


# BLACK SANCTUARY, NOT PUSHOUT


*Defending the George Floyd  
Resolution in OUSD and Beyond*

---

**The Black Organizing Project**  
December 2025




PROTECT  
OAKLAND  
SCHOOLS



# Table of Contents

3	Authors & Partners
4	Acronyms & Key Terms
5	Executive Summary
6	Key Findings
7	Introduction
8	History & Methodology
9	<b>I: Criminalizing Black Students</b>
17	<b>II: Building Blocks of Black Sanctuary</b>
23	<b>III: Our Collective Path Forward</b>
25	Acknowledgements
26	Endnotes





# Authors & Partners

## Authors

Keala Uchôa, Oscar Lopez, Monifa Akosua, Caitlin Jolicoeur, Atasi Uppal, Gabrielle Birog, Michelle Kotval, Gloria Yi, Deksyos Damtew, Chaquius Stephens

## Demands Team

Monifa Akosua, free Pierre, Amia Brizendine, Najorae Trang-Kwina, Malcolm Harris, Vanja M. Abena, BOP Black Parent & Caregiver Member Group

## Contributing Editors

Sally Lee, Zach Norris, Malaika Parker, Malcolm Harris

## Graphic Design

Paul Pugh, Keala Uchôa

## Report Reviewers

Holy Wilson, Ursula DeWitt, Kampala Taiz-Rancifer, Jessica Black

## Research Partners

### The Black Organizing Project (BOP)

is a multi-generational, member-led, community organization working for racial, social, and economic justice through grassroots organizing in Oakland, California, and across the Bay Area. Founded in 2009, BOP is committed to organizing for real long-term systems change. In 2020, after years of strategic community organizing, BOP succeeded in pressuring the Oakland United School Board (OUSD) to pass the George Floyd Resolution (GFR), eliminating the Oakland School Police Department. This historic victory was the first of its kind in the country.

### Disability Rights California (DRC)

is the agency designated under federal law to protect and advocate for the rights of Californians with disabilities. DRC works in litigation, legal representation, advocacy services, investigations, public policy, and provides information, advice, referral, and community outreach. For more than 40 years, DRC has worked to advance the rights of Californians with disabilities in education, employment, independence, health, and safety, and has grown into the largest disability rights organization in the nation.

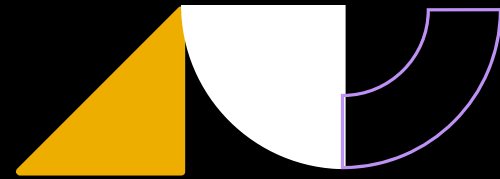
### The East Bay Community Law Center

is the largest provider of free legal services in Alameda County. For over three decades, EBCLC has nurtured community partnerships to provide each client with holistic legal services that reflect their unique, complex experience. EBCLC's Education Defense and Justice for Youth (EDJY) Program uses social work and legal advocacy to confront the impact of the school-prison nexus on Black and Brown youth. Through individual legal representation, local and state policy efforts and resource development, EDJY works to improve and disrupt special education, school discipline and juvenile court systems.

### Preferred Citation

Keala Uchôa, Oscar Lopez, Et al., Black Sanctuary, Not Pushout: Defending The George Floyd Resolution in OUSD and Beyond. Oakland, CA: Black Organizing Project, 2025.

# Acronyms & Key Terms



**Black Sanctuary** is a practical and visionary response to this era of multiple, overlapping crises. It offers both shelter from systemic harm and a path forward toward collective thriving. Black Sanctuary is both a place and a practice. It is a demand and a design. It is the radical act of building communities where Black people are safe, supported, and self-determined. In a world that devalues Black life, Black Sanctuary affirms our humanity. In a political climate that criminalizes dissent and difference, Black Sanctuary is a bulwark against authoritarianism.

**B.O.S.S.** stands for the Bettering Our School System Campaign, which was launched in October 2011 by BOP members to address the impact of law enforcement on students in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).

**Community Pushout** refers to a complex convergence of factors, including gentrification, environmental racism, structural racism, the rising cost of living, and low wages for workers of color, that result in the displacement of communities.

**DVP** Department of Violence Prevention

**GFR** The George Floyd Resolution was passed June 24, 2020, making the Oakland Unified School District the first district in the country to eliminate an entire school police department. In addition to eliminating the Oakland Unified District's internal police department, the GFR directed the superintendent to reallocate funds previously used for sworn police officers to student supports and resources, such as school-based social workers, psychologists, restorative justice practitioners, and other mental or behavioral health professionals.

**IEP** Individualized Education Program is a legally binding plan for public school students with disabilities, detailing personalized goals, specialized instruction, and support services to ensure they get a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under US federal law (IDEA).

**OUSD** Oakland Unified School District

**OPD** Oakland Police Department

**OSPD** Oakland School Police Department

**OSS** Out-of-School Suspension

**People's Budget** is a \$57 million transformative budget that aims to direct the Oakland Unified School District to allocate these funds (and more) to essential positions, training for staff, and resources that are integral in transforming school culture and climate. The resources include Restorative Justice facilitators, Mental Health Counselors, Culture Keepers, Violence Prevention staff, and more.

**School Pushout** refers to the many systemic factors that prevent or discourage young people from remaining on track to complete their education.

**VIP** Violence and Intervention Prevention Programs

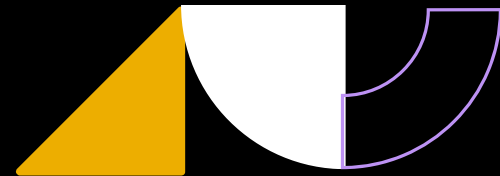
**504 Plans** A 504 plan is a plan provided by schools to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to education via accommodations. Unlike an IEP, a 504 plan modifies the learning environment to meet the student's needs.





# Executive Summary

# Key Findings



## Black students are the most impacted by punitive school discipline

**50%**

Black students made up half of all suspensions between 2021-2024 despite only making up less than 20% of OUSD's student population

**50%**

Black students made up more than half of all expulsions in the past four school years despite only making up less than 20% of OUSD's student population

## Black OUSD workers holding key GFR positions are severely underpaid

**\$37K**

Average salary of Cultural Keepers in OUSD, who are more than 80% Black

**\$47K**

Average salary of Culture and Climate Ambassadors in OUSD, who are more than 80% Black

**\$57K**

Average salary of Family-Parent Liaisons, who are 90% Black and Latine

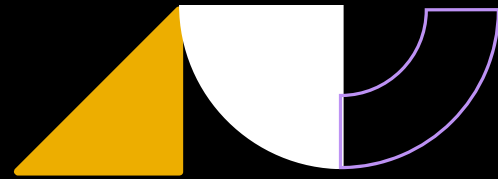
## Punitive school discipline is a racial justice & disability justice issue

**100%**

All students with disabilities expelled were students of color.



