

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1194

To establish the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, to study and make recommendations to address social problems affecting Black men and boys.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 16, 2017

Ms. WILSON of Florida (for herself, Mr. VEASEY, Ms. NORTON, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. RICHMOND, Mrs. BEATTY, Ms. MOORE, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. RUSH, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. JEFFRIES, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. CLAY, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California, and Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To establish the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, to study and make recommendations to address social problems affecting Black men and boys.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Commission on the
5 Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) Black men and boys face disproportionate
2 hardships that result in disparities in areas includ-
3 ing: education, criminal justice, health, employment,
4 fatherhood, mentorship, and violence. These hard-
5 ships have negative consequences for national pro-
6 ductivity, especially for Black families and commu-
7 nities.

8 (2) A Commission to study and examine issues
9 which disproportionately have a negative impact on
10 Black men and boys in America will signal that the
11 issues facing the Black male population are a na-
12 tional priority, will develop solutions to these hard-
13 ships, and will help eliminate the obstacles facing
14 Black men and boys.

15 (3) A Commission will also be able to inves-
16 tigate potential civil rights violations affecting this
17 population that attract national attention.

18 (4) Black babies are three times more likely to
19 be born in poverty and rapidly fall behind their
20 White counterparts in cognitive development.

21 (5) By fourth grade, Black students are ex-
22 pected to be three years behind White male students.
23 According to the Educational Testing Service Policy
24 Informational Center, only 12 percent of Black
25 eighth-grade male students are proficient in math,

1 compared to 44 percent of White eighth-grade male
2 students.

3 (6) The Educational Testing Service Policy In-
4 formational Center also found that nationally, more
5 than 50 percent of Black male students attending
6 urban schools will drop out.

7 (7) The low rate of high school retention among
8 Black male students directly relates to high rates of
9 joblessness and incarceration among this population.
10 This barrier to employment exacerbates cycles of
11 poverty, which in turn results in health inequalities,
12 including higher levels of diabetes, obesity, and HIV/
13 AIDS. According to a study by the American Acad-
14 emy of Arts and Sciences, more than 66 percent of
15 Black male dropouts are expected to serve time in
16 State or Federal prison.

17 (8) Black men are subjected to unequal
18 profiling by the police and disproportionately harsh
19 sentences in the judicial system. The Black male
20 population is six times more likely to become incar-
21 cerated than their White counterparts. Although the
22 Black male population comprises approximately six
23 percent of the United States population, of the
24 2,300,000 people incarcerated nationwide, 1 million
25 are Black males. Black males receive ten percent

1 longer Federal sentences than White males who
2 commit the same crime.

3 (9) According to the Bureau of Statistics and
4 the Pew Research Center, Black male unemployment
5 is consistently almost double that of White male un-
6 employment.

7 (10) Black fathers are more than twice as likely
8 to live apart from their children as White fathers.

9 (11) Young boys with male mentors are more
10 likely to progress further in school and have greater
11 financial success in life.

12 **SEC. 3. COMMISSION ESTABLISHMENT AND MEMBERSHIP.**

13 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Commission on the So-
14 cial Status of Black Men and Boys (hereinafter in this
15 Act referred to as “the Commission”) is hereby estab-
16 lished within the United States Commission on Civil
17 Rights Office of the Staff Director.

18 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—The Commission shall consist of
19 19 members appointed as follows:

20 (1) The Senate majority leader shall appoint
21 one member who is not employed by the Federal
22 Government and is an expert on issues affecting
23 Black men and boys in America.

24 (2) The Senate minority leader shall appoint
25 one member who is not employed by the Federal

1 Government and is an expert on issues affecting
2 Black men and boys in America.

3 (3) The House of Representatives majority
4 leader shall appoint one member who is not em-
5 ployed by the Federal Government and is an expert
6 on issues affecting Black men and boys in America.

7 (4) The House of Representatives minority
8 leader shall appoint one member who is not em-
9 ployed by the Federal Government and is an expert
10 on issues affecting Black men and boys in America.

11 (5) The Chair of the Congressional Black Cau-
12 cus (CBC) shall be a member of the Commission, as
13 well as five additional Members of the CBC who ei-
14 ther sit on the following committees of relevant ju-
15 risdiction or who is an expert on issues affecting
16 Black men and boys in America, including—

- 17 (A) education;
- 18 (B) justice and Civil Rights;
- 19 (C) healthcare;
- 20 (D) labor and employment; and
- 21 (E) housing.

22 (6) The Staff Director from the United States
23 Commission on Civil Rights shall appoint one mem-
24 ber from within the staff of the United States Com-

1 mission on Civil Rights who is an expert in issues
2 relating to Black men and boys.

3 (7) The Chair of the United States Equal Em-
4 ployment Opportunity Commission shall appoint one
5 member from within the staff of the United States
6 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission who is
7 an expert in equal employment issues impacting
8 Black men.

9 (8) The Secretary of Education shall appoint
10 one member from within the Department of Edu-
11 cation who is an expert in urban education.

12 (9) The Attorney General of the Department of
13 Justice shall appoint one member from within the
14 Department of Justice who is an expert in racial dis-
15 parities with the criminal justice system.

16 (10) The Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
17 ices shall appoint one member from within the De-
18 partment of Health and Human Services who is an
19 expert in health issues facing Black men.

20 (11) The Secretary of the Department of Hous-
21 ing and Urban Development shall appoint one mem-
22 ber from within the Department of Housing and
23 Urban Development who is an expert in housing and
24 development in urban communities.

1 (12) The Secretary of the Department of Labor
2 shall appoint one member from within the Depart-
3 ment of Labor who is an expert in labor issues im-
4 pacting Black men.

