

<b>THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS</b> <b>Eastern Regional Office</b>
---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 16, 2010

For Information Contact:

**Barbara de la Viez, Eastern Regional Office**

202-376-7533

## **Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to Convene Briefing on Bilingual Education Issues in Massachusetts**

**What: Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

**When: Thursday, September 23, 2010, 10:00 a.m. EDT**

**Where: Holyoke City Hall  
536 Dwight Street  
Holyoke, MA 01040**

**Washington, DC** -- -- The Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (MA SAC) will convene a briefing to gather information on bilingual education issues in Massachusetts.

*Background:* In July, the Massachusetts Advisory Committee convened a briefing to look at the consequences of a 2002 ballot initiative – English for the Children of Massachusetts – that replaced bilingual education with English immersion teaching techniques. Bilingual education involves the teaching of academic content in two languages, the native language of the student and English. English immersion emphasizes learning the English language as its primary focus and dedicates most of the school day to teaching the English language. In English immersion, students and teachers are expected to speak, read, and write in English without any use of the student’s native language.

At its July briefing, the State Advisory Committee heard from witnesses that there is a tendency to funnel English Language Learners (ELL) into Special Education programs and that ELL students in regular classes do not receive the assistance or services they are entitled to under state and federal civil rights laws. According to State Advisory Committee Chair, David J. Harris, “The State Advisory Committee is deeply concerned about this tendency and looks forward to hearing more fully from those familiar with the problem and potential solutions.” Harris added that the committee decided to convene the briefing in Holyoke because of the diversity of the student bodies there and in neighboring Springfield, and because the July testimony pointed to concerns that the “diversion of limited English speaking students to special education programs is growing in these cities.”

The Massachusetts Advisory Committee has invited experts to discuss this issue. Presenters include school officials, (including administrators and teachers; government representatives, both state and local; advocates; and members of the community).

### **The Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

*The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has established state advisory committees to advise the Commission about state civil rights issues that are within the Commission’s jurisdiction. State committees receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public officials, and representatives of public and private organizations in response to committee inquiries. The committees forward advice and recommendations to the Commission; and assist the Commission in its public education and outreach efforts. The committees are comprised of state citizens who serve without compensation.*

**624 9<sup>TH</sup> Street N.W. Suite 740 Washington, DC 20425**  
**(202) 376-7700 (phone) (202) 376-7548 (fax) www.usccr.gov**

The briefing is open to the public. For more information contact Barbara de La Viez, Eastern Regional Office, 202-376-7533, or David Harris, Chairman, Massachusetts Advisory Committee, 617-495-8075.