



June 18, 2020

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Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect civil and human rights in the United States, we write to share our [Civil Rights Principles for Safe, Healthy, and Inclusive School Climates](#) and our [Civil Rights Principles for Higher Education](#). In light of the recent killings and police violence against Black people in our country, and the massive public outcry for change, we seek to uplift the civil and human rights community's policy recommendations for achieving justice and equal opportunity in education. Although these documents were created prior to the current public outcry against racial injustice, we believe they offer areas for action that Members can and should take in this moment.

As the COVID-19 public health crisis and recent police violence have clearly exposed, systemic racism and the policies that perpetuate it have limited opportunity and erected barriers for Black people and other people of color across all spheres of American life. Educational opportunity has been limited for generations from early childhood through higher education. Exclusionary discipline, barriers to college success, and the policing of Black students and other students of color from preschool¹ through graduate school² demonstrate the urgent need for Congressional leadership.

In recent weeks, The Leadership Conference coalition has been working tirelessly to advocate for [justice and accountability](#) in law enforcement. As we reimagine what our society looks like in light of the calls for justice and policing reform, we are presented with an urgent opportunity to rethink what a safe and inclusive P-16 education experience should look like for the most marginalized students. Policing in schools is directly connected to the historic oppression of Black and Brown bodies in the United States. This same oppression has manifested across our education system for generations. In recent decades, the presence of police in schools has drastically increased, with figures on arrests and referrals to law enforcement showing that Black and Latino students are disproportionately disciplined and targeted by officers.³ Police in schools do not make young people feel safe,⁴ and in spite of this, school districts continue to invest in police at the expense of students.⁵ As we know too well, for many Black students and other students of color, interactions with police in schools may be the first of a lifelong series of challenging interactions with law enforcement that are rooted in systemic and institutional racism.

¹ See, for example: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/handcuffed-5-year-old-sparks-suit/>

² See, for example: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/09/nyregion/yale-black-student-nap.html>

³ <https://dignityinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/WhyCounselorsNotCops.pdf>

⁴ <https://advancementproject.org/6-things-you-need-to-know-about-school-policing/>

⁵ <https://dignityinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/WhyCounselorsNotCops.pdf>



As we see support grow for transformative change to dismantle White supremacy, the coalition's principles are key to ensuring positive educational experiences for Black students and other students who are too often marginalized both in the school setting as well as in the world. We hope that these principles and policy recommendations will offer policy leaders a path to supporting and protecting marginalized students and ensuring they have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Arielle Atherley, policy analyst, at atherley@civilrights.org

More information on each of the principles documents can be found below:

The [Civil Rights Principles for Safe, Healthy, and Inclusive School Climates](#) were developed by members of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Education Task Force. These principles seek to ensure a school system that is free from discrimination and that prioritizes making sure all children are safe and welcome in school environments.

The [Civil Rights Principles for Higher Education](#) were developed collaboratively by the members of the Higher Ed Civil Rights Coalition, convened by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund. This group sought to identify fundamental elements of a higher education system that advances equity and protects students' civil rights.

Sincerely,

LaShawn Warren

LaShawn Warren
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs