



Federal Policy Update: A Look Back at the 113th Congress

Throughout the year, CJJ's *Federal Policy Update* provides members with information about key juvenile justice policy initiatives. Below are updates on how the bills CJJ highlighted in 2014 fared at the conclusion of the 113th Congress.

Senate Bills

S. 1307, the Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support and Education (YOUTH PROMISE Act) was introduced by [Sen. Mary Landrieu \(D-La.\)](#). The bill would establish panels to work with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to create standards and evidence-based practices to prevent juvenile delinquency and criminal street gang activity. These panels would also collect data from select communities to assess their needs and existing resources in these areas. A companion measure, [H.R. 1318](#), was introduced [Rep. Bobby Scott \(D-VA\)](#). Both bills remained in committee at the end of the 113th Congress.

S. 1690, the Second Chance Reauthorization Act, would provide grant funding for projects that help adults and youth reenter their communities following incarceration. The bill passed out of the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) on Sept. 18, with the addition of two amendments. [Sen. Chuck Grassley \(R-IA\)](#)'s amendment prohibits related grant funds from being used for lobbying efforts. [Sen. John Cornyn \(R-TX\)](#), added provisions that ensure states will not have certain [Department of Justice](#) grant programs penalized if they fail to comply with the [Prison Rape Elimination Act \(PREA\)](#). The measure was not approved by the full 113th Congress.

S. 2461, The CHIP Extension Act, would ensure, among other things, that people who are younger than 21 do not have their benefits under a state plan for medical assistance terminated if they are detained in a public institution. Under the legislation, care could be suspended but not terminated while a child was incarcerated. Care would be required to be re-instated upon the child's release. The provision was similar to [S. 2211, the At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act](#), and its companion legislation [H.R. 4390](#). The CHIP Extension Act was introduced in June by [Sen. Jay Rockefeller \(D-WV\)](#), and was referred to the [Committee on Finance](#). All three bills remained in committee at the conclusion of the 113th Congress.

[**S. 2531, the Better Options for Kids Act**](#), would provide financial incentives to states that implement policies aimed at reducing the number of children who are arrested or referred to the courts for school-based behaviors. The bill would provide priority for funding through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrations (SAMHSA) for states with policies that limit court referrals for non-criminal school-based behaviors such as truancy. States would also receive incentives when, among other things, they encourage school districts to have clear guidelines about school resource officers and their ability to arrest students on school grounds. The bill was introduced in June by [Sen. Chris Murphy \(D-CT\)](#) and [Sen. Cory Booker \(D-NJ\)](#). It was referred to the [Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions](#). The measure remained in committee at the conclusion of the 113th Congress.

[**S. 2567 the Records Expungement Designed to Enhance Employment \(REDEEM\) Act of 2014**](#), was introduced in July by [Sen. Rand Paul \(R-KY\)](#) and [Sen. Cory Booker \(D-NJ\)](#). An identical measure, [H.R. 5158](#), was also introduced by [Rep. Chaka Fattah \(D-PA\)](#) and [Rep. Frank Wolf \(R-VA\)](#) that same month. Both measures would provide for the sealing and expungement of federal juvenile records in non-violent offenses. The bills would have also prohibited solitary confinement of juveniles unless the child poses a serious and immediate risk to themselves or others. The legislation also included financial incentives to states that enact similar laws related to the sealing and expungement of juvenile records, and/or solitary confinement. Financial incentives were also included for states that set the age of original jurisdiction in adult court at 18. S. 2567 and H.R. 5158 both remained in committee when the 113th Congress came to an end.

[**S. 2646, The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act**](#), would reauthorize a series of grant programs that provide services and protections to homeless youth, such as shelter, and training programs. The bill was voted out of the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) on Sept. 18, with several amendments. One amendment, by [Sen. Chuck Grassley \(R-IA\)](#), would add accountability measures to the bill. A second amendment, by [Sen. John Cornyn \(R-TX\)](#), would, among other things, provide protections for domestic victims of human trafficking. The measure was not approved by the full 113th Congress.

