



PRESS RELEASE
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U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report:

Beyond Suspensions: Examining School Discipline Policies and Connections to the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Students of Color with Disabilities

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released its [report](#), *Beyond Suspensions: Examining School Discipline Policies and Connections to the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Students of Color with Disabilities*. The report examines compliance with federal laws designed to protect students of color with disabilities from discrimination, and whether the federal government’s enforcement of these laws adequately protects these students from discriminatory disciplinary actions and policies. The Commission investigated school discipline practices and policies impacting students of color with disabilities and the possible connections to the school-to-prison pipeline, examined the rates of exclusionary discipline, researched whether discipline policies unlawfully target students of color with disabilities, and analyzed the federal government’s responses and actions on the topic.

Chair Catherine E. Lhamon said, “As the Commission documents, discrimination based on race and disability in school discipline practices has plagued education across the United States for decades and can wreak significant harm on students and school communities. As the Commission urges, the nations’ students deserve aggressive enforcement of federal civil rights laws designed to protect against these harms.”

Key findings from the Commission majority include:

- Students with disabilities are approximately twice as likely to be suspended throughout each school level compared to students without disabilities.
- Students of color as a whole, as well as by individual racial group, do not commit more disciplinable offenses than their white peers – but black, Latinx, and Native American students in the aggregate receive substantially more school discipline than their white peers, and receive harsher and longer punishments than their white peers receive for like offenses.
- Most recent available U.S. Department of Education data reflect that black, multiracial, Native American/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander American students with disabilities were more likely than white students with disabilities to be expelled without educational services.

- According to Department of Education data 1.6 million students attend a school with a sworn law enforcement officer (SLEO) but not a school counselor and by the 2015-16 academic year, schools reported having more than 27,000 school resource officers (SROs), compared to 23,000 social workers. Latinx, Asian, and black students were all more likely than white students to attend a school with an SLEO but not a counselor.

Key recommendations from the Commission majority include:

- The Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) should continue offering guidance to school communities regarding how to comply with federal nondiscrimination laws related to race and disability in the imposition of school discipline.
- Congress should continue to provide funding to help states and school districts provide training and support and, with Congressional appropriation support, the Departments of Justice and Education should continue and expand their grant funding for these important goals.
- OCR should rigorously enforce the civil rights laws over which it has jurisdiction, to address allegations of discrimination in school discipline policies.
- Congress should provide funding as needed and incentivize states to provide funding to ensure all schools have adequate counselors and social workers.

[Beyond Suspensions](#), based on expert and public input, and extensive research and analysis, offers actionable recommendations to the President, Congress, and federal agencies. The Commission held a [public briefing](#) on the subject in December 2017; we invite you to view [video](#) of the sessions and the [transcript](#).

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 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 more information about the Commission, please visit www.usccr.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).