

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 17, 2025

TO: Chair Garza, Commissioners Adams, Gilchrist, Heriot, Jones, Kirsanow, Nourse, and Magpantay

FROM: Mauro Morales, Staff Director

SUBJECT: Commission Highlights Since 2015

I respectfully submit this memorandum about the work achieved by the Commission during the 10 years of my tenure as Staff Director (SD). I submit this memo pursuant to the request of the Chair. It is intended to serve as an exit memo highlighting the work achieved this past decade.

The events that have occurred over the last ten years are more than I could have envisioned when I became the SD in 2015. The work done during this period of time is exceptional and extraordinary. It could not have been successfully accomplished without the dedication of the professional men and women of the Commission. This memo is a tribute to the Federal employees undertaking the mission of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys. Their work is in the finest tradition of Federal Service, and I am fortunate to be associated with all of them.

Highlights During the Past 10 Years

- Including the current members, four Chairs and fourteen Commissioners have come and gone from the Commission.
- On December 11th, 2015, the Commission held an event at the Lincoln Cottage commemorating the 150th anniversary of the passage of the 13th Amendment. Over 45 people attended the event to witness the singing of the Battle Hymn of the Republic and hear commemorative comments by Commissioner Heriot, Chair Castro and the Director of the Lincoln Cottage.
- In 2015, the agency budget had been frozen at \$9.2 million for over ten years and we employed 38 full time employees (FTEs). Our current budget is \$14.4 million with over 58 FTEs which includes the administration of the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (BMB).

- On November 14th, 2017, we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Commission at the Library of Congress with all current staff, the Chair and Commissioners as well as a number of distinguished guests including several previous Chairs, previous commissioners, Members of Congress and the Librarian of Congress.
- In 2020, the responsibility for the administration and oversight of BMB was given by Congress to USCCR.
- In 2021, USCCR faced the Covid Pandemic by working together to overcome the challenges of the pandemic. Agency offices were forced to close for two years. All employees were required to work remotely. The Commission successfully undertook business meetings, briefings and agency work virtually via conference calls or Zoom meetings. We published agency reports and as well as SAC reports and continued to onboard new Commissioners, Special Assistants and FTE's. No agency employees became ill with COVID because of staff interaction.
- Prior to the termination of the speaker series in 2021, we hosted numerous speakers during Commission business meetings including the Director of the US National Holocaust Museum, the Director of the National Museum of African American History as well as scholars discussing the case of Brown v. Board of Education and scholars discussing Korematsu v. United States.
- In 2021, Congress required the addition of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Marianna Islands and the American Virgin Islands to the Commission list of advisory committees.

While this memorandum is not a comprehensive list of the work during the past ten years, I am pleased to provide the following highlights of our agency accomplishments:

Management (Budget, Administrative Services and Clearinghouse Division, and Human Resources)

Administrative Services

- In ten years, USCCR has held over 100 commission business meetings, including telephonic meetings;
- The Staff Director has attended in person or virtually every Commission business meeting during his 10-year tenure;
- In ten years, USCCR has held thirty-three commission briefings including three field briefings in North Carolina, New York and San Juan, Puerto Rico. The agency has held investigative visits to New York, Texas, South Dakota, Virginia, Arizona and Missouri. The Staff Director has attended every Commission briefing during this time;
- The Commission has held over 30 meetings between the Staff Director and SA's;

- There have been over 250 meetings between the Staff Director and the Executive Committee;
- The Commission has managed and maintained IT infrastructure without any security breaches identified;
- USCCR has created and implemented 3 strategic plans pursuant to federal statute;
- In 2019, USCCR began to Livestream every Commission meeting either in person or through virtually briefings;
- Agency personnel ensured that USCCR has enhanced access for Section 508 and ADA compliance using CART Live Captioning during all Livestreaming of virtual briefings and commission meetings;
- USCCR regularly issues annual FISMA audit reports with no substantial issues or weakness identified.
- USCCR receives annual “Managing Risk” Status for Cybersecurity from the Office on Management and Budget, the highest a small agency can receive;
- USCCR orderly returned to work agency 45 employees in 2018-2019 after the thirty-five day government shutdown;
- In 2021, USCCR established the Commission on Social Status of Black Men and Boys pursuant to the statute passed by Congress in 2020.
- In 2021, we upgraded and modernized the USCCR Website.

