

September 2014 Action

Write your House of Representatives Member about Youth PROMISE Act (and make plans for an in person visit when they are home for the October recess)

We are in the final few months of the legislative session – let's seize this opportunity to inform and motivate our Members of Congress to pass this powerful and important legislation. We will encourage Congress to bring the Youth PROMISE Act, HR 1318, to the floor for a successful vote by writing an enrolling letter to our House Members.

Reducing Youth Violence and Incarceration - through practical, local, life & money-saving methods – by promoting the Youth PROMISE Act - is what this letter is about.

Preparation:

1. Ascertain whether your US House Member is already co-sponsoring the Youth PROMISE Act (so you will know whether to thank them or urge them to co-sponsor in the letter - important):
Go to www.peacealliance.org/ypa-sponsors View an updated list of current co-sponsors [if you are not sure who your housemember is, and/or need contact info, you can look it up here:
<https://org.salsalabs.com/o/696/getLocal.jsp>
2. Most Congressmembers have a contact form on their website that allows you to submit a typed letter. Today we'll ask you to hand-write a letter and send it in by mail, which has a large impact.
3. All Action Teams are encouraged to also seek in-person meetings with your House Member, or their staff if that proves unavailable, during the month of October.

Outline

(please personalize, so every letter isn't the same)

1. **Introduce yourself briefly (I am a grandmother/teacher/college student/etc.)**
2. **Speak from your heart.** Share any relevant personal story(s) about why this issue is important to you. Do you know any youth who have been impacted by violence? Have you been the victim of violence? Have you been particularly affected or moved by the tragic waste of youth incarceration?
3. **Share some statistics** on violence prevention and incarceration (see talking points below)
4. **Call to Action: IMPORTANT** - Thank your House Members for co-sponsoring the bill or ask them to do so if they are not co-sponsors. (HR 1318). Request that they respond to you, so you know what position they are taking on the bill. This helps them form an official stance, which could make it more of a priority. **(If they are already a supporter, we can help them become a CHAMPION!)**
5. **If your Member is already a co-sponsor, thank them and ask them to please contact one of the bill's lead sponsors - Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) or Walter Jones (R-NC) – about further steps such as reaching out to other colleagues about this bill.**

Sample Talking Points

The Problems:

According to the Bureau of Justice, the number of people under some form of correction supervision in the U.S. grew from 200,000 people in 1980 to almost 7 million today. We incarcerate ten times more juveniles per capita than any of the other ten leading industrialized countries – and are the only nation incarcerating youth for life without the possibility of parole.¹

Bonus: Use local anecdotes and/or statistics for your state and community.

Example Solutions YPA might amplify:

Pennsylvania adopted a similar approach to what the Youth PROMISE Act could support, and over a ten year period they saved \$5 for every \$1 invested.² Due to the shrinking number of juvenile detainees, they were able to close a 100-bed juvenile detention facility.

Within two years of implementing a Restorative Discipline program in West Philadelphia High School, incidents of assault and disorderly conduct dropped more than 65%³.

Youth PROMISE Act:

The Youth PROMISE Act (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) is bipartisan legislation (H.R. 1318 & S. 1307). The act will fund, implement, and evaluate an array of evidence-based, locally controlled youth and gang violence prevention and intervention practices, such as mentoring, after school programs and other innovative diversion strategies, like: gang violence prevention, school-based conflict resolution restorative justice practices and many others. (If you know of any good state or local programs, mention them by name.)

The bill 1) empowers local control and community oversight, 2) reduces crime and saves taxpayer money, and 3) creates accountability by linking funding to measurable success.

By specifically focusing on violence prevention and intervention strategies, this bill ensures we are funding programs that save lives and give every young person the opportunity to meet his or her potential.

² Bumbarger, Jones, et al., “The Economic return on PCCD’s Investment in Research-based Programs: A Cost-Benefit Assessment of Delinquency and Prevention in Pennsylvania”, The Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development, Penn State, March 2008, p. 3
http://www.prevention.psu.edu/pubs/docs/PCCD_Report2.pdf

³ fixschooldiscipline.org/toolkit/educators/goodnews/