



March 25, 2009

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman
433 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking Member
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Herb Kohl
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Leahy, Specter, Kohl, and Durbin:

Voices for America's Children (Voices) applaud your introduction of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (S. 678). This legislation is a critical step toward keeping our communities and our children safe and to ensure high standards of care and safeguards for our youth in the juvenile justice systems throughout the nation.

Voices is a national, nonpartisan child advocacy organization strengthening and integrating the work of our 60 multi-issue member organizations across 45 states, as well as the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Voices network advocates for effective public policies that will improve the lives of all children in their communities and states. Voices vision for safety calls for all children and youth to be safe in their homes and communities, and free from exploitation and violence. Voices believes that S. 678 is a step toward achieving this goal.

The legislation that you have offered seeks to improve the nation's juvenile justice system by focusing on preventing juvenile crime, providing appropriate intervention strategies, and helping children to return to their communities and build healthy productive lives. Voices is specifically grateful for the legislative focus on addressing the disproportionate number of minority youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system, along with the other core provisions within the legislation including separating adult and juvenile offenders in secure institutions, deinstitutionalizing status offenders, and eliminating the practice of detaining or confining juveniles in adult jails and lockups.

Voices, and our network of child advocates, are eager to work with you and your staff to ensure that this legislation is enacted during this legislative session.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Bentley", written in a cursive style.

William H. Bentley, MSW
President and Chief Executive Officer

cc: Senate Judiciary Committee