



September 5, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC, 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC, 20515

**RE: Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (S. 860/H.R. 1809)**

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is asking that Congress enact a reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) before the fall recess.

September 7, 2018 marks the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the JJDP A—a law that embodies a partnership between the federal government and the states and localities to protect children in the juvenile justice system, effectively address high-risk and delinquent behavior, and improve community safety. First signed into law on September 7, 1974 by President Gerald Ford, the bill authorizes funding to states that agree to monitor and comply with four core protections for youth involved in the justice system. The law was last reauthorized in 2002, making it a decade overdue for reauthorization. The House and Senate cosponsors, as well House and Senate leadership, have expressed a commitment to get the bill across the finish line.

Since 1921, CWLA, the oldest child welfare organization in the country, has advocated for the best interests of all children and their families. As outlined in the *CWLA National Blueprint for Excellence in Child Welfare (CWLA National Blueprint)*, CWLA envisions a country in which all children have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Our focus is children and youth who may have experienced abuse, neglect, family disruption, or a range of other factors that jeopardize their safety, permanence, or well-being. Children and youth in the juvenile justice system are far more likely to have experienced trauma than their peers. Recognizing the impact of exposure to violence and trauma on adolescent behavior and development, both bills include a definition of “trauma-informed” and encourage states to ensure

that programs and practices designed to address the needs of youth involved in juvenile justice are both evidence-based and trauma-informed.

The majority of children and youth in detention have witnessed family or community violence or have been a direct target of it. The House and Senate bills offer comprehensive services and support for these youth. Both bills promote community-based alternatives to detention; encourage family engagement in design and delivery of treatment and services; and improve screening, diversion, assessment, and treatment for mental health and substance abuse needs.

As indicated in the *CWLA National Blueprint*, all child-serving systems, including the juvenile justice system, should use trauma- and evidence-informed approaches that do no harm. Reauthorization of the JJDPa strengthens incentives for investment in evidence-based practices. Both bills strengthen provisions to promote interventions with a proven impact on reducing recidivism based on research that shows that community-based alternatives can have better outcomes for youth, protect public safety, and cost less.

We are very close to reauthorizing this important law, but doing so will require Congressional leadership. For the first time since 2002, two strongly supported bipartisan bills have passed both chambers of Congress (H.R. 1809 and S. 860).

- H.R. 1809, cosponsored by Rep. Jason Lewis (R-MN) and Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), passed the House by a voice vote on May 23, 2017.
- S. 860, cosponsored by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (R-RI), passed the Senate by voice vote on August 1, 2017.

It has been more than a year since these two bills passed their respective chambers. The bills now can be easily reconciled and passed into law. We urge you to take the swiftest path forward to reauthorization by supporting the House-passed bill with a Senate amendment.

Let us not reach the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the JJDPa without reauthorizing this important piece of legislation that protects children in the juvenile justice system and creates safer communities.

Thank you for your attention on behalf of children.

Sincerely,



Christine James-Brown  
President/CEO, Child Welfare League of America

CC: Senator Chuck Grassley, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Representative Jason Lewis, and Representative Bobby Scott