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## **U. S. House Committee Approves Bipartisan Bill to Strengthen Federal Juvenile Justice Law**

*H.R. 5963 would reauthorize and strengthen the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) to support state efforts to improve their juvenile justice systems, protect kids, and build safer communities*

WASHINGTON, D.C. –Today, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce unanimously approved, by voice vote, H.R. 5963, the Supporting Youth Opportunity and Preventing Delinquency Act of 2016, which strengthens and updates the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDP A).

Signed into law by President Gerald Ford on September 7, 1974, and most recently reauthorized in 2002, the JJDP A embodies a partnership between the federal government and the U.S. states, territories and the District of Columbia to protect children and youth in the juvenile and criminal justice system, to effectively address high-risk and delinquent behavior and to improve community safety.

“Today’s historic action by the House Committee Education and the Workforce reaffirms Congress’ bi-partisan commitment to this successful law, which – for more than 40 years – has strengthened states’ ability to keep children and youth out of the justice system, protect those young people in custody, and advance evidence-based practices to help youth get back on track and keep communities safe,” said Marcy Mistrett, Co-chair of the Act4JJ Campaign and CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice. “We commend the Committee for its leadership and strong bipartisan vision on juvenile justice reform and we look forward to continuing to work closely Committee members and their House and Senate colleagues toward final passage this year.”

More than eight years overdue for reauthorization, the JJDP A is the only federal statute that sets out national standards for the custody and care of youth in the juvenile justice system and provides direction and support for state juvenile justice system improvements.

H.R. 5963 would build upon these national standards by reducing the placement of youth in adult jails pre-trial, providing more structure to the law’s requirement to decrease racial and ethnic disparities, and calling on states to phase out exceptions that allow the detention of youth who have engaged in status offense behaviors. The bill also promotes the use of alternatives to

incarceration; supports the implementation of trauma-informed, evidence-based practices; calls for the elimination of dangerous practices in confinement, including eliminating the use of restraints on pregnant girls; improves conditions and educational services for incarcerated youth; focuses on the particular needs of special youth population such as trafficked youth and Tribal youth; and increases accountability.

The bill was introduced on September 9, 2016 by Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) and is co-sponsored by Chairman Kline (R-MN) and Reps. Susan Davis (D-CA), Earl L. “Buddy” Carter (R-GA), and Frederica Wilson (D-FL).

For more information go to [www.ACT4JJ.org](http://www.ACT4JJ.org)

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**About Act 4 Juvenile Justice** - *Act 4 Juvenile Justice (ACT4JJ) is a campaign of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition (NJJDPC), which represents over 80 national organizations who work on youth development and juvenile justice issues. ACT4JJ is composed of juvenile justice, child welfare and youth development organizations advocating for the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) and increased federal funding for juvenile justice programs and services.*