

## ***Ohio Supports the Youth PROMISE Act (H.R. 3846)***

March 18, 2008

Dear Ohio Delegation:

We, the undersigned organizations representing a broad array of children and youth organizations express our strong support for the Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act (Youth PROMISE Act), H.R. 3846, and urge you to co-sponsor this important legislation.

This bill is a crime prevention and intervention bill, which gets at the root causes of youth and gang violence before youth get into trouble. Rather than creating additional and duplicative punitive approaches, that do very little to prevent youth from engaging in delinquent activity, the Youth PROMISE Act builds upon evidence-based and promising practices proven to reduce youth violence and delinquency.

Specifically, the Youth PROMISE Act is a unique and forward thinking bill containing strategies that respond directly to the needs of our community. The bill provides for:

1. **Planning grants to assess the needs of each community.** The bill provides for a one year planning grant for each community facing an increase risk of crime and gang activity in order to enable them to begin to address unmet needs and prevent crime from occurring.
2. **The formation of local community committees – PROMISE Coordinating Councils – to come up with a solution specifically tailored for that community.** Under the Youth PROMISE Act, communities facing the greatest youth gang, delinquency and crime challenges will come together –via the PROMISE Coordinating Council – that brings together 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.
3. **The use of evidence-based practices and programs for prevention and intervention.** The Youth PROMISE Act builds upon the broad array of evidence-based strategies that are proven effective to reduce and prevent youth violence and delinquency. Evidence-based practices are rooted in science, they are replicable, and their efficacy has been proven. In addition, the bill requires that thorough assessment and evaluation measures be implemented to ensure that resources are directed toward communities faced with the highest levels of crime and gang activity.
4. **Cost savings related to prevention and intervention practices.** 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 such as; in early childhood education, after-school, mentoring, and other programs, will be reinvested in prevention and intervention efforts funded under the Act.

**5. Resources for law enforcement.** The Youth PROMISE Act also provides for the hiring and training of Youth Oriented Policing (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. Additionally, the Act includes support for youth victim and witness protection programs, which are critical to deter crime, as well as extended and increased authorizations for the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant program to support juvenile justice systems.

The Youth PROMISE Act is a direct response to what is occurring in our state. As you know in Ohio:

- Ohio has the 6<sup>th</sup> largest rate of incarceration among youth in the nation.
- In Fiscal Year 2006, the Ohio Department of Youth Services had an average daily population of 1730 youth. At a \$219 average daily cost per youth, that is a \$13,829,000 cost to taxpayers. This does not include the much larger number of youth incarcerated in local detention and other secure facilities.

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. We are hopeful that you will take into account our strong support for the Youth PROMISE Act H.R. 3846, and become a co-sponsor of this important legislation. Please contact Ilana Bruner in Representative Bobby Scott's office at 202-225-8351 or [ilana.brunner@mail.house.gov](mailto:ilana.brunner@mail.house.gov).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Child Caring Service Providers (Cleveland)  
Beech Brook (Pepper Pike)  
Catholic Charities Health and Human Services (Cleveland)  
Children's Defense Fund Ohio (Columbus)  
Connections: Health Wellness Advocacy (Beechwood)  
Juvenile Justice Advocacy Alliance (Lyndhurst)  
Juvenile Justice Coalition (Bath)  
Montgomery County, Public Defender (Dayton)  
Voices for Ohio's Children (Cleveland)