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## Supporting Youth Opportunity and Preventing Delinquency Act

### BACKGROUND

To promote safe and healthy communities, the federal government has long supported state efforts to set at-risk youth and juvenile offenders on the pathway to success. Helping children reject a life of crime requires more than an adjudication system and a detention facility. It requires a collaborative effort among parents, teachers, and community members to prevent criminal behavior and help support children who have engaged in illegal activity.

In support of that effort, Congress passed the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act* in 1974. The law coordinates federal resources aimed at improving state juvenile justice systems with a focus on education and rehabilitation. Over the years, these state juvenile justice programs have been able to help children develop the life skills they need to hold themselves accountable and achieve success. However, not all juvenile justice programs have seen the same results, and the consequences can be devastating for vulnerable youth and local communities. In fact:

- Approximately two million children are currently involved in the juvenile justice system, and many more youth are at risk of entering the system because of difficult circumstances, such as poverty, broken families, and homelessness.
- Roughly 26 percent of youth who have been incarcerated are *less likely* to graduate high school.
- Children who have been incarcerated are up to 26 percent *more likely* to engage in other unlawful activity and return to jail as adults.

For these children and the communities they live in, the stakes are too high to do nothing. Federal law needs to be updated to help state and local leaders explore and implement better ways to serve at-risk youth and juvenile offenders to put them on the pathway to success.

### SUPPORTING YOUTH OPPORTUNITY AND PREVENTING DELINQUENCY ACT

To reauthorize and improve current law, Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA)—along with Chairman John Kline (R-MN) and Reps. Earl L. “Buddy” Carter (R-GA), Susan Davis (D-CA), and Frederica Wilson (D-FL)—introduced the *Supporting Youth Opportunity and Preventing Delinquency Act*. The bipartisan legislation:

- ✓ **Sets kids up for long-term success** by helping them acquire skills necessary to grow into productive members of society and promoting opportunities to turn their lives around;
- ✓ **Provides state and local leaders flexibility** to meet the needs of delinquent youth in their communities and improve public safety;
- ✓ **Helps at-risk youth** avoid the juvenile justice system by supporting prevention services;
- ✓ **Prioritizes what works** by focusing on evidence-based strategies with proven track records; and
- ✓ **Improves accountability and oversight** to deliver positive outcomes for kids and protect taxpayers.