

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7354

To establish an Interagency Task Force to examine the conditions and experiences of Black women and girls in education, economic development, healthcare, labor and employment, housing, justice and civil rights, to promote community-based methods for mitigating and addressing harm and ensuring accountability, and to study societal effects on Black women and girls, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Ms. KELLY of Illinois (for herself, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mrs. BEATTY, Ms. SEWELL, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Ms. NORTON, Ms. ADAMS, Mrs. FOUSHEE, Ms. WATERS, Ms. MCCLELLAN, Ms. CROCKETT, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE, Ms. BROWN, Mrs. CHERFILUS-MCCORMICK, Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania, Mrs. MCBATH, Mrs. HAYES, Ms. STRICKLAND, Ms. PRESSLEY, Mrs. SYKES, Mr. THANEDAR, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. PLASKETT, and Ms. JACKSON LEE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committees on Education and the Workforce, Energy and Commerce, and Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish an Interagency Task Force to examine the conditions and experiences of Black women and girls in education, economic development, healthcare, labor and employment, housing, justice and civil rights, to promote community-based methods for mitigating and addressing

harm and ensuring accountability, and to study societal effects on Black women and girls, and for other purposes.

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 “Protect Black Women
5 and Girls Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds as follows:

8 (1) The United States Commission on Civil
9 Rights (USCCR) advises Congress, as well as the
10 President and the American public, on “discrimina-
11 tion or denials of equal protection of the laws under
12 the Constitution of the United States because of
13 color, race, religion, sex, age, disability, or national
14 origin, or in the administration of justice”.

15 (2) The USCCR routinely has difficulties col-
16 lecting information from Federal agencies despite
17 having the power to take depositions, issue interroga-
18 tories and subpoenas, and broad authority language
19 for the collection of information from Federal agen-
20 cies.

21 (3) The activities mandated herein for the
22 USCCR are explicitly authorized by section 3 of the

1 Civil Rights Commission Act of 1983 (42 U.S.C.
2 1975a).

3 (4) An interagency task force is a task force or-
4 ganized in collaboration with two or more Federal
5 agencies, using government-wide resources, and ex-
6 pertise to—

7 (A) examine a particular problem, issue, or
8 event;

9 (B) discuss strategies as a collective group
10 to address such problem, issue, or event;

11 (C) identify programs, policies, and fund-
12 ing; and

13 (D) make recommendations for changes in
14 public policy.

15 (5) Black women and girls are individuals who
16 identify as a woman, female, or femme.

17 (6) Implicit bias on the basis of race is experi-
18 enced by all Black people, and demonstrated more
19 clearly, in the troubling conditions for Black women
20 and girls in our school discipline policies and the
21 connections to the school-to-prison pipeline for chil-
22 dren of color with disabilities.

23 (7) Black girls are suspended and expelled from
24 school at rates that exceed other girls and all other
25 boys except Black boys.

1 (8) 40 percent of all suspected human traf-
2 ficking victims in the U.S. are Black, and Black
3 children account for nearly 51 percent of all juvenile
4 prostitution arrests.

5 (9) In studying the conditions of confinement
6 for women in prison, Black women are admitted to
7 prison at 3.9 times the rate of White women.

8 **SEC. 3. INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON BLACK WOMEN AND**
9 **GIRLS.**

10 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after
11 the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General,
12 in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human
13 Services, shall establish an Interagency Task Force on
14 Black women and girls (referred to in this Act as the
15 “Task Force”) to carry out the purposes and duties de-
16 scribed in subsections (d) and (e), in compliance with re-
17 quirements and restrictions under law, as applicable, in-
18 cluding those prohibiting discrimination on the basis of
19 race and sex.

20 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—The Task Force shall consist of
21 members appointed as follows:

22 (1) The head of each of the following agencies
23 shall appoint at least one officer or employee, but no
24 more than two, from a relevant office of the fol-
25 lowing:

1 (A) The Department of Health and
2 Human Services.

3 (B) The Department of Education.

4 (C) The Department of Labor.

5 (D) The National Institutes of Health.

