



Attention: Judiciary Staffer

January 23, 2008

Dear Representative:

As a national reform organization that endorses effective criminal justice policies that invest in vulnerable communities and prevent crime, The Sentencing Project is pleased to support **H.R. 3846, the Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support and Education (“Youth PROMISE”) Act**. I urge you to endorse and co-sponsor this legislation with its lead sponsor, Rep. Robert “Bobby” Scott.

Successful strategies to combat youth violence and gang-related activity have long eluded lawmakers who too often rely on enacting longer sentences for young people instead of implementing proven prevention and intervention programs that stop violence before it happens. The Sentencing Project believes that H.R. 3846 promotes a constructive approach to address youth crime by:

- Establishing a federal advisory panel that sets standards to evaluate juvenile delinquency and criminal street gang prevention and intervention programs, and identifies communities with the greatest need for assistance;
- Supporting community councils that plan strategies to address youth crime with improved indigent defense delivery systems, court personnel trainings, and enhanced services for early childhood development, child protection and safety, adolescent job training, education, housing, health care and substance abuse treatment;
- Creating a National Center for Proven Practices Research;
- Aiding the hiring and training of law enforcement officers as youth-oriented police; and
- Expanding victim and witness protection for juveniles.

Children are our most precious resource and by providing the care and services they need while they are young we can improve their chances for success. Neighborhoods confronted with juvenile crime will be better served by keeping children in school rather than locking them behind bars. According to data from 1999, over 40% of young black males without a high school diploma were in prison or jail. Among young white male dropouts, one out of 10 was incarcerated.¹ These stark statistics serve as a warning sign that efforts to stop crime must start early and include a comprehensive strategy for a child’s success.

The Sentencing Project applauds H.R. 3846’s forward thinking approach and emphasis on proven measures to prevent crime. I hope you support it as well. The investment in our youth today will produce savings for the future because of reductions in violence, crime, incarceration and other criminal justice costs.

Sincerely,

Marc Mauer
Executive Director

¹ Western, B., Pettit, B. and Guetzkow, J. *Black Economic Progress in the Era of Mass Imprisonment* in *Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Incarceration* 168 (Marc Mauer & Meda Chesney-Lind eds., 2002).