

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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**Chairwoman McCarthy Statement at Subcommittee Hearing on
“The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act: Overview
and Perspectives”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities, for a subcommittee hearing on “The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act: Overview and Perspectives”*

I am pleased to welcome you to the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities Joint hearing with the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, chaired by my colleague, Representative Bobby Scott from Virginia.

We appreciate his Subcommittee’s participation today and his personal desire to demonstrate the importance of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, or “JJ”.

I would also like to thank Ranking Member Platts, my colleague on the Healthy Families Subcommittee and Ranking Member Forbes for their interest in this important hearing.

Finally, I want to recognize Chief Joseph Wing from the Hempstead Police Department in my district.

I met with Chief Wing yesterday and he told me about Project Ceasefire, Project Impact and the Nurse and Family Partnership, some effective juvenile programs they are working on in Nassau County.

Thank you Chief for the hard work you and your officers are doing.

Today’s hearing serves as an overview of the legislation and will also offer perspectives for the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities to consider as we move through the reauthorization process.

Although this is our first hearing on this topic in Washington, last month our Subcommittee held a hearing on gang prevention in my district with Ranking Member Platts and Ms. Clarke in attendance.

We heard about the challenges faced by law enforcement, the courts, and local communities in dealing with the juvenile justice system.

Ideally, we want to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system, but we must also look at how to serve those young people already in the system and develop ways to help them get involved in their communities after they have served their time.

JJ began with a focus on prevention and rehabilitation and has shifted focus towards accountability and sentencing.

Unfortunately, it may not be working.

During a trip to Northern Ireland, which has had its share of juvenile crime, I saw a play written about 2 young girls who commit the same crime.

One of the girls received a sentence that didn't involve jail time.

She learned from her mistake and lived a normal crime-free life.
The other girl was sent to prison.

While in prison, she became more involved with the crime world, and there were no efforts to educate or train her.

When she left prison, she was well educated, however -- in crime.

She eventually killed another person.

Not only was her life destroyed, but she has destroyed other lives as well.

This story highlights how a single decision in the court system can directly affect the outcome of a person's life.

We heard similar stories to this at our field hearing from former gang members, and we need to remember this as we consider JJ.

We know there are factors which will lead to crime.

Young people who don't feel connected to society will look to other sources, such as gangs, for acceptance, stability, companionship, and a sense of identity.

For these at-risk children and teenagers, we must invest in their education, and their personal development.

Communities must come together to address these challenges.

Leaders in government, law enforcement, education businesses, and communities, must work with kids, parents and citizens to address the needs of our youth so they do not enter the juvenile justice system.

Far too many youth prevention efforts have fallen short and our goal is to reverse that trend.

The overview today will educate Members on JJ and raise questions such as what is the appropriate Federal role in juvenile justice?

Is the Coordinating Council effective?

Do we need to update the Core Mandates?

What is research telling us about effective programs and interventions?

What does research into early childhood development tell us?

We will hear testimony today that will help the Subcommittee answer these questions as we move to reauthorize this important legislation.

Thank you all for joining us today, and I now yield to Ranking Member Platts for his opening statement.

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