# Introduction



*“So what would it look like to have true behavioral support at our schools? This is something that has been needed, and had I had access to it back in the late 90’s, maybe my adolescent years would not have been spent in a residential treatment facility” - Vanja Abena, OUSD alumna & current OUSD Parent*

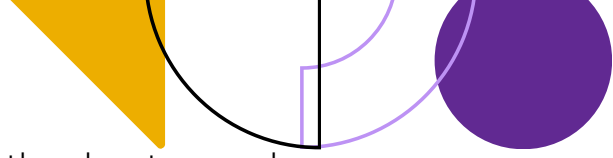
Vanja Abena still remembers running up and down Plum Heaven – otherwise known as Alcatraz Ave – with her brother as kids in the 90s. Lined with abundant, fruiting plum trees, this street felt like home to the Abenas, who – similar to thousands of other Black Oaklanders – made the long journey from rural Louisiana seeking refuge from Jim Crow segregation and racial terror. Yet, this street was also the site of Vanja’s first experience of anti-Blackness and criminalization as a young Black girl, which has always stuck with her, even today, as she walks the same street with her 6-year-old daughter, Nova. While climbing a tree to pick plums, her white neighbor sprayed her with a hose and called her a ‘monkey,’ making it clear to Vanja that she was not welcome outside the bounds of what was then known as Black North Oakland.

Rather than being spaces of refuge and sanctuary, Peralta Elementary and later Claremont Middle School also became sites of trauma, racial exclusion, and pain for her as a Black student on an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**. Decades later, Nova, who is now only in first grade, has already attended three schools in OUSD. First Piedmont Avenue Elementary, then Hoover Elementary in the hills, and now a new school in the district, Vanja says, if she cannot find an affirming learning environment for her Black autistic daughter, she may be forced to pull Nova out of OUSD altogether.

Vanja’s multigenerational experience navigating anti-Blackness and disability injustice in OUSD as a student and now a parent is not an anomaly. This is what **School Pushout** looks like. Vanja – like so many other Black caregivers that we organize with in Oakland – is struggling to keep her daughter in OUSD and get her the care that she needs as a student on an IEP instead of punishment and exclusion. **“They have put me through hell,”** Vanja says, exhausted, yet still determined.

A convergence of factors – including anti-Black racism, a perpetual budgetary crisis at OUSD, understaffing, gentrification, and the rising cost of living – is pushing Black students and their families out of one of the few school districts in the *entire country* that has remained police-free for more than five years. In other words, Black folks are being pushed out of the very district that they have nurtured, shaped, and fought for over decades.






And yet, working-class Black parents, caregivers, youth, educators, and community members are still organizing to ensure that the GFR is fully invested in and, in turn, Black students and their families can reap the transformative benefits of policing-free schools in Oakland for generations to come. At BOP, we continue to fight with Black Oakland for data and transparency from OUSD so we can truly access where we have been and where we need to go.

Our analysis of the implementation of the GFR five years after its passage is presented in four sections. We open with a grounding in the history of policing in schools in Oakland and our research methodology. In Part II, we discuss the impact of the GFR thus far on outcomes for Black students in OUSD. In Part III, we provide an overview of the elements of our People's Budget that have been successfully implemented by the district. Likewise, we identify key gaps that must be filled to ensure Black students and workers are supported in shifting the culture of criminalization in OUSD. We conclude in Part IV with demands from Black organizers, parents, caregivers, students, community partners, and community members committed to building Black Sanctuary in OUSD.


### **History & Methodology**



From the Jim Crow South to diverse countries across the Global South, many of our loved ones and neighbors have made long journeys to Oakland in search of refuge from anti-Black violence and poverty. As we have cultivated vibrant communities, sustained local economies, and co-created cultural hubs, we have also been met with hauntingly similar forms of structural anti-Blackness and racism throughout the Bay Area. When large waves of Black folks came to cities like Oakland during the first and second great migrations, policing burgeoned as a form of racialized social control. School police were established in Oakland in 1957 to police our youth, and, ultimately, prevent our communities from developing self-determination.

And yet, for as long as our children have been policed in Oakland public schools, our communities have resisted and organized to fund care in schools instead of cops. In October 2011, members of BOP launched the B.O.S.S campaign to address the impact of law enforcement on students in OUSD. The BOSS campaign was the product of a year of community research and analysis, but was prompted by the tragic killing of Raheim Brown, a young Black boy who was murdered by Oakland school police in January 2011. After a decade of grassroots organizing led by working-class Black families, we got the GFR passed, making Oakland the first city in the country to eliminate a school police department.

Five years after the implementation of the GFR, we made several Public Records Act requests alongside our partners at DRC and EBCLC to OUSD to assess its efficacy and impact thus far.





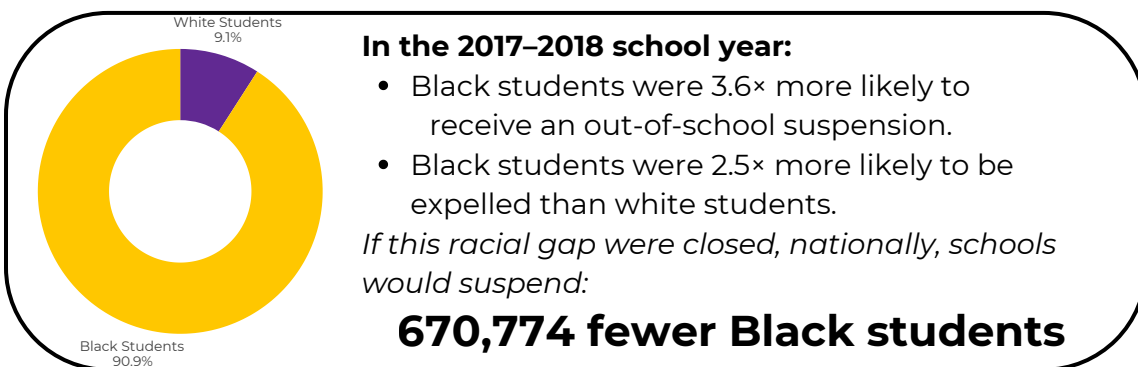
# Part I.

