



January 20, 2016

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
530 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
135 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley and Senator Whitehouse:

We, the undersigned—representing more than 80 national, state, and local organizations and hundreds of thousands of constituents—thank you for your leadership in sponsoring S. 1169, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2015. The bill strengthens and updates the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), which has provided States and localities with federal standards and supports for improving juvenile justice and delinquency prevention practices and contributed to safeguards for youth, families and communities for more than 40 years, and we are grateful that you have made it a priority this Congress.

Despite a continuing decline in youth crime and delinquency, more than 60,000 young people are held in detention centers awaiting trial or confined by the courts in juvenile facilities in the U.S. For these confined youth, and the many more kids at-risk of involvement in the justice system, the JJDP and programs it supports are critical. Youth who are locked up are separated from their families, and many witness violence. These youth struggle when they get out, trying to complete high school, get jobs, housing, or go to college. Aside from the human toll, the financial costs of maintaining large secure facilities have also made it vital to rethink juvenile justice in every community.

Premised on research-based understandings of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, S. 1169 reaffirms a national commitment to the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile justice system; one that supports developmentally appropriate practices that treat as many youth as possible in their communities. It advances important improvements to the JJDP, its core requirements and its central purposes, provides enhanced safeguards for youth in the system, increases community safety, and ensures progress toward racial fairness.

Since the last JJDP reauthorization was approved in 2002, there have been many developments in the field of juvenile justice that significantly impact practitioners' work. S. 1169 recognizes and addresses many of these developments in several key ways. Specifically, we are pleased that the bill:

1. Strengthens the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) core requirement by calling on states to phase-out use of the Valid Court Order Exception that currently causes non-offending youth/status offenders to be locked up.

2. Extends the adult Jail Removal and Sight and Sound Separation core requirements to apply to juveniles held pretrial, whether charged in juvenile or adult court.
3. Gives States and localities clear direction on the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) protection to plan and implement data-driven approaches to ensure fairness and reduce racial and ethnic disparities, to set measurable objectives for reduction of disparities in the system, and to publicly report such efforts.
4. Encourages States to eliminate dangerous practices in confinement and to promote adoption of best practices and standards.
5. Recognizes the impact of exposure to violence and trauma on adolescent behavior and development.
6. Encourages investment in community-based alternatives to detention; encourages family engagement in design and delivery of treatment and services; improves screening, diversion, assessment, and treatment for mental health and substance abuse needs; allows for easier transfer of education credits for system-involved youth; and calls for a focus on the particular needs of girls either in the system or at risk of entering the justice system.
7. Promotes fairness by supporting State efforts to expand youth access to counsel and encouraging programs that inform youth of opportunities to seal or expunge juvenile records once they have gotten their lives back on track.
8. Reauthorizes the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) program which helps states and localities reduce juvenile offending by providing judges and other juvenile justice officials with a range of age/developmentally-appropriate options to both hold youth accountable and get them back on track so they are less likely to reoffend.
9. Encourages transparency, timeliness, public notice, and communication on the part of OJJDP, its agents and the States.
10. Increases accountability to ensure effective use of resources, to provide greater oversight of grant programs, and to ensure state compliance with federal standards.

Given the significant gains reflected in S. 1169, we are pleased to endorse the bill and look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues toward final passage in the 114th Congress.

Respectfully submitted,
(in alphabetical order)

National Organizations

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Civil Liberties Union
Boys Town
Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth
Campaign for Youth Justice
Center for Children's Law and Policy
The Center for Public Representation
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund

Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition for Human Needs
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
The Corps Network
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Covenant House International
Disciples Justice Action Network
ECPAT-USA
Forum for Youth Investment
Foster Family-based Treatment Association
First Focus Campaign for Children
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Futures without Violence
Girls, Inc.
Healthy Teen Network
Human Rights Project for Girls (Rights4Girls)
Institute for Family Centered Services
Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States
Juvenile Law Center
Justice for Families
Justice Policy Institute
Juvenile Justice Council of First Judicial Circuit (Illinois)
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Mennonite Central Committee, U.S. Washington Office
Mental Health America
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NAACP
National Alliance of Faith and Justice
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of Counties
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of Youth Courts
National Center on Adoption and Runaway Permanency
The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)

