

ANNOUNCEMENT

Access to Justice Commission: Public Hearings for the Committee reviewing Fairness in the Criminal Justice System

The *Committee on Fairness in the Criminal Justice System*, of the *Access to Justice Commission*, will conduct a series of hearings between Oct. 22 and Dec. 9 on important topics related to the fairness of our criminal justice system and the incidence of crime in our state.

The Committee, comprised of a cross-section of the Delaware Bar, community and business leaders and academia, is charged with examining the causes of racial disparities in our state's system of criminal justice, and with trying to find ways to reduce those disparities. Through these hearings, the Committee seeks input from national and local experts in criminal justice and from the community about ideas that can make our criminal justice system more equitable and improve public safety.

The hearings are divided into two parts: informational hearings on Oct. 22 and Nov. 13, followed by a series of public forums around the state in December to accept public comment.

At the informational hearings, experts from the **University of Pennsylvania Law School's Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice, Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative and the University of Delaware**, will discuss how policies in certain areas contribute to racial disparities, and, most importantly, outline strategies that have worked in other states to reduce racial disparities without any increase in crime rates. All of the speakers have been asked to focus on potential reforms that can make our criminal justice system more equitable and improve public safety.

The hearings on **Oct. 22 from 1 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Doubletree Downtown Wilmington** at 700 N. King St. in Wilmington will focus on:

- Alternatives to incarceration, including community-based sentences; supervision and programming; problem-solving courts; prison-based rehabilitation programming, and support for inmates re-entering society from prison

- Educational, social and economic factors and other root causes that contribute to racial disparities

The hearings on **Nov. 13, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at The Chase Center on the Riverfront**, 815 Justison St. in Wilmington will focus on:

- Bail/pre-trial detention
- Charging and plea bargaining decisions and sentencing
- Policing strategies that have worked elsewhere

Members of the public are invited to attend but public comment will not be accepted during these hearings.

Written summaries and videos of the hearings will be made available on the court's Access to Justice website for those who are unable to attend at: www.courts.delaware.gov/supreme/access.stm.

The community will then get its turn to comment about the research presented at the informational hearings, or offer their own ideas to the Committee about how to improve our criminal justice system at the public forums.

Those interested in offering comment should pre-register by logging onto the court's website at www.courts.delaware.gov/supreme/accessform.stm. Same day registration will be available at each location if time and space permits. Speakers will be limited to five minutes.

All of the public forums will be held in the evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at four locations around the state including:

- **Dec. 1 in Georgetown at First State Community Action Agency, 308 N. Railroad Avenue**
- **Dec. 2 in Middletown at Middletown High, 120 Silver Lake Road**
- **Dec. 8 in Wilmington at Howard High, 401 E. 12th Street**
- **Dec. 9 in Dover at William Henry Middle School, 65 Carver Road**

If anyone is unable to attend the forums, or does not get the opportunity to speak at a forum because of time constraints, comments will be accepted online until Dec. 18, at the Access to Justice website.

The information collected at the hearings will inform the work of the Fairness Committee as it creates a plan of action to reduce or eliminate racial disparities in the criminal justice system.

**For more information, please contact
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