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December 12, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Graham, and members of the Subcommittee for holding this hearing. My name is Michael Jacobson and I serve as president and director of the Vera Institute of Justice. Vera is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit center for justice policy and practice, with offices in New York City, Washington, DC, New Orleans, and Los Angeles. Since 1961, Vera has combined expertise in research, technical assistance, and demonstration projects to help develop justice systems that are fairer, more humane, and more effective for everyone.

Vera is uniquely positioned in its knowledge about the factors surrounding the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon, not only because of our current research and work on the issue, but also because of our extensive experience conducting research on a range of juvenile and criminal justice issues, including school safety and discipline, at both the national and local level. In addition, Vera and its partners plan and implement practical demonstration or pilot projects to test and refine innovative solutions to complex problems. In this area, Vera is currently conducting research to establish an evidentiary basis for the school-to-prison pipeline while also working with private-sector and non-governmental leaders to address the urgent need arising from the disproportionate impact of these policies on young men of color in New York City.

I.   School-to-prison pipeline: how did we get here?

The past several decades have seen the emergence of increasingly severe policies, practices, and enforcement strategies for safety and discipline in United States (U.S.) schools. Police presence on campuses has grown substantially since the 1980s. Currently, approximately half of public

schools have police officers present during school hours,[1] and the total number of officers nationally is between 14,000 and 15,000, double what it was in the late 1990s.[2]

As just one example, since 1998, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) has been in charge of the School Safety Division—a team of officers responsible for maintaining order and safety in public schools. Over the years it has grown to become one of the largest police forces in the country. In 2008-2009, there were more than 5,000 school safety agents (SSAs) and 191 armed police officers in New York City schools—a force larger than the entire police department in Washington, DC.[3] In addition to the strong police presence in schools, approximately 150 of the city's high schools require students to go through a metal detector to enter the building. Following the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado, such enhanced security measures have become much more prevalent across the country. In 2002, 10 percent of school districts nationwide used metal detectors, and in urban districts the percentage was 30 percent.[4]

A.   Rapid Growth and Enforcement of Zero Tolerance Policies

Significantly, there has also been a dramatic change in the nature of policies and practices for responding to noncompliance among students, referred to collectively as school disciplinary policies. Specifically, the use of zero-tolerance policies, which mandate severe penalties—including exclusion from school—for certain infractions regardless of gravity, situational context, or the presence of mitigating factors, has increased dramatically.[5]

Zero-tolerance policies have existed for more than 20 years, yet they have never been as prevalent as they are today. The large majority of U.S. schools have adopted them for responding to certain serious behaviors, particularly those that constitute criminal activities. Eighty-seven

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[1] Travis, L., and Coon, J. (2005). *The Role of Law Enforcement in Public School Safety: A National Survey.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.
[2] St. George, Donna. (2011, July 17). Supreme Court ruling, rising police presence in schools spur Miranda questions. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/supreme-court-ruling-rising-police-presence-in-schools-spur-miranda-questions/2011/06/21/gIQAYXgeKI_story.html
[3] *School to Prison Pipeline: A Look at New York City School Safety*: http://www.nyclu.org/schooltoprison/lookatsafety
[4] National School Boards Association. (2002). School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Conditions and Challenges of District Governance. Alexandria, VA: Frederick M. Hess.
[5] Russell Skiba et al. (2006). *"Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations,"* American Psychological Association (APA) Zero Tolerance Task Force

percent of schools have some form of zero-tolerance policy in place for responding to alcohol- and drug-related behaviors, for example, and 91 percent use the policies in cases of weapons possession on campus.[6] In addition, however, these policies are increasingly being used to respond to less severe behaviors—those that, in the past, would have been handled by school administrators or teachers on a case-by-case basis.

