



PREVENTING VIOLENCE  
AND DEVELOPING  
YOUTH LEADERS

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April 6, 2021

The Honorable Steven Bradford  
Chair, Senate Committee on Public Safety  
California State Capitol, Room 2059  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0059

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Youth ALIVE!  
Oakland, CA

**RE: SB 493 (Bradford) — Support – Promoting Youth Success and Empowerment (PROMYSE Act)**

Dear Senator Bradford:

Youth ALIVE! is proud to support SB 493, which will amend California’s Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA). JJCPA was enacted in 2000 to support youth locally and limit involvement in the justice system through collaborative efforts. For twenty years, the state has lacked oversight and accountability as county spending has fallen short of the bill’s original goals.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20, the state spent \$167 million<sup>1</sup> through the non-competitive JJCPA grant. SB 493 will 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 harmful contact<sup>2</sup> with the justice system through investments 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>3</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 youth impacted by the criminal and juvenile justice systems informs our support of Senate Bill 493.

SB 493 addresses chronic shortcomings of JJCPA implementation while serving as a stimulus for community-based organizations (CBOs) and public health and education agencies. Amid community needs heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly

<sup>1</sup> Board of State and Community Corrections. (2021). Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act and Youthful Offender Block Grant Annual Report to the Legislature. At <http://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021-JJCPA-YOBG-Leg-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> There is a growing body of evidence that initial contact with the juvenile justice system both inhibits youth development and increases the likelihood of further involvement with the system. See Liberman, Akiva M., David S. Kirk, and KiDeuk Kim. 2014. “Labeling Effects of First Juvenile Arrests: Secondary Deviance and Secondary Sanctioning.” *Criminology* 52 (3): 345–70.

<sup>3</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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among people of color<sup>4</sup>, CBOs offer critical services but struggle with limited resources. Last June, 83 percent<sup>5</sup> of large and mid-sized nonprofit organizations reported declines in funding that have, in many cases, led to reduced staffing and services. Small CBOs may experience even greater difficulty remaining afloat. SB 493 will redirect existing state resources to more effectively serve youth in their homes, schools, and communities.

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 originally conceived of the JJCPA as a response to the over-incarceration of youth in California and tough-on-crime measures<sup>6</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>7</sup>

Unfortunately, JJCPA funds have been distributed with little local or state oversight, resulting in poor spending decisions. The majority of funds have been “distributed” 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>8</sup> Law enforcement contact and probation involvement – including the “net-widening” effects<sup>9</sup> of excessive supervision – does more harm than good.

The California State Auditor verified long-held concerns that insufficient planning and reporting has led to irresponsible spending. The audit finds that counties maintain outdated spending plans and reports fail to show if JJCPA-funded programs are effective. Many counties left mandatory stakeholder seats vacant on their JJCCs, 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 sampled spent over 75 percent of their JJCPA funds on probation departments despite massive declines in youth arrests and referrals to probation,<sup>10</sup> leaving youths’ needs unmet when they could be served by non-law enforcement providers.

Black, Brown, and Indigenous youth bear the brunt of our state’s most harmful investments in policing, punishment, probation, and incarceration<sup>11</sup>. As a state, we must confront the legacy of policy choices that have resulted in disparate impacts on youth of color and unconscionable inequities in our communities. With SB 493, we can ensure state funds no longer prop up a system that has consistently failed youth and communities of color. Instead, we can invest in youth development and equity.

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<sup>4</sup> California Budget and Policy Center. (2021). *Confronting Racism: Overcoming COVID-19 and Advancing Health Equity*. At: [https://calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/R-FP-Health-Equity\\_.pdf](https://calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/R-FP-Health-Equity_.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Independent Sector. (2020). *The Impact of COVID-19 on Large and Mid-Sized Nonprofits*. At: <https://independentsector.org/resource/covid19-survey/>.

<sup>6</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>7</sup> Cardenas, Tony. Letter to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. June 14, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> See *Sigma Beta Xi v. County of Riverside* (2018). At: <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/cases/sigma-beta-xi-v-county-riverside>.

<sup>9</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>10</sup> California Department of Justice. (2001-2020). *Crime in California; Crime and Delinquency in California; and various reports*.

<sup>11</sup> Ridolfi, L. et al. (2020). *California Youth Face Heightened Racial Disparities in Division of Juvenile Justice*. At: [http://www.cjcj.org/uploads/cjcj/documents/2020\\_DJJ\\_realignment\\_racial\\_and\\_ethnic\\_disparities.pdf](http://www.cjcj.org/uploads/cjcj/documents/2020_DJJ_realignment_racial_and_ethnic_disparities.pdf).



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Specifically, SB 493 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. This is a critical improvement given that “use of JJCPA funds on law enforcement personnel – including net-widening with excessive supervision – is contradictory to the bill’s original intent of investment in collaborative, community-based services.”<sup>12</sup> SB 493 requires that JJCPA-funded programs be modeled on trauma-informed and youth development approaches. Additionally, the bill improves reporting requirements to assess each program’s effectiveness. Under SB 493, counties’ Juvenile Justice Coordinating Councils (JJCCs), which decide how JJCPA funds are allocated, will have a balanced representation of government and community stakeholders.

SB 493 supports youth development and counters the historic harm caused by criminalizing youth of color throughout California. This bill ensures stable funding for critical services run by schools, public health agencies, and CBOs to support at-promise and justice-involved youth.

Now is the 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! is pleased to support SB 493 and respectfully requests your “Aye” vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne Marks", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Anne Marks  
Executive Director

CC:

Christopher Morales ([christopher.morales@sen.ca.gov](mailto:christopher.morales@sen.ca.gov))  
Renee Menart ([renee@cjcj.org](mailto:renee@cjcj.org))

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<sup>12</sup> Cardenas, Tony. Letter to Assemblymember Reginald Jones-Sawyer. July 15, 2020.