

July 16, 2012

**In Support of the Youth PROMISE Act
H.R. 2721**

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned, representing a broad array of children and youth-oriented specialties including juvenile justice, mental health, civil rights, education, youth work, legal services, and faith communities, respectfully express our strong support for the Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act (“Youth PROMISE Act”), bi-partisan legislation sponsored by Representatives Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA-3rd), Walter B. Jones (R-NC-3rd), John Conyers (D-MI-14th) and Steven LaTourette (R-OH-14th).

Rather than creating additional and duplicative punitive approaches, the Youth PROMISE Act builds upon evidence-based and promising practices proven to reduce youth violence and delinquency. Specifically, the Youth PROMISE Act directs resources towards communities facing an increased risk of crime and gang activity in order to enable those communities to begin to address significant unmet needs and prevent crime from occurring. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, communities facing the greatest youth gang, delinquency and crime challenges will come together – via a local council that includes law enforcement, community-based organizations, schools, faith organizations, health, social services, and mental health providers – to develop and implement a comprehensive local plan to support young people and their families and make our communities safer, reduce victimization, and help at-risk young people to lead law-abiding and healthy lives, free from gangs, delinquency and/or criminal involvement.

The Youth PROMISE Act provides for thorough evaluation, including analyses of the cost-savings to society yielded by investing in prevention and intervention rather than in more costly and ineffective prosecution and incarceration. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, savings from investments in prevention and intervention programs will be reinvested in prevention and intervention efforts funded under the Act.

The Youth PROMISE Act also provides for the hiring and training of Youth Oriented Policing Services (YOPS) officers to prevent and address juvenile delinquency and criminal street gang activity in a manner that is responsive to the research on juveniles and adolescent brain development. The Act’s Center for Youth Oriented Policing will be responsible for identification, development and dissemination of information related to strategic policing practices and technologies to law enforcement agencies, specifically related to the needs of young people. Additionally, the Act includes support for youth victim and witness protection programs, which are critical to deter crime.

Finally, the Youth PROMISE Act provides for the increased local coordination of federal programs designed to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency and youth crime, and establishes a federal commission charged to carry out a nationwide, comprehensive study of the effectiveness of crime and delinquency prevention and intervention strategies.

In short, the approach of the Youth PROMISE Act makes sense, comports with the research on adolescent brain development and crime and violence prevention and intervention, and will yield overall savings to the community, according to both financial and life quality measures. For all of these reasons, we urge your support for H.R. 1064 and S. 435, the Youth PROMISE Act.

Please feel free to contact the Chairs of the Gang and Youth Violence Prevention Task Force of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition with any questions: Jennifer Bellamy at the American Civil Liberties Union, 202-715-0828; or Corryne Deliberto at World Vision, 202-572-6553.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

International Organizations (7)

Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), International
Continental Societies, Incorporated
Covenant House International
Human Rights Watch
International Community Corrections Association
Penal Reform International
World Vision

National Organizations (113)

Afterschool Alliance
Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
American Bar Association
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American Correctional Association
American Council of Chief Defenders
American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
American Jewish Congress
American Probation and Parole Association
American Psychological Association
Asian American Justice Center
ASPIRA, Inc.
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Boy Scouts of America
Boys and Girls Clubs of America
Campaign for Youth Justice
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Children's Law and Policy
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Coalition on Human Needs
Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Correctional Education Association
Council for Educators of At-Risk and Delinquent Youth
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA)
Democrats for Education Reform
Family Justice
Federal CURE
First Five Years Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
Girls Inc.

Immigrant Justice Network
Institute for Community Peace
Justice Policy Institute
Juvenile Justice Trainers Association
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
League of Young Voters
Legal Action Center
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office
Mental Health America
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National African-American Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.
National Alliance of Black School Educators
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Alliance for Faith and Justice
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice
National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Association of Juvenile Correctional Agencies
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO)
National Black Police Association
National Center for Youth Law
National Consortium of TASC (Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities) Programs
National Council for Community Behavioral Health
National Council of La Raza
National Council on Crime and Delinquency
National Council on Educating Black Children
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)
National Council for Urban (Gang) Peace, Justice and Empowerment
National Education Association
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Head Start Association
National Hire Network
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Juvenile Defender Center
National Juvenile Detention Association
National Juvenile Justice Network
National Network for Youth
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement (NOBLE)
National Organization of Concerned Black Men, Inc.
National Partnership for Juvenile Services
National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
National Trust for the Development of African-American Men
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
Open Society Policy Center
The Peace Alliance
Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office

Prison Legal News
Prisons Foundation
Restorative Community Foundation
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southern Poverty Law Center
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Law and Policy Section
The Rebecca Project for Human Rights
The School Social Work Association of America
The Sentencing Project
The Student Peace Alliance
Therapeutic Communities of America (TCA)
Time Dollar Youth Court
TimeBanks USA
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United Neighborhood Centers of America
U.S. Conference of Mayors
U.S. Dream Academy
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)
VOICES for America's Children
W. Haywood Burns Institute
Washington Office on Latin America
Youth Law Center
Youth Matter America

State and Local Organizations (122)

Alabama

Alabama Youth Justice Coalition
Equal Justice Initiative
Southern Juvenile Defender Center
Southern Poverty Law Center
VOICES for Alabama's Children
Parents, Youth, Children and Family Training Institute

Arizona

Children's Action Alliance

California

Alturas Mas Altas
Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Office of Restorative Justice
Asian Law Caucus
Barrios Unidos – Santa Cruz Chapter
City and County of San Francisco
City of Los Angeles
City of Pasadena
Contra Costa County Public Defender's Office
Everychild Foundation
Faith Communities for Families and Children

Homies Unidos
Juvenile Court Judges of California
L.A. Unified School District
L.A. Youth Justice Coalition
Leaders in Community Alternatives, Inc.
Pacific Juvenile Defender Center
San Francisco Youth Commission

Colorado

The Pendulum Foundation

Connecticut

Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance
Families Moving Forward
The Poor People's Alliance, Connecticut Chapter

Delaware

Delaware Center for Justice (DE)

District of Columbia

Young America Works Public Charter School
Columbia Heights Shaw Family Collaborative
DC Alliance of Youth Advocates
DC NAACP Youth Council
Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY)
Justice for DC Youth
Latin American Youth Center
Life Pieces to Masterpieces, Inc.

Florida

Children's Campaign, Inc.
Florida Public Defender Association, Inc.
Florida Public Defender, Fourth Judicial Circuit
Florida Families for Fair Sentences
Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office

Illinois

ACLU of Illinois
Chicago Area Project
John Howard Association of Illinois
Juvenile Justice Initiative of Illinois
Midwest Juvenile Defender Center
PTA of Illinois
United in Peace, Inc.

Kansas

H.O.P.E., Inc
Kansas CURE

Louisiana

Families & Friends of La.'s Incarcerated Children
Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana

Maryland

Advocates for Children and Youth
CASA of Maryland, Inc.
Fusion Partnerships, Inc.
Identity, Inc.
Law Office of Anthony J. Keber
Maryland CURE
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
Maryland Juvenile Justice Coalition
Maryland Office of the Public Defender
Public Justice Center

Massachusetts

Citizens for Juvenile Justice
Youth Advocacy Project of the Committee for Public Counsel Services

Michigan

Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency

Minnesota

Minnesota Juvenile Justice Coalition

Mississippi

Mississippi CURE
Mississippi Youth Justice Project

Nebraska

VOICES for Children in Nebraska

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

New Jersey

New Jersey Association on Correction

New Mexico

County of Santa Fe
New Mexico Council on Crime and Delinquency
New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association

New York

Center for Community Alternatives
Central American Legal Assistance

City of New York
City of New York Department of Juvenile Justice
Correctional Association of New York
The Fortune Society
Juvenile Justice Center of Suffolk University Law School
Quad A For KIDS / A Rochester Area Community Foundation Initiative

North Carolina

ACLU of North Carolina
Action for Children North Carolina
Council for Children's Rights
UNC Juvenile Justice Clinic, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law

Ohio

ACLU of Ohio
Franklin County Public Defender
Hispanic Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program
Juvenile Justice Coalition
Peace in the Hood
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
VOICES for Ohio's Children

Oregon

Partnership for Safety and Justice

Pennsylvania

Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.

Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

Rhode Island

The Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence

South Carolina

Alston Wilkes Society
The Children's Trust of South Carolina

South Dakota

Parents Who Care Coalition

Tennessee

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth

Texas

Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

Utah

Utah Commission on Criminal Justice and Juvenile Justice

Virginia

Barrios Unidos – Virginia Chapter
Families & Allies of Virginia’s Youth
JustChildren
Keeping Our Kids Safe: The Newport News Violence Prevention Network
Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center, Juvenile Law and Policy Clinic, University of Richmond School of Law
The Center for Community Development, Inc.
The S.T.O.P. Family Investment Center at Oakmont North
Virginia Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education
Virginia Commonwealth University Center for School-Community Collaboration
Virginia CURE (VA)

Washington

Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
Washington Defender Association
Washington Defender Association's Immigration Project

Wisconsin

ATTIC Correctional Services, Inc.
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

Local Jurisdictions (12)

City of East Cleveland (OH)
City of Hampton (VA)
City of Los Angeles (CA)
City of New York (NY)
City of Newport News (VA)
City of Norfolk (VA)
City of Pasadena (CA)
City of Philadelphia (PA)
City of Pittsburgh (PA)
City of Portsmouth (VA)
City of Richmond (VA)
City and County of San Francisco (CA)
County of Santa Fe (NM)

Elected Officials and Academics (10)

Leroy D. Baca, Sheriff, County of Los Angeles (CA)
Donna M. Bishop, Northeastern University (MA)
Susan J. Carstens, Psy.D., L.P. Juvenile Specialist, Crystal Police Dept. (MN)
The Honorable Toni Harp, Connecticut State Senator
The Honorable Alice L. Bordsen, North Carolina State Representatives
Jolanta Juszkievicz, Ph.D., American University (D.C.)
The Honorable Kelvin Roldán, Connecticut State Representative
Tony Roshan Samara, George Mason University (VA)
Earle Williams, Psy.D. Hampton University, (VA)
Aaron Kupchik, Ph.D., University of Delaware

