

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM
12TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

DISTRICT OFFICE:
587 EASTERN PARKWAY
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11216
(212) 596-3500

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1108 LONGWORTH BUILDING
(202) 225-6231

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 22, 1974

COMMITTEE:
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND TRAINING
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSURANCE
MR. WESLEY MCD. HOLDER
DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE

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Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
2350 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C.

Dear Gus:

This is to express my appreciation for your holding the hearing on student pushouts yesterday. I was extremely pleased with the way they went.

I have enclosed some press clippings for your information.

Sincerely,

Shirley
Shirley Chisholm
Member of Congress

ing them by academic achievement is not readily apparent. But some educators are disturbed by the effect of such separation in the city's many desegregated schools, where the tendency because of prior social, economic and cultural

New York schools was 64.4 per cent, the figures showed.

The other 18 cities under investigation are Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, Houston, Miami, Cleveland, San

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of the 3,339 suspended were from a minority group.

Dallas—of 42 pupils expelled, 39, or 92.9 per cent, were from a minority group. The city's minority enrollment was 49.4 per cent, while 68.5 per cent of the suspensions were of pupils from a minority group.

St. Louis—In a system with a minority-pupil enrollment of 69.1 per cent, 68 per cent of the 2,799 suspensions were of members of a minority group. St. Louis was the only city whose minority suspension rate approximated the minority percentage of the school population.

The issue of minority pupils who are expelled or suspended has been linked to the integration effort. Several organizations have accused school officials in newly desegregated school districts of "pushing out" minority pupils. Such pupils are therefore referred to as "pushouts."

These organizations include the National Education Association, the Southern Regional Council, the American Friends Service Committee, the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial and the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Each has conducted investigations into the problem.

But Mr. Holmes told the committee that the Department of Health, Education and Welfare had not yet documented the problem extensively enough to take action at this time. He said the department's priority had been school desegregation, rather than the pushout problem.

"We intend to make this kind of documentation the object of strong enforcement efforts in the coming year," he testified.

"As the worst offenders are identified statistically they will become the subject of full-scale investigations that will lead either to satisfactory corrective action or legal proceedings. But first we need the evidence to make a case of discrimination and before that we need to learn for ourselves just how to

sulted in pupils' being pushed out. He said that discrimination by teachers and principals opposed to desegregation led to pushouts.

The problem was at first thought to be a Southern one, but more and more pupils in Northern school systems were found being pushed out, an investigation found suspensions and expulsions on the rise as more Northern districts became increasingly black. In some instances, systems without suspension and expulsion regulations adopted them.

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HEW Vows Action on Ousted Students

By Austin Scott

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare yesterday promised "strong enforcement efforts" against widespread and apparently growing second-generation school desegregation problem—pushouts.

Pushouts, a phenomenon studied mostly in the South so far, are students who are suspended or expelled from school—or who drop out—for reasons more related to racial animosities than academic or disciplinary problems.

Testimony that the problem is widespread came from groups as varied as the National Education Association,

the Southern Regional Council, the American Friends Service Committee and HEW's Office for Civil Rights.

They told the House Subcommittee on Equal Educational Opportunity that many districts appear to be using loosely drawn disciplinary codes to force large numbers of blacks, almost arbitrarily, out of school.

Many of those pushed out are potential leaders, they said, whose only "infractions" may have been accusing the school of treating black students unfairly.

Peter Holmes, director of HEW's Office for Civil Rights, said in one junior high school 38.6 per cent of the minority

students were suspended last year, compared with 12.5 per cent of the white enrollment. In another, he said, the figures were 23.1 per cent of blacks, 2.7 per cent of whites, and the black suspensions averaged six days compared to three days for whites.

Samuel Ethridge, the National Education Association's assistant executive secretary for teacher rights, said NEA has found many districts where the black expulsion rate is 10 times the white.

A still incomplete NEA survey for 1972-73 shows that 21 of the largest school districts in the country suspended 125,000 students, 90,000 of whom were black.

Ethridge said he expects those figures to double when the survey is finished, because so far suspensions in New York City, Philadelphia, Newark, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Louisville, Baltimore and New Orleans have not been tabulated.

"While on the surface the South seems more oppressive to minorities," he said, "I would urge the committee to reserve judgment on that until an in-depth study has been done on the extent to which the North puts its pushouts in juvenile homes, special schools for the disruptive, and detention homes," Ethridge said.

Leon Hall, director of the Southern Regional Council's school desegregation project, said pushouts "result in large numbers of young people who lose hope and are marked by despair and bitterness."

He cited as common the tale of a black youth from Arkansas, who told him:

"Last year . . . I got into a fight with a white boy and was suspended from Sept. 15 to Jan. 15, but still the other boy started the fight. The white boy was only suspended for seven days and there were black people and whites who saw how the fight started."

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73 school year, he said, show that in the major city school systems minority students are disproportionately suspended for disciplinary infractions.

IN NEW YORK, for example, 85.9 percent of student suspensions were incurred by minority students who make up 64.4 percent of the city's enrollment. In Houston with a 56.4 percent minority student population, minority students made up 71 percent of the suspensions, while in Memphis, enrolling 58 percent minority students, 70 percent of the suspended students were from minority groups.

In Prince Georges County with a 28 percent black student population, HEW figures showed that black students made up 43 percent of the suspensions, said Samuel B. Ethridge of the National Education Association, who also testified before the subcommittee.

Holmes told the Subcommittee on Equal Opportunities, headed by Rep. Augustus Hawkins, D-Calif., that his office plans in-depth pilot investigations of from 10 to 20 school systems beginning next fall to determine to what extent discriminatory treatment leads to minority students leaving school.

Twenty years after the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision barring separate, but equal schools, civil rights organizations are concentrating increasingly on what they call "second generation problems" — discriminatory treatment of minority students in school

test treatment, respond angrily to biased teachers or refuse to conform to rules they consider an invasion of their culture.

The closing of black schools and the assignment of black students to majority white schools, Hall said, has shifted to blacks the "burden of adjustment to a new white authority structure in the hands of policymakers who have resisted desegregation through the years."

Both Hall and M. Hayes Mizell, a civil rights worker and school board member in Columbia, S.C., told the committee that school districts receiving funds under a proposed juvenile delinquency bill it is considering should be required to adopt student bills of rights.

A RECENT study in South Carolina, Mizell said showed students could be suspended in local school systems for failing to dress according to the "mores of the community," smoking, being married or pregnant, or for "ungentlemanly or unlady-like behavior in any form that would embarrass school image from a public viewpoint." As the ultimate blanket restriction on students, he cited the students handbook in Barnwell County, S.C., that states:

"It is a privilege to attend school. Students who will not act, speak, dress and react in a manner acceptable to the school administration will not be permitted to continue in school."

John Mathews

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