

**Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa  
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee  
Executive Business Meeting  
July 23, 2015**

Good morning. The bipartisan Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2015, S. 1169, is first on today's agenda. This bill, which I introduced in April with Senator Whitehouse, extends the authorization for some key juvenile justice programs, which expired in 2007. The bill also will go a long way to ensure accountability in the spending of federal grant funds.

Dozens of organizations, including Fight Crime Invest in Kids, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, Boys Town, and Rights 4 Girls worked with us on this bill's development and at least 100 groups have signed endorsement letters in support of S. 1169. I want to take this opportunity to also thank the members of this Committee who are cosponsors, including Senators Cornyn, Leahy, Hatch, Coons, and Blumenthal. The bill is a truly bipartisan effort.

Senator Whitehouse and I have a complete substitute amendment to this measure that we will now offer for this Committee's consideration.

Among other things, our substitute amendment, like the bill it would amend, calls for continued congressional support of programs that serve at-risk youth. Such youth include, for example, youths who are being exploited by human traffickers and children with trauma, mental health or substance abuse issues. Our substitute, like S. 1196, also phases out an exception in current law that permits States to lock up children who have committed so-called "status offenses," which would not be an offense if committed by adults. These include offenses like running away, truancy, or violating a curfew.

And, like the underlying bill, our substitute amendment not only extends the authorization for existing juvenile justice programs, which are designed to keep juveniles away from adult offenders, but it does so in a way that is fiscally responsible. The substitute, just like S. 1196, limits authorized funding levels for these programs to the amounts provided by appropriators for juvenile justice programs in recent years, with a slight adjustment for inflation.

But the substitute is an improvement over the bill we originally introduced in several ways. First, the amendment would accord greater priority in federal funding to those programs that are scientifically proven to work with at-risk juveniles. The addition of this new language will ensure that scarce federal resources must go primarily to the most meritorious programs.

Second, the substitute also incorporates some new provisions to encourage States to phase out the use of unreasonable restraints of juveniles in detention. Such practices include, for example, the shackling of girls during childbirth. We worked with human trafficking advocates as well as Senators Schumer and Cornyn on the development of this language. Senator Durbin also worked with us on the development of language that calls for States to consider alternatives to detention for nonviolent youth who come into contact with the criminal justice system, and that language now is part of this amendment

Finally, the amendment incorporates some grant accountability reforms that are not in the original version of S. 1196. In recent years, I've actively engaged in oversight of the Justice Department, and during this time, the DOJ Inspector General has identified grant management as one of the top management and performance challenges at the Department. In this same period--most recently at an oversight hearing I chaired in April--we have witnessed numerous controversies relating to the grant making and oversight practices of the Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, or OJJDP.

The amendment reflects technical input from the Inspector General's Office and is designed to help resolve the accountability problems that have plagued OJJDP for years. It will require GAO audits of the agency's internal controls every three years as well as audits of certain States receiving grants. It also will require the Justice Department's Audit, Assessment Office to institute a comprehensive review of OJJDP's internal controls.

It will tighten bill language that holds States accountable for failing to meet the law's core requirements, by ensuring that States must incur a substantial financial penalty if they are out of compliance. And it will not only encourage the Attorney General to provide States with greater technical guidance on compliance with the law's core requirements, but it also will require each State grantee to designate someone who must certify to that State's compliance with the law's core requirements.

I'm glad to have had the opportunity to work on these key reform provisions. And I am pleased we have revisited the authorizing statute for some vitally important juvenile justice programs—a statute which is long overdue for an update, to reflect the latest scientific research on what works with at-risk adolescents.