



Diminished Support is Deliberate Indifference

Remarks submitted by Tracy Kemp 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 organizers for creating space for families like mine to be heard.

My name is Tracy Kemp, and I am the mother of Braden, a Black student who experienced severe racial harassment and discriminatory discipline at his school in Lubbock, Texas. I am here today because families like ours need the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights—and because right now, many of us feel forgotten, abandoned, and ignored by this critical office.

My family moved to Texas from Michigan in 2021, believing we were choosing a safe community where my children would be welcomed and nurtured. Instead, my son experienced repeated racial harassment from other students, including racist comments and behavior that made school feel unsafe and humiliating.

Throughout the 2021-22 school year, Black children at Braden's school were subjected to an environment of constant and near-daily bullying on the basis of race. The harassment included the use of derogatory language and racial slurs including "monkey," "retard," "n****r," "bitch n****r," "porch monkey," "go pick cotton" and other similar derogatory language.

Other times, Black children would be subjected to the sounds of cracking whips as they walked through the halls of the school due to White students using a "whip app" to play these sounds on their phones. White students also imitated the sounds of monkeys as Black students walked by.

Despite myself and other parents of Black children consistently reporting these incidents, our school leaders ignored us and left our children to fend for themselves. Because of the deliberate indifference by Braden's school administrators, these incidents often escalated into physical threats and assaults. Black students like my son were then removed to long-term alternative disciplinary settings, while their harassers were allowed to remain in school and faced no accountability for their discriminatory behavior.

Ultimately, the failure of school administrators to intervene or respond to the culture of racism at my son's school led to an extremely vile and offensive campaign of racist bullying over social media near the end of the 2021-2022 school year. School bullies used an offensive social media handle to encourage classmates to take and post non-consensual photos of Black students in the school, who were then labeled as "monkeys."

Despite being confronted with the evidence of discriminatory harassment, school leaders did nothing to investigate the racial cyberbullying or any other reported harassment. Because of the hostile environment and retaliation my family experienced in this school community, I withdrew my son from his middle school, and we eventually relocated to yet another state to start over.

I filed my own OCR complaint with other parents from my son's school in April 2022 and later joined a broader complaint in collaboration with the Lubbock branch of the NAACP and the Intercultural Development Research Association, or IDRA. We chose to trust OCR with our son's story because we believe federal civil rights protections should mean something. We believed there would be an investigation. We believed there would be accountability.

But four years after our complaint was filed, we are still waiting for resolution. Worse still, we have not had any communication with or outreach from the Office of Civil Rights since January 2025.

For over a year, our family has waited while the harm done to my son remains unresolved. We have received little communication, little clarity, and little indication that cases involving racial harassment and discriminatory discipline are being treated as a priority by this administration.

And our family is not alone. Racial bullying, harassment, and hate crimes are on the rise nationwide.

Across this country, families facing racial discrimination in schools are watching enforcement slow down while protections are weakened. When OCR fails to act, schools receive the message that civil rights violations can be ignored. And students receive the message that their pain does not matter.

The Office for Civil Rights is not just another government office. For many families, especially for families in the U.S. South, it is the last place to turn when state and local systems fail.

I am proud to share that Braden graduated from high school this May. I am grateful that I was able to access the support and resources necessary to escape the hostile environment our family was subjected to. And I am heartbroken that my son was not able to see justice done in the four years after he was subjected to horrific and unacceptable racial harassment.

I will continue to seek justice and accountability not only for my son, but for the generations of families that will not have the means or ability to find safety elsewhere.

Every child deserves to walk into school knowing they will be protected regardless of their race. And every parent deserves to know that when discrimination happens, someone in power will care enough to act.

I urge Congress to protect and strengthen the Office for Civil Rights, enable meaningful enforcement, and ensure that families like mine 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.
- Duggins-Clay, P., & Lyons, M. (May 2024). [Preventing and Addressing Identity-based Bullying in Schools – IDRA Model Policy Issue Brief](#). IDRA.
- Hixenbaugh, M. (December 12, 2022). [Taunted for being Black, a student fought back, civil rights complaint says. The 30-second fight derailed her life](#). NBC News.
- Hylton, A. (December 15, 2022). [Texas school district accused of inaction over racist bullying of Black students](#). NBC Nightly News.
- IDRA. (December 13, 2022). [IDRA Lubbock NAACP, join Slaton and Lubbock Families in Demanding End to School-Based Racial Discrimination](#). IDRA.
- IDRA. (April 17, 2023). [End Identity-based Bullying in Texas Schools](#).
- Lahdon, T., & Rapp, S. (2021). [Preventing Youth Hates Crimes and Identity Based Bullying](#). U.S. Department of Justice.
- GAO. (2021). [K-12 Education: Students' Experiences With Bullying, Hate Speech, Hate Crimes, and Victimization in Schools](#). Report to the Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives. Government Accountability Office.
- U.S. Department of Justice. (2022). [Hate Crimes and Youth, Literature Review: A Product of the Model Programs Guide](#). U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.