



National Juvenile Justice Network

December 20, 2007

Support for the Youth PROMISE Act (H.R. 3846)

Dear Member of Congress:

The National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN), a membership organization of thirty state-based organizations working towards the fair and equitable treatment of all youth in conflict with the law, strongly supports Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott's Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act (Youth PROMISE Act), H.R. 3846.

Members of the NJJN have intimate knowledge of the destruction that ineffective gang policies have wreaked on public safety, communities and children's lives. Unfortunately, our fear of gangs and youth crime has led to punitive policies that have propelled increasing numbers of children into detention facilities and adult prisons. Experience and research have both proven that these policies actually increase youth crime and decrease public safety by removing youth from the critical supports of family, school and community, placing youth in a criminogenic training ground that reifies any gang affiliation, and exposing youth to harsh conditions with little to no rehabilitative programming. There are better ways to protect public safety and the Youth PROMISE Act adopts these approaches.

The Act directs resources towards those communities most at risk from crime and gang activity and enables them to come together through local councils that include an array of community stakeholders from law enforcement to schools to mental health providers in order to develop and implement a comprehensive local plan to support young people and their families, reduce victimization, and make our communities safer. The Act also incorporates recent research in adolescent brain development that is changing the way we think about and work with young people. The Act provides for the hiring of Youth Oriented Policing (YOPS) officers and training them a manner that is responsive to this growing body of research. These officers will be supported by a Center for Youth Oriented Policing that will disseminate information related to youth appropriate policing practices and technologies.

The Youth PROMISE Act will help troubled communities grow strong and will address youth crime in a way that actually reduces future crime. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at 202/467-0864 x 105. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Bryer
Director,
The National Juvenile Justice Network