

Communication from the public  
Submitted in Committee  
2/19/09 Ad Hoc Gang



Violence Prevention Coalition  
of Greater Los Angeles

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February 19, 2009

The Honorable Tony Cardenas  
Chair, Ad Hoc Committee on Gang Violence and Youth Development  
200 N. Spring Street, Rm 455  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Chairman Cardenas,

The Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles is pleased to submit these comments regarding The Youth PROMISE Act (H.R. 3846), introduced by Congressman Bobby Scott (D, Virginia).

A highlight and driving force behind the Act is a foundation in evidence-based prevention and intervention programs. Local groups will have the opportunity to design plans that best suit the needs of their communities. Generally, this approach complements the City's own approach to violence prevention under the new GRYD strategy.

The Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles is focused on the use of the Public Health Model of Violence Prevention in public and private programming that affect youth, their family and the community where they reside and work. We also promote the use of evidence-based planning in addressing the needs of these communities. As such, we support the general intentions of the Youth PROMISE Act. We are also ready to gather our 150 member agencies and individuals to support the bill and its implementation. Without exception, our members are currently providing the types of services identified by the youth PROMISE Act.

Aside from a general agreement with the direction and tone of the bill, there are two areas that we feel need attention. First, we are concerned that including of any funding for Law Enforcement has the potential of diverting the few precious resources away from the targeted communities, and outside the same governance structure that will be applied to programs in other sections of the bill. Requiring the same local review and oversight of the YOP funds would address that specific issue.

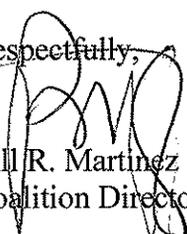
We also strongly believe that any program designed to keep youth out of gangs and out of jail must directly address the issue of family violence. Too often laws, programs and other efforts silo different "types" of violence and aim to address only one "issue." Thus, we have gang prevention programs, teen-dating violence

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programs, family violence prevention programs, safe-school programs, etc. This approach fails to recognize that violence is a public health problem and as such, requires a more comprehensive response. Long term violence prevention programs must recognize the entire spectrum of violence and have the courage to go inside of violent homes to address the broken systems operating there. Exposure to and victimization from violence at home can not, will not and does not lead to safety in our streets and communities. The Youth Promise Act should acknowledge and incorporate this concept by requiring all programs to include a family violence prevention component.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments and concerns regarding the Youth PROMISE Act. We look forward to working with you on this and other legislation designed to bring peace and justice to our community.

Respectfully,



Bill R. Martinez  
Coalition Director

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**Support for the Youth PROMISE Act (H.R. 3846)**

Dear Members of the Los Angeles City Council:

On behalf of the Center for Juvenile Law and Policy at Loyola Law School, I am writing to respectfully express our strong support for Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott's Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act (Youth PROMISE Act), H.R. 3846. The clinic, which provides cutting edge legal services to children in the delinquency system, also works with policy makers and stakeholders in an attempt to craft enlightened and effective policies. Based on our research and experience, we believe that the Youth PROMISE Act is the direction that the federal government needs to take when dealing with court-involved youth.

Rather than promoting failed punitive approaches, the Youth PROMISE Act builds upon evidence-based and promising practices proven to reduce youth violence and delinquency. Specifically, the Youth PROMISE Act directs resources towards communities facing an increased risk of crime and gang activity in order to enable those communities to begin to address significant unmet needs and prevent crime from occurring. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, communities facing the greatest risk will come together to develop and implement a comprehensive local plan to support young people and their families, making our communities safer, reducing victimization, and helping at-risk young people to lead law-abiding and healthy lives.

Most importantly, the Youth PROMISE Act provides for thorough evaluation, including analyses of the cost-savings to society yielded by investing in prevention and intervention rather than in more costly and ineffective prosecution and incarceration. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, savings from investments in prevention and intervention programs will be reinvested in prevention and intervention efforts funded under the Act.

In short, the approach of the Youth PROMISE Act makes financial sense and comports with the research on crime and violence prevention. We are hopeful that you will take into account our strong support for the Youth PROMISE Act H.R. 3846.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cyn Yamashiro  
Executive Director, Center for Juvenile Law and Policy