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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 13, 2015

New Report Examines School Disciplinary Policies in the District's Public Education System that May Lead to School Push-Out

(Washington, DC, March 13, 2015) - The Council for Court Excellence (CCE) announced today that it has released "Equity in School Discipline: An Examination of School Disciplinary Policies and Practices in the District of Columbia Public Education System and Recommendations for Reform," a first-of-its-kind report that comprehensively describes and assesses the District's traditional and charter public school discipline codes.

The report examines the 62 public charter school discipline codes for the 2012-2013 school year and the common discipline code regulation for traditional DC Public Schools. The report finds significant variance in the charter school codes adherence to due process procedures ensured by the US Constitution and additional due process protections for students with special education needs.

"It is critical to understand how these disciplinary systems are structured and who the key education stakeholders are in relation to school discipline in the District. Our report provides this framework," said June Kress, CCE's Executive Director. "We know there is a correlation between exclusionary disciplinary practices, such as suspensions and expulsions, and how these actions may result in poor educational outcomes and youth's involvement in the juvenile justice system. So having a better understanding of the variance in disciplinary processes is important."

CCE Board Director Victor Long commented that "[a]s a founding Board member of Friendship Public Charter School and an attorney, I was immediately concerned with school discipline, based upon principles of due process. . . .The value of the report's surveys of procedures and practices cannot be overstated."

The report finds that more than half, or 64%, of the charter school discipline codes use zero-tolerance policies for non-violent and violent acts that result in automatic expulsion. Zero-tolerance policies, even following school tragedies like in Columbine, CO and Newtown, CT, have been widely scrutinized in terms of fairness and effectiveness. In addition to these findings, the report assesses the

codes allowance for remote academic participation while a student waits out a school suspension, and accessibility of the codes, including on-line access and availability in languages other than English. It also describes the role of the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), the District's administrative court, in hearing long-term suspension and expulsion cases from the traditional public schools. The report analyzes this OAH case data, finding a decline in the number of cases heard for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years and that more than 90% of families and students appear before an administrative law judge not represented by a lawyer.

The report profiles select DC school administrators from some of the highest and lowest suspending and expelling middle and high schools. It also offers ten policy recommendations on improving equity in school discipline in the District.

A formal roll-out of the report will take place on March 23rd from 12:30-2:00pm at the historic Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, 1201 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. [Registration](#) is required. Please direct all media inquiries to evans@courtextcellence.org.

A full copy of the report can be found on the CCE Web Site at:
www.courtextcellence.org

Media Contact:
Hillary Evans
CCE Policy Analyst

Council for Court Excellence
Phone: 202-785-5917
evans@courtextcellence.org

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Our Mission

The Council for Court Excellence works to improve the administration of justice in the local and federal courts and related agencies in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

CCE accomplishes this goal by identifying and promoting justice system reforms, improving public access to justice, and increasing public understanding and support of our justice system.