## Criminalizing Black Students

*“I was one of many Black girls who just wanted to be understood but didn’t yet have the tools to express what I was going through”*

- Amia Brizendine, 2019 Skyline High School Alumna

Across the United States, Black students, regardless of ethnicity, are subjected to harsher and more frequent punishments than their non-Black peers by school administrators. We see this racial gap in disciplinary measures even when non-Black students engage in similar behavior deemed as misconduct. Compared to their white peers in the 2017-2018 academic year, Black students were 3.6 times more likely to receive an **out-of-school suspension (OSS)** and 2.5 times more likely to be expelled. Put differently, when we close the racial gap between Black and white students, schools across the country will suspend 670,774 fewer Black students.



Even more glaring gaps exist in California. During the 2023-2024 academic year, Black students had a suspension rate 5.9 percentage points higher than white students—the highest gap between *any* reported demographic. In that same academic year, Black and Native American students had the highest expulsion rates.

California has one of the lowest expulsion rates in the country, thanks to an organizing movement that demanded an end to punitive and exclusionary discipline. Yet, the numbers do not tell the whole story. We know that many school districts in our state have found informal ways to push our young people out of their classrooms. For example, although Sacramento City Unified only expelled 42 students, it transferred 511 students for disciplinary reasons and transferred 3,281 students to alternative schools. Black students in the majority of districts across our state are overrepresented in discipline-related transfers.

As Chelsea Helena, an education attorney for Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, put it, “transfers are being used as a back-door way of removing kids from school. And it’s impacting Black and Brown kids more.”

Not only do Black students face higher disciplinary rates, but they are, as a result, pushed out of school and into the juvenile justice system. Black students are nearly 2.5 times more likely to be referred to law enforcement by their schools and 2.9 times more likely to experience a school-based arrest. Compounding these inequities, Black students face additional negative consequences associated with suspensions—including an inability to graduate and reduced economic mobility. Even just one out-of-school suspension increases the odds that a student will not graduate high school or attend college.

In California schools, Black students are missing a significant amount of classroom instruction, denying them their right to learn. Between 2021 and 2022, Black youth, on average, missed 30.7 days of school due to out-of-school suspensions. Conversely, white students missed only 8.1 days, which is 22.6 fewer days than their Black peers. This gap was the largest between white students and any other reported racial demographic. In 2023 to 2024, this gap grew—and now sits at a staggering 26 days.

Higher rates of school discipline occur for Black students in the foster system, Black students with a disability, and Black unhoused youth, as well. Recent trends in outcomes for Black students in the foster system are particularly disturbing. On average in the 2023-2024 academic school year, Black students in the foster system were denied 121.8 school days because of out-of-school suspensions – an average lost instruction rate 15 times higher than white students. In other words, children in greatest need of belonging are pushed out and rendered disposable by the adults charged to protect them.

Our research backs what we already know to be true – pushing Black students out of their classrooms and school communities has devastating and rippling impacts across California and the entire country.





## Zooming in on Oakland Unified School District

Amia Brizendine remembers the day she was met with cops and handcuffs instead of the care and healing she desperately needed as a freshman at Skyline High School. Amia graduated in 2019, just one year before the passage of the GFR in 2020, when Black students and families won police-free schools in Oakland after a decade of grassroots organizing. She had gotten into a conflict with another young Black girl in her grade, resulting in her suspension.

**“I remember being treated like a threat with my hands behind my back. Instead of getting to the root cause, I was suspended for three days and labeled,”** she tells us at a Black parent and caretaker meeting at our BOP office in West Oakland.

At the time, the restorative justice facilitators and trained mental health professionals that our People’s Budget demanded were not accessible on her campus. She did not have a trusted adult who asked her about what was happening at home. Navigating a parent with addiction and instability at home, she carried that overwhelming stress into her classrooms each day.

**“This wasn’t just my story; it’s the system. Black students are only 20% of OUSD’s population, yet we make up half of all suspensions and expulsions. That’s not restorative,”** Amia says as she reminds us that we still have work to do to ensure the racial inequities in school discipline are eradicated in OUSD.

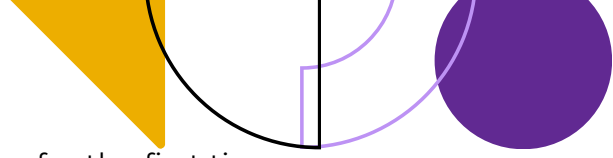
Similar to trends throughout our state, OUSD still disproportionately suspends and expels Black students. Given the harmful impacts that result from punitive school discipline, we know that we must continue to organize to ensure that the Black students in OUSD are getting the support and resources that they need to thrive.

**“The GFR shows us what’s possible when we prioritize healing over punishment,”** says Amia. Today, she is a school-site organizer at BOP fighting with Black students and caregivers to ensure that her alma mater and all OUSD campuses invest long-term in the GFR to truly build Black Sanctuary in The Town.

We break down our analysis of OUSD data by four key benchmarks to measure school disciplinary outcomes for Black students: (A) **Calls for Service**, (B) **Arrests**, (C) **School Suspensions**, and (D) **School Expulsions**.

### Calls for Service

Although OUSD’s history with school policing goes back more than six decades, it was not until 2012 that the district began tracking data about the school police department’s activities and interactions with students.



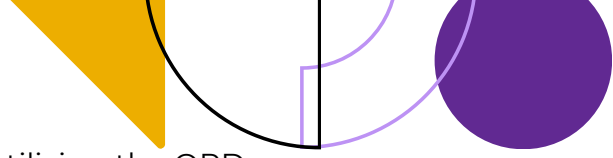
That's because in 2012, BOP organized to ensure that – for the first time – OUSD tracked complaints by students and parents against the **Oakland School police department (OSPD)**. Soon thereafter, we published a report that exposed the disproportionate arrest rates of Black students in OUSD. Then, in 2014, we negotiated with OUSD to track more metrics beyond complaints against school police officers, including arrests, citations, and calls to police by school staff, and all interactions between students and police.

The data we received soon afterwards was shocking. In the 2015-16 school year alone, OUSD staff called the police on students over *2,500 times*. As a result of our organizing, these calls dropped steadily to nearly 2,100 in 2019, the year before OUSD approved the GFR. However, it was not until the OUSD police department was eliminated that the number of calls decreased dramatically.

