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Factsheet: Assessing the Need

Youth PROMISE Act (H.R. 2721)

“Youth Prison Reduction Through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support and Education Act”

Youth Violence Widespread, Punitive Approach Not Working

Despite spending billions of dollars each year to arrest, prosecute and incarcerate juveniles in the United States, youth delinquency, crime and violence remain widespread. The focus on costly, ineffective and punitive enforcement strategies such as incarceration has been shown to expose troubled youth to harmful influences, increase school dropout rates and recidivism, make it harder to get a job and cost significantly more than under-funded, proactive, community-based prevention and intervention practices and alternatives to detention, such as mentoring, job-training and afterschool programs. The numbers show an urgent need to revisit and revise our current policies to invest in what works: addressing the root causes to prevent crime and violence in the first place. The Youth PROMISE Act will be a critical first step.

Statistics on Youth Violence:

Pervasive School Violence¹

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2007-08 school year:

- 36 percent of high school students said they had been in a fight during the past 12 months, and
- 8 percent said they had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property
- 32 percent of students ages 12–18 reported having been bullied, and
- 23 percent reported gangs at their schools

Catastrophic Social Impact

According to U.S. government reports:

- Homicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10–24. For African-American youth, homicide is the **leading** cause of death.²
- In 2008, youth ages 12–19 were victims of more than 1.3 million reported incidents of violence.³
- Nearly 50% of children surveyed in a comprehensive 2008 study said they were assaulted at least once in the past year.⁴

Mass Arrests & Incarceration^{5,6}

- In 2008, there were 2.1 million arrests of youth under the age of 18, including 96,000 for serious violent crimes and 230,000 for other assaults.
- African-American youth represent 16% percent of the U.S. juvenile population, but account for 52% of arrests for violent crime, and 40% of youth held in long-term detention.
- In 2006, 93,000 juveniles were incarcerated or held in residential detention centers – the vast majority for nonviolent offenses

Unsustainable Cost⁷

- States spend roughly \$5.7 billion each year imprisoning youth, at an average cost of \$240/day per youth (\$87,600/year).
- A growing number of studies show that incarcerating young people has significant immediate and long-term negative employment and economic outcomes for individuals and their communities.

To learn more, visit: www.YouthPROMISEAction.org.

¹ *Indicators of School Crime & Safety: 2009* (National Center for Education Statistics)

² *Youth Violence: Facts at a Glance, 2009* (Centers for Disease Control)

³ *National Crime Victimization Survey, 2008* (The Bureau of Justice Statistics)

⁴ *Children's Exposure to Violence: A Comprehensive National Survey, 2009* (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention)

⁵ *Crime in the United States, 2008* (Federal Bureau of Investigation)

⁶ *OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book, 2006* (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention)

⁷ *The Dangers of Detention, 2006* (Justice Policy Institute)