

August 9, 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,

I am writing on behalf of Strategies for Youth (SFY), a national non-profit organization based in focused on improving the relationships and interactions between youth and police and reducing disproportionate minority contact. SFY provides law enforcement training and helps law enforcement agencies adopt developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, equitable policies and practices in 18 states.

I am writing to urge you to ensure the reauthorization of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JDDPA). Reauthorization of this statute is long overdue. Failure to re-authorize it suggests a lack of commitment to youth and to ensuring they receive the protections and opportunities to rehabilitate that the law aims to guarantee. For the first time since 2002, there are two strong bipartisan bills (S. 860 and H.R. 1809) that have passed their respective chambers. As the leaders of Congress, I ask that you use your position to reconcile the small differences between the two bills and get the bill to the President's desk for reauthorization.

In particular, SFY supports reauthorization of the JJPDA because it makes significant improvements to current law, including:

- Strengthened measures to reduce racial and ethnic disparities at all levels of the juvenile justice system: Under President George H.W. Bush, the JDDPA was amended to address disproportionate minority contact (DMC). Thanks to the JDDPA, we are seeing law enforcement agencies start to recognize their obligation to address these extreme disparities which start at the point of police contact and intensify as youth go more

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deeply into the system. The reauthorization strengthens the DMC core protection by providing clear direction to states and localities to plan and implement data-driven approaches to ensure fairness in their juvenile justice systems.

- Recognizes the importance of trauma-informed care: The reauthorization of the JJDPa is necessary to ensure increased programming in recognition of the impact of trauma on youth. The reauthorization bills both include a definition of “trauma-informed” and encourage states to ensure programs and practices designed to address the needs of system-involved youth are both evidenced-based and trauma-informed.
- Ends the use of harmful practices used on detained, pregnant juveniles: Both bills end the use of certain restraints on detained, pregnant juveniles during labor, delivery, and recovery.
- Reinforces the accountability of states: The reauthorization bills promote transparency and increase accountability to ensure states are meeting their obligation to adhere to core protections and report on compliance in a timely manner. It requires publication of state plans and ensures that states that fail to comply risk the penalty of losing part of their Title II formula grant.

These strengthened provisions are critical for the more than 50,000 young people who are held in detention centers awaiting trial or confined by the courts in juvenile facilities across the country. For these reasons we urge you to move quickly and efficiently in the necessary passing and reauthorization of the JJDPa bill. SFY strongly supports and commends the efforts put forward in this bill. This bill will be beneficial to the youth and therefore help to build a better future for this nation.

Sincerely,
Lisa H. Thureau