Throughout our B.O.S.S. campaign to eliminate police from schools and leading up to the win of the GFR, we stood firm: **No police in our schools — including OPD**. From the start, the community understood the real risk: if police were removed from OUSD schools, staff may default to calling the OPD instead— a pattern rooted in historic harm to Black and Brown youth. Staff concerns echoed what our community already knew. Instead of accepting police as the fallback, we pushed the district to build real, community-rooted safety infrastructure so OPD wouldn't be the default.

In the year immediately following the GFR's passage, 2021, the number of calls from OUSD to the police, including OPD, dropped by nearly 90%. The numbers have stayed steady between 150 and 300 in the five years since the GFR passed, significantly lower than the nearly 2,000 calls per year when the school police department existed. This data demonstrates that school staff were unnecessarily calling the police when the district had its own police department, which should serve as a warning to other school districts that employ or are considering employing their own police department.

We also knew that due to the disproven super-predator theory and the racialized “tough-on-crime” mentality of the early 1990s, several states and Congress passed laws to further criminalize young people. In California, one example of these laws was the “mandatory notification” laws, which require school staff to notify police of certain school incidents, such as possession of marijuana or alcohol. However, these laws do not require OUSD staff to call 911, which results in the deployment of police to a school campus. Instead, school districts can comply with these notification laws by simply sending a fax to a police department or submitting a report to a non-emergency line, which would not result in the deployment of police. This means that administrators were unnecessarily deploying police to school campuses, putting young people at risk for harmful interactions with OPD officers.



To address this, we negotiated with OUSD to begin utilizing the OPD non-emergency line to comply with notification laws and keep our children safe, rather than unnecessarily calling 911.

The data indicates that OUSD did, in fact, begin utilizing the non-emergency line after the GFR. For example, in the 2024-25 school year, there were 208 calls from OUSD to OPD, 40 of which went to the non-emergency line.

This means that children who are navigating boundaries, experimenting, and exhibiting developmentally appropriate behaviors are more often being offered resources and support opportunities rather than facing criminalization. The majority of calls to the non-emergency line involved finding a weapon on campus or submitting a Child Protective Services (CPS) or Missing Persons report, all of which are required notifications pursuant to state or federal law.

However, despite these victories, OUSD has also continued to over-utilize 911. In 2024-25, OUSD staff made 170 calls to OPD's 911 line, many of which involved issues that school staff or other non-police personnel should address. For example, the primary reason why OUSD called 911 was for an "escalated adult." As we describe below, culture and climate ambassadors are trained in trauma-informed de-escalation practices, so OUSD should rely on them in situations involving "escalated adults." As another example, the secondary reason why OUSD called 911 was for student mental health crises. However, in response to our continued organizing, OUSD recently took steps to reduce calls to police when a student is experiencing a mental health crisis.

In September 2025, OUSD and Alameda County launched a "Direct Dispatch Pilot," which allows designated OUSD staff to call one of Alameda County's Mobile Crisis Teams without the need to call 911. Instead, OUSD staff can directly contact a Mobile Crisis Team, which provides crisis intervention services, through the Oakland Fire Department's emergency dispatch system. This pilot program is a critical resource for students experiencing mental health crises, and we expect the program to result in better outcomes for students, as well as reduced contact with law enforcement. However, we will continue monitoring this program to ensure that students are not unnecessarily or excessively placed on involuntary psychiatric holds.





## Arrests

Calls to the police compound existing racial inequities that Black and Brown children in Oakland are navigating. Interacting with or even just mentioning the police can have a measurable impact on the psychological and emotional health of Black youth. In frontline environmental justice communities like West and East Oakland, Black children already experience catastrophically disproportionate asthmatic rates, making them especially vulnerable to the chronic inflammatory responses that are triggered from exposure to police. When police are called, Black and Brown children are also much more likely to experience arrests, which can be traumatic and life-altering.

In fact, since the 2017-18 school year, *all* students arrested by the OUSD police department or OPD were Black or Brown. From 2017 to 2020, the three school years before the elimination of the OUSD police department, OPD arrested between 6 and 13 students per year.

However, after the OUSD police department was eliminated, there was only one OUSD student arrested in the 2021-22 school year and three in the 2022-23 school year. This shows us what we already know: a future with zero student arrests in OUSD schools *is possible and within our reach*.

Alarming, 7 students were arrested in each of the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, including ten Black students, four Latine students, and four students who had or were being assessed for a special education plan. Within the 2024-25 school year, four out of the seven students arrested were alleged to have been involved in a “physical fight,” which does not require school personnel to call or notify law enforcement, according to OUSD’s matrix.

Meaning, OUSD personnel are potentially escalating situations on campus unnecessarily, with devastating consequences for our young people. This signals to us that the OUSD needs to provide additional training to their staff on situations that can be de-escalated, rather than involving the police, to ensure they feel equipped and supported in maintaining the safety of all students and staff on campus.





## School Suspensions

While the GFR resulted in the reduction of calls from OUSD to police, OUSD's suspension numbers have largely stayed the same. Racial disparities for Black students remain. School suspensions are defined as the removal of a student from their school for up to five school days by educators. Despite the normalization of punitive practices like suspensions – which school administrators and staff have the ability to subject students to multiple times per school year – our lived experience backed by evidence-based research tells us that isolating our young people is a false solution.

Removing our students from their school communities does not create safer learning environments, nor does it address the needs that led to the behavior in question. Schools have many alternative restorative options to ensure the safety of both students and educators, as well as to support long-term violence prevention work. While some schools consistently utilize these alternatives to suspensions, there are many others that do not.

Furthermore, our data analysis reveals that racial gaps remain in suspension rates. **Although Black students comprise less than 20% of the overall OUSD student population, they made up half of all suspensions in the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 school years.**


Certain schools in OUSD perpetuate racial disparities more pronouncedly than others. For instance, Black students represented over 70% of suspended students in the 2024-25 school year at the following schools: ACORN Woodland Elementary School, Bella Vista Elementary School, Bret Harte Middle School, Castlemont High School, Dewey Academy, East Oakland Pride Elementary School, EnCompass Academy, Highland Community School, Hoover Elementary School, Laurel Elementary School, Lockwood STEAM Academy, Markham Elementary School, McClymonds High School, Piedmont Avenue Elementary School, Prescott Elementary School, Ralph J. Bunche Academy, Street Academy, West Oakland Middle School. Critically, many of these schools are elementary schools, meaning that our youngest and most vulnerable students are being excluded from their school communities early on in their school careers.

