



Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release:

From: Davenport NAACP Branch #4019

Event: NAACP HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 9 CALLING FOR AN AUDIT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE PROCESS

Iowa-Nebraska NAACP State Area NAACP President Betty Andrews Joins Davenport NAACP President Michael Guster and Community Members to address High Youth Justice Disparities in Scott County and Iowa

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Tuesday, November 9, 2021, the Davenport NAACP Branch #4019 will host a press conference, at 10:30 a.m. at the Friends of MLK Interpretive Center, 501 Brady St., Davenport, IA, addressing the proposed construction of a new Scott County Youth Detention Center which would more than quadruple the current capacity of 14 beds to a potential capacity of 60 beds.

Michael Guster, President, Davenport NAACP Branch #4019 will be joined by Betty C. Andrews, President of the Iowa-Nebraska NAACP State Area Conference of Branches and founder of the Iowa Summit on Justice & Disparities (WWW.IowaJusticeSummit.org); and Iowa State Representative Ako Abdul – Samad and other community leaders.

According to a recent [Sentencing Project Report](#), the Black youth placement rate in Iowa was more than double the national average, and young African Americans in Iowa were nearly nine times as likely as their white peers to be committed to facilities such as detention centers, residential treatment centers, group homes, and youth prisons.

Scott County appears to be driving much of this statewide disparity. A review of statewide data from 2016 – 2019 shows the racial disparity was the highest in Scott County. Black youth in Scott County were more disproportionately impacted by formal complaints, petitions, adjudications, and adult waivers than white Scott County youth at a higher rate when compared to Black Hawk, Linn, Polk, and Woodbury Counties. (Iowa counties with comparable sized Black youth populations.)

1. State Audit of Scott County Juvenile Legal System Disproportionate Impact on Black and Minority Youth.

In November, 2020 the Iowa Department of Human Rights issued a paper ["Racial Disparities - An Analysis of Three Decision Points in Iowa's Juvenile Justice System."](#)

With concerns about the impact on African American and on people of color, the NAACP has been reviewing the breakdowns of referrals, detention admissions and adult transfers in Scott County compared to other counties in the state (Polk, Linn and Black Hawk, Woodbury Counties). We are alarmed that Scott County's disproportionate impact leads the five counties in all three categories.

Along with other community organizations, the NAACP is calling for the Iowa Department of Human Rights Department of Human Rights Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning to conduct an audit that shall include a full examination of the Scott County juvenile justice system including a review of decision points, judicial practices, deferment programs, police referrals, racial disparities, and the use of waivers to adult court. In Scott County, the audit should be comparable in scope to the Iowa Board of Education 2018 audit of the Davenport Community School District. The NAACP believes the inequities of suspensions and referrals to special education found in the school system are related to similar inequities in the juvenile legal system - - thus laying a foundation for a Scott County school to prison pipeline.

The Davenport NAACP's call for this audit is in conjunction with the Iowa-Nebraska NAACP's declaration that Iowa needs to take immediate measures to drastically address Iowa's high-ranking juvenile justice disparities with a thorough internal examination and immediate implementation of a plan of action.

- 2. The NAACP rejects the increased size of the proposed new juvenile detention center.** As a matter of ensuring a safe place for youth in crisis and delivering best practices, the NAACP recognizes the county's quest to build a state-of-the-art juvenile detention center, however erecting a modernized facility should not be an excuse for increasing the number of youth the facility will hold. The NAACP rebuffs the notion that the new detention center must increase capacity to 60 beds which would also be a violation of current Iowa Code. If the extremely poor juvenile justice outcomes in Scott County are at the very least brought into alignment with the rest of the country, the center should serve no more than 24.
- 3. Finally, the NAACP opposes the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in the construction of the new juvenile detention center.** As these dollars we designated to mitigate societal damage caused by the Covid 19 Pandemic, the NAACP encourages Scott County to invest the \$4.5 million of ARPA funds to build capacity in existing neighborhood-based programs with history and credibility working with underserved Black and Hispanic families, restorative juvenile justice, and youth engagement. These communities were hit the hardest by the pandemic and in order to foster equity, deserve additional support.

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