While zero-tolerance policies were designed to make schools safer, the application of these policies to an expanding range of offenses has been shown to contribute to both increasing drop-out rates and decreasing social and civic opportunities among youth.[7] Some policymakers have suggested that the policies contribute to greater delinquency and criminal activity as well, creating a school-to-prison pipeline in which youth are increasingly propelled into the juvenile and adult justice systems.[8] Indeed, studies have shown that students suspended or expelled from school under zero-tolerance policies are arrested within one year at greater rates than those not subject to such policies.[9]

B. Effects of school discipline policies

While empirical evidence on the impact of severe discipline policies on criminal justice system involvement is very limited, there are a few studies that suggest a relationship exists between the two. One of the largest and most relevant studies to date was conducted in Texas by the Council of State Governments Justice Center.[10] In the study, a research team examined school and juvenile justice records for a cohort of public school students who entered seventh grade between 2000 and 2002, following each student for six years to examine trends in school discipline experiences and how those experiences related to educational and other outcomes. Overall, researchers found that 54 percent of students experienced in-school suspension and 31 percent

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[6] Forgione, Jr., P. D. (1998). Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

[7] Hanson (2008). Have zero tolerance school discipline policies turned into a nightmare? The American Dream's Promise of equal educational opportunity grounded in Brown v. Board of Education. University of California Davis Journal of Juvenile Law and Policy, 9, 289-379.

[8] NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. (2007). Dismantling the School to Prison Pipeline. Retrieved January 25, 2011 from http://naacpldf.org/files/publications/Dismantling_the_School_to_Prison_Pipeline.pdf

[9] Bernard L., & Nutt, J. (1994). School Expulsion Law Too Costly, DET. NEWS, Oct. 13, at 11A

[10] Justice Center, Council of State Governments (2011). Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement. New York, NY. Retrieved from http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles

were placed on out-of-school suspension; however, only three percent of the disciplinary actions were for behaviors for which state law mandated suspension and expulsion.[11]

Even more informative, researchers found that justice system involvement (defined as referral to a county probation department for either a delinquent or status offense) was much more prevalent among students who were suspended or expelled. A descriptive analysis revealed that 23 percent of those who fell into this category had some sort of contact with the justice system during the study period compared to only two percent of students with no involvement in the school disciplinary system. Moreover, when researchers conducted multivariate analyses they found a predictive relationship between being suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation (in which punishment is not required) and becoming involved in the justice system. Specifically, they found that students who experienced a first suspension or expulsion for a discretionary school violation were 2.85 times more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system within the next academic year.[12]

C. Racial differences and disparities in school discipline

Research also suggests that school discipline policies disproportionately affect youth of color.[13] A 1998 report by the Federal Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights found, for example, that African American students represented 17 percent of public school enrollment nationally, but 32 percent of out-of-school suspensions.[14] White students, in contrast, made up 63 percent of enrollment and 50 percent of out-of-school suspensions. Other analyses have shown some evidence of disproportion in the representation of minority students among arrests in schools as well. For example, in 2007 African American students made up 47 percent of all school arrests referred to the juvenile justice system in Florida and only 22 percent of the student population in the state.[15]

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[11] Many of these mandatory exclusions are for behaviors that constitute felonies.

[12] School policies on discretionary and mandatory violations varied from school to school – as a result, examples of specific violation types are not provided in the Texas study

[13] Casella, R. (2003). Zero tolerance policy in schools: Rationale, consequences, and alternatives. *Teachers College Record, 105*, 872–892.

[14] Office of Civil Rights (2000). Fall 1998 Elementary and secondary school civil rights compliance report: National and state projections. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education

[15] Hall, E. and Karanxha, Z. (2012). School Today, Jail Tomorrow: The Impact of Zero Tolerance on the Over-Representation of Minority Youth In the Juvenile System. *PowerPlay, (4)*, p. 1-30

Unfortunately, the abovementioned analyses did not examine the extent to which the disproportionate representation of minorities among discipline actions resulted from their differential involvement in serious problem behaviors. There is other research, however, suggesting that disparities—or differential responses to the same behaviors—exist across races as well. A review of studies that examine predictors of out-of-school suspension, found, for example, that non-behavioral characteristics such as race predicted school suspension more strongly than student behavior and attitude.[16]

Another more recent study by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights found that African-American students represent 18 percent of the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) sample, but 35 percent of students were suspended once, 46 percent of those suspended more than once, and 39 percent of students expelled. Over 70 percent of students involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American. The CRDC reflected data from the 2009-2010 school year, and is a representative sample covering about 85% of the nation's students.[17]

D. Factors related to school discipline and long-term justice system involvement

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. There is also research that demonstrates how academic failure—in particular dropping out of high school—serves as a link between the two.