## School Expulsions

Between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, there was a 20% decrease in the number of expulsion referrals. Yet, administrators and staff still disproportionately expel Black students. An expulsion is the most serious disciplinary outcome a student can face.

If expelled, a student is unable to return to a school in the district for up to one year from the date of their expulsion.





Since OUSD closed its Community Day School at the end of the 2021-22 school year, expelled students must attend an alternative school run by the Alameda County Office of Education or find a different school district willing to educate them. To be readmitted after an expulsion, a student must show they have substantially complied with a rehabilitation plan created by the school district.

In the past four school years, though **Black students comprised less than 20% of the overall student population, they represented over half of those expelled.** Specifically, of the 106 students expelled by OUSD in the past four years, 57 were Black. In contrast, no white student appears to have been expelled in the past four school years.

Similar to the suspension data above, there were also specific schools that had large racial disparities for expulsions of Black students. In the 2024-25 school year, Black students represented over 70% of expulsions at the following schools: Bret Harte Middle School, Castlemont High School, Dewey Academy, EnCompass Academy, Laurel Elementary School, Lockwood STEAM Academy, McClymonds High School, Ralph J. Bunche Academy, and West Oakland Middle School.

In addition, though students with disabilities (students with IEPs or 504 Plans) comprised approximately 16% of the overall student population, they represented over 40% of those referred for expulsion. It is unclear how many students with disabilities administrators actually expelled because as many as 14 students were marked as “status unknown” regarding their disability status, pointing to an ongoing need for more accurate and transparent record-keeping by the district.

When intersecting identities were considered, we found an even starker finding – **all students with disabilities expelled were students of color.**

Such disparity is especially concerning when understood as days of lost instruction. On average, expelled students were out of school for 205 school days—or more than an entire school year—from their first day of suspension to the date of their reinstatement.

Notably, reinstatements have decreased by 50% between the 2021-22 and 2023-24 school years. Though more data is needed to fully understand the school outcomes of those students for whom OUSD denies readmissions, national data trends suggest that these students are especially vulnerable to crossing over to the carceral system.

# Part II.

## Building Blocks of Black Sanctuary

The elimination of the OUSD police department was a major victory won by and for our community. As Black caregivers, workers, staff, educators, and community members, we knew that this was only the first step in our larger struggle to transform schools into systems of care rather than criminalization for our children. We need to continue organizing not only to keep police out of OUSD but also to ensure that OUSD builds and funds a new, community-centered culture of safety. That's why the GFR, in addition to the elimination of the OUSD school police department, required OUSD to engage in a two-phase, community-driven process to develop a new District safety plan.

During phase one, BOP members, community partner organizations, and OUSD representatives met weekly to create a plan to eliminate the OSPD by January 2021. This phase included several goals, including (1) lawful termination of the police officers, (2) reallocation of \$1.8 million from the school police department to student support services, (3) destruction of OSPD weapons rather than transferring them to another police department, and (4) eliminating numerous policies and protocols that referenced OSPD. At the end of the first phase, we produced the George Floyd District Safety Plan Phase One, which addressed all of these issues and more. Soon thereafter, the Chief of OSPD was required to take all of OSPD's firearms, pepper spray, body cameras, and police radios to be destroyed. Thereafter, OSPD was officially dismantled and eliminated, marking an incredible moment in our city's history.

During Phase Two, we focused on creating an implementation and budget plan to move OUSD to develop an anti-racist, relationship-centered, and restorative culture in the district. The plan included a community-created budget – the GFR Design Team Transformative School Safety Budget – which demanded that OUSD hire, train, and adequately pay six key roles: (1) **Culture Keepers**, (2) **Culture and Climate Ambassadors**, (3) **Restorative Justice Facilitators**, (4) **Trauma-Informed Mental Health Counselors**, (5) **Parent-Family Liaisons** (6) **Nurses**. The GFR People's Budget also demanded that OUSD contract with **community-based organizations (CBOs)** that have experience and expertise in supporting Black youth and families.

Our analysis of budget records we have received from OUSD reveals that the district did, in fact, hire many of the positions that BOP members fought for.

Yet, OUSD is not currently paying these workers – who are overwhelmingly Black – a living wage, creating both a workers' rights issue and a fundamental barrier to the transformation of safety culture in our schools. Black families are being pushed out of Oakland at a record pace, and the district is amplifying this ongoing gentrification and displacement of our communities. We know that true investment in a safety culture beyond criminalization requires sustained and long-term investment in workers, who are the backbone of this work. OUSD must pay a living wage that keeps pace with the rising cost of living in our city. Otherwise, OUSD puts us all at risk of going backwards and reverting to a district culture of criminalization.

### **Culture Keepers**

Community leaders who advocated for the passage of the GFR conceptualized Cultural Keepers as a crucial new part of school ecosystems that didn't rely on armed school security guards on campus. Culture Keepers work at school sites to maintain a positive culture and climate by building strong relationships with students, parents, staff, and the community and utilizing restorative practices to prevent conflicts between students.

Since the approval of the GFR in 2020, OUSD has hired over 60 culture keepers, over 80% of whom are Black. These hires represent tremendous progress. Yet, OUSD continues to pay low wages for these critical positions. On average, OUSD pays culture keepers approximately \$37,000 per year, which is below the poverty line in Oakland and the Bay Area at large. By underfunding this important role, the district is, in turn, undermining the creation of safe school communities.

For Alameda County, a living wage for a single adult with no children is \$29.95 per hour, which equates to \$62,000 annually. Thirty dollars an hour should be the minimum wage for OUSD workers, with incremental increases that keep up with the pace of inflation and the rising cost of living in the Bay Area.

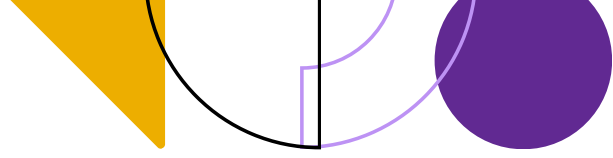
---

**“The critical findings in this report emphasize what we already know to be true at Oakland Education Association – holistic safety in schools and worker power are part of the same broader fight for racial justice in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). We stand in firm solidarity with Black organizers, caregivers, and community members demanding that the George Floyd Resolution is fully funded to ensure the well-being, success, and retention of our Black students, families, and workers in OUSD.”**

---

***-Kampala Taiz-Rancifer, OEA President***





We know that student safety and worker power go hand-in-hand – shifting the culture of criminalization in OUSD is only possible if we pay Culture Keepers the living wage needed for them to thrive in their roles, workplace, and community.

