

NATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE NETWORK

September 7, 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,

Today marks the 44th anniversary of the passage of the landmark Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). In 1974, when JJDP was enacted, egregious practices were commonplace in many states, such as regularly placing children in adult jails. Over the years, this Act has helped to protect millions of youth by preventing juvenile justice involvement and ensuring a minimum level of safety for and the equitable treatment of all youth in the system. The law was last reauthorized in 2002, making it a decade overdue for reauthorization. Gratefully, JJDP is close to reauthorization; last year two bipartisan bills passed both chambers of Congress. Nevertheless, it needs your help to get it over the finish line. On this auspicious anniversary, NJJN urges you to pass the JJDP reauthorization bill as soon as possible.

The National Juvenile Justice Network is a membership organization currently comprising 53 organizational members in 42 states and the District of Columbia as well as graduates from our Youth Justice Leadership Institute. NJJN promotes policies and practices that treat youth in trouble with the law with dignity and humanity and which strengthen them, their families, and their communities. Our members highly value the JJDP for the essential standards that it provides to protect youth, particularly through the core protections: the deinstitutionalization of youth with status offenses (DSO); jail removal; sight and sound separation; and disproportionate minority contact. In addition to these core protections,

the JJDPA creates invaluable structures that enable the on-going improvement of our state juvenile justice systems. We have outlined some of these elements below.

Creation of Federal Agency Devoted to Addressing Youth Justice Issues

The JJDPA established the office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention ([OJJDP](#)) – an agency that provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to states to help them comply with the core protections and other requirements of the JJDPA, as well as to develop effective youth justice programs to support youth and build healthy, safe communities. These resources include:

- provision of funding to the states through formula and discretionary grants;
- technical assistance and training to states;
- research, reports and trainings on youth justice issues and reforms; and
- the collection and analysis of statistics on youth involved with youth justice systems throughout the country.

Data Collection

Our members recognize how important data collection is to hold systems accountable. OJJDP collects, and makes public, data on youth in every stage of the youth justice system throughout the country. OJJDP provides statistical analyses of this data as well as a [Statistical Briefing Book](#), which allows all users to sort the data by a variety of categories on the national and state level.

Local Input

The JJDPA requires that governors create a State Advisory Group (SAG) to provide advice on youth justice policy, monitor and support the state’s progress in addressing the JJDPA core requirements, provide input into the distribution of the state’s JJDPA funding, and develop a three-year, youth justice plan for the state. The state SAGs must have representation from a wide variety of stakeholders which allows for local input to help ensure that funding is being used to meet community needs.

Because the JJDPA has not been reauthorized for over a decade, it does not reflect many of the new developments in the field, including new adolescent brain science research; the cost-effectiveness and improved outcomes from trauma-informed, community-based approaches; and what we know works to address the needs of youth of color and girls. The current bills would update the JJDPA to reflect these new developments and incentivize states to enact the most effective means of safeguarding youth and communities. We urge Congress to reauthorize the JJDPA without delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Bryer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Bryer
Executive Director
National Juvenile Justice Network

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