

**Write your Senators about Youth PROMISE Act and follow up with a phone call.
Optionally: Arrange to meet your Senators while they are home during August!**

This action focuses on getting more Senate support for the Youth PROMISE Act, S. 1307, by writing and making phone calls to both of your Senators. We hope many of you will also seek to meet personally with your Senators during this August recess. It is crunch-time for this bill, and we need Senate support right away! If your Senator is a co-sponsor already, we want them to persuade their colleagues to co-sponsor!! The bill ESPECIALLY needs Republican supporters.

Passing life-saving, money-saving legislation – to promote local, accountable solutions to youth violence and incarceration – is what this action is about.

Preparation:

1. Ascertain whether your two US Senators are already co-sponsoring the Youth PROMISE Act (so you will know whether to thank them and urge further support, or urge them to co-sponsor in the letter - important):
 - a. At www.peacealliance.org/ypa-sponsors you can see a list of current co-sponsors
2. Most Senators have a contact form on their website that allows you to submit a typed letter. On their site you can also find phone contact information. Today we ask you to send email, since this matter is so time-sensitive.
3. **Critical Follow-up:** Call to emphasize the importance of your message, to seek to learn your Senator's thoughts/feelings about the bill, and possibly to schedule a time to meet with the Senator. Please call their D.C. office, or call the office nearest you if you are also seeking to meet with your Senators while they are in their home state in August.

Letter Outline

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

1. **Introduce yourself briefly (I am a grandmother/teacher/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? Are you aware of any local, regional, or national resources that reduce violence/incarceration among youth? (see some examples below).
3. **Share some statistics** on violence prevention and incarceration (see below).
4. **Call to Action: IMPORTANT** - Thank your US Senators for co-sponsoring the bill or ask them to do so if they are not co-sponsors. (S. 1307) 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, help them become a CHAMPION!)**

Sample Talking Points

We know time is short in this session, but with your (your Senator's) support over the coming weeks, this bill can save many young lives and substantial resources.

The Problems:

We in the US incarcerate more juveniles than the next 12 nations combined.¹

Approximately 93,000 young people are currently in detention in the US, most of them costing taxpayers over \$80,000 per person per year.²

¹ <http://jdcresource.wordpress.com/2012/09/01/39/>

² http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09_05_rep_costssofconfinement_jj_ps.pdf

Bonus: Share any details you know or can research about violence/incarceration in your community/state. Youth incarceration costs? Youth crime rates? A Google search can find a lot.

Example Solutions YPA might amplify:

Research shows that early prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation are highly effective in reducing crime.³

Pennsylvania adopted a similar approach to the Youth PROMISE Act, and over a ten year period they saved \$5 for every \$1 invested.⁴ 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%⁵.

A recent Maryland juvenile justice study found that young “offenders” who participated in a Community Conference were 60% less likely to reoffend.⁶

Pennsylvania Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) is a treatment focused program targeting at-risk youth 12-17 years old exhibiting chronic/serious antisocial behavior. Trained clinicians deliver comprehensive care over 3-5 months, including crisis care and intensive skills coaching, to change home, school and community environments.

- MST programs have been proven to increase pro-social functioning, decrease truancy, and reduce drug and alcohol abuse, both immediately and over time. Those who have completed the program had 75% fewer substance related arrests 4 years after treatment.
- In 2008, MST produced an estimated \$30 million in savings for Pennsylvania.

Youth PROMISE Act:

The Youth PROMISE Act (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) is bipartisan legislation (H.R. 1318 & S. 1307). Lead co-sponsors in the House are Bobby Scott (VA) and Walter Jones (NC) – in the Senate are Mary Landrieu (LA) and James Inhofe (OK).

The YPA would create unprecedented investments in proven community-based violence prevention and intervention practices, such as mentoring, after school programs, restorative discipline programs, peer mediation, and other effective solutions.

The bill 1) funds evidence-based violence prevention & intervention practices, 2) empowers local control and community oversight, 3) reduces crime and saves taxpayer money, and 4) 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.

³ <http://www.publiceye.org/defendingjustice/pdfs/factsheets/9-Fact%20Sheet%20-%20US%20vs%20World.pdf>

⁴ 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

⁵ fixschooldiscipline.org/toolkit/educators/goodnews/

⁶ <http://www.communityconferencing.org/index.php/impact/>