### **Culture and Climate Ambassadors**

BOP members also demanded the creation of Culture and Climate Ambassadors, who work both full-time at school sites as well as out of the OUSD central office. Their primary role is to de-escalate situations on OUSD campuses from a trauma-informed praxis. Essentially, they serve as the district's rapid response safety team, promoting conflict mediation and resolution, leading restorative circles when conflict does happen, and providing training to newly-hired Culture Keepers.

In the 2024-25 school year, OUSD employed a total of 16 Culture and Climate Ambassadors, all of whom are Black. This is over double the positions that BOP demanded in 2020, meaning OUSD quickly recognized the importance of these community-created positions. However, much like the Culture Keepers, the Culture and Climate Ambassadors are not being paid a living wage by the district – on average, they get paid \$47,000 per year.

**“When we hear from our SEIU 1021 OUSD chapter members that their low wages have forced them to live in their cars, miss utility payments, and have impacted their ability to afford groceries – this highlights the lack of regard and safety for our members, who are entrusted to care for our students and each other.”**

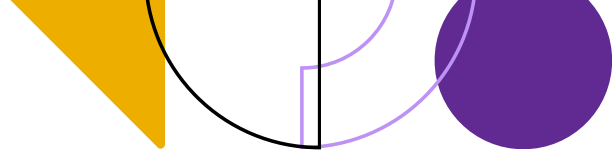
***-Holly Wilson, SEIU 1021 Secretary & BOP Member***

### **Restorative Justice Facilitators**

Although OUSD began to hire Restorative Justice (RJ) Facilitators over a decade ago, the district has also gone through waves of layoffs that heavily impacted RJ Facilitators. The GFR People's Budget demanded that OUSD retain and hire more RJ Facilitators. RJ Facilitators implement school-based and community restorative practices, which are an effective alternative to out-of-school suspensions.

RJ Facilitators are critical to OUSD's work to reduce racial disparities in school discipline and to create safe and supportive schools.

Five years since the implementation of the GFR, OUSD has increased the number of RJ Facilitators from 17 to 26. OUSD has also surpassed BOP's demand in 2020 to pay facilitators at least \$68,000 per year. Specifically, in the 2024-25 school year, the average salary for an RJ facilitator was \$78,000.



While we celebrate this win for our community, there are still school sites without RJ facilitators that would benefit from these professionals in their school communities. **Critically, three of the five school sites that had a student arrested in the 2024-25 school year did not have an RJ facilitator on staff.** With adequate and well-staffed support systems, we know that some of these traumatic and consequential arrests could be prevented. OUSD must hire more RJ facilitators to ensure that all schools have staff trained to create connected communities and resolve conflicts in a way that doesn't rely on suspensions, expulsions, arrests, or other forms of school pushout.

### **Family-Parent Liaisons**

Another position that OUSD created years earlier, but which was never adequately staffed, was the Family-Parent Liaison. This position facilitates communication and engagement with families to create educational equity. As part of the GFR People's Budget, BOP members and partners demanded that OUSD retain and hire more Family-Parent Liaisons.

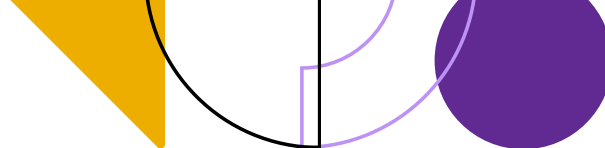
Compared to the school year when OUSD approved the GFR, it has tripled the number of Family-Parent Liaisons. These positions, much like the other positions in the GFR People's Budget, are held by predominantly Black and Latine staff—nearly 90%. However, similar to the Culture Keeper and Culture and Climate Ambassador positions, these staff are underpaid. On average, Family-Parent Liaisons earned \$57,000 in the 2024-25 school year.

To see a true transformation of safety culture in OUSD that closes racial disparities in expulsions, arrests, suspensions, and transfer rates for Black students, these positions must be invested in long-term, via adequate pay and enhanced training.

### **Trauma-Informed Mental Health Counselors**

The pre-GFR data shows that a large number of police interactions in OUSD involved students with mental health needs or disabilities, and there was a risk that OUSD would begin calling OPD to respond to mental health crises. BOP demanded that OUSD invest in trauma-informed mental health staff to prevent unnecessary interaction between police and students and to prevent students from being sent to carceral psychiatric hospitals. Hiring trauma-informed mental health staff was also important because many students had already experienced or witnessed police violence.

In 2020, we demanded that OUSD hire and retain at least 113 trauma-informed mental health staff, and OUSD has nearly achieved this goal. In the 2024-25 school year, OUSD employed 56 mental health counselors and 46 psychologists.



In addition, BOP demanded that OUSD pay these staff at least \$90,000 per year, and in the 2024-25 school year, OUSD surpassed this goal by paying these staff \$100,000 per year, on average. We celebrate this achievement by the district and continue to organize to ensure that OUSD retains these staff to prevent unnecessary interactions between police and students experiencing a mental health crisis.

### **Nurses**

We also found that past OUSD policies and practices heavily embedded police in their responses to potential child abuse, so we demanded that OUSD change its policies to rely more on school nurses. Pre-GFR, OUSD policy required school staff to notify the OUSD police department if they suspected sexual abuse. This was catastrophic, especially for Black students who were forced to engage with the criminal justice system, which can be traumatizing and compound the potential harm they are facing. However, post-GFR, OUSD policy requires staff to notify nurses, who can be a more appropriate and effective first response to sexual trauma and abuse.

OUSD surpassed BOP's goal to pay nurses at least \$89,000 per school year—it pays nurses \$97,000 per year, on average—but OUSD has six fewer school nurses than it had in the 2019-20 school year. OUSD must assess why nurses are leaving OUSD and develop a plan to hire and retain more nurses.

### **Contracts with Community-Based Organizations**

In addition to the aforementioned positions, BOP demanded that OUSD contract with CBOs to support transformational safety work. Staff at CBOs often have expertise in resolving community conflicts because many CBO staff grew up in, live in, and have deep relationships with Oakland. As a result, we advocated for OUSD to contract for two positions for de-escalation, two positions for violence interruption, and two positions for youth development, and OUSD exceeded our demands by contracting for 27 positions.

