

# The youth promise act: analysis



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The Youth PROMISE (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) Act was designed with the intent to prevent and intervene against criminal delinquency. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, communities facing the greatest youth gang and crime challenges will be able to enact a comprehensive, coordinated response and intervention that includes the active involvement of representatives from law enforcement, court services, schools, social service organizations, health and mental health care providers, the business community, and other public and private community-based service organizations, including faith-based organizations (Scott, 2013). Also, it aimed to decrease youth gang activity by implementing evidence-based practices. The goal of the youth PROMISE act is to gain community involvement by developing community-based committees. Collaborating with community stakeholders will provide a firsthand experience when working to prevent youth violence within communities.

## **Social Issue and Context for Change**

The Youth PROMISE Act (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) is bipartisan legislation H. R. 2197, S. 1770 that will give our communities the support and funding they need to effectively address youth violence issues (Youth promise action, 2018). The Youth PROMISE Act will specifically focus on preventing violence while implementing new intervention strategies. According to the bill H. R. 2197, “Congress finds that the youth gang crimes have taken a toll on a number of communities, and senseless acts of gang-related violence have imposed economic, social, and human costs” (Scott, 2015). Research supported by

the Department of Justice specifies that gang-membership is fleeting among adolescents. This means that there are very few youth and adolescence that involve themselves in gangs throughout their adolescence years. According to Congressman Bobby Scott, “ in the fiscal year 2012, Federal, State, and local governments spent an estimated \$265, 000, 000, 000 for police protection, corrections, and judicial and legal services, nearly a 213-percent increase since 1982 and estimates suggest that each year the United States incurs over \$8, 000, 000, 000 in long-term costs for the confinement of young people” (Scott, 2015). The average annual cost to incarcerate one youth is \$146, 302. It cost more money to incarcerate a youth than to support an organization that seeks out to help a young person. Implementing a collaboration between the juvenile justice system and local communities will result in the success of reducing the impact of youth and gang-related violence. This type of collaboration has already taken place in states such as California, Massachusetts, Chicago, and Virginia. Congressman Bobby Scott believes that investing in prevention and intervention programs for children and youth, including quality early childhood programs, comprehensive evidence-based school programs, mentoring programs, mental health and treatment programs, evidence-based job training programs, and alternative intervention programs, has been shown to lead to a decreased in youth arrests (Scott, 2015). Also, a mild decreased in delinquency will result in lower recidivism. For example, by decreasing youth crime there is a huge financial saving for all entities involved.

Demographics and socioeconomic changes drove the youth PROMISE act. For example, many of the youth who are incarcerated are minorities. These

individuals tend to live in the low-income areas or come from a community that is high risked in terms of violence. According to the Annie E Casey foundation “ African-American youths are nearly five times as likely to be confined as their white peers and Latino and American Indian youth are between two and three times as likely to be confined (Casey, 2011). The disparities in youth confinement rates according to violence reflects a system that treats youth of color, worse than whites. The Youth PROMISE act was formed to prevent unfair treatment and support human rights by addressing social justice concerns of all races. Congressman Bobby Scott believes that everyone deserves a second chance. That is why he wants to implement the youth PROMISE act to advocate for incarcerated youth. The Youth PROMISE Act is a start to breaking the school-to-prison pipeline cycle. Instead of locking up the youth, the youth PROMISE act focuses on innovative, community-based interventions that engage and divert at-risk youth before they get into a cycle of crime. The Youth PROMISE act was designed specifically to address incarcerated youth. It was established out of 1974 juvenile justice and delinquency prevention act. Combining these two acts will help when assessing and developing evidence-based practices to prevent criminal street activity. I chose the youth promise act because I wanted to research a topic that would help incarcerated youth. The school-to-prison pipeline affects the population in which I work with. For example, many of the youth that I come in contact with they say, “ they have a 90% chance of going to jail instead of attending college”. Having the youth PROMISE act allows individuals to get a second chance at life. They are given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and prove that can be productive citizens of society.

