



**Testimony of Talvin Paul, Southwest Vice President of Youth Advocate Programs
Senate Judiciary B Committee
Senate Bill 301
April 5, 2016**

Good morning. My name is Talvin Paul and I'm the Southwest Vice President of Youth Advocate Programs, or YAP.

I'd like to thank you for inviting us to share our expertise with the Senate Judiciary B Committee. As Advocates for our young people, we very much appreciate the light you're shining on this critical issue.

We support Senate Bill 301 and its efforts to improve accountability and cost-effectiveness in Louisiana's juvenile justice system.

First, let me provide a brief overview of the scope of our work and expertise. YAP's mission is to keep young people out of institutions, including youth and adult prisons, by providing intensive community-based services.

In Louisiana, YAP currently provides re-entry services in Thibodaux and New Orleans for young people coming back from state juvenile correction facilities. Our model is based in principles of wraparound and culturally competent "advocacy" where we hire people from a young person's community to provide support and mentorship to young people and their families.

Nationally, YAP is located in 19 states and provides services to 13,000 young people and their families. Most of the young people in our programs are young men of color. We provide an array of services in some of the nation's toughest cities, including anti-violence programs and juvenile justice programs.

We know our model has worked to reduce unnecessary confinement and recidivism among the youth we work with.

Of the justice involved youth in YAP programs, 94.1% are not arrested for a new offense while in program and 90% are living in their homes and communities at the time their participation in the program ends. In 2014, 89% of justice-involved young people who received community-based services through YAP were still living in their home communities up to one year after formal services ended.

Through community-based care, youth and families are able to learn skills and receive the services and support they need amidst their real life circumstances, rather than in a remote location and without one another's support.

Specifically, as it relates to Senate Bill 301, we offer the following testimony:

- Senate Bill 301 seeks to promote accountability and cost-effectiveness in Louisiana’s juvenile justice system. It does this in a few key ways:
 - Designating a process by which some of the savings from reduced incarceration can be re-allocated to localities for community-based programs like YAP, that have been proven to reduce recidivism and improve youth outcomes
 - Ensuring that youth adjudicated for nonviolent offenses are not lingering for unnecessarily long periods in state facilities, and reducing the likelihood that youth will end up incarcerated for technical violations of probation.
 - System accountability and transparency through comprehensive data reporting
- Research shows that community-based programs are far more effective than confinement in reducing recidivism. Indeed YAP has been recognized for its excellence in providing safe community-based alternatives to youth incarceration by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the John Jay School of Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Center.
- Community-based programs are much more affordable. Reducing unnecessary confinement and re-allocating a portion of any resulting savings will ensure that more youth can take advantage of effective programming at a fraction of the cost of secure care.
 - For example, YAP costs \$45/day. It’s an intensive program for youth who are at risk of out-of-home placement.
 - Overwhelmingly, youth placed into our Louisiana YAP programs remained in the community without picking up any new charges during their time in the program.
 - We have seen similar results throughout the country. In Alabama, which implemented a similar grant funding program as proposed in SB 301, YAP serves more than 100 kids per year, with the vast majority completing the program successfully without picking up new charges. This has helped Alabama reduce the number of youth in its state facilities by more than 50%.
- More transparency with data can only help us. YAP has always been a data driven program. It allows us to ensure we are fulfilling our mission to safely keep young people in their own homes. Given the state’s dire fiscal situation, it only makes sense that there should be more transparency about how our juvenile justice dollars are spent.

We recognize that the state’s current fiscal situation does not allow for upfront funding for a grant program for community-based services. That’s why SB 301 is so important.

Providing mechanisms that prevent youth from lingering for unnecessarily long periods in confinement or on probation will ensure our resources are used wisely and save money that can be used both to fill our budget holes and to fund effective, economical community-based services.

And, the data will help ensure we are not incarcerating youth that could be safely served in their homes on probation supervision and with the resources that are already available.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share our expertise with you today. Please consider myself, and all of YAP resources to help Louisiana bring and keep more young people safely home.

Respectfully Submitted,

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