



American
Public Health
Association

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Protect, Prevent, Live Well

May 6, 2009

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senate
433 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association (APHA), the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals and advocates in the world dedicated to promoting and protecting the health of the public and our communities, I write in support of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2009.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act has been protecting youth across our nation for over 30 years. However, certain components of the current law should be strengthened to better protect the mental and physical health of youths in the juvenile justice system, such as eliminating dangerous practices and protecting youth under the age of 18 from being housed with incarcerated adults. Research shows that youth confined in adult jails and lock-ups are more likely to reoffend upon release and while confined, are at a high risk of suffering assault and committing suicide.

The National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act reauthorizes this critical law and includes important new protections for youth in the juvenile justice system. The bill ensures that youth involved in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems are placed in developmentally appropriate and safe environments, and are provided comprehensive services and supports. The bill also rewards states that implement effective, evidence-based rehabilitation programs and services that increase the likelihood of successful reintegration of incarcerated youth into society after release.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important public health issue. We look forward to working with you as the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (Emeritus)
Executive Director