September 5, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert C. Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support for H.R. 1809, the “Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017”

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Scott:

I write on behalf of the American Bar Association (ABA) to express our gratitude for your continued commitment to juvenile justice and to commend you for your bipartisan effort to pass H.R. 1809, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017.

The ABA strongly supports the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), which has provided states and localities with federal standards and support for improving juvenile justice and delinquency prevention practices and contributed to safeguards for youth, families, and communities for more than 40 years. The reauthorization of this act is critical to protecting juveniles in the justice system and to ensuring federal funding priority for juvenile justice programs that researchers have shown improve outcomes for these young people.

When the House meets with Senate representatives to resolve differences between H.R. 1809 and S. 860, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2017, the ABA urges the conference members to work quickly and efficiently to finally reauthorize the JJDPA and reaffirm a national commitment to the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile justice system. The ABA specifically supports extending protections that limit youth contact with adult offenders and phasing out use of the valid court order exception that currently causes non-offending youth/status offenders to be exposed to potentially dangerous influences while in a confined setting when access to other youth services outside a detention facility would be more appropriate.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments and look forward to seeing a reconciled JJDPA sent to the President and enacted into law this Congress. If the ABA can provide any assistance, please contact Holly Cook in the ABA’s Governmental Affairs Office at 202-662-1860 or holly.cook@americanbar.org.

Sincerely,

Hilari Bass