



The SOUTHEASTERN TIDEWATER OPPORTUNITY PROJECT INC.

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
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Rep. Robert C. Scott
United States House of Representatives
Longworth House Office Building
Room 1201
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Scott:

We, the undersigned, are writing to express our strong support of the *Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act* (H.R. 3846).

As organizations and individuals committed to identifying the root causes of youth violence and implementing innovative prevention and intervention programs that keep young people safe and productive, we are gravely concerned about the growing problem of gang violence in the United States. We recognize and respect all efforts to decrease youth violence, create safer communities, and protect children and families. However, other legislation introduced in Congress related to this issue has focused disproportionately on suppression strategies and does not provide adequate support for prevention and intervention approaches. In contrast, the Youth PROMISE Act provides a fresh perspective that will offer greater success in tackling the problem of youth violence and creating stronger, safer communities where children can thrive.

The Youth PROMISE Act highlights several important strategies that we support:

- 1. Strong focus on the use of evidence-based methods of prevention and intervention:** The Youth PROMISE Act builds upon the broad array of evidence-based strategies that are proven to reduce and prevent youth violence and delinquency. In addition, the bill requires that thorough assessment and evaluation measures be implemented to ensure that resources are directed toward communities faced with the highest levels of crime and gang activity.
- 2. Inclusive PROMISE Coordinating Councils:** Based on our collective experience, the most effective, sustainable way to address youth violence is to provide a balanced, integrated approach involving prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies that engage the whole community in partnership, primarily social service providers, faith-based organizations, schools, law enforcement agencies, and parents. The Youth PROMISE Act articulates this approach effectively by requiring that the PROMISE Coordinating Councils be comprised of all key community stakeholders. The bill also provides measures to support and enhance community collaboration around this issue. We applaud in particular, the requirement to involve youth themselves as full members of the coordinating councils.
- 3. Focus on the impact of cost savings related to prevention and intervention:** The bill emphasizes the significant savings generated when investment is made in early childhood education, after-school programs, mentoring, and other prevention and intervention efforts, as opposed to costly incarceration and prosecution strategies. We affirm the re-investment of these savings back into the programs supported by this bill.

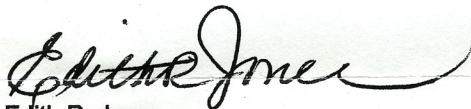
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4. **Emphasis on youth-oriented policing:** In our work, we have experienced first-hand the value of working with law enforcement officials that are knowledgeable in youth development trends, supportive of evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies, and who work closely with community members to keep our streets safe. The youth-oriented policing provisions outlined in this bill, particularly the emphasis on training, capacity-building, and community collaboration, shed light on the important role that law enforcement can play in the community-wide effort to prevent and reduce youth violence.

Thank you, Rep. Scott, for your commitment to the young people of our nation. We look forward to working with you to pass this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



Edith R. Jones
President and CEO
The STOP Organization