



Texas Must End Juvenile Curfew Ordinances to Help Break the School-to-prison Pipeline

IDRA Testimony for HB 561, Submitted by Araceli García to the House Juvenile Justice and Family Issues Committee, April 12, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Neave and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Araceli García, and I am an Education Policy Fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan, education non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. We support HB 561.

Black students, Latino students, students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, and students from families with limited incomes are pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline due to the harmful discipline practices used by schools (IDRA, 2021). Additionally, harmful youth criminalization policies, such as juvenile curfews put in place by city ordinances, contribute to the criminalization and marginalization of young students of color.

The history of juvenile curfew ordinances is marred by racism. Beginning in the 1990s as a response to perceived threats from “juvenile super-predators,” cities began adopting these juvenile curfew ordinances that criminalized young people who were out past a certain hour (JCO Workgroup, 2017). Youth charged with violating a curfew ordinance are charged with a Class C misdemeanor, which introduces students to the criminal justice system and can carry fines and fees and create a criminal record.

Juvenile curfew ordinances do not help students who may be experiencing real challenges and are not supported by any research or data (JCO Working Group Report, 2017). However, research does confirm that charging young people with a criminal offense threatens their ability to succeed in school, and a criminal record compromises college, employment, housing, and military prospects when students are forced to disclose conviction histories. Research also shows that students of color and students with disabilities are overrepresented in police and court interactions (Jafarian & Ananthakrishnan, 2017).

We recommend passing HB 561 to support ending harmful discipline and criminalization practices in our communities that further marginalize students of color, students from families with limited incomes, and students with disabilities.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Araceli García, IDRA Education Policy Fellow, at araceli.garcia@idra.org.

Resources

IDRA. (2021). Breaking the School-to-Prison and School-to-Deportation Pipelines: IDRA Texas Policy Brief. San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association. https://www.idra.org/education_policy/breaking-the-school-to-prison-and-school-to-deportation-pipelines-idra-texas-priority-brief/

Jafarian, M., & Ananthakrishnan, V. (2017). Just Kids: When Misbehaving is a Crime. Vera.

<https://www.vera.org/when-misbehaving-is-a-crime>

JCO Workgroup. (2017). Report: Austin's Juvenile Curfew Ordinance: Recommendations for Non-Criminal Ways to Support and Ensure the Safety of Young People in Austin. Juvenile Curfew Ordinance Working Group.

<https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=285194>

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. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.