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## **Congress Unanimously Passes Bipartisan Bill to Strengthen Federal Juvenile Justice Law**

*In final days of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, lawmakers reauthorize the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act, updating key provisions that strengthen protections for justice-involved youth and improve public safety.*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** –Today, 16 years after the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDPA) was last reauthorized, the House and Senate have passed H.R. 6964, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018, which strengthens and updates the federal law that has been protecting justice-involved youth for nearly 45 years.

“We are grateful for the commitment to children and tireless persistence of the JJDPA’s lead cosponsors, Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Congressman Jason Lewis (R-MN), and Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA), for getting this critical law reauthorized. We also want to recognize the leadership of Dr. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, for getting this bill across the finish line. When the Act is signed into law, it will ensure critical and long-awaited improvements to help states protect children and youth in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, while effectively addressing high-risk and delinquent behavior and improving community safety,” said Naomi Smoot, Executive Director of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and co-chair for the Act4JJ Coalition, which advocates for the reauthorization of this law.

The JJDPA was first signed into law by President Gerald Ford on September 7, 1974 and was last reauthorized in 2002. The law remains the only federal statute that sets out national standards for the custody and care of youth in the juvenile justice system and provides direction and support for state juvenile justice system improvements. Under the newly passed legislation, the core protections will be strengthened, and critical, research-based improvements will be made that reaffirm a national commitment to the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile justice system.

“Today we celebrate a hard-fought victory for children,” said Marcy Mistrett, Co-chair of the Act4JJ Coalition and CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice. “The JJDPAs have played a critical role in reducing youth incarceration, which is at its lowest rate in four decades. With the improvements made by the legislation, states can continue to invest in strategies that support children in their homes and communities.”

The final bill passed by Congress strengthens national standards by reducing the placement of youth in adult jails pre-trial and providing more structure to the law’s requirement to decrease racial and ethnic disparities, a critical provision ensuring that children, regardless of their race or ethnicity will be treated fairly and equitably by our legal system. The bill also promotes the use of alternatives to incarceration; supports the implementation of trauma-informed, evidence-based practices; calls for the elimination of dangerous practices in confinement, including eliminating the use of restraints on pregnant girls; improves conditions and educational services for incarcerated youth; focuses on the particular needs of special youth populations, such as trafficked youth and Tribal youth; increases local control in delinquency prevention programming; and increases accountability. The legislation also includes a two-year reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). The Act4JJ Coalition and our allies remain committed to seeing a longer term reauthorization of RHYA in the 116th Congress, including much-needed programmatic updates. Nearly 62 percent of youth experiencing homelessness have been arrested and 44 percent have been detained.

This critical legislation was not passed through the work of one member alone, but by the continued partnership and collaboration of members from across party lines. The Act4JJ Coalition would also like to thank the 33 cosponsors for helping to secure this win for young people. The full list of cosponsors is included below this release.

For more information go to [www.ACT4JJ.org](http://www.ACT4JJ.org).

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*About Act 4 Juvenile Justice - Act 4 Juvenile Justice (ACT4JJ) is a campaign of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition (NJJDP), which represents over 80 national organizations who work on youth development and juvenile justice issues. ACT4JJ is composed of juvenile justice, child welfare, and youth development organizations advocating for the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) and increased federal funding for juvenile justice programs and services.*

*JJDP Cosponsors: Rep. Todd Rokita (R-IN), Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA), Rep. Frederica Wilson (D-FL), Rep. David Roe (R-TN), Rep. Paul Mitchell (R-MI), Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Rep. Drew Ferguson (R-GA), Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC), Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL), Rep. Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA), Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC), Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Rep. Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO), Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN), Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA), Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL), Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC), Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO), Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL), Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA).*