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The Act 4 JJ Coalition Honors the Legacy of Senator Birch Bayh

Architect of the cornerstone juvenile justice reform legislation passes away at the age of 91

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Civil rights champion and architect of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), former Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana passed away today at the age of 91. While perhaps more well known for authoring Title IX, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and two constitutional amendments, Bayh was also a long-time champion for juvenile justice reform. As Chair of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, Bayh held a hearing in 1971 detailing the rampant abuse in the youth prison system. He [noted](#) that incarcerated youth were often “beaten, brutalized and subject[ed] to vicious sexual attacks.” After Senator Bayh initially introduced the JJDPA in 1972, the legislation was finally signed into law by President Gerald Ford in 1974.

“The introduction and eventual passage of the JJDPA marked the first time we had a concrete response from the Federal government to address the way states treat young people in their custody,” said Marcy Mistrett, CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice and co-chair for the Act 4 JJ Coalition. “Thanks to Senator Bayh’s relentless advocacy, Congress took action to protect some our country’s most vulnerable children. The JJDPA has been so successful that nearly every state and U.S. territory participate in this voluntary program, and youth crime is at all all-time low.”

The Senator’s passing comes shortly after the JJDPA was finally reauthorized after a 16-year lapse. In December 2018, Congress passed a reauthorization bill that strengthened the core protections and included critical, research-based improvements that reaffirm a national commitment to the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile justice system. States and advocates

now await direction from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention on the implementation of these important updates. “The passing of the first champion for juvenile justice reform cannot be the death of the law. We need to honor the legacy of Senator Bayh by ensuring full implementation of the reforms made by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018,” said Naomi Smoot, Executive Director of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and co-chair of the Act 4 JJ Coalition.

The Act 4 JJ Coalition honors the life of Senator Bayh. We remain committed to carrying on the work started by the Senator and honor his legacy through continued advocacy for our nation’s young people.

For more information go to www.ACT4JJ.org

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About Act 4 Juvenile Justice - *Act 4 Juvenile Justice (ACT 4 JJ) is a campaign of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition (NJJDPC), which represents a broad network of organizations that work on youth development and juvenile justice issues. ACT 4 JJ is composed of juvenile justice, child welfare, and youth development organizations advocating for the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) and increased federal funding for juvenile justice programs and services.*