A number of studies have shown that youth who are disciplined under severe school disciplinary policies are more likely to be less committed to school, do worse academically, and drop out. An analysis of high school sophomores from the *High School and Beyond* study,[18] for example,

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[16] Skiba, R.J. (2000). *An analysis of school disciplinary practice. Policy Research,* Rep. No. SRS2. (Bloomington, Indiana Education Policy Center)
[17] Office of Civil Rights (2012): The Transformed CRDC-March 2012 Data Summary. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education
[18] The High School & Beyond (HS&B) study was designed to study the educational, vocational, and personal development, and included life cycle factors, such as family formation and social participation. A sophomore cohort was added in order to track changes and choices made between 10th and 12th grade. Initial data were collected in 1980 and a follow-up survey was given in 1982 to students with a slightly different version given to dropouts.

examined a range of factors and found that prior engagement with school discipline was more strongly related to dropping out than either poor academics or low socio-economic status (a coefficient of .41 compared to those of .22 and .25, respectively).[19]

Another study that followed several cohorts of sixth-grade Philadelphia students through one year past on-time graduation found that only 20 percent of those who received one or more out-of-school suspensions in sixth grade graduated within one year of their on-time date;[20] and according to a 2006 report by the National Center for Education Statistics, 31 percent of high school sophomores in 2002 who dropped out within two years had been suspended three or more times. In general, research shows that students sanctioned under these policies have lower rates of high school graduation, lower academic achievement, and lower college attendance levels.[21]

In addition to this research demonstrating the impact of school discipline on negative school outcomes, there is a great deal of research showing that negative school outcomes increase the risk of delinquent and criminal behavior over the short and long term, and that positive school outcomes decrease it. For example, one longitudinal analysis of high-risk youth found that high school graduation decreased involvement in serious crime in young adulthood, in large part because of the greater ability of graduates to gain employment.[22] A study by Bersani and Chapple found that dropping out of school and grade retention (being held back) are associated with future delinquent behavior and marijuana use; and a longitudinal analysis by Lawrence, Leonard, Michael, and Stanley revealed that dropping out of high school increases the likelihood of being arrested as an adult as well.[23]

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[19] Wehlage, G.G. and Rutter, R.A. (1986). Dropping Out: How much do schools contribute to the problem? *Teachers College Record, 87,* p. 374-393

[20] Balfanz, R., Herzog, Mac Iver, D. (2007). Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions. *Educational Psychologist, 42(4),* pp. 223-235

[21] Wald, J. and Losen, D. (2003). Defining and Redirecting a School-to-Prison Pipeline, Framing Paper for the *School-to-Prison Pipeline* Research Conference. The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University.

[22] Bernburg, J. and Krohn, M. (2003). Labeling, Life Chances, and Adult Crime: The Direct and Indirect Effects of Official Intervention in Adolescence on Crime in Early Adulthood. *Criminology, 41(4),* p.1287-1318

[23] St. George, Donna. (2011, July 17). Supreme Court ruling, rising police presence in schools spur Miranda questions. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/supreme-court-ruling-rising-police-presence-in-schools-spur-miranda-questions/2011/06/21/gIQAYXgeKI_story.html

II. Vera's work on the school-to-prison pipeline

The research presented above provides a strong foundation of support for exploring the school-to-prison pipeline; however, there are significant further areas of inquiry that Vera seeks to address through our work. First, there is almost no research that directly tests the link between severe school disciplinary policies—in particular, zero-tolerance policies—and crime and delinquency outcomes, and our review of existing research to date revealed no studies that examined the impact of such policies on system involvement (as opposed to self-reported crime) over the long term.

