



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D. C. 20530

December 15, 2010

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Department of Justice is pleased to support S. 132, the "Youth PROMISE and Gang Abatement Act of 2010" (the Act). We understand that this legislation has been negotiated between sponsors in both the House and the Senate, and it makes important contributions to our ability to combat criminal street gangs; provide criminal law and criminal procedure tools for federal prosecutors; establish a critical new framework for gang prevention and intervention; and provide re-entry assistance to state, local, and tribal governments.

According to the 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment, there are approximately one million gang members, belonging to more than 20,000 gangs, active throughout the United States. While the majority of these gang members belong to local, neighborhood-based street gangs, gang members are increasingly migrating from urban areas to suburban and rural communities, and national and transnational gangs are an increasingly significant public safety threat.

Criminal gangs are responsible for as much as 80 percent of the crime in many communities, with gang offenses including drug trafficking, armed robbery, home invasions, assault, firearms trafficking, and murder. Moreover, national and transnational gangs, as well as prison-based gangs, are extending their influence and are often extremely dangerous.

The Act builds on various ongoing federal, state and local efforts to combat gang crime and will help ensure that the country continues on the path to lower violent crime and improved public safety. For example, the designations of High Intensity Gang Activity Areas, outlined in Section 301 of the Act, are similar to initiatives currently undertaken by the Department of Justice. We look forward to working with Congress to effectuate the goals of the bill and to effectively allocate federal resources in this important area.

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Page Two

Please do not hesitate to call upon us if we may be of additional assistance. The Office of Management and Budget has advised us that from the perspective of the Administration's program, there is no objection to submission of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Weich', written in a cursive style.

Ronald Weich
Assistant Attorney General

cc: The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on the Judiciary