

JOINT CENTER HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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MEDIA ADVISORY:

Dellums Commission Begins Work on Public Policy Reform To Expand Life Paths of Young Men of Color

WASHINGTON—The Joint Center Health Policy Institute has commissioned a panel of respected experts to examine the cumulative impact on community health of evolving national and state policies that limit life options for young men of color. As overall child mortality fell dramatically from 1981 to 2001, the only group that did not experience a reduction in death rates was African Americans between 15 and 19 years old—mostly because of a rise in homicide and suicide rates. Black, Latino, Asian and Native American young men are incarcerated at disproportionately high rates. Many young men of color are unable to recover from serious mental illness because they are warehoused in juvenile detention centers where the availability of community mental health care services is severely limited.

These problems are typical of the effects of a wide range of misguided public policies, including the abandonment of drug treatment in favor of interdiction and criminal sanctions; the growing diversion of youthful offenders to adult criminal systems; and the escalating use of zero-tolerance policies to expel students from school. In combination, these policies have wasted billions of taxpayer dollars, and their impact has fallen most heavily on young men of color. Among Black, Latino, Asian and Native American young men, high school drop-out rates have increased, college enrollment levels have declined and incarceration rates have grown. More than 25 percent of black men who are 20 years old today are likely to go to prison at some point in their lives, compared with 4.1 percent of white men of the same age.

On **Tuesday, July 26**, the commission's chairman, the Honorable Ronald V. Dellums, other commission members and policy analysts will brief journalists on this significant community health issue in the African American, Latino, Asian and Native American communities and on the need for innovation and more effective policies.

WHAT: Dellums Commission media briefing on improving community health by addressing state and national public policies that harm young men of color.

WHEN: 8:30 to 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, July 26, 2005. Continental breakfast will be served. **RSVP to Avery Peters at 202-789-3515 or on Monday only at 240-277-1641.**

WHERE: National Press Club, First Amendment Lounge, 529 14th St. NW, 13th Floor, Washington, DC.

WHO: **Commission Chairman Ronald V. Dellums**, a Member of Congress representing California from 1971 to 1998 and former chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and the Congressional Black Caucus; **Togo Dennis West Jr.**, President, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, and former Secretary of the Army and Secretary of Veterans Affairs; **Commission Members and Policy Analysts**, including state legislators, judges, educators, human rights activists, corporate executives and religious leaders.

The Joint Center Health Policy Institute was established in 2002 by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, with a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The institute's mission is to ignite a "Fair Health" movement that gives people of color the inalienable right to equal opportunity for healthy lives. The Joint Center, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, conducts research and analyses on public policy issues of concern to African Americans and other minorities, promotes their involvement in the governance process, and operates programs that create coalitions within the minority, business, and other diverse communities. For more information, visit www.jointcenter.org.

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