

Murphy Unveils Legislation to Reform Federal Juvenile Justice Policy

Contact: Kristen Bossi

(202) 225-4476

HARTFORD, CT - Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) announced that he has crafted legislation to reform federal juvenile justice policy to mirror many of the recent successes in Connecticut. After a press conference today at the state Capitol with Connecticut legislators and advocates, he will return to Washington, D.C. tomorrow to introduce the bill.

In the coming months, Congress will consider the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevent Act (JJDP). Working with advocacy groups to craft the bill, Murphy's legislation will:

- begin to remove youth from adult jails and support states in their efforts to keep kids out of adult prisons;
- improve safety of juveniles in custody, by requiring states to develop procedures that eliminate dangerous practices, increase the use of effective behavior management systems, provide training for staff on effective techniques, and encourage state's to develop safe staffing levels;
- disallow locking up status offenders - youth who have not been charged with any offense - and provides supports for these youth in the community. The bill provides that when youth may need secure confinement, that they are placed in safe conditions and rehabilitative environments;
- and provide incentives for states to use "best practices" such as effective community-based alternatives to incarceration.

Murphy hopes it will be included in the reauthorization of the JJDP.

"We've seen the effects of treating juveniles like adults in our justice system - kids end up losing hope because the

system essentially gives up on them. It's time we change our approach so that they have a chance at leading productive lives. By making these reasonable reforms to the system we will protect kids, reduce recidivism, and improve safety in our communities," said Murphy.

Murphy was a leader on juvenile justice issues at the state level. He was a leading sponsor of legislation to move 16 and 17-year-olds out of the adult prison system and into more appropriate rehabilitative incarceration. With Murphy's leadership, in 2006 the Legislature passed legislation to start planning for the transition of 16 and 17-year-olds out of the adult prison system.

"Congressman Murphy's commitment to strengthen the language and requirements of the JJDPa this year provides significant help to advocates and those who work in the juvenile justice system, all of whom want what's best for youth and communities. We are so grateful that Congressman Murphy has taken his commitment to juvenile justice to the Federal level and are honored to be working with him on this legislation," said Abby Anderson, Executive Director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance.

###