In the 2022-23 school year, OUSD and the City of Oakland Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) launched the School Violence and Intervention Prevention (VIP) program at seven high schools: Bunche Academy, Castlemont High School, Dewey Academy, Fremont High School, McClymonds High School, Oakland High School, and Rudsdale Continuation Schools. In February 2025, OUSD and DVP added two more schools to the program: Oakland Technical High School and Skyline High School.





Each of the nine schools has a VIP team with one violence interruptor, one gender-based violence specialist, and one youth life coach. All of these teams are provided at no cost to OUSD and are run by trusted CBOs like Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ), Youth Alive!, and others.

Safety in OUSD is not just the responsibility of the district – we need a holistic approach to safety that requires investment from our local government. The school violence intervention and prevention (VIP) program underscores that when partnerships between the district, city, and CBOs that are culturally aligned with the communities they are serving are done well, our city thrives, too.

Yet, we are witnessing the divestment in these critical programs, causing rippling effects across our schools and communities. As of the writing of this report, the future of these vital programs is at risk of being cut as a result of the culmination of funding by the City of Oakland. Oakland City Council must intervene to extend and expand the DVP to defend police-free schools in our city.





# Part III.

## Our Collective Path Forward

*By Monifa Akosua, free Pierre, Amia Brizendine, Najorae Trang-Kwina, Vanja M. Abena, Malcolm Harris, & BOP Black Parent & Caregiver Group*

*The school-to-prison pipeline disappears youth for decades. We have to know our history because it defines our present. Youth organizers have led the fight to keep schools police-free in Oakland and will continue to lead to keep them out. Defending the GFR is crucial. Without it, we run the risk of furthering the attacks on Black people in Oakland”*

**- Najorae Trang-Kwina, long-time BOP member & Youth Organizer**

As we came together to reflect on the data in this report, we grounded ourselves in our history of triumphant community organizing and an honest assessment of where we must go collectively. The findings in this report, coupled with our lived experience and wisdom, have helped us determine the most strategic and effective investments that must be made to support Black students in OUSD. Together, as Black parents, caregivers, and community members, we demand that the GFR is defended, invested in, and protected for generations to come. We direct our demands as a call to action to OUSD, policymakers, our community, and our broader movement.

### **WE DEMAND THAT OUSD FUND COMMUNITY-LED VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

We demand that OUSD secure six contracts of \$300,000 each with community-based organizations that lead community-centered violence prevention. These Organizations should be selected through a community-driven process to ensure each has the relevant expertise to meet students' needs.

### **WE DEMAND AN END TO RACIAL DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**

Black students represent less than 20% of the District's population, yet more than half of the suspensions and expulsions. We demand that OUSD immediately implement an action plan to eliminate discriminatory discipline practices against Black students. Monthly reporting should be provided to students, caregivers, and community partners.

### **WE DEMAND THAT OUSD FULLY IMPLEMENTS THE GFR DISTRICT SAFETY PLAN**

We demand full and transparent implementation of the GFR District Safety Plan, including the redirection of resources away from harm and towards student safety, care, and support services.



## **WE DEMAND A LIVING WAGE FOR OUSD STAFF AND RETENTION OF BLACK STAFF**

Positions such as Culture Keeper roles, predominantly held by Black staff, remain underpaid. We demand that OUSD raise wages to reflect the living wage [\$30 an hour in Alameda County], improve retention support for Black educators and support staff, and ensure that Black educators and support staff are treated equitably.

## **WE DEMAND PROPER TRAINING FOR CULTURE & CLIMATE AMBASSADORS**

We demand that the District confirm whether Culture and Climate Ambassadors have received the required culturally relevant, trauma-informed de-escalation training outlined in the GFR District Safety Plan. Likewise, we demand quarterly report outs to school communities.

## **WE DEMAND NON-POLICE RESPONSES TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISES**

We demand that the District continue its work to eliminate police involvement in student mental-health crises and invest in trained, trauma-informed care teams that respond without criminalization.

## **WE DEMAND THAT BLACK STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND WORKERS CAN LIVE AND THRIVE IN OAKLAND**

We demand that as part of a reparations framework, OUSD, the City of Oakland, and Alameda County work collaboratively to create real solutions to keep Black people in Oakland and our children in OUSD. OUSD could start by publicizing properties in its possession for use at minimal rates for cultural hubs, and for OUSD children and families facing housing instability.

## **WE DEMAND OUSD IMPLEMENT DISTRICT-WIDE ANTI-RACISM & RESTORATIVE PRACTICE TRAINING**

We demand mandatory, ongoing training for all OUSD staff who work with children in anti-racism, restorative practices, and trauma-informed training. These trainings should be made available to the larger community.

## **WE DEMAND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SCHOOLS INTO SYSTEMS OF CARE INSTEAD OF CRIMINALIZATION**

We call on the District to stop harming and criminalizing Black students and prioritize student safety, belonging, and well-being.

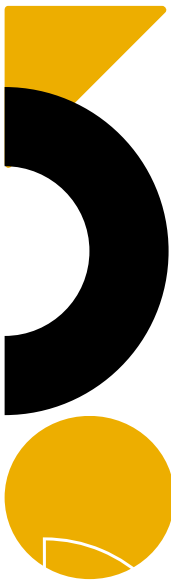
## **WE DEMAND OUSD PROVIDE ACCURATE AND TRANSPARENT DATA**

We call on the District to share accurate, transparent data related to student safety, discipline, staffing, budgeting, and implementation of the GFR. The District should end any plans to share student information with the Probation Department, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or any other law enforcement agency.



# Acknowledgements

We want to offer our deepest gratitude for all of the beautiful minds, souls, and hearts who make this report and our broader organizing with working-class Black folks possible.



Hundreds of Black students, families, educators, and community members in Oakland have contributed their labor and time to organizing to pass and defend the GFR. For sharing your stories, organizing alongside us, and contributing your brilliance to this collective report, we thank you.

To the many hands who nurtured what became The Black Organizing Project, this report belongs to you, too, and we hope we carry forward the experience and expertise you share with us. We are tremendously indebted to Jackie Byers and all former staff, volunteers, and members who have helped shape BOP over the years. Thank you.



This report was made possible through support provided by a generous community of funders and partners. We thank you immensely for nurturing Black-led and Black-centered organizing in Oakland.