**Key Elements of the Legislative Decision-Making Process**

The Youth PROMISE Act is bipartisan legislation, sponsored by Congressman Bobby Scott and representative Walter Jones in the House, and Senators Mary Landrieu and James Inhofe in the Senate (JJIE, 2013). In 2016 The Youth Promise (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) Act was passed and put into place by Congressman Bobby Scott. The three main elements of this bill are to empower local communities to choose their own solutions, fund evidence-based violence prevention & intervention practices, and save taxpayer money while reducing crime. Allowing communities to find their own solution to the problem will enhance community involvement. The Youth PROMISE Act brings together a diverse coalition of community leaders such as community and faith-based groups, parents, schools, law enforcement, elected leaders, courts, health providers, social services, and nonprofit organizations. In order to make sure that stakeholders are fully engaged, the Youth PROMISE act ensures that all local challenges are met and properly used. To make sure that funds are being allocated properly the youth PROMISE act will require evidence of program success. Communities will be required to track crime rates and funding is used as a structure to urge the community to reinvest back into the PROMISE program. The total cost per bed each year for juvenile incarceration ranges from 50, 000 to 200, 000. The Youth PROMISE Act is subjected to save on average \$5 for every \$1 that is invested in prevention programs.

According to Bill Keating congressman of Massachusetts, “ the legislative process in order to pass a bill starts with first a representative sponsoring a

bill, then the bill is assigned to a committee for a study, once released by the committee, the bill is put on a calendar to be voted on or amended, if the bill is passed it is then moved to the Senate” (The Legislative Process, 2017). In the Senate, the bill is assigned to another committee and released and voted on. If the Senate makes changes, the bill will be returned to the house for concurrences. The resulting bill will then be sent to the house and senate for final approval. Lastly, the president then has 10 days to veto the final bill or sign it into law. The key decision makers from the idea to the enactment of the law start with the house of representatives, the Senate, and the president. The legislative process can take as little as 10 days. However, the bill usually takes months to get through the assembly. There are many challenges and barriers that can delay the legislative process. One of the most common barriers is the changes that have to be made. If there are revisions that need to be made in regard to the policy, that can potentially prolong the process when passing the bill. The Youth PROMISE Act is currently active and is limited until the year 2020. The key proponent for the Youth PROMISE Act is the democratic party. There are close to no Republicans against the act. However, there has been a lot of controversy saying that the United States cannot afford to spend the money that would be needed to implement and support this act (Wright&Chadorf, 2013). The fiscal budget for the youth PROMISE act is 1. 2 billion for five years, this budget will help locally-based collaborative council of police, schools, social service agencies, and community groups (Billitteri, 2010).

**Impacts and Outcomes.**

Based on available research, the youth PROMISE act is meeting their intended goals. This act has sought out to help youth and improve criminal delinquency. It has involved the appropriate entities such as law enforcement and the community. Although, this policy is fairly new, based on the evidence-based practices it indicates that this policy will meet their intended needs. Do to the youth PROMISE act taking action in certain states it shows that they are already addressing its purpose. In the state of California, the Youth PROMISE act has already reduced crime in the cities of Los Angeles and Pasadena. The social worker will play a huge role when implementing the youth PROMISE act. Social workers will be the ones advocating for the youth and adolescences. Also, they will be the ones helping with community involvement. They will be passing out flyers and getting the community to involve by speaking with those who are impacted. Also, they will be meeting with law enforcement and speaking as a liaison for the community. Although, the Social Worker is doing their part, having full commitment from other members of the community is necessary. Everyone must do their part in order for the youth PROMISE act to be successful. It is critical that everyone does what is expected of them. Especially law enforcement, because they will have one of the most important jobs. They will come across youth gang members on a daily basis, so instead of arresting these individuals, they can offer them services to ensure that they don't live a prison lifestyle but with the promise of living a more normal lifestyle. However, the youth must do their part to see success within themselves. The Youth PROMISE Act is designed as an intervention program to detour youth and adolescents from gangs and crime from being an

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alternative lifestyle. It is crucial for law enforcement, social workers, community leadership, faith-based organization, health/mental health programs, and political leaders to come together and find services that will help keep youth and adolescence out of jails and prisons. The Youth PROMISE Act will advance social justice by providing opportunities and privileges within a society. This act intends to help not only gang members but those who live in those type of communities by providing peer to peer contact. Overall, the youth PROMISE act uses a holistic form of juvenile justice that seeks out to find alternatives when working with high-risked youth that is gang related.

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