[**S. 2872, the Promoting Healthy Minds for Safer Communities Act**](#), would establish comprehensive, school-based mental health services to assist at-risk youth. The bill was introduced on Sept. 18 by [Sen. Richard Blumenthal \(D-CT\)](#). It was referred to the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) where it remained at the close of the 113th Congress.

[**S. 2874, the Prohibiting Detention of Youth Status Offenders Act**](#), would prohibit states from using the Valid Court Order (VCO) exception to incarcerate status offenders. The bill would require that states stop using the exception within one year. An additional one-year extension would have been possible for states that were able to demonstrate hardship. The bill was

introduced by [Sen. Bob Casey \(D-PA\)](#) in September. An identical measure, [H.R. 4123](#), was introduced by [Congressman Tony Cardenas \(D-CA\)](#) in February. Both bills remained in committee at the close of the 113th Congress.

[S. 2999, a bill to amend and improve the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974](#), would reauthorize federal legislation which provides core protections for youth in the juvenile justice system. This bill would strengthen the JJDPA's requirements related to incarceration of youth in adult jails, and addressing racial and ethnic disproportionality within juvenile justice systems. The legislation was introduced Dec. 11, 2014 by [Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse \(D-RI\)](#) and [Sen. Chuck Grassley \(R-IA\)](#). It was referred to the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#), where it remained at the end of the 113th Congress.

House Bills

[H.R. 1199, the Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2013](#), would have required schools to implement policies prohibiting severe forms of bullying. The bill also required schools to implement policies to prevent disproportionate punishment and limit students' removal from the classroom. The bill remained before the [Committee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education](#) when the 113th Congress ended.

[H.R. 3530, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act](#) would provide up to \$7 million in block grants to help victims of human trafficking. These grants could be used, among other things, to create diversion programs for child victims. The grants could also be used to create and educate law enforcement about state-level Safe Harbor Laws that prevent child sex trafficking victims from being prosecuted for prostitution. The bill passed the House, but was not approved by the Senate before the end of the 113th Congress.

[H.R. 3717, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act](#) would make a portion of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants available to mental health programs, law enforcement and corrections officers. The bill, which was introduced by [Congressman Tim Murphy \(R-PA\)](#), would among other things, also provide funds for the Department of Education to undertake a national awareness program aimed at high school and college students. The bill remained in committee when the 113th Congress came to an end.

[H.R. 4124, the Protecting Youth From Solitary Confinement Act](#) would prohibit solitary confinement of individuals who are being held in juvenile facilities while under federal custody. The bill, which was introduced by [Congressman Tony Cardenas \(D-CA\)](#), would further require that the Director of the Board of Prisons compile and present annual data on the number and demographics of youth who are placed in solitary confinement at their facilities, as well as how long the youth was placed in solitary. H.R. 4124, remained in committee at the end of the 113th Congress.

[**H.R. 4574, the Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act**](#), would, among other things, require that states receiving funding through Community Mental Health Services Block Grants report the number of juvenile justice facilities that screen residents for mental health disorders. The bill was introduced in May by [**Congressman Ron Barber \(D-AZ\)**](#) and was referred to the [**House Armed Services Committee, Education Committee, Energy Committee, Judiciary Committee, Natural Resources Committee, Veterans Affairs Committee, and Ways and Means Committee**](#). The bill remained in committee when the 113th Congress came to an end.

[**H.R. 4980, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act**](#), would require that state agencies that are responsible for foster care and adoption services identify and document children under their care who are victims to sex trafficking. The bill would also require that agencies identify appropriate services for sex trafficking victims who are under their care. The measure passed the House on July 23, and was approved by the Senate on Sept. 18. It was signed into law by the President on Sept. 29.

[**H.R. 5238, the Securing the Assistance of Victims of Exploitation \(SAVE\) Act of 2014**](#), would clarify law enforcement's ability to inform victims of severe forms of trafficking - including child victims of sex trafficking - of their right to receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). H.R. 5238 was introduced by [**Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee \(D-TX\)**](#) on July 29. It was referred to the [**Committee on Agriculture's Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight and Nutrition**](#). The bill remained in committee at the conclusion of the 113th Congress.