Second, and related, there are limits to what current research can tell us about the nature of the school-to-prison pipeline—in other words, what types of factors explain the relationship between discipline and long-term system involvement. Most of what we know in this area comes from drawing connections between findings from different studies. Finally, while there is evidence that racial disproportionalities and disparities exist in discipline patterns, there are still many unanswered questions about the extent of these phenomena as well. Little research to date has attempted to explore the relationship between school disciplinary policies and long-term justice system involvement, often referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline.

Experts agree that more rigorous, longitudinal research is needed to clarify exactly how far the influence of these policies extends—and in particular how they affect long-term involvement in the criminal justice system.[24] While individual-level school factors such as being held back and dropping out of high school have received considerable attention in studies on criminal careers, there is a significant gap in this research on the role played by school-level policies and practices.

A. Vera's research: establishing the evidence

To begin to address this gap, in January 2012 Vera launched a study, which will be published in 2013. The research will examine the connection between school disciplinary policies—in particular, those that approximate a zero-tolerance approach—and crime and delinquency

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[24] American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. (2008). Are zero tolerance policies effective in schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations. *American Psychologist, 63,* 852-862.

outcomes among youth exposed to these policies. More specifically, the study, which is funded by the Spencer Foundation and employs data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health),[25] will explore three specific questions related to the school-to-prison pipeline hypothesis:

1) What is the impact of school disciplinary policies and school climate on short-term delinquency outcomes among youth, including in-school delinquency and juvenile justice involvement?

2) What is the impact on long-term outcomes of adult crime and adult justice system involvement? and

3) What are the interactional influences of school characteristics, family, peer groups, and neighborhoods on both sets of outcomes?

Our goal is to promote a better understanding of the impact of these policies on youth well-being and the implementation of policies that are fair and effective. In other words, in examining the factors leading to the pipeline, to what extent do the following factors explain the relationship between severe disciplinary policies and long-term involvement in the criminal justice system: suspension and expulsion, juvenile delinquency, contact with the juvenile justice system, high school GPA, drug and alcohol use (as an adult or juvenile), educational achievement, and employment.

In addition to examining the connections between school disciplinary polices and school climate, and crime and delinquencies outcomes, this research also fills a critical gap. As discussed above, the gap is particularly problematic in light of profound changes in the use of zero-tolerance policies, a substantial growth in the presence of police officers in schools, and higher levels of collaboration between schools and juvenile justice agencies. The removal of youth from school under these policies has been shown to lead to decreases in educational opportunities, increases

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[25] Add Health is based on a stratified, random sample of all middle and high schools in the U.S., and includes a core group of 12,105 youth participants recruited from 132 schools. Data on all participants were collected in four waves, each of which drew on multiple sources of information (including youth, parents, school administrators, and peers) and covered a range of variables (including demographics, school performance, school punishment, peer behaviors, employment, delinquency, and crime). Two of the waves were conducted between 1994 and 1996, when the youth were enrolled in school. Wave three occurred in 2001-2002, when respondents were 18-26 years old, and the fourth wave was conducted in 2007-2008.

in drop-out rates, and subsequent decreases in social and civic opportunities for youth as they enter adulthood. Indeed, studies have shown that students suspended or expelled from school under zero-tolerance policies are arrested within one year at greater rates than those not subjected to such policies.

Experts agree, however, that more research is needed to clarify exactly how school policies and other environmental factors influence crime and delinquency outcomes over the long term. While many of the systems in which youth are embedded, such as families and neighborhoods, have received considerable attention in studies on delinquent careers, the role of schools has been researched in far less detail.

Research on school-level policies and characteristics has primarily been cross-sectional in nature. Thus, while we know that supportive environments, fairness toward students, respect, and other factors all predict lower levels of in-school offending—including violent offending[26]—we do not know anything about the long-term effects of these characteristics on youth development and future juvenile and criminal justice system involvement.

