



July 13, 2015

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 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Respectfully submitted,  
*(in alphabetical order)*

**National Organizations**

American Civil Liberties Union  
Boys Town  
Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth  
Campaign for Youth Justice  
Center for Children's Law and Policy  
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  
Coalition for Juvenile Justice  
Covenant House International

Disciples Justice Action Network  
Forum for Youth Investment  
Foster Family-based Treatment Association  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Futures without Violence  
Healthy Teen Network  
Human Rights Project for Girls (Rights4Girls)  
Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States  
Juvenile Law Center  
Justice for Families  
Justice Policy Institute  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
Mennonite Central Committee, U.S. Washington Office  
Mental Health America  
NAACP  
National Alliance of Faith and Justice  
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 Center on Adoption and Runaway Permanency  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Council of Churches  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
National Crittenton Foundation  
National Domestic Violence Hotline  
National Juvenile Justice Network  
National Latin@ Network: Casa de Esperanza  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Network for Youth (NN4Y)  
National Religious Campaign against Torture  
National Youth Advocate Program  
Pace Center for Girls, Inc.  
Partnership for America's Children  
Peace Alliance  
PFLAG  
School Social Worker Association of America  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Justice Team  
SparkAction  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Southwest Key  
Strategies for Youth, Inc.  
Student Peace Alliance

The Center for Public Representation  
The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare  
The Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps  
The Sentencing Project  
The Social Action Commission of The African Methodist Episcopal Church  
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

**State and Regional Organizations**

ACCESS Education  
Children's Justice Clinic, Rutgers School of Law Camden  
Citizens for Juvenile Justice (Boston, Mass.)  
Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance  
Crittenton Center (Iowa)  
Homeboy Industries (Los Angeles, Ca.)  
Jesuit Social Research Institute, Loyola University New Orleans  
Juvenile Justice Coalition (Ohio)  
Juvenile Justice Initiative of Illinois  
Just Children (Virginia)  
Louisiana Center for Children's Rights  
Marion County Commission on Youth (Indiana)  
Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency  
PACE Center for Girls, Inc.  
Rhode Island State Council of Churches  
SAY San Diego  
Sisters of Mercy, Mid-Atlantic Justice Office  
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Justice Team  
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  
Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles  
Voices for Children in Nebraska  
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families