



May 26, 2009

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Herbert H. Kohl
United States Senate
330 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
152 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
309 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Leahy, Specter, Kohl, and Durbin

On behalf of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and our public and private member agencies across the country who work directly with abused, neglected, and otherwise vulnerable children, youth, and their families, I write in strong support for S. 678, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2009, which was introduced on March 24, 2009.

S. 678 strengthens and updates key components of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP), including the recognition of the critical link between child maltreatment and a later involvement with the juvenile justice system. The legislation provides for the compilation of data on juveniles entering the juvenile justice system with a prior history as victims of child abuse or neglect, an analysis of necessary services for the prevention and treatment for these youth, and a plan for providing such services.

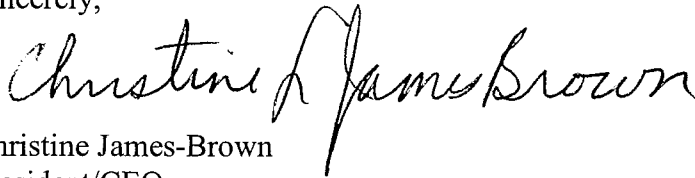
Developing stronger coordination between dependency and delinquency systems, including plans for providing prevention and treatment services for victims of child abuse or neglect and their families' will result in better outcomes for these youth, and reduce the likelihood that juvenile offenders will commit subsequent violations. This connection is well documented by a growing body of research which undeniably establishes the connection between all forms of child maltreatment—neglect, physical, and sexual abuse—and the risk of subsequent involvement in delinquency.

In addition S. 678 makes many other meaningful improvements that expand several of the core protections and other areas contained in the bill. The bill gives guidance to states on complying with the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) core protection by listing specific steps toward reducing DMC. S. 678 extends the jail removal and sight and sound core requirements to keep youth awaiting trial in criminal court out of adult lock-ups and to ensure sight and sound separation in the limited circumstances where they are held in adult facilities.. S. 678 requires states that still permit the use of the Valid Court Order (VCO) exception to phase-out use of the VCO within three years, and allows States in need to apply for one-year hardship extensions through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

The bill also improves conditions of confinement in juvenile facilities, provides comprehensive services and supports for youth, and sets more appropriate authorization levels for Title II and Title V. Finally, S, 678 keeps the focus on prevention and intervention.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of youth across the country. We support this bill and offer ourselves as a resource as the bill moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine James-Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Christine James-Brown
President/CEO