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Attorney General Holder, Secretary Duncan Announce Effort to Respond to School-to-Prison Pipeline by Supporting Good Discipline Practices

WASHINGTON –Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan today announced the launch of the Supportive School Discipline Initiative, a collaborative project between the Departments of Justice and Education that will address the “school-to-prison pipeline” and the disciplinary policies and practices that can push students out of school and into the justice system. The initiative aims to support good discipline practices to foster safe and productive learning environments in every classroom.

“Ensuring that our educational system is a doorway to opportunity – and not a point of entry to our criminal justice system – is a critical, and achievable, goal,” said Attorney General Holder. “By bringing together government, law enforcement, academic, and community leaders, I’m confident that we can make certain that school discipline policies are enforced fairly and do not become obstacles to future growth, progress, and achievement.”

“Maintaining safe and supportive school climates is absolutely critical, and we are concerned about the rising rates and disparities in discipline in our nation’s schools,” said Secretary Duncan. “By teaming up with stakeholders on this issue and through the work of our offices throughout the department, we hope to promote strategies that will engage students in learning and keep them safe.”

The goals of the Supportive School Discipline Initiative are to: build consensus for action among federal, state and local education and justice stakeholders; collaborate on research and data collection that may be needed to inform this work, such as evaluations of alternative disciplinary policies and interventions; develop guidance to ensure that school discipline policies and practices comply with the nation’s civil rights laws and to promote positive disciplinary options to both keep kids in school and improve the climate for learning; and promote awareness and knowledge about evidence-based and promising policies and practices among state judicial and education leadership.

In order to implement the initiative, the two departments will coordinate with other organizations in the non-profit and philanthropic communities who are also working to help ensure students succeed by addressing inappropriate school discipline. These groups include the Council of State Governments and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The Supportive School Discipline Initiative will build upon the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights’ work to increase and enhance the school discipline data available through the Civil Rights Data Collection and the Departments’ proactive efforts to ensure disciplinary policies support students and are administered in a non-discriminatory manner.

Attorney General Holder and Secretary Duncan announced this initiative during the quarterly meeting of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, whose membership includes representatives from 12 federal agencies and nine practitioners. The council coordinates federal juvenile justice and prevention programs to help better serve at-risk youth. A priority issue for the council is education and at-risk youth. More information on the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice is available at: www.juvenilecouncil.gov/index.html.

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Attorney General



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