Furthermore, longitudinal work to date does not fully explore how school-level factors interact with those from other social systems. Vera seeks to analyze delinquency careers over the short term as well as the long term, while explicitly paying attention to a range of microsystems that may influence such careers. Vera's particular interest is in exploring the effect of school climate and school disciplinary control factors on youth outcomes.

This research is a critical step toward establishing an evidentiary basis for the school-to-prison pipeline. It is just a start, however, in that it focuses on ascertaining the extent to which a

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[26] Welsh, W. N., Greene, J. R., & Jenkins. P. H. (1999). School disorder: The influence of individual, institutional, and community factors. *Criminology, 37*, 73-115; Payne, A. A. (2008). A Multilevel Analysis of the Relationships among Communal School Organization, Student Bonding, and Delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency*, *45*, 429-455; Brookmeyer, K. A., Fanti, K., A., & Henrich, C. C. (2006). Schools, parents, and youth violence: A multilevel ecological analysis. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology 35,* 504-514; Gottfredson, G. D., Gottfredson, D. C., Payne, A. A., & Gottfredson, N. C. (2005). School climate predictors of school disorder: Results form a national study of delinquency prevention in schools. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency, 42*(4), 412-444.; and Crooks, C. V., Scott, K. L., Wolfe, D, A., Chiodo, D., and Killip, S. (2007). Understanding the Link between Childhood Maltreatment and Violent Delinquency: What do schools have to add?" *Child Maltreatment*, 12, 3, 269-280.

relationship between school policies and criminal justice system involvement (both in the short and long term) exists. Along with this research effort, Vera is continuing its practice of testing ideas on the ground. For more than 50 years, Vera has employed a model centered on the dual approach of working closely with government partners and using pilot demonstration projects. When there is no existing evidence-based practice that can be readily adapted to complex problems like violent crime and chronic truancy, Vera partners with government officials and interested stakeholders to research, develop and test new solutions.

B. Innovative private-sector responses to the crisis

To that end, in addition to the research described above, Vera is also actively engaged in an effort with private-sector individuals striving to make a difference in New York City. The Pipeline Crisis Initiative (www.pipelinecrisis.org) is a diverse volunteer-based association that mobilizes private-sector leadership, investments, and advocacy to create and clear pathways for young black men to achieve social and economic equality. Their approach to these obstacles is three-fold: program development and support; advocacy; and research to identify winning strategies. The Pipeline Leadership Team consists of partners, senior managers, and leaders from influential private-sector companies who oversee the working groups and collaborate to achieve the initiative's overall goals.[27] Vera serves as its fiscal sponsor, leads the Justice Working Group, and serves on the leadership team.

The initiative emerged from plenary sessions organized by Sullivan & Cromwell between 2006 through 2008 that aimed to raise private-sector consciousness of the alarming rates at which black boys and men are falling through the cracks. The sessions identified five areas of urgent need, and participants divided into working groups around each broad category. The status and achievements of these groups are listed below:

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[27] Leadership Team includes: Roger A. Blissett, Managing Director, U.S. Strategy, RBC Capital Markets Corporation; Eric Brettschneider, Assistant Commissioner, NYS Office of Children & Family Services; Richard A. Brown, Vice President, Philanthropy, American Express; Stephanie Y. Gayden, Vice President & Associate General Counsel, Goldman Sachs; Robert J. Gerrard, Jr. General Counsel, Scripps Networks emeritus; Karen Goldstein, Vice President & General Counsel, Vera Institute of Justice; Adrienne A. Harris, Associate, Sullivan & Cromwell LLP; Michael Jacobson, Director, Vera Institute of Justice; Jennifer Krevitt, Vice President, Goldman Sachs; Andrea Locklear, Chief Operating Officer, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer US LLP; Kevin Martinez, Senior Director of Corporate Outreach, ESPN; William Schroeder, Special Counsel, Sullivan & Cromwell LLP; Gwendolyn Simmons, Vice President, Bank of America; and William J. Snipes, Partner, Sullivan & Cromwell LLP.

