



The Protecting Lives of Active Youth Act

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

The United States is failing its youth. Emergency rooms across the country care for more than [800 young victims](#) of physical assault each day. Mental health for young people remains a [crisis](#), with youth suicides [climbing 62%](#) between 2007 and 2021 — and even more in rural communities — and gun violence remains the [leading cause of death](#) of U.S. children. Moreover, all this has coincided with an [unprecedented rise in chronic absenteeism](#) that has disproportionately impacted [Black and Hispanic students](#).

But we know that there are solutions. Overwhelming evidence shows that when we make proactive investments in young people — in [youth sports](#), [mentorship](#), [afterschool programming](#), [youth centers](#), [summer jobs](#), [violence prevention](#), and more — we reduce youth violence, dramatically lower youth arrests, and bolster youth mental health while helping young people, their families, and their entire communities thrive. We also provide the kinds of enriching activities that chronically absent students disproportionately [do not have](#).

WHERE WE NEED TO GO

Our youth need programs that work — programs that not only prevent violence, but also provide purpose, fulfillment, leadership skills, and pathways to economic mobility. And with the PLAY Act, Congress has a chance to offer exactly these solutions.

The *Protecting Lives of Active Youth (PLAY) Act* directly advances youth safety and youth development by making evidence-based, multidisciplinary investments in what actually keeps kids safe — sports, mentorship, drama, music, dance, general enrichment programming, safe passage to school programs, youth centers, violence prevention, and resources to knit these interventions together as cohesive safety and thriving plans.

THE PLAY ACT TAKES PROACTIVE, TIMELY STEPS TO SUPPORT OUR YOUTH BY:

- Creating an **Office of Youth Safety** within the Department of Health and Human Services to administer the following grant programs and coordinate preventative, non-carceral youth programming.
- Creating a **Youth Safety Task Force** that includes interagency coordination that would routinely consult youth stakeholders.
- Establishing a **grant program for community-based organizations to fund youth programs**, including youth sports, youth mentorship, enrichment programs, youth centers, and violence prevention.
- Creating **local government grants** so communities can conduct needs assessments that examine barriers to youth safety and opportunity, and then align stakeholders around a "Youth Violence Prevention Plan" or a "Youth Thriving Plan" to address these barriers using the grant funding.