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Washington, D.C. (May 13, 2020) National youth justice advocates and stakeholders applaud House lawmakers for including provisions to protect some of our most vulnerable youth - those involved in the youth justice system - in the HEROES Act, and call on legislators to support and pass provisions of H. 6800, particularly those related to youth justice.

Tuesday's stimulus bill, which is meant to help address America's needs during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, includes a number of juvenile justice specific provisions. Specifically, the legislation provides \$75 million for rapid response grants through Title II of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. These funds will help support a variety of services, including testing of young people and staff in facilities, continued access to education and community supports for youth returning home, at a time when positive tests in secure settings continues to rise to an unsettling degree.

"These funds are critically important to support our young people and their families. They will help ensure that young people and facility staff do not become victim to the virus, and will provide resources to help states ensure that youth returning home get the supports they need to be successful during this challenging time," said Naomi Smoot Evans, Executive Director of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and Co-Chair of the Act4JJ Coalition.

The bill also encourages courts to refrain from detaining young people whenever possible. Nationally, nearly [40 percent](#) of young people who are held in detention facilities are there for status offenses, technical violations, and public order or drug offenses.

"While in secure settings, our young people face potential life threatening exposure at the hands of Covid-19. We know that children who come in contact with the law have heightened rates of underlying health issues such as asthma, auto-immune deficiencies, and other conditions that leave them vulnerable to Covid-19 exposure. The best place for most of them to be is at home

or placed safely in their community with appropriate supports,” said Marcy Mistrett, CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice and Co-Chair of the Act 4 JJ Campaign.

The bill also provides other protections to young people and their families, ensuring priority in grant funding for states that halt the use of fines and fees in their court systems. Such fees have long been burdensome for vulnerable families, but are especially so in the current moment, where [unemployment figures](#) have reached 14.7 percent nationally, with numbers even higher among African American communities (16.7 percent) and Hispanic communities (18.9 percent), both of which are also disproportionately impacted by both the juvenile justice system and the Covid-19 pandemic.

“In this moment, the last thing our young people and their families need is to have to make the decision between food on the table, or paying fines to participate in a mandated program,” said Smoot Evans. “This package ensures funding for community supports, and ensures that they don’t have to bore on the backs of our youth and their families.”