

United States House of Representatives
Education and the Workforce Committee
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

Subcommittee Hearing
Providing Vulnerable Youth the Hope of a Brighter Future Through Juvenile Justice Reform
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Written Testimony of:
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Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member Polis, and all members of the House Education & Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, I want to start by thanking you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the importance of juvenile justice reform. It is a pleasure to be here.

I serve as the Chief of Police of Lafayette, Indiana. I am also the At-Large Director of the Indiana Association of Chiefs of Police. Additionally, I am a member of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national organization of chiefs of police, sheriffs, prosecutors, and violence survivors. We have over 5,000 members nationwide and have at least one member represented in 97 percent of Congressional Districts. I bring this experience to speak about the juvenile justice reforms my state has adopted, the positive impact those reforms have had on public safety, and how Congress can support our efforts by reauthorizing the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (or JJDP Act).

Nationwide, juvenile recidivism remains a serious problem. For far too many young people, their first arrest is only the beginning of their run-ins with the law. Past studies have shown that if a youth 14 years old or younger becomes a second-time offender, their likelihood of future brushes with law enforcement spikes to 77 percent. Nationwide, 40 percent of young people who come before juvenile court will come before the court at least one more time. This cycle damages public safety, drains law enforcement resources, and does not help put those young people back on a better path. More needs to be done to ensure that if a youth offends, their first contact with the justice system is also their last.

Recognizing this challenge, Indiana has undergone reforms at the state level and at the county level to better address juvenile delinquency. Starting in 2006, Marion County Indiana joined the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (or JDAI). This strategy reprioritizes existing funding away from detention facilities and into community-based alternative programs. In 2010, my county of Tippecanoe joined the initiative. In 2013, these reforms went statewide.

Research has shown that effective community-based alternatives to detention for low- or moderate-risk youth can significantly reduce the likelihood that the youth will get into trouble again. These intervention programs engage the family, reasserting both family and personal responsibility. They also coach parents and youth in the skills they will need to change the young person's behaviors. This is an important part of fixing the problem, since many of the youth we see are following the footsteps of family members or peers who have previously gone down the wrong road. After undergoing these rigorous interventions, juveniles are much more likely to engage in more pro-social behavior and avoid future problems with the law.

Two of the anti-recidivism programs at work in my state are Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST). Functional Family Therapy provides eight to 30 hours of coaching for parents and youth. The sessions focus on how to respond to situations and pressures in with more positive behaviors. Multisystemic therapy provides 60 hours of coaching for more serious youth offenders and their parents. While maintaining the importance of that immediate relationship, it widens the focus to reach out to more adults in that child's sphere of influence,

including teachers or coaches, to reinforce positive behaviors. Randomized controlled trials have found that FFT can cut youth recidivism by 50 percent and MST by 62 percent. Additionally, one trial of MST that did a 22-year follow up showed that troubled youth who did not receive MST were three and a half times more likely to be arrested for a violent felony than those who did (Henggeler, S.W., Mihalic, S.F., Rone, L., Thomas C., & Timmons- Mitchell, J. 1998).

It is important to note that confinement may be necessary for some juveniles with a very high-risk assessment or due to the severity of the offense. However, confinement should be reserved only for that small segment of juveniles who pose a threat to public safety. For the majority of juvenile offenders, however, the more just and effective approach involves community-based alternatives like those I described. A landmark study of the Ohio RECLAIM program found that diversion to local, effective youth programs reduced the rate of re-offending more than placements in juvenile facilities for most juvenile offenders. This was true for youth whose risk assessment classified them as low-risk, medium-risk, and high-risk. Only the final category of very high-risk juveniles were better served by confinement. (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005).

These programs are also more cost-effective. Nationwide, the average cost of confinement is \$88,000 per juvenile per year. That is more than the \$61,000 annual cost of tuition, room, and board at Harvard. Alternatively, because of the reduced costs associated with crime and contact with the justice system, MST and FFT saved the public an average of \$16,000 and \$27,000 per youth treated.

I have seen the positive effects of these juvenile justice reforms first-hand. After starting the JDAI in Tippecanoe County, we were able to cut juvenile arrests from 1,646 in 2008 to 755 in 2016, which a reduction of 891 arrests in just over 7 years! Not only did that save us the costs associated with each arrest, we also cancelled plans to build a thirty two bed secure juvenile detention facility at an anticipated cost of \$22 million dollars. Additionally, utilizing methods such as MST and ART (Aggression Replacement Training) programs beginning in 2008 through the end of 2016, 427 youth have successfully completed the program, and to date, 51 percent have yet to recidivate.

In early 2014, we implemented two programs, Policing the Teen Brain and Juvenile Justice Jeopardy, as strategies to enhance how youth approach Officers and vice versa. This work is paying significant dividends. In the two subsequent years we were able to reduce the number of arrest involving juveniles that involved Battery on Law Enforcement, Resisting Law Enforcement, and Disorderly Conduct by 31 percent. By teaching our officers and youth more productive and meaningful ways to interact, we are reducing conflict and improving relationships. It is our goal that every police officer in the county, and eventually the state, completes this course.

While states have led the way in juvenile justice reform, we cannot do it alone. The JJDPA provides critical grants to states that help support our juvenile justice systems, including these alternatives to detention. It also provides training, technical assistance, and research so that approaches can continue to improve. In 2005, Indiana created the Youth Law T.E.A.M. (YLT) to centralize Indiana's JJDP Act Compliance Monitoring services. Shortly thereafter, YLT developed a comprehensive JJDPA Compliance training curriculum. This training is routinely

provided to residential treatment facility personnel to ensure they know the correct procedure for handling youth in their custody, as well as judiciary, law enforcement, probation and other juvenile justice professionals. Unfortunately the federal law is lagging behind. Since the last time JJDPa was reauthorized in 2002, we know much more about what works to correct juvenile behavior and deter future offenses. A reauthorization to update this law is long overdue to ensure the best outcomes for the communities we serve.

I was excited to see this Committee introduce a bill last year to reauthorize JJDPa, the Supporting Youth Opportunity and Preventing Delinquency Act. That bipartisan bill made important updates to the federal law that would support the advancements made in Indiana and many other states. The bill also emphasized a continuum of programs that 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 those programs in recent years, as well, and support through a federal reauthorization would help states continue this work.

I appreciate this Committee's work on behalf of this important issue and was encouraged to see such a strong, bipartisan vote to pass it through the House of Representatives. I hope a similar reauthorization will make it into law this Congress.

Reauthorizing the JJDPa is an important opportunity to support 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. I urge you to reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and am happy to answer any questions you may have.