



September 12, 2016

Dear Members of the House Education and the Workforce Committee,

On behalf of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national organization of over 5,000 law enforcement leaders across all 50 states, I write today to urge your support for H.R. 5963, the Supporting Youth Opportunity and Preventing Delinquency Act of 2016.

This bipartisan reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) supports evidence-based programs that can prevent youth from engaging in criminal activity or rehabilitate youth who are starting to offend. These proven programs provide a critical support for law enforcement, as well as an investment in those young people. We urge your support for this important reauthorization.

As police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and violence survivors, our members know the importance of programs that tackle delinquency and youth recidivism head on. Past studies have shown that if a youth 14 years old or younger becomes a second-time offender, his likelihood of future run-ins with law enforcement spikes to 77 percent; and nationwide, roughly 40 percent of youth who come before juvenile court will come before the court at least one more time. This cycle damages public safety and drains law enforcement resources. More needs to be done to ensure that if a youth offends, her first contact with the justice system is also her last.

States have led the way in solving this youth recidivism problem. By expanding the use of community-based alternatives to detention and other interventions that work directly with the youth and their family, various states have experienced improved public safety and considerable cost savings. The Supporting Youth Opportunity and Preventing Delinquency Act would update the federal law to better direct federal support to these evidence-based programs.

Two anti-recidivism programs already at work in most states are Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST). Randomized controlled trials have found that these programs can cut youth recidivism by 50-62 percent. The bill also emphasizes a continuum of programs that are research-proven to help keep kids from involvement in crime in the first place, including evidence-based mentoring and voluntary home visiting. Many states have expanded the use of these programs in recent years, as well, and support through this reauthorization would help states continue this work.

We urge your support for H.R. 5963, the Supporting Youth Opportunity and Preventing Delinquency Act, to promote evidence-based programs that improve public safety, as well as youth outcomes.

Sincerely,

Natasha O'Dell Archer
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