



PREVENTING VIOLENCE  
AND DEVELOPING  
YOUTH LEADERS

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July 2, 2020

The Honorable Reginald Jones-Sawyer  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Public Safety  
California State Capitol, Room 2117  
PO Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0059

**RE: AB 1007 (Jones-Sawyer) — Support – Promoting Reinvestment and Oversight Measures for Individual Success and Empowerment (P.R.O.M.I.S.E.) Act**

Dear Assemblymember Jones-Sawyer:

Youth ALIVE! is proud to support AB 1007, which will amend California’s Juvenile Justice Criminal Prevention Act (JJCPA) to ensure the state effectively invests these hundreds of millions in grant dollars to support youth locally. This bill will ensure that youth: (1) Are protected from contact with the juvenile justice system through an investment in community-based youth development, prevention, and intervention services; (2) Benefit from improved planning and coordination of youth-serving agencies by local counties, including greater community and youth representation in decision making; and (3) Receive support that aligns with best practices by increasing county reporting and state oversight, as recommended in a recent state audit of JJCPA grant administration.<sup>1</sup>

Youth ALIVE! is a nationally recognized community-based organization known for initiating an alliance to treat violence as a public health crisis and developing young leaders in the process. Tasked as Oakland’s anchor organization for violence prevention, intervention, and healing, Youth ALIVE! has maintained a successful track record of implementing evidence-based violence intervention and prevention services. Our decades of experience serving justice-involved youth informs our support for AB 1007.

AB 1007 addresses chronic shortcomings of JJCPA implementation and will distribute grant funds, serving as a stimulus for community-based organizations (CBOs) and public health and education agencies. Specifically, AB 1007 will ensure that 95 percent of JJCPA funds are distributed to CBOs and/or non-law enforcement public agencies providing youth development services in schools and/or communities. AB 1007 requires that JJCPA-funded programs be modeled on trauma-informed and youth development approaches.

Additionally, the bill improves reporting to assess each program’s effectiveness. Under AB 1007, counties’ Juvenile Justice Coordinating Councils, which decide how JJCPA funds are allocated, will have a balanced representation of government and community stakeholders.

The JJCPA grant program was originally created by the Schiff-Cardenas Crime Prevention Act (2000), which authorized non-competitive funding for county juvenile justice programs and designated the Board of Corrections, now the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), as the administrator of funding. Community leaders

<sup>1</sup> California State Auditor. (2020). Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act: Weak Oversight Has Hindered Its Meaningful Implementation. At: <http://auditor.ca.gov/reports/2019-116/summary.html>.



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originally conceived of the JJCPA as a response to the over-incarceration of youth in California and tough-on-crime measures<sup>2</sup> that came with high social and fiscal costs. According to the original author and former Assemblymember Cardenas, “The JJCPA funds were intended to reduce youth involvement in the justice system, ensure that there is a diverse membership in the JJCC in counties for decision-making, and a meaningful performance assessment.”<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, JJCPA funds have been distributed with little local or state oversight, resulting in poor spending decisions. The majority of funds have been used by county probation departments for their own staffing, or to other law enforcement agencies, running counter to the bill’s collaborative goals. In some cases, counties have used JJCPA grants to implement harmful “voluntary probation” programs, which impose invasive probation conditions on youth who have not been arrested for any crime.<sup>4</sup> Law enforcement contact and probation involvement – including the “net-widening” effects<sup>5</sup> of excessive supervision – do more harm than good.

The recent state audit verifies these long-held concerns, as insufficient planning and reporting has led to irresponsible spending. The audit finds that counties maintain outdated spending plans and that reports do not adequately assess program effectiveness. Many counties left mandatory stakeholder seats vacant on their Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, with 20 percent of all California counties lacking a JJCC entirely during the audit review period. In Fiscal Year 2017–18, four of the five counties spent over 75 percent of their JJCPA funds on probation departments despite massive declines in youth contact with probation,<sup>6</sup> leaving youths’ needs unmet when they could be best served in the community.

California must confront the legacy of policy choices that have resulted in disparate impacts on youth of color and unconscionable inequities, particularly in our Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. AB 1007 will ensure that state funds no longer prop up a system that has consistently failed youth of color, by instead investing in youth development and countering the historic harm of youth criminalization throughout California. It is time to invest in a new vision for California’s young people – one that recognizes that health, education, and community-based services are essential in preventing youths’ exposure to violence and involvement in the justice system.

For these reasons, Youth ALIVE! strongly supports AB 1007.

Sincerely,

Anne Marks  
Executive Director

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Proposition 21 (2000) increased penalties for youth in the justice system, including incarceration, and placed youth at greater risk of transfer to adult court. See: Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO). (2000). Proposition 21. At: [https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/2000/21\\_03\\_2000.html](https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/2000/21_03_2000.html).

<sup>3</sup> Congressman Cardenas details the JJCPA’s intent in a letter sent to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee on June 14, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Voluntary probation’ programs have come under harsh criticism due to questionable legality and ethicality. For an example, see Sigma Beta Xi v. County of Riverside (2018). At: <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/cases/sigma-beta-xi-v-county-riverside>.

<sup>5</sup> “Net-widening” refers to administrative or practical changes that result in more individuals being controlled by the justice system. See Leone, M. (2002). At: <https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/crimepunishment/n286.xml>.

<sup>6</sup> Arrests of youth under 18 in California declined by over 80% between 2000 and 2018. See California Department of Justice (DOJ). (2019). Open Justice: Arrests. At: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/exploration/crime-statistics/arrests>.