



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**MAYOR DELLUMS ADDRESSES CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TO CREATE MORE
OPTIONS FOR YOUNG MEN OF COLOR**

Joint Panel to Recommend How to Address This Issue in Current Federal Legislation

OAKLAND – Mayor Ron Dellums today joined the congressional briefing “A Way Out: Creating Partners for our Nation’s Prosperity by Expanding Life Paths for Young Men of Color” hosted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies’ Health Policy Institute in conjunction with the Office of the House Majority Whip, James E. Clyburn in Washington D.C.

This briefing was organized because the United States Congress faces a unique opportunity to address the needs of young men of color as it considers major legislation to reform health care, education, criminal justice and job training. The panel was convened to outline some specific policy approaches that can change the trajectory for many young men of color, while at the same time strengthening our families, our communities and our nation.

“Every institution in our society is failing young men of color,” said Mayor Dellums. “We are grinding our young men up like glass and we are doing little or nothing to address these issues. We are not listening to them and ignoring the reality of their plight. With this new administration, we must make it our business to change this course of action.”

The diminished life options and outcomes for young men of color was the starting point for the Dellums Commission, chaired by the Mayor in 2006. Mayor Dellums made his recommendations based on this report to help shape legislation and new policy to benefit the young people of Oakland and similar cities across the country.

“Young men of color constitute more than 40 percent of American males under 25. Yet according to nearly every comparative measure – income, education, incarceration, health – these young men face a stark reality. Simply put, they face diminished life opportunities and some might say these problems are getting worse,” said Mayor Dellums.

Mayor Dellums recommended a comprehensive policy approach that addresses the many sectors in which young men of color are disadvantaged relative to other groups. Some of the recommendations include:

Health:

- Fund more school-based healthcare programs;
- Extend coverage to all uninsured children; and
- Establish universal coverage.

Education:

- Aggressively stem dropout rates, such as narrowing the application of zero tolerance to only serious threats;
- Evaluate the No Child Left Behind Act to determine its fairness and equity and ensure full funding of activities required under the act; and
- Invest more financial resources in college readiness programs for high-risk youth.

Family Support and Child Welfare:

- Promote positive social network experiences for boys and young men of color by supporting the creation of in-school and out-of-school engagements with peer groups;
- Strengthen assurance that children in foster care will receive early and periodic assessment of physical and mental health; and
- Address lack of cultural competency in the foster care system.

Workforce and Economic Development:

- Increase minimum wage at the federal level or state and local level; and
- Enforce existing anti-discrimination laws in the area of employment, housing, and credit markets.

Juvenile and Criminal Justice:

- Mandate better legal counsel for young men of color and strengthen the public defender system;
- Repeal mandatory minimums, including the mandatory 100 to 1 powder cocaine/crack cocaine ratio; and
- Expand youth courts, drug courts, and community-based counseling as alternatives to incarceration for low-risk, nonviolent offenders.

For full Dellums Commission reports, please go to: <http://www.mayorrondellums.org/dellums-commission-reports/>

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For more information on Mayor Ron Dellums and the City of Oakland, please visit and bookmark the following Web accounts:

 : <http://www.youtube.com/ronalddellums>

 : <http://www.facebook.com/mayorrondellums>

 : <http://web.me.com/mayorrondellums>

 : <http://www.mayorrondellums.org>