



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

July 30, 2020

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Vought:

This letter responds to your request for the views and recommendations of the Department of Justice (the Department) on enrolled bill S. 2163, the “Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act.” The Department recommends that the President sign this bill.

The purpose of the bipartisan Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act is to establish a 19-member commission to examine the issues that face black males in America. The Commission would include Members of Congress, appointed subject matter experts, and federal agency experts, including one member from the Department of Justice. Commission members will engage in a “systematic study of the conditions affecting Black men and boys,” examining a wide range of issues, including education, health, criminal justice, economic, and social issues.

The Commission will produce annual reports examining the conditions affecting black men and boys and making recommendations to create, develop, or improve related law and policy. These reports will provide vital guidance for Congress and the Administration on effective strategies to address the Commission’s findings. The problems facing black males have complex causes and complex solutions. The breadth of the Commissioners’ backgrounds and the Commission’s mandate will enable it to examine these issues with the depth and deliberation they deserve.

In his recent Congressional testimony, the Attorney General noted that “[t]he work of securing civil rights is rightly focused on reforming our institutions to ensure they better conform to our laws and aspirations.” We look forward to working with the Commission to address the issues that face black men and boys in America.

We note one issue for your consideration. The bill states that “(9) The Attorney General shall appoint one member from within the Department of Justice who is an expert in racial disparities within the criminal justice system.” Revising that portion to read as follows: “(9) The Attorney General shall appoint one member from within the Department of Justice who is an

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expert on criminal justice issues affecting Black men and boys,” would be more consistent with the listed criteria for Commission appointees from other agencies, and provide greater breadth to the justice issues to be examined.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may be of additional assistance to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Blanche Hankey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Blanche Hankey
Deputy Assistant Attorney General