

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

December 30, 2022

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G St. NW
Washington D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro,

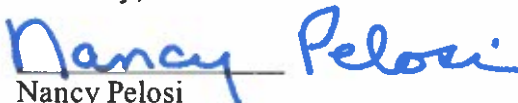
Across the country, the education of Black and brown students is often disrupted as a result of discriminatory and punitive discipline policies that criminalize and push them out of school. Black girls are suspended, expelled, referred to law enforcement and arrested on school campuses at disproportionately higher rates than white girls, according to a report by the African American Policy Forum and the Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies. These disparities are a result of unfair dress code and hair policies and a lack of understanding of the historical, social, and economic inequities such as poverty, trauma, hunger, and violence that often impact student behavior. Black girls, girls of color, and students with disabilities are disproportionately subjected to exclusionary school discipline policies such as suspension and expulsion, which can have long-term effects on their safety, well-being, and academic success.

We write to request that GAO examines the disparate impact of school disciplinary policies and practices on Black and brown girls in K-12 public schools. This work would build on the findings of two GAO studies, *Discipline Disparities for Black Students, Boys, and Students with Disabilities*, and *Department of Education Should Provide Information on Equity and Safety in School Dress Codes*. In these studies, GAO reported that unfairness in the classroom can cause students to have to repeat a grade, drop out of school, or become a statistic in the juvenile criminal system. Congress has an obligation to ensure that all students receive the educational support and opportunity they deserve to achieve their fullest potential.


Specifically, we ask that GAO study the (1) trends associated with the overuse and discriminatory application of exclusionary disciplinary practices affecting girls in public schools; (2) factors contributing to the disproportionate application of disciplinary policies and practices on girls of color, including those with disabilities; and (3) actions, directives, and guidance provided by the Department of Education and Department of Justice that impact school discipline disparities.

Please keep McKenzie Fields (McKenzie.Fields@mail.house.gov) and Demarquin Johnson (Demarquin.Johnson@mail.house.gov) of our staffs informed as your work proceeds.

Sincerely,



Nancy Pelosi
Speaker



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress