

April 14, 2014

Support the Youth PROMISE Act

S.1307

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned, representing a broad array of children and youth-oriented organizations and communities, respectfully urge you to cosponsor and support passage of S. 1307, the “Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act (“Youth PROMISE Act”). The Youth PROMISE Act is bipartisan legislation sponsored by Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and James Inhofe (R-OK) and co-sponsored by Senators Richard J. Durbin (D-IL) and Tim Kaine (D-VA).

The Youth PROMISE Act has bipartisan support for many reasons. First, the bill would reduce and prevent crime, building upon evidence-based practices proven to reduce youth violence and delinquency. The Youth PROMISE Act would direct resources to communities facing increased risk of crime and gang activity, in order to enable those communities to address significant unmet needs and prevent crime from occurring. Under the Act, communities facing the greatest challenges would 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.

At a time when annual corrections costs in the United States have reached over \$68 billion, the Youth PROMISE Act would save money. For example, the state of Pennsylvania implemented an evidence-based program similar to the alternatives that could be employed through the Youth PROMISE Act. The program saved, on average, \$5 for every dollar spent during the ten-year study period. The Youth PROMISE Act would provide for thorough evaluation of these programs receiving funding, including analyses of the cost-savings to society yielded by investing in prevention and early intervention rather than in costly and ineffective prosecution and incarceration. In fact, cities receiving grants under the Youth PROMISE Act would be required to track governmental cost savings that accompany a drop in crime. The grantees would then recapture a portion of those savings to keep the PROMISE programs alive after the federal grant period ends. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, savings from investments in prevention and intervention programs would be reinvested in similar efforts funded under the Act.

Finally, the Youth PROMISE Act has broad support from the law enforcement community. The Act would provide increased local coordination of federal programs designed to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency and youth crime with law enforcement, and establish a federal commission 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 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 you to cosponsor and support S. 1307, the Youth PROMISE Act.

Please contact Jennifer Bellamy at the American Civil Liberties Union, jbellamy@aclu.org, with any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

International Organization (1)

International Community Corrections Association

National Organizations (45)

Afterschool Alliance

Alliance for Children and Families

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

American Correctional Association

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

American Probation and Parole Association

American Psychological Association

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Campaign for Youth Justice

Center for Children's Law and Policy

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Defense Fund

Coalition for Juvenile Justice

Community Action Partnership

Correctional Education Association

Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

Council for Opportunity in Education

Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA)

Democrats for Education Reform

First Focus Campaign for Children

Girls Inc.

Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA)

Justice for Families

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office

NAACP

National African American Drug Policy Coalition

National Alliance to End Homelessness

National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of School Psychologists

National Council for Behavioral Health

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)

National Council on Crime and Delinquency

National Council on Educating Black Children

National Employment Law Project

National Juvenile Defender Center

National League of Cities

Open Society Policy Center

The Student Peace Alliance

The Peace Alliance
Union for Reformed Judaism
Youth Law Center
Youth Represent