



Congress Must Strengthen Funding for and Oversight of the Office for Civil Rights

Remarks submitted by Lisa Youngblood in Congressional Briefing on How Weakening the Office for Civil Rights Harms Students and Families, May 27, 2026

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee and your dedicated staff:

Good afternoon, and thank you to the members of Congress, staff and the organizers of this briefing for inviting families like mine to share our experiences.

My name is Lisa Youngblood, and I am the mother of a Black student in Lewisville Independent School District who experienced discriminatory discipline after trying to protect herself and her classmates.

In January 2023, my daughter overheard another student say, “Don’t come to school tomorrow.” Like so many children in this country, she has grown up in the shadow of school shootings – from Newtown, to Parkland, to Uvalde.

After hearing the student’s comment, she became afraid that what she heard might be a warning sign of violence. She texted friends about her concerns and came to me scared about what could happen at school the next day. Law enforcement later confirmed that the other student made the comments and also determined there was no credible threat.

But instead of supporting my daughter to raise concerns about safety, school administrators punished her.

My daughter was initially given a suspension and faced placement in alternative school for a staggering 73 days – the remainder of the school year. She was accused of making a false report, despite the fact that she was acting out of fear and legitimate concern during a time when students across this country are constantly told, “If you see something, say something.”

As I fought the discipline through the district grievance process, I began looking more closely at the data and learned that Black students made up a disproportionately high percentage of alternative school placements in the district. I came to believe that my daughter was treated more harshly because she is Black.

After public reporting and community advocacy, the district hired an outside investigator, who ultimately found it was “more likely than not” that my daughter received inappropriate and inconsistent discipline.

Because I believed what happened violated my daughter's civil rights, I filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. OCR initially informed us that it would investigate whether Lewisville ISD discriminated against students of color through harsher discipline practices and indicated the matter could move through a "rapid resolution process." I consented, believing we were on a fast track to accountability and healing.

But instead of swift action, our family has experienced delay after delay.

Although we were in regular communication with our assigned OCR investigator, our complaint has effectively stalled since January 2025. What message does that send to families whose children experience discrimination?

OCR exists because families cannot always rely on state and local systems to protect children from discrimination. But when investigations sit unresolved for months or years, families lose faith that justice will ever come.

My daughter still carries the emotional impact of what happened. And our family learned how exhausting and isolating it can be to pursue accountability.

I am here today because no child should be punished more harshly because of their race, and no family should feel ignored when they seek help.

I urge Congress to protect and strengthen the Office for Civil Rights, increase its capacity to investigate complaints promptly and thoroughly, and ensure that students facing racial discrimination are not left waiting indefinitely for justice.

Resources

Craven, M. (June 16, 2022). [What Safe Schools Should Look Like for Every Student – A Guide to Building Safe and Welcoming Schools and Rejecting Policies that Hurt Students – IDRA Issue Brief](#). IDRA.

Richman, T. (November 10, 2023). [See Something, Slay Something](#). This American Life.

Richman, T. (March 3, 2023). [How a Texas girl scared of school shootings was punished](#). Dallas Morning News.

Richman, T. (March 9, 2023). [Lewisville ISD reviews racial discrimination claim after student's discipline](#). Dallas Morning News.

Richman, T. (March 3, 2023). [Lewisville ISD making changes after student who feared shooting threat was punished](#). Dallas Morning News.

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