5 (13) The President of the United States shall
6 appoint two members who are not employed by the
7 Federal Government and are experts on issues af-
8 fecting Black men and boys in America.

9 **SEC. 4. OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO APPOINTMENT; RE-**
10 **MOVAL.**

11 (a) **TIMING OF INITIAL APPOINTMENTS.**—Each ini-
12 tial appointment to the Commission shall be made no later
13 than 90 days after the Commission is established. If any
14 appointing authorities fail to appoint a member to the
15 Commission, their appointment shall be filled by the
16 United States Commission on Civil Rights.

17 (b) **TERMS.**—Except as otherwise provided in this
18 section, the term of a member of the Commission shall
19 be four years. For the purpose of providing staggered
20 terms, the first term of those members initially appointed
21 under paragraphs (1) through (5) of section 3 shall be
22 appointed to two-year terms with all other terms lasting
23 four years. Members are eligible for consecutive reappoint-
24 ment.

1 (c) REMOVAL.—A member of the Commission may
 2 be removed from the Commission at any time by the ap-
 3 pointing authority should the member fail to meet Com-
 4 mission responsibilities. Once the seat becomes vacant, the
 5 appointing authority is responsible for filling the vacancy
 6 in the Commission before the next meeting.

7 (d) VACANCIES.—The appointing authority of a
 8 member of the Commission shall either reappoint that
 9 member at the end of that member’s term or appoint an-
 10 other person meeting the qualifications for that appoint-
 11 ment. In the event of a vacancy arising during a term,
 12 the appointing authority shall, before the next meeting of
 13 the Commission, appoint a replacement to finish that
 14 term.

15 **SEC. 5. LEADERSHIP ELECTION.**

16 At the first meeting of the Commission each year,
 17 the members shall elect a Chair and a Secretary. A va-
 18 cancy in the Chair or Secretary shall be filled by vote of
 19 the remaining members. The Chair and Secretary are eli-
 20 gible for consecutive reappointment.

21 **SEC. 6. COMMISSION DUTIES AND POWERS.**

22 (a) STUDY.—The Commission shall make a system-
 23 atic study of the conditions affecting Black men and boys,
 24 including, but not limited to, homicide rates, arrest and
 25 incarceration rates, poverty, violence, fatherhood,

1 mentorship, drug abuse, death rates, disparate income and
2 wealth levels, school performance in all grade levels includ-
3 ing postsecondary levels and college, and health issues.
4 The Commission shall also document trends under the
5 above topics and report on the community impacts of rel-
6 evant government programs within the scope of the above
7 topics. All reports shall be made public via a Federal agen-
8 cy website.

9 (b) PROPOSAL OF MEASURES.—The Commission
10 shall propose measures to alleviate and remedy the under-
11 lying causes of the conditions described in the subsection
12 (a), which may include recommendations of changes to the
13 law, recommendations for how to implement related poli-
14 cies, and recommendations for how to create, develop, or
15 improve upon government programs.

16 (c) SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS.—The Commis-
17 sion shall accept suggestions or comments pertinent to the
18 applicable issues from members of Congress, governmental
19 agencies, public and private organizations, and private
20 citizens.

21 (d) STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.—The
22 Office of the Staff Director of the United States Commis-
23 sion on Civil Rights shall provide staff and administrative
24 support to the Commission. All entities of the United
25 States Government shall provide information that is other-

1 wise a public record at the request of the Commission on
2 Black Men and Boys.

3 **SEC. 7. COMMISSION MEETING REQUIREMENTS.**

4 (a) **FIRST MEETING.**—The first meeting of the Com-
5 mission shall take place no later than 30 days after the
6 initial members are all appointed. Meetings shall be fo-
7 cused on significant issues impacting Black men and boys,
8 for the purpose of initiating research ideas and delegating
9 research tasks to Commission members to initiate the first
10 semiannual report.

11 (b) **QUARTERLY MEETINGS.**—The Commission shall
12 meet quarterly. In addition to all quarterly meetings, the
13 Commission shall meet at other times at the call of the
14 Chair or as determined by a majority of Commission mem-
15 bers.

16 (c) **QUORUM; RULE FOR VOTING ON FINAL AC-**
17 **TIONS.**—A majority of the members of the Commission
18 constitute a quorum, and an affirmative vote of a majority
19 of the members present is required for final action.

20 (d) **EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTENDANCE BY MEM-**
21 **BERS.**—Members are expected to attend all Commission
22 meetings. In the case of an absence, members are expected
23 to report to the Chair prior to the meeting and allowance
24 may be made for an absent member to participate re-
25 motely. Members will still be responsible for fulfilling prior

1 commitments, regardless of attendance status. If a mem-
2 ber is absent twice in a given year, he or she will be re-
3 viewed by the Chair and appointing authority and further
4 action will be considered, including removal and replace-
5 ment on the Commission.

6 (e) MINUTES.—Minutes shall be taken at each meet-
7 ing by the Secretary, or in that individual’s absence, the
8 Chair shall select another Commission member to take
9 minutes during that absence. The Commission shall make
10 its minutes publicly available and accessible not later than
11 one week after each meeting.

12 **SEC. 8. ANNUAL REPORT GUIDELINES.**

13 The Commission shall make an annual report, begin-
14 ning the year of the first Commission meeting. The report
15 shall address the current conditions affecting Black men
16 and boys and make recommendations to address these
17 issues. The report shall be submitted to the President, the
18 Congress, members of the President’s Cabinet, and the
19 chairs of the appropriate committees of jurisdiction. The
20 Commission shall make the report publicly available online
21 on a centralized Federal website.

22 **SEC. 9. COMMISSION COMPENSATION.**

23 Members of the Commission shall serve on the Com-
24 mission without compensation.

