November 7, 2013

**Summary:**

Racial Impact Statements are proactive tools to redress racial and ethnic disproportionality within the criminal justice system. This policy tool will help legislators address a potential disparate impact upon communities of color prior to the adoption of new and amended legislation.

**History:**

In 2007, the Sentencing Project based in Washington DC began to discuss the utilization of a policy tool to redress racial and ethnic disproportionality within the criminal justice system. In 2007, the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission adopted a Racial Impact tool to monitor racial and ethnic disproportionality within Minnesota sentencing. Today, three other states (Iowa 2008, Connecticut 2008, and Oregon 2013) have adopted some variation of a Racial Impact Statement. Similar legislation is pending in Arkansas.

In Washington, racial and ethnic disproportionality exist at all stages of the criminal justice system including the juvenile justice system. The effects of disproportionality are largely due to facially neutral policies that may be mitigated if lawmakers are fully informed and understand the potential impact to certain segments of the community.

**Proposed Legislation:**

Like fiscal notes, racial impact statements are short statements of the projected impact of criminal justice legislation on particular communities. The statistical estimates will provide legislators with useful information on anticipated demographical impacts.