



YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Use Your Voice

December 11th, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
Chair, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: AB 702 (Jackson) - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember McCarty,

Youth Leadership Institute is pleased to support AB 702 (Jackson): The PROMYSE (Promoting Youth Success and Empowerment) Act, which would help California fully realize the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act's vision of providing collaborative, restorative, community and health-based services for young people and ensuring equitable representation and decision-making within county oversight bodies.

yli partners with thousands of youth across the state, the majority of whom are low-income youth of color. We witness first hand the brutal impacts of our state's harmful "justice" system on their lives, and are staunch advocates of policies that will reduce the criminalization and incarceration of our communities.

The Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) was enacted in 2000 to support youth in their communities and limit their involvement in the justice system. In the following years, youth arrests have declined by 89 percent, from 243,090 in 2000 to 26,000 in 2022. California has also seen a 91 percent decline in referrals to probation since 2006, from 187,296 in 2006 to 16,252 in 2022. However, most counties spend the majority of their JJCPA funds on probation staffing with little to none invested in public agencies like education, arts, and public health and community-based organizations (CBOs).

In 2020, the California State Auditor released a report verifying long-held concerns about poor JJCPA spending, decision-making, and reporting. The audit included an in-depth review

of a diverse sample of counties, finding that counties maintained severely outdated spending plans. Four of the five counties sampled spent over 75 percent of their Fiscal Year 2017–18 JJCPA funds on probation departments, running counter to the stated goals of the program. While each county is required to make JJCPA funding decisions through a Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), the audit found that counties left mandatory stakeholder seats vacant. In fact, 20 percent of all California counties lacked a JJCC during the audit review period. Additionally, counties' reporting failed to evaluate whether their JJCPA-funded programs have been effective.

In the years since the audit, county spending continues to fall short of the bill's original goals and youths' most urgent needs. In Fiscal Year 2021–22, 1 in 2 counties used 70 percent or more of their JJCPA funds on probation staffing. In 2022, 19 counties spent JJCPA funds on truancy programs and school based probation officers, putting youth at risk of entering the school-to-prison pipeline.

Across the state, inequitable decision-making by JJCCs has continued. In 2021 and 2022, Fresno and Sacramento Counties were both found unlawfully holding meetings on juvenile justice reform behind closed doors. Dismal data reporting has continued, allowing for incidents such as in Los Angeles County, where probation was found to have spent nearly \$400 thousand yearly on a youth diversion program that served zero youth participants.

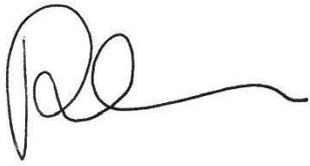
AB 702 will address these long-standing problems, further the goals of the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act, and support much-needed youth programming by:

- Requiring a greater investment of JJCPA funds into public agencies such as arts, parks and recreation, and behavioral health focussed agencies, as well as healing-centered, restorative, community-based programs and services that reduce and prevent young people's engagement with law enforcement.
- Ensuring equitable community representation and improved decision-making on county JJCCs overseeing county Juvenile Justice Plans and the disbursement of JJCPA funds.

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 Leadership Institute is pleased to support AB 702 and respectfully requests your "Aye" vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PATRICIA BARAHONA

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Youth Leadership Institute