



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS
EXECUTIVE

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For Immediate Release

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Civil Rights Urges Action In Wake Of Recent Ann Arbor Incident

Lansing, MI—Kelvin W. Scott, Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR), has issued the following statement on behalf of the Department following the alleged assault of a 16-year-old Muslim girl in Ann Arbor.

"The Department of Civil Rights is concerned about information it has received indicating that tensions in the community between youth of various ethnic groups were high even before this incident occurred. Unfortunately, that tension may have escalated as the week has progressed.

We urge Ann Arbor Schools not to treat this as an isolated incident to be resolved by discipline alone, but rather, to acknowledge the broader issues involved. The inclusion of conflict resolution and cultural competency programming is needed immediately, and for all students. To have such an occurrence take place as the new school year begins is truly disheartening.

To Ann Arbor Schools we say, please take advantage of this teachable moment for your students and staff. To everyone else we say, please do not wait for an incident like this one, give your students the skills they need to work together now.

All our children have the right to attend schools that are safe and free of harassment. Students need to be provided the tools to work together and to refute the many misconceptions about people of other races and faiths. Children in particular should never have to fear what may happen to them while they attend school, participate in school-sponsored events or while they are traveling to and from school.

We also believe that incidents such as this one highlight the need to update and clarify Michigan's existing hate crime law. We urge the Michigan Senate to join the Michigan Sheriffs' Association, Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police, Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan, and their colleagues in the Michigan House by passing HB-4836 and sending it to the Governor for her signature.

Lastly, we urge local governments across the state to develop or update policies and ordinances that both confirm the acceptance of diversity and provide comprehensive protections for those within the jurisdiction. Such announcements would serve as clear indications that public leaders understand the value of working together across personal backgrounds and will not stand for the expression of prejudice.”

For more information on the Department of Civil Rights visit the Department's website at <http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr>

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