



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 20, 2015

Contact:

Campaign for Youth Justice

Aprill Turner

Phone: (202) 821-1604 Email: aturner@cfyj.org

Coalition for Juvenile Justice

Naomi Smoot

Phone: (202) 467-0864 ext.109 Email: smoot@juvjustice.org

Bi-Partisan Leadership in the Senate Moves to Reauthorize Federal Juvenile Justice Legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C. – While the President and country focus on reforming the US criminal justice system, a strong, bi-partisan group of Senators are working to ensure these reforms extend to our nation’s youth.

In April, Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) introduced the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2015, to reauthorize and strengthen the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDPA). On July 23, the bill is scheduled to be marked-up in the Judiciary Committee. To date, the bill has garnered strong support from a number of Senators on both sides of the aisle, including Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO), Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), and Senator Coons (D-DE).

Signed into law in 1974, the JJDPA is the nation’s primary federal juvenile justice law. It enables states to provide juvenile justice programs that offer the young people involved the support necessary for successful rehabilitation and re-entry into their communities.

“Renewing and adequately funding this law is central to the safety of our communities and our children,” said Marie Williams, Co-Chair of ACT4JJ and Executive Director of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice. “Real lives are at stake. We are hopeful that the strong, bi-partisan leadership supporting this bill sends the message that children are not forgotten as the country reconsiders its perspective on justice.”

More than seven years overdue for reauthorization, the JJDPA 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. The JJDPA also supports programs and practices that have significantly contributed to the reduction of delinquency.

“We urge all Members of Congress to support both a reauthorization of JJDPA and to invest in what we know works best for kids” said Marcy Mistrett, Co-Chair of ACT4JJ and Chief

Executive Officer of the Campaign for Youth Justice. “This bill reaffirms a national commitment to the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile justice system; one that supports developmentally appropriate practices for youth and helps ensure that young people receive the protections, services, and supports they need to be productive, law-abiding adults.”

Despite a continuing decline in youth 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 JJDPa 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.

S. 1169 will reinforce and strengthen the four key protections of the federal law that improve systems and keeps children and communities safer. Specifically:

1. Removing youth from adult jails and lock-ups;
2. Ensuring that youth who have committed nonviolent status offenses are not in secure detention or confinement;
3. Keeping young people separated from adult inmates in lock-ups or jail; and,
4. Reducing the disproportionate rates of minority involvement with the juvenile justice system.

The bill also supports comprehensive reform programs in states that address specific delinquency prevention and intervention needs like alternatives to incarceration, restorative justice, and holistic approaches to providing representation to young people, using a framework of evidenced-based practices, principles, and strategies.

For more information go to www.ACT4JJ.org.

###

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.