6 (E) The Department of Justice.

7 (F) The Department of Housing and
8 Urban Development.

9 (2) The Attorney General shall appoint the fol-
10 lowing:

11 (A) One officer or employee of a defender
12 organization described in section 3006A(g)(2)
13 of title 18, United States Code.

14 (B) Two representatives of community-
15 based organizations that have expertise working
16 on culturally specific issues unique to the needs
17 of Black women and girls.

18 (c) TERMS.—The term of a member of the Task
19 Force shall be 4 years, and the member shall be eligible
20 for consecutive reappointment by the head of their respec-
21 tive agency or the Attorney General.

22 (d) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Task Force is to
23 examine the conditions and experiences of Black women
24 and girls, to identify and assess the efficacy of policies
25 and programs of Federal, State, and local governments de-

1 signed to improve outcomes for Black women and girls,
2 and to make recommendations to improve such policies
3 and programs.

4 (e) DUTIES.—The duties of the Task Force are as
5 follows:

6 (1) EDUCATION.—The Task Force shall iden-
7 tify and recommend programs, policies, and incen-
8 tives for adoption by Federal, State, or local govern-
9 ments with respect to the following:

10 (A) Community-led educational and sup-
11 port programs for Black girls in kindergarten
12 through grade 12, which shall include the fol-
13 lowing:

14 (i) Social and emotional learning pro-
15 grams, including those that employ
16 facilitators trained in identity-based dia-
17 logue.

18 (ii) Support for girls who have a par-
19 ent or guardian who is incarcerated or has
20 a substance use disorder.

21 (iii) Support for a college scholarship
22 fund and programs to increase access to
23 post-secondary education for Black chil-
24 dren of incarcerated parents.

- 1 (iv) Classroom and after school em-
2 powerment programs for Black girls.
- 3 (v) Community-led civic engagement
4 and community organizing education.
- 5 (vi) Classroom and community-led art,
6 theater, and STEM learning centers.
- 7 (vii) School-based and community-
8 based programs to eliminate the detention
9 and incarceration of school-aged children
10 that employ trained de-escalation profes-
11 sionals.
- 12 (viii) Household access to school-based
13 communication technologies.
- 14 (ix) School-based or community-based
15 restorative justice programs instead of ex-
16 pulsion of girls from school.
- 17 (x) Curriculum, tutoring, and activi-
18 ties support for homeschooling and virtual
19 learning families.
- 20 (xi) School-based or community-based
21 programs on comprehensive, age-appro-
22 priate, sexual health education, which
23 teaches about consent and healthy relation-
24 ships across the spectrum.

1 (B) Community-led educational programs
2 for Black women, including—

3 (i) providing household access to in-
4 formation and communication technologies
5 to narrow the digital divide and enhance
6 access to higher education;

7 (ii) emotional support training for
8 Black mothers, parents, or other guardians
9 on child development and behavioral and
10 discipline management; and

11 (iii) educational programs to support
12 immigrant women, including English learn-
13 ing courses, citizenship preparation
14 courses, and GED courses.

15 (C) School-based and community-based re-
16 storative and transformative justice curriculums
17 and spaces.

18 (D) Policies that prohibit religious dis-
19 crimination against Black Muslim girls in kin-
20 dergarten through grade 12, which may include
21 the following:

22 (i) Allowing girls to always wear all
23 cultural and religious garments.

24 (ii) Excusing absences for Muslim
25 girls during religious holidays.

1 (iii) Avoiding scheduling exams during
2 Muslim holidays that require such girls to
3 fast.

4 (E) Educational programs for Black girls
5 in kindergarten through grade 12 with learning,
6 developmental, and emotional disabilities that
7 may pose an obstacle to learning and excelling
8 in academics, and support groups for parents of
9 such children.

10 (F) Programs and support groups for
11 mothers, parents, or guardians of a child with
12 disabilities.

13 (2) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.—The Task
14 Force shall identify and recommend programs, poli-
15 cies, and incentives for adoption by Federal, State,
16 or local governments with respect to the following:

17 (A) Pre-apprenticeship, nontraditional, and
18 career exploration programs for careers in the
19 skilled trades and transportation.

