

## **March 2015 Action**

**Write Letter to your Two Senators Urging them to become an Initial Co-Sponsor of the Youth PROMISE Act.**

**Secondary Action: Coalition building, reach out to local community leader.**

Let's capitalize on all the great momentum we helped to build during the last Congressional session. A new version of the bill will be introduced soon. Please encourage your elected representatives to have their names on the co-sponsor list when that happens. The Youth PROMISE Act currently has no bill numbers, but your Congress Member can contact the office of the lead Senate sponsor – Senator Bob Casey – and become an initial co-sponsor. You can call your Member's local area office and also the D.C. office, for good measure.

Making stronger, safer communities – using proven peacebuilding tools – and ending epidemics of youth incarceration and violence – is what this action is about.

### **Preparation:**

1. Ascertain whether your Senator was a co-sponsor during the last session – if s/he was, s/he will be far more likely to sign on as an initial co-sponsor in this session. a. At [www.peacealliance.org/ypa-sponsors](http://www.peacealliance.org/ypa-sponsors) you can see last session's 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.
3. Critical Follow-up: Call to emphasize the importance of your message, to seek to learn your Member's thoughts/feelings about the bill, and possibly to schedule a time to meet in-person. Please call both their D.C. office, and also the office nearest you – it is worthwhile to build relationships with local staffers, and also with the issue specialists in Washington.

### **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 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 Senators if they co-sponsored the bill in the last session, and ask them to become initial cosponsors in this current session. 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

**YPA Bill:** Youth PROMISE Act (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) is bipartisan legislation that will give our communities the support and funding they need to effectively address youth violence issues. 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.

### The Challenges:

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

On average, the annual cost of violence related only to paying for police, justice, corrections and the productivity effect of violent crime, homicide and robbery is \$3,257 for each U.S. taxpayer or \$460 billion for the United States economy.

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.

In Chicago, the Becoming a Man program, which places disadvantaged boys from 7th-10th grade into mentoring relationships, saw among their participants a 44 percent drop in arrests for violent crime and a 23 percent increase in graduation rates.

Research has indicated that investing early to prevent conflicts from escalating into violent crises is, on average, 60 times more cost effective than intervening after violence erupts.

Diversion and mentoring programs produce \$3.36 of benefits for every dollar spent, aggression replacement training produces \$10 of benefits for every dollar spent, and Functional Family therapy produces \$18 of benefits for every dollar spent.

More quotable statistics and citations at: [www.peacealliance.org/stats](http://www.peacealliance.org/stats)

## **SECONDARY ACTION:**

### **Coalition Building: Reach out to a community leader or organization**

*This month we are kicking off a secondary action we are urging all to participate in, which is something that can be done by teams and/or individuals between meetings.*

This month, we are asking teams to reach out to at least one group or individual who is in some way doing work related to Youth PROMISE Act. It could be a non-profit doing on-the-ground work (gang violence, mentoring, Restorative Justice, etc.), or a leader in the community (judge, sheriff, police, city councilmember, social worker, principle at a school, etc.). Someone for whom support of this bill would be beneficial.

These efforts will grow our overall peacebuilding network, helping to weave together this field, and also form partnerships to increase local support for the bill. What you learn can also increase our awareness about other community work we can share when talking about our policy objectives.

#### **Benefits for them:**

1. Share that we are championing the work and/or values they share with us. Together, we can make a stronger impact on these issues.
2. Ask them to share their story as a “Face of Peace”. We can post on our website, share on social media, linking to their work and increasing their exposure. You can share that we have a national network of over 60,000 supporters.
3. Things like YPA could facilitate funding for their work.

#### **Steps of engagement:**

1. Request a meeting or phone conversation to alert them about the Youth PROMISE Act and The Peace Alliance’s work.
2. Once they are willing to connect and you meet with them, give them the key talking points about YPA. Make sure to ask them questions about their work and what is important to them. Connect first. As the dialogue progresses be sure to make any notes about relevant data that could be shared with our network or in some of the possible actions below. Keep track of any agreements you each make.
3. Share about our Peace Alliance objectives more broadly. Talk to them about our Peace Cornerstones, and how this inter-related field can amplify our values by coming together.

#### **Requests to them:**

1. Attend a congressional meeting
2. Write letter in support of the bill, which can be shared with elected officials.
3. Send out messages to their own network supporting the bill and urging others to support it through our petition site, [www.youthpromiseaction.org](http://www.youthpromiseaction.org)
4. Co-author an op-ed or Letter to the Editor in support of the bill.

Remember, hold the space that we are all in this together. Go in with the spirit of collaboration and connection and enjoy this new relationship.