



Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi
Statement for the Record: H.R. 1064, the “Youth PROMISE Act”
Committee on the Judiciary Markup
Wednesday, December 2, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I applaud Chairman Scott for the work he has done in crafting this bill, and I am proud to be a cosponsor of his legislation.

For too long, our nation’s leaders have been led to believe that government must choose between, on the one hand, enacting tough criminal penalties and, on the other hand, promoting policies that attack the root causes of criminal behavior—in other words, that government must choose between being “tough on crime” and funding programs designed to address the various conditions that contribute to the commission of crime in our communities.

Experience has proven this to be a false choice. If we are serious about reducing violent crime, we must focus on both enforcement and prevention. We now have extensive research that shows that violent behavior can be significantly reduced by redirecting at-risk youth away from crime and providing them with the tools they need to become productive members of society. For example, drug courts have successfully diverted drug-abusing youth and young adults away from prison and towards treatment. These programs are effective because they leverage the resources of the entire community to bring the individual receiving treatment back into the mainstream of society.

I am confident that the Youth PROMISE Act will bear fruit because it is rooted in this same principle: it provides resources to local communities to help prevent children and teens from entering the criminal justice system in the first place. I will not describe every aspect of the bill, but I do want to highlight one provision. The Youth PROMISE Act provides grants to hire and train police officers to address juvenile delinquency and criminal street gang activity. These officers would be hired and trained through the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services—otherwise known as the “COPS” program—which Congress created in 1994. Over the past 15 years, the COPS program has enabled law enforcement agencies to purchase new crime-fighting technologies and to develop innovative policing strategies. The COPS program has proven successful in reducing crime and saving lives.

It makes good sense to expand the COPS program to place special focus on the prevention of youth crime, and the Youth PROMISE Act would do precisely that. I am pleased that we are considering this bill today, and I yield back the balance of my time.