

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/vera-on-the-hill-michael-jacobson-submits-testimony-on-the-school-to-prison-pipeline>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

[Michael Jacobson](#), Vera's president and director, submits [testimony](#) today at a [hearing](#) titled Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline, held by the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights, chaired by Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois. The hearing comes as there is emerging public debate about zero-tolerance school discipline policies and the increasing involvement of law enforcement in schools. Vera's [Center on Youth Justice](#) is conducting a [study](#) of the long-term effects of these policies to see whether they push youth toward antisocial and criminal behavior and justice system involvement a trajectory known as the school-to-prison pipeline.

"While research showing a direct relationship between severe school discipline policies and justice system involvement is limited, there is clear evidence that discipline policies can have an effect on educational achievement, commitment to school, and other factors that are associated with future criminal behavior," Jacobson wrote. "There is also research that demonstrates how academic failure in particular dropping out of high school serves as a link between the two."

Juvenile justice experts and education specialists have been tracking this growing phenomenon for some time. It emerged in the mainstream media and in [Vera's blog](#) in August 2012 when the U.S. Justice Department (DOJ) released findings of an investigation showing that the Meridian, Mississippi, school district was in violation of students' constitutional rights through the use of these policies, which disproportionately affected African American youth and those with disabilities. In October, the [DOJ sued Meridian](#) and Lauderdale County, Mississippi for failure to address the problem.

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