I associate myself with Joyce and Lucy, and of course what Jamaal had to say in his powerful statement.

Here in Brooklyn we often have said that if we as a community don't take the time to give our Black men and boys opportunity to allow their natural talents to flourish, the system will continue to seize the opportunity to give our children some time, time in juvenile, time in isolation, time in the prison industrial complex.

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And so we have this moment right now because of the creation of the Commission that is really extraordinary and it's a moment -- we have the passion; I can hear that when everyone talks, but also opportunity because of at least current policy alignment within the White House, the Department of Justice as represented on the Commission, and of course in the Congress. And let's just all seize this moment to be able to advance the ball for our Black men and boys consistent with your vision. And I look forward to working with all of you in that regard.

CHAIR WILSON: Thank you so much. And you all know who this is, right, how powerful he is? I mean this is the first -- I mean he is the chairperson of the Democratic caucus-- this young, young brother right here. This Commissioner Jeffries. And so all of us are just so, so, so proud of him, not only the Congressional Black Caucus, but the nation is -- as Black people he is one of the best and we definitely are proud of him.

So any other comments for the good of the order?

COMMISSIONER BEATTY: Move for adjournment.

CHAIR WILSON: Who was it? Raise your hand because I can't --

COMMISSIONER BEATTY: Move for adjournment.

CHAIR WILSON: Move for adjournment? All in favor, signify by saying aye?

(Chorus of aye.)

CHAIR WILSON: Opposes?

(No audible response.)

VI. CHAIR COMMENTS/ADJOURN MEETING

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CHAIR WILSON: Thank you so much. Happy new year. Happy Martin Luther King Birthday and we'll see you next month. Bye-bye.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 2:16 p.m.)

OFFERED