September 5, 2017

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for S. 860, “Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2017”

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Feinstein:

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 S. 860, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2017 (JJDPA).

The ABA strongly supports JJDP A, 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. This bill 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 Senate meets with House representatives to resolve differences between S. 860 and H.R. 1809, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017, the ABA urges the conference members to work quickly and efficiently to finally reauthorize the JJDP A 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 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 JJDP A 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,

Hilarie Bass