National Council for Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
National Council of Young Leaders
National Council on Crime and Delinquency
National Crittenton Foundation
National Disability Rights Network
National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Juvenile Defender Center
National Juvenile Justice Network
National Latin@ Network: Casa de Esperanza
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network for Youth (NN4Y)
National Organization for Women
The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
National PTA
National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives
National Women's Law Center
National Religious Campaign against Torture
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE
National Youth Advocate Program
Pace Center for Girls, Inc.
Partnership for America's Children
Peace Alliance
PFLAG
Prison Policy Initiative
Public Advocacy for Kids
Public Justice Center
The Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps
Robert F. Kennedy Juvenile Justice Collaborative
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
School Social Worker Association of America
The Sentencing Project
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Justice Team
SparkAction
The Social Action Commission of The African Methodist Episcopal Church
Southern Poverty Law Center
Southwest Key
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Strategies for Youth, Inc.
Student Peace Alliance
TASH: Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
True Colors Fund
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
W. Haywood Burns Institute
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)
YWCA USA

State and Regional Organizations

180 Degrees, Inc.
ACCESS Education
Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.
Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
Arise for Social Justice (Springfield, Mass.)
California Alliance for Youth and Community Justice
Caney Fork Headwaters Association (Tennessee)
Cass County Probation Department (Walker, Minn.)
Center for Children & Youth Justice (Washington)
Center for Juvenile Justice Reform/Georgetown University
Children's Justice Clinic, Rutgers School of Law Camden
Citizens for Juvenile Justice (Boston, Mass.)
City of Stamford Youth Services Bureau
The Collaborative Center for Justice (Hartford, Conn.)
Columbia County Teen Court
Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance
Cornucopia Network (New Jersey/Tennessee Chapter)
Crittenton Center (Iowa)
Cumberland Countians for Ecojustice
DeKalb County Court Services (Illinois)
Division of Youth Services (Arkansas)
Double R Consulting
Douglas County Youth Services (Kansas)
Education Equals Making Community Connections
Equity Matters, Baltimore Place Matters
Family and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Youth
Family and Youth Counseling Agency (Louisiana)
Family Services of Western Pennsylvania
Franciscans for Justice
Hawaii Juvenile Justice State Advisory Group
Hawaii State Office of Youth Services
Handel IT
Homeboy Industries (Los Angeles, Ca.)
Hunger Free Vermont
Illinois Collaboration on Youth
Invictus Reentry Maryland
Jesuit Social Research Institute, Loyola University New Orleans
Johnson County (Iowa) Attorney's Office
Justice and Advocacy Committee of the Lehigh Conference of Churches

Juvenile Justice Coalition (Ohio)
Juvenile Justice Initiative of Illinois
Just Children (Virginia)
Kentucky Youth Advocates
Leadership of Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, MN
Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations (Michigan)
Louisiana Center for Children's Rights
LUK, Inc. (Massachusetts)
Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group
Marion County Commission on Youth (Indiana)
MEN IN MOTION IN THE COMMUNITY
Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility
Office of Restorative Justice, Archdiocese of Los Angeles
Ohio Department of Youth Services
Oakland Tenants Union (California)
Oregon Youth Court Association
PACE Center for Girls, Inc.
Pax Christi Metro New York
Pipe Organs/Golden Ponds Farm (Delafield, Wisc.)
Rhode Island State Council of Churches
Richland County Public Defender's Office
Salt Lake Area Gang Project
SAY San Diego
Southern University at New Orleans
The School Sisters of Notre Dame - CP Province Office of Shalom-JPIC
Sisters of Mercy, Mid-Atlantic Justice Office
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Justice Team
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
Social Action Linking Together (SALT)
StarrVista
Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
Texas Criminal Justice Coalition
The Anti-Recidivism Coalition
The Art of Yoga Project
The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking
The Northeast Regional Juvenile Defender Center
The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy
The San Mateo County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission
Toledo Area Jobs with Justice & Interfaith Worker Justice Coalition
Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles
Voices for Children in Nebraska
Washington State Partnership Council on Juvenile Justice
Wichita County Teen Court (Texas)
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

Yakima County Juvenile Court (Washington)
Youth First! Initiative
Youth Services of Fremont County Wyoming