20 (B) Programs that give priority to black
21 women-owned businesses, which qualify as dis-
22 advantaged business enterprises, when award-
23 ing yearly and multi-year contract dollars.

24 (C) Entrepreneurship and cooperative busi-
25 ness training for Black women.

1 (D) Support for low-income Black women
2 workers.

3 (E) Career mentorship for Black women.

4 (F) Support for Black women workers over
5 the age of 50 to enter the workforce.

6 (G) Support for Black women who leave
7 the workforce to care for a dependent (such as
8 an elderly relative or child) to re-enter the
9 workforce after a significant absence.

10 (H) Increase in sustainable employment
11 for women headed households.

12 (I) Limitation of barriers to occupational
13 licensure for Black women.

14 (J) Establishment of vocational training
15 and career technical education.

16 (K) Job placement and career assistance
17 programs for Black youth experiencing home-
18 lessness or discrimination.

19 (L) Support for Black women and girls
20 with disabilities entering the workforce in part-
21 nership with local businesses.

22 (3) HEALTHCARE.—The Task Force shall iden-
23 tify and recommend programs, policies, and incen-
24 tives for adoption by Federal, State, or local govern-
25 ments with respect to the following:

1 (A) Developing a study of the health, in-
2 cluding the mental health, of Black women and
3 girls.

4 (B) Programs to improve maternal health
5 from the prenatal to postpartum period and in-
6 fant mortality outcomes for Black mothers and
7 children.

8 (C) Community-based, on demand mental
9 health and trauma services.

10 (D) Gender and culturally responsive do-
11 mestic violence (including violence against an
12 intimate partner) and interpersonal violence re-
13 sponders.

14 (E) Local neighborhood safe houses.

15 (F) Long-term, on demand, substance use
16 disorder treatment.

17 (G) Community-based emergency response
18 teams for women and girls.

19 (H) Access to comprehensive well-women
20 care for Black women and girls, including local
21 testing for mammograms, papsmears, sexually
22 transmitted infections, other medical testing,
23 and general health screenings.

24 (I) Local neighborhood COVID–19 testing.

1 (J) Programs to assist Black mothers, par-
2 ents, or guardians of children with disabilities
3 and Black women with disabilities with obtain-
4 ing affordable health insurance.

5 (4) JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS.—The Task
6 Force shall identify and recommend programs, poli-
7 cies, and incentives for adoption by Federal, State,
8 or local governments with respect to the following:

9 (A) Reentry assistance and reunification
10 planning and community-based programming
11 for women victims of sexual, domestic, or inti-
12 mate partner violence, or the war on drugs or
13 women experiencing mental illness or substance
14 abuse.

15 (B) Programs for Black women and girls
16 that promote the treatment of underlying prob-
17 lems instead of incarceration, including the ex-
18 pansion of the use of parole and diversion pro-
19 grams and preventing the incarceration of
20 mothers who are primary caretakers of minor
21 children.

22 (C) Access to legal assistance provided by
23 the Office on Violence Against Women of the
24 Department of Justice for child custody and pa-
25 rental termination proceedings.

1 (D) Funding that enables communities to
2 reimagine community-based programming.

3 (E) Support for formerly incarcerated
4 Black women, in collaboration with community-
5 led organizations.

6 (F) Permitting formerly incarcerated and
7 convicted women (not including incarceration or
8 convictions for violent offenses, human traf-
9 ficking, or sex offenses) to be eligible to serve
10 as a foster parent.

11 (G) Judicial discretion in sentencing and
12 procedures for resentencing.

13 (H) Examination of policies to reform and
14 limit laws requiring mandatory minimum sen-
15 tences.

16 (I) Examination of vacatur and
17 expungement laws for criminal offenses com-
18 mitted by victims of human and sex trafficking.

19 (J) Promoting access for Black women
20 with disabilities to be sheltered, or held in men-
21 tal healthcare facilities rather than imprisoned,
22 especially for nonviolent crimes.