Budget

- For the 8th year in a row, the Commission received an unmodified opinion for our FY 2024 Financial Statement Audit. This is the highest audit opinion issued;
 - Auditors renewed their findings and found that there are no deficiencies in internal controls;
- For the 10th year in a row the agency has issued on time the Performance and Accountability Report (PAR);
- While the agency remains under a Continuing Resolution, USCCR is prepared to implement the FY24 Appropriation of \$14.35 million;

Human Resources

- HR oversaw all intern, PMF and contractor recruitment and onboarding;
 - On boarded 150 interns, verifying transcripts and accreditation of each school attended, as well as documenting service for future verification;
- Annually oversaw performance appraisal system to ensure all employees were properly rated by supervisors;
- In 2021, HR jointly developed Covid-19 protocols for the agency in response to mandatory telework operations.
- USCCR re-opened office operations in 2023 after being closed because of the pandemic for two years.
- Employee View Point Survey (EVS) results for the past two years show that USCCR has one of the highest levels of satisfaction of any agency in the Federal Government and reflects the satisfaction, dedication and professionalism of agency personnel.

- In working with the EEOC, the Commission has become a model agency among all federal agencies.

Office of General Counsel

- Regularly assists in significant research and writing on statutory enforcement and Regular HQ Reports:
- Reviewed for legal sufficiency (LSR) over 190 SAC reports; and
- Created a Quick Reference Guide as a resource for Commission employees and SAC members.
- Reviews the Commission's response to the EEOC's technical assistance letters;
- Created the Commission's Reasonable Accommodation Procedure, EEO Policy Statement, Anti-Harassment Policy, Personal Assistance Service Procedure, Exit Interview Survey, 508 posting and ABA notices on the public website;
- Created the EEO tab on the Commission's website with resources for employees
- Finalized the Commission's EEO Programs and Complaint Processing guide.
- Regularly oversaw and conducted annual ethics training for Commissioners, Special Assistants, Staff Director, and confidential filers;
- Reviewed and certified all financial public financial disclosure forms;
- Drafted memos on multiple topics including: the Commission's jurisdiction, the use of U.S. Commission appropriations for the Commission on Black Men and Boys, the Paperwork Reduction Act, the Privacy Act and collecting information in conjunction with visits to 14(c) sites, and personnel matters;
- Regularly created guidance documents for Commission employees: redacting information for FOIA requests and public comments and a records management guide;
- Assisted in preparing Commissioners for testimony and briefing remarks to Members of Congress.

Office of Civil Rights Evaluation

- The Commission has researched, drafted, and facilitated publication of 33 Statutory Enforcement and Commission briefing reports;
- OCRE ensured that numerous Commission reports have been adopted by congress and state governments as foundations for legislative initiatives including maternal health for women of color, voting rights, hate crimes, unlawful use of police force, sexual harassment in the Federal workforce, and wage discrimination of people with disabilities handicapped to name but a few
- USCCR has held over 32 briefings on a variety of topic such as civil rights status of Native Americans, the mistreatment of immigrant women and children, disparities in the provision of emergency assistance to communities of color, and increase of hate crimes against Asian Americans;
- The agency regularly worked with other Federal agencies and government officials to enhance Commission reports and reputation;
- USCCR has held over 4 field briefings;

- OCRE reviewed, responded to, and referred thousands of civil rights complaints; and
- Led the EEO Program to ensure that our EEO program is compliant with EEOC's standards and submits annual no FEAR Act reports to Congress and the President;
- Regularly assists in preparing information requests from Congress.

Commission Media Communications

- Publicized 90 Commission Business meetings, including telephonic meetings;
- Publicized 55 Commission Statements;
- Assisted in publicizing and coordinating Commissioner testimony and briefing remarks before Members of Congress on numerous occasions;
- Sent 25 Official Agency letters to federal entities;
- Facilitated and Publicized increased visibility for Commission briefings; Including the first ever virtual briefing held in July 2020;
- Facilitated and publicized the release of every Commission Report;
- Issued 340 National Headquarters press releases/media advisories/public notices;
- Issued 207 SAC Press releases & information flyers for SACs; and
- Posted over 500 Sunshine Act Notices
- Coordinated numerous commission interviews and content featured in:
 - Newsweek, Washington Post, New York Times, Associated Press, US News, Politico, NBC News, ABA Journal, PBS, ProPublica, local TV outlets (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, C-Span); and
 - State/local outlets – papers, radio, and/or TV;
- Issued social media across all platforms including X, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn:
 - Issued: 810 Notifications;
 - The Commission has approximately 12,500 followers; and
 - USCCR has reached (impressions) 465,000 people.

