



July 10, 2008

The Honorable Ted Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

On behalf of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), representing hundreds of public and private child-serving member agencies serving millions of children and families in all fifty states, I'm writing to ask you to support strong legislation to reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (S. 3155), and to support three changes to the bill that will reduce inappropriate treatment of youth and ensure funding for proven effective programs.

This bill will move federal policy ahead significantly and many young people will benefit from it. The legislation represents major progress on supporting states in maintaining compliance with the core requirements in the law, and contains major new provisions regarding youths with a prior history with the child welfare system. These provisions will go a long way in putting many youths back on the right track, keeping many more of them out of trouble in the first place, and helping to make our neighborhoods safer.

While these improvements are significant there are three further changes we seek. In regards to status offenders, the bill should contain language to gradually eliminate the Valid Court Order exception for incarcerating youths on status offenses. Also, we urge you to support strengthened language on conditions of confinement to focus training for personnel at juvenile facilities on ending dangerous practices. Finally, please support adding language to the bill that will target more federal resources to programs that are evidence-based and proven effective.

Thank you for your leadership. CWLA appreciates your efforts on behalf of rehabilitation and prevention, which are the cornerstones of a strong and effective juvenile system.

Sincerely,

Christine James-Brown
President/CEO