23 (5) HOUSING.—The Task Force shall identify
24 and recommend programs, policies, and incentives

1 for adoption by Federal, State, or local governments
2 with respect to the following:

3 (A) Increasing access to the following:

4 (i) Permanent and transitional hous-
5 ing for women with children, formerly in-
6 carcerated women, women with disabilities,
7 and elderly women.

8 (ii) Legal representation for women
9 with children and women 60 years of age
10 and older facing eviction.

11 (iii) Homeownership assistance funds
12 for Black women.

13 (B) Increasing accessibility and availability
14 of long-term neighborhood transitional and per-
15 manent supportive housing for Black women re-
16 entering the community following incarceration.

17 (f) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1 year
18 after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually
19 thereafter, the Task Force shall submit to Congress a re-
20 port on—

21 (1) the activities conducted under this section;

22 and

23 (2) the activities conducted under this section
24 that are ongoing or are in continuation of existing
25 Federal programs, including information on addi-

1 tional work undertaken in response to duties of the
2 Task Force under subsection (e).

3 (g) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not later than 2 years
4 after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually
5 thereafter, the Task Force shall submit to Congress, the
6 President, and to each chief executive of a State rec-
7 ommendations on policies, practices, programs, and incen-
8 tives that may be adopted to improve outcomes for Black
9 women and girls.

10 **SEC. 4. UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS RE-**
11 **PORT ON ISSUES IMPACTING BLACK WOMEN**
12 **AND GIRLS.**

13 (a) DUTIES.—Not later than 1 year after the date
14 of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the
15 United States Commission on Civil Rights shall conduct
16 a comprehensive study and collect data with respect to the
17 effects on Black women and girls of the following:

18 (1) The lack of contract opportunities with the
19 Federal Government for Black women.

20 (2) The wage gap and pay equity for Black
21 women in comparison to other individuals.

22 (3) The high maternal mortality rate and the
23 steps needed to reduce such rate.

24 (4) The high infant mortality rate of Black
25 girls.

1 (5) The impact of screening for breast cancer
2 at an earlier age than 40 years of age for Black
3 women.

4 (6) The school-to-prison pipeline and its impact
5 on Black women and girls, including Black women
6 and girls with disabilities.

7 (7) Housing stability, homelessness, and access
8 to affordable rental housing and home loans for
9 Black women.

10 (8) The prevalence and rate of violence, includ-
11 ing intimate partner violence and homicide, against
12 Black women and girls, including Black transgender
13 women and girls, and the effect of prevention strate-
14 gies and barriers to service for such women and
15 girls.

16 (9) Excessive use of force by law enforcement,
17 including when death results, against Black women
18 and girls, including Black transgender women and
19 girls.

20 (10) The over-incarceration of Black women
21 and girls, including Black transgender women and
22 girls, in the juvenile and adult justice system.

23 (11) Establishing a moratorium on building
24 new women's prisons or jails.

1 (12) Repealing of the Adoption Safe Families
2 Act of 1997 (Public Law 105–89; 111 Stat. 2115).

3 (13) Repealing any policy or law that creates
4 barriers to housing or precludes formerly incarcerated
5 ated people from living with family members in pub-
6 lic or private housing.

7 (14) Neighborhood family reunification support.

8 (15) The high rate of sex trafficking of Black
9 women and girls, and the impact of State vacatur
10 and expungement laws for victims of human and sex
11 trafficking.

12 (16) Any additional items described in section
13 2(e) that the Commission determines appropriate.

14 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
15 of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the
16 United States Commission on Civil Rights shall submit to
17 Congress, the President, and make publicly available on-
18 line, a report outlining the Commission’s activities and
19 findings under subsection (a).

20 (c) INFORMATION SHARING.—All relevant entities of
21 the United States Government, including the Department
22 of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Serv-
23 ices, the Department of Education, the Department of
24 Labor, and the National Institutes of Health, shall provide
25 information to the United States Commission on Civil

- 1 Rights in order for the Commission to carry out its duties
- 2 under this section.

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