Regional Programs Coordinating Unit

- Published 176 State Advisory Committee (SAC) reports, statements and memoranda;
- Held 2,068 SAC planning meetings;
- Held 391 fact-finding meetings to hear testimony on various topics;
- 96 SAC Chairs have briefed Commissioners on SAC reports at business meetings;
- USCCR has successfully implemented Congressional mandate of advisory committees in the five US Territories;
- Improved efficiency of filing advisory committee charter by filing one charter for the 51 non-discretionary committees in lieu of 51 separate charters
- Initiated the only operational and workload assessment in the agency that led to the full implementation of three of the four recommendations, including the significant cost-savings of closing four brick-and-mortar offices.
- Created the unit's first virtual orientation for all advisory committee members;
- Began holding unit retreats for strategic planning;

- Prepared new AI 5-7 and AI 5-9 for Commission vote and approval, improving the process and increasing the appointment terms from two to four years
- Continued agreement with the University of Chicago to serve as field site for Master of Social Work Students to complete their internship requirements;
- Entered MOU's with the University of Southern California, Columbia University, University of Michigan, Fordham University, and Florida State University to become field site for Masters of Social Work Internship Program;
- Participated in the Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program to add two temporary civil rights analysts in FY; and
- Led the federal system conducting advisory committees via video conferencing platforms and played a crucial role in assisting other agencies to transition to the virtual format during the pandemic

YEAR	REPORTS	BRIEFINGS	TOTAL MEETINGS
2014	5	11	11
2015	7	11	106
2016	9	11	113
2017	9	11	198
2018	19	31	218
2019	20	27	284
2020	35	41	285
2021	35	67	308
2022	14	76	345
2023	17	66	368
2024	11	50	234
TOTALS	176	391	2459

Baseline FY 2014 included before SD began at Commission

Commission on Social Status of Black Men and Boys

In 2020 Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act (CSSBMB) was established within the office of the Staff Director.

CSSBMB produced three in-depth annual reports to address the current conditions affecting Black men and boys in America. Made policy recommendations to improve social conditions, and provided vital guidance for Congress on effective strategies to reduce racial disparities in criminal justice and civil rights, education, housing and health, and labor and employment.

The bipartisan, 19-member commission includes congressional lawmakers, executive branch appointees, issue experts, activists, and other stakeholders.

2023–2024 Annual Report:

- The CSSBMB released a public-facing handout spotlighting the major findings from its 2023-2024 Annual Report, which can be found on CSSBMB’s website.
- CSSBMB worked with key stakeholders to develop the 2024 Education Roadmap, a collaborative research guide on critical educational issues and inequalities facing Black men and boys across the nation. CSSBMB Digital Launch
- The CSSBMB developed and launched its website, <https://cssbmb.gov>. This revised digital presence provides CSSBMB with a compelling platform to promote its research and activities.
- In concert with the website, CSSBMB also debuted a new logo and brand color scheme.
- Education: Researching Problems, Advocating Solutions Throughout 2024-2025, CSSBMB will be releasing the results of its research on the disparities that Black male students face in their educational journeys due exclusionary discipline in schools.
- Beginning in late 2025, CSSBMB will launch its EmpowerED Initiative, which brings CSSBMB together with HBCUs across the country to hold events that explore the importance of Black male teachers, ways to bring more Black males into the teaching profession, benefits to students of color and schools, and the challenges that remain.

Preliminary Planning for 2025 and 2026:

- Depending on the final appropriation allocation, we intend to hire additional FTEs;
- 2025-2026 reports and briefings underway include:
 - Enforcing Religious Freedoms in Prison;
 - The Federal Response to the Rise in Antisemitism on American College and University Campuses;
 - Teacher Shortage Affecting Students with Disabilities; and
 - Mental Health Juvenile Justice.