



County of Santa Cruz

PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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SCOTT MACDONALD
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER

July 17, 2008

The Honorable Senator Diane Feinstein
United States Senate
31 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The Santa Cruz County Probation Department offers strong support for S. 3155, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2008. S. 3155 makes meaningful and important improvements to many of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) core requirements, research and training resources and other key areas of the law.

As a probation jurisdiction that has achieved success in providing comprehensive community based services to youth while making reductions in disproportionate minority confinement without jeopardizing public safety, we know that each of the areas included in this proposed legislation are essential to an effective juvenile justice system.

S. 3155 will:

- strengthen the core requirement to reduce racial and ethnic disparities that currently exist at every decision-making point in juvenile justice system;
- improve the Jail Removal and Sight and Sound core requirements that will ultimately reduce recidivism by further removing the influence that entrenched adult offenders have on youthful offenders;
- allow States to continue to place youth convicted in adult court in juvenile facilities without jeopardizing federal funding, which removes a disincentive to keep young people and chronic adult offenders separate;
- strengthen the core requirement promoting the deinstitutionalization of status offenders, which helps troubled youth with difficult family backgrounds stay out of the juvenile delinquency system;

- improve conditions of confinement in juvenile facilities in order to promote safety in institutions and maximize the services and pro-social programming that can occur in institutions.

While the Santa Cruz County Probation Department fully endorses the improvements to the juvenile justice system that S.3155 will bring, the legislation could be further strengthened to ensure fairness and to reduce racial and ethnic disparities with the following three additions:

- 1 adding language that ensures that families and youth of color impacted by the juvenile justice system, community leaders, and service providers are included in the proposed coordinating body of juvenile justice stakeholders that oversee and monitor state efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disparities;
- 2 adding the requirement that states and localities identify and analyze the causes of disparities in order for states to develop strategic interventions that reduce racial and ethnic disparities at key decision making points;
- 3 adding the requirement that annual reports are produced by states and localities to report on their progress towards reducing racial and ethnic disparities.

As a jurisdiction that is committed to advancing fairness and justice in the juvenile justice system locally and nationally, the Santa Cruz County Probation Department supports S. 3155 as a significant step towards improving the JJDP. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of youth, families and communities across the country.

Sincerely,



Scott MacDonald
Chief Probation Officer

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