1. **The Early Care & Education Working Group** has worked with four daycare centers in East New York to credential, certify, and provide leadership training for directors and staff to bring them in compliance with current quality standards as established by city and state guidelines and is now considering how best to reformat its program using online learning to accomplish the same professional development goals but with fewer overhead costs;

2. **The Public School Education Working Group** has established the Black Male Donor Collaborative, based at the Schott Foundation, which pools resources to identify and financially support successful programs promoting academic achievement among low-income black males in Central Harlem and Central Brooklyn, using the research BMDC commissioned at its inception;[28]

3. **The Justice Working Group** is supporting a research study that is being performed by the Vera Institute of Justice to assess the impact of the New York Police Department's stop and frisk practices on young people and their families in several New York City neighborhoods and their communities, using interviews and surveys to determine how young people experience stop and frisk interactions, and how these interactions influence perceptions of justice, safety, and self. (A final report on the study will be released in the middle of 2013);

4. **The Employment and Economic Development Working Group** is working in partnership with American Express and Jobs First NYC to develop closer ties between the New York Restaurant Association and community-based workforce development organizations in order to help train and hire hard-to-employ youth in front-of-the-house and back-of-the-house food services jobs; and

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[28] Winning Strategies for Changing the Educational/Life Trajectories of Black Male Youth in New York City," by Dr. Pedro Noguera and Dr. Ron Mincy (2010)

5. **The High Potential Youth Working Group** funded test preparation courses for middle school students to improve their performance on the entrance exams for New York City's selective public high schools.

At present, the leadership team is working to build upon its successful local interventions to have a systemic impact on the lives of young black males. Its current projects include gathering statistics and research that bolster the "business case" for Pipeline's initiatives, and can be used to generate both private and public sector support; creating an advocacy campaign to educate the public about stop and frisk issues; and building on the private sector engagement and support it has already achieved.

C.   Collaboration with Turnaround for Children

In another partnership, Vera is collaborating with a New York-based nonprofit organization Turnaround for Children to develop a new program for chronically absent students in middle and high schools in New York City. Turnaround for Children is a non-profit organization that partners with the lowest-performing, highest-poverty public schools to address the obstacles to teaching and learning that stem from poverty. With funding from the local city government, a private foundation, and a private-sector partner, Vera has one year of planning funds to interview school staff, youth, and families and conduct observations of program teams in schools. At the same time, Vera is examining data trends for predictors and correlates of chronic absence. Looking ahead, Vera plans to design an intervention strategy that will include the development and implementation of an assessment tool to use with the chronically absent kids and their families the project works with to explore the underlying reasons for their school disengagement.

Concluding Statement

Looking ahead, Vera hopes that our research and collaboration with governmental and private partners will provide strategies to educators and policymakers to promote positive, consistent, and fair discipline measures that keep students in school and learning all the while ensuring school safety—through research and programs that develop a better understanding of which school policies lead to school delinquency and increased victimization for similar youth.

In addition to identifying the most effective discipline strategies, the goal of our research is to help educators better understand which organizational aspects of school climate produce better student bonding with the school, thereby leading to a reduction in disciplinary issues, as well as improved longer-term outcomes such as reductions in suspensions and expulsions, better academic achievement, higher graduation rates, and the cultivation of productive citizens.

A better understanding of how school-level factors affect long-term crime and delinquency is critical to understanding the development of delinquent careers. There is much debate about the effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies among advocates, and it is hoped that the results of Vera's research will provide empirical evidence to inform the debate leading to the development of evidence-based disciplinary policies.

This hearing comes at a critical time. Jurisdictions across the country are increasingly working to limit the reach of the juvenile and criminal justice systems. In particular, officials are striving to develop and implement strategies that both safely divert young people from justice system involvement and keep them engaged in school and in their communities. In order to do this effectively and thoughtfully, however, localities need to understand how youth are currently entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems—what are the trajectories they follow into those systems and what are the factors that influence those trajectories? Vera is working to find answers to those questions and, in doing so, looks forward to further collaboration with Congress, the Administration, and other non-governmental partners as we seek a better future for our nation's youth.

In closing, I would like to thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for holding this hearing, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue on this important issue.