



Janet Murguía, President

National Office  
Raul Yzaguirre Building  
1126 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202.785.1670  
Fax: 202.776.1792  
www.nclr.org

December 10, 2007

### Support for the “Youth PROMISE Act” (H.R. 3846)

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the U.S., I write on an issue of great importance to the Latino community. As you are aware, the prevalence of gang violence in the Latino community is on the rise with our families suffering the consequences as the victims of both violence and excessive law enforcement. While many of the crimes committed by gangs are despicable and reprehensible – and must be punished to the fullest extent of the law – the punishment must fit the crime. For this reason, NCLR strongly supports Representative Robert “Bobby” Scott’s (D-VA) “Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act (Youth PROMISE Act),” H.R. 3846, and we hope you will consider cosponsoring this legislation.

At the same time, NCLR is in strong opposition to any gang legislation that is over-inclusive of youth who may be perceived to be in a gang, or which contains any enhanced penalties such as mandatory minimums or life without the possibility of parole. These policies exacerbate the problem of gang violence in our communities by failing to address the root causes of the problem. Furthermore, overreliance on incarceration as a one-size-fits-all solution is out of step with what research and law enforcement have found to reduce gang violence.

NCLR believes that the “Youth PROMISE Act” takes the right approach to reducing gang violence. It focuses on evidence-based prevention and intervention proven to reduce the risk of youth involvement in gangs and violence. This legislation has three noteworthy elements:

First, the “Youth PROMISE Act” dedicates resources to communities facing an increased risk of crime and gang activity to enable them to begin to address significant unmet needs. One such way is through a local council that includes law enforcement; community-based organizations; schools; faith organizations; and health, social service, and mental health providers – to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies. These strategies will make our communities safer, reduce victimization, and help at-risk young people lead law-abiding and healthy lives, free from gang and other criminal involvement.

**Regional Offices:** Atlanta, Georgia • Chicago, Illinois • Los Angeles, California • New York, New York  
Phoenix, Arizona • Sacramento, California • San Antonio, Texas • San Juan, Puerto Rico

LA RAZA: The Hispanic People of the New World

Second, the “Youth PROMISE Act” establishes a National Center for Proven Practices Research that will evaluate and analyze the effectiveness of evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies. It will also explore the savings yielded to society by investing in such programming, as opposed to the more costly ineffective prosecution and incarceration. These savings from investments in prevention and intervention programs will be reinvested into these efforts.

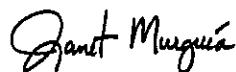
Third, the “Youth PROMISE Act” recognizes the importance of a specialized police force and the hiring and training of Youth Oriented Policing (YOPS) officers to respond to juvenile delinquency and criminal street gang activity. Finally, the “Youth PROMISE Act” provides additional improvements for youth victim and witness protection programs.

The approach of the “Youth PROMISE Act” makes sense. It comports with the research on prevention, intervention, and adolescent brain development and yields overall savings to the community according to both financial and life quality measures. The Act will sustain investment in evidence-based prevention and intervention practices by authorizing just more than \$2.3 billion per year over five years.

Please consider becoming a cosponsor of the “Youth PROMISE Act” H.R. 3846, a smart-on-crime bill. If you have questions, please contact me or my staff Angela Arboleda, Director of Civil Rights and Criminal Justice Policy, at [aarboleda@nclr.org](mailto:aarboleda@nclr.org) or (202) 776-1789.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Janet Murguía  
President and CEO