We thank our report reviewers for your generosity, graciousness, and analysis. This report was enriched by your scholarship, organizing prowess, and deep experience. Thank you, Holly Wilson, Jessica Black, Kampala Taiz-Rancifer, Ursula DeWitt, Jackie Byers, Jasmin Williams, and the many other folks who shaped this report.

To our beloved community partners, we deeply appreciate your collaboration, co-authorship, and solidarity. Thank you, Oscar Lopez, Caitlin Jolicoeur, Atasi Uppal, Gabrielle Birog, Michelle Kotval, Gloria Yi, Deksyos Damtew, and Chaquis Stephens. Special thank you to the teams at Disability Rights California (DRC), The East Bay Community Law Center, The Center for Story-Based Strategy, and Dignity in Schools Campaign California.

To our current BOP staff, we appreciate your vision, leadership, and brilliance that continue to build Black Sanctuary in Oakland.

**To our BOP membership – old and new – you are the heartbeat of our organization and the compass of our struggle. Together, we are protagonists of our shared history and the architects of our collective future.**

With immense gratitude,

***The Black Organizing Project***



# End Notes

nsfer/.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> End The School To Prison Pipeline, Nat. Ctr. For Youth L., available at <https://youthlaw.org/initiatives/end-school-prison-pipeline>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Darling-Hammond & Ho, January-December 2024, No Matter How You Slice It, Black Students Are Punished More: The Persistence and Pervasiveness of Discipline Disparities, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23328584241293411>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Losen & Goyal, July 2022, Unmasking School Discipline Disparities in California: What the 2019-2020 Data Can Tell Us about Problems and Progress, available at <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-rem>, October 2023, Lost Instruction Time in California Schools: The Disparate Harm from Post-Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/lost-instruction-time-in-california-schools-the-disparate-harm-from-post-pandemic-punitive-suspensions>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, a

nsfer/.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> End The School To Prison Pipeline, Nat. Ctr. For Youth L., available at <https://youthlaw.org/initiatives/end-school-prison-pipeline>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Darling-Hammond & Ho, January-December 2024, No Matter How You Slice It, Black Students Are Punished More: The Persistence and Pervasiveness of Discipline Disparities, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23328584241293411>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Losen & Goyal, July 2022, Unmasking School Discipline Disparities in California: What the 2019-2020 Data Can Tell Us about Problems and Progress, available at <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-rem>, October 2023, Lost Instruction Time in California Schools: The Disparate Harm from Post-Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/lost-instruction-time-in-california-schools-the-disparate-harm-from-post-pandemic-punitive-suspensions>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, a

# End Notes

nsfer/.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> End The School To Prison Pipeline, Nat. Ctr. For Youth L., available at <https://youthlaw.org/initiatives/end-school-prison-pipeline>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Darling-Hammond & Ho, January-December 2024, No Matter How You Slice It, Black Students Are Punished More: The Persistence and Pervasiveness of Discipline Disparities, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23328584241293411>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Losen & Goyal, July 2022, Unmasking School Discipline Disparities in California: What the 2019-2020 Data Can Tell Us about Problems and Progress, available at <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-rem>, October 2023, Lost Instruction Time in California Schools: The Disparate Harm from Post-Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/lost-instruction-time-in-california-schools-the-disparate-harm-from-post-pandemic-punitive-suspensions>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, a

nsfer/.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> End The School To Prison Pipeline, Nat. Ctr. For Youth L., available at <https://youthlaw.org/initiatives/end-school-prison-pipeline>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Darling-Hammond & Ho, January-December 2024, No Matter How You Slice It, Black Students Are Punished More: The Persistence and Pervasiveness of Discipline Disparities, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23328584241293411>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Losen & Goyal, July 2022, Unmasking School Discipline Disparities in California: What the 2019-2020 Data Can Tell Us about Problems and Progress, available at <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-rem>, October 2023, Lost Instruction Time in California Schools: The Disparate Harm from Post-Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/lost-instruction-time-in-california-schools-the-disparate-harm-from-post-pandemic-punitive-suspensions>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, a

# End Notes

nsfer/.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> End The School To Prison Pipeline, Nat. Ctr. For Youth L., available at <https://youthlaw.org/initiatives/end-school-prison-pipeline>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Darling-Hammond & Ho, January-December 2024, No Matter How You Slice It, Black Students Are Punished More: The Persistence and Pervasiveness of Discipline Disparities, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23328584241293411>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Losen & Goyal, July 2022, Unmasking School Discipline Disparities in California: What the 2019-2020 Data Can Tell Us about Problems and Progress, available at <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-rem>, October 2023, Lost Instruction Time in California Schools: The Disparate Harm from Post-Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/lost-instruction-time-in-california-schools-the-disparate-harm-from-post-pandemic-punitive-suspensions>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, a

nsfer/.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> End The School To Prison Pipeline, Nat. Ctr. For Youth L., available at <https://youthlaw.org/initiatives/end-school-prison-pipeline>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Darling-Hammond & Ho, January-December 2024, No Matter How You Slice It, Black Students Are Punished More: The Persistence and Pervasiveness of Discipline Disparities, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23328584241293411>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Losen & Goyal, July 2022, Unmasking School Discipline Disparities in California: What the 2019-2020 Data Can Tell Us about Problems and Progress, available at <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-rem>, October 2023, Lost Instruction Time in California Schools: The Disparate Harm from Post-Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/lost-instruction-time-in-california-schools-the-disparate-harm-from-post-pandemic-punitive-suspensions>.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

<sup>[1]</sup> Id.

Pandemic Punitive Suspensions, a

# JOIN US

*"When we have members risking their health and clocking in exhausted after working 2-3 jobs just to make ends meet, this is unsafe and impacts everyone's ability to fully realize safe and nurturing school communities. As this report underscores, it is through sustainable, living wages that our members' health, wellness, and the work of keeping each other safe can be better actualized."*

**-Holly Wilson, SEIU 1021 OUSD Chapter Secretary & BOP Member**



*Scan the QR code to sustain our work or visit*

**[blackorganizingproject.org/donate/](https://blackorganizingproject.org/donate/)**



**@blackorganizingproject**



**[info@blackorganizingproject.org](mailto:info@blackorganizingproject.org)**





[BLACKORGANIZINGPROJECT.ORG](https://blackorganizingproject.org)

[@BLACKORGANIZINGPROJECT](https://twitter.com/blackorganizingproject)