



November 10, 2014

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
437 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy:

We the undersigned are the chief staff officers of organizations who support and provide services to America's youth – including mentoring programs, camps, afterschool programs, clubs, scouts, and more. We are writing to urge you to move the Child Protection Improvements Act (CPIA) S. 1362 swiftly through the Senate Judiciary Committee so it can finally be considered for a vote by the Senate. This bill has broad bipartisan support in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and we fully expect it to pass once considered for a vote.

We appreciate your past efforts to move this bill through your Committee. As you know, in the last session of the 112th Congress, CPIA was placed on the consent agenda but time ran out before it could pass. The longer we wait to act, the more children may be at risk. While the Congressional calendar after the recent midterm elections will be limited, with your support we are confident CPIA can finally pass the Senate and move toward final Congressional approval. **To that end, we are specifically requesting you to commit to putting S. 1362 before your Committee, and to help move the bill to the Senate floor for a vote before the end of the 113th Congress.**

As you know, organizations providing critical services to youth must be able to effectively, affordably, and reliably screen their volunteers and employees to ensure they do not have an inappropriate criminal past that might endanger the young people we seek to help. FBI fingerprint background checks are the most complete and reliable means of checking an individual's criminal record, and are the only type of background check that is truly available on a nationwide basis. Unfortunately, the current background check system is not widely accessible for youth-serving organizations. All FBI requests must go through state agencies, but less than half of states allow a wide range of youth-serving organizations to access federal searches. Even in states where FBI searches are accessible, they are often prohibitively expensive and time-consuming.

We know from the PROTECT Act Child Safety Pilot that FBI searches provide information that is absolutely critical for screening youth-serving volunteers and employees. Results from the pilot showed that more than 6 percent of the nearly 69,000 volunteers screened with FBI searches had criminal records of concern — including extremely serious crimes like child sexual abuse, cruelty to children, and even murder. In addition, more than 41 percent of individuals with

criminal records had crimes in states other than where they were applying to volunteer — meaning that only a nationwide check would have revealed these serious criminal offences.

CPIA would build on the lessons learned through the Child Safety Pilot and finally solve this problem for youth-serving organizations of all kinds and in all states. The bill creates a streamlined and efficient way for youth-serving organizations to access FBI fingerprint checks at a reasonable cost with optimized turnaround time.

We are strong and passionate advocates of this bipartisan legislation and hope for swift movement through Committee so it can finally be voted upon – and enacted into law! Thank you again for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

CC: Senator Charles Schumer (NY), sponsor S. 1362
Senator Orrin Hatch (UT), sponsor S. 1362

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