



NEWS RELEASE

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Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report: Civil Rights and the School to Prison Pipeline in Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a report following a series of panel discussions on school discipline policies and practices in the state. The Committee's purpose was to examine the civil rights impact of school discipline and juvenile justice policies, which may lead to high rates of juvenile incarceration—particularly among youth of color, boys, and students with disabilities—in what has become known as the “school to prison pipeline.” The Committee heard testimony from academic experts and legal professionals; community advocates; local, state, and federal government officials; and individual community members directly impacted.

Through this testimony, the Committee identified a number of concerns regarding the role of implicit bias in implementing disciplinary measures in schools; the adverse impact of poverty on students' academic success, which disproportionately affects children of color; and exclusionary disciplinary policies and practices that may exacerbate disengagement, particularly among youth of color and youth with disabilities. The Committee also identified a number of recommendations for the Commission's consideration, which may help to remedy some of these concerns moving forward. Committee Chair Vicki Limas said, "All Oklahoma children have a right to an educational environment that is safe and conducive to learning, but our schools must be equipped with the various resources necessary to give every child access to that environment by making every effort to keep that child engaged in the learning process. We are encouraged by the dedication of all who participated in these proceedings and hope that the facts and ideas generated will begin the reformation of school disciplinary policies and practices in a way that focuses on meeting the underlying needs of our children."

Full text of the Committee's memorandum is available at:

http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/Oklahoma_SchooltoPrisonPipeline_May2016.pdf

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with studying and advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing a federal civil rights enforcement report. For information about the reports and meetings of the Commission and its Advisory Committees, visit <http://www.usccr.gov>.

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