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2012 Federal Policy Recommendations

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids members know from the research that the best way we can improve public safety is by providing vulnerable children the right start in life and provide those who start to veer off access to services that get them back on track. In 2012, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids will work with Congress and the Administration to protect, and if possible build upon, evidence-based programs that support these priorities.

The following are the broad federal policy goals for Fight Crime: Invest in Kids in 2012:

Protect Access to High Quality Early Care and Education and Increase Quality of Programs

The research is clear that obtaining the long-term benefits of early care and education – including academic and behavioral outcomes – depends on accessing high-quality services. The vast majority of public resources spent on early care and learning programs comes from the federal government. The major federal programs in this area are: Head Start, Early Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant program. In addition, there has been a substantial investment by the federal government in the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant program.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids will work this year to:

- Fight against cuts, and where possible seek increases, for Head Start, Early Head Start and both the discretionary and mandatory funding streams of the Child Care Development Block Grant;
- Work to improve the quality of Head Start/Early Head Start and CCDBG through the reauthorization of these programs (including mandatory funding for CCDBG); and

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- Seek to, at minimum, maintain the current investment in the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge program to enable States to build up the necessary infrastructure to increase access to high-quality early care and learning programs, especially for the most at-risk children.

Protect Key Income Supports

The link between poverty and a number of social ills is clear. Research has further demonstrated that the provision of additional resources to families in poverty can have a positive impact on outcomes for their children, including a reduction in behavioral issues that lead to juvenile delinquency. The end of 2012 will bring once again the expiration of the tax cuts enacted under President George W. Bush. Expanded in the package of cuts, and enhanced further during the passage of ARRA in 2009, the Child Tax Credit (CTC) has enabled more low-income families to obtain resources to care for their needs of their children. Other programs that can provide key income supports to at-risk families, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are also important.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids will work this year, at minimum, to:

- Protect the current the structure of the CTC, including ensuring that families earning at least \$3,000 have access to the refundable portion of the credit;
- Protect and reauthorize TANF; and
- Work to ensure that EITC benefits, to the greatest extent possible, continue to be available to families with the most at-risk kids

Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (known as No Child Left Behind in the last reauthorization), is the primary federal support for K-12 education programs in the United States. As Congress continues their work in this area, there remains an opportunity to advocate for some key reforms that will help vulnerable kids succeed – both academically and developmentally.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids will work to ensure that education reform:

- Provides incentives for States to shift away from the traditional K-12 approach towards an educational system that incorporates early learning into the educational structure so kids are ready to learn and succeed when they enter kindergarten;
- Improves graduation rates measurement and accountability, including supporting both data systems that can serve as an “early warning system” for kids headed

towards dropping out, as well as the use of evidence-based programs to keep kids in school and on the path towards graduation;

- Ensures support of evidence-based K-12 programs which enhance school climate;
- Provides resources for evidence-based out of school time programs and extended learning approaches, especially those focused on middle and high-school students;
- Provides incentives to reform “zero-tolerance” policies and encourage the use of positive, evidence-based approaches to school discipline; and
- Ensures that, to the maximum extent possible, funds are directed toward evidence-based approaches in the highest-need communities.

Home Visiting

Evidence-based home visitation can have a tremendous impact in the reduction

of child abuse and neglect. The passage of the federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program has created an opportunity for robust federal investment in these services. However, there is a real possibility that the funding stream (\$1.5 billion over 5 years) could be put at risk.

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Fight Crime: Invest in Kids will work to:

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- Educate policymakers at the federal level on the tremendous benefits of high-quality, evidence-based home visitation services; and
- Protect funding for the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program.

Juvenile Justice and Troubled Youth

Once a child begins to stray from the path that provides the best chance for successful outcomes, it is crucial that they get back on track in the shortest amount of time possible. There are a variety of sources of possible federal support for evidence-based therapeutic interventions that can be leveraged.

Should the opportunity arise, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids will work to:

- Provide for greater utilization of evidence-based therapeutic interventions through Medicaid/CHIP reimbursement;
- Engage the Administration regarding actions that would encourage states to suspend, rather than terminate, Medicaid and CHIP benefits while juveniles are in lock-up;

- Ensure that any reauthorizations of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) or the Second Chance Act, contain language that directs federal funds, to the greatest extent possible, toward proven-effective prevention and intervention approaches, with adequate definitions to ensure such programs have been rigorously evaluated (or are undergoing such evaluations);
- Fight against cuts, and where possible seek increases, for funding streams that support access to such therapeutic prevention programs and interventions for troubled youth, including Titles II and V of the JJDP, JABG, Juvenile Mentoring, and the Second Chance Act, especially the adult and juvenile offender reentry demonstration program;
- Promote the idea that a portion of federal resources for justice research and evaluation should be specifically directed towards juvenile-focused programs and approaches; and
- Enact and fund the Youth PROMISE Act  and improve evidence-based prevention and intervention programs for at-risk children and families.

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