

REMARKS

OF

THE HONORABLE KAROL V. MASON
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COUNCIL ON
JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

ON

MONDAY, JULY 28, 2014
WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Associate Attorney General West. I'm sure I speak for everyone here – and certainly for those of us from OJP – when I say how grateful we are for your leadership, and for the leadership of the Attorney General, in strengthening our juvenile justice system. We are fortunate to have two leaders in the Department who understand the vital role the system plays in getting our kids on a path to healthy development and who are so committed to helping it reach its full, positive potential.

I'm also delighted that we are joined by Roy Austin from the White House. Roy is a former Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Department's Criminal Division, and he now serves as Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, Justice, and Opportunity. Roy has been a staunch advocate for our work in juvenile justice, and his presence here today speaks volumes about the President's commitment to these issues.

Finally, I want to acknowledge Bob and the incredible work he's been doing to lead the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Department's efforts to improve the juvenile justice system. His vision and energy have added a whole new dimension to this work, and I consider myself very fortunate to have him as a colleague.

I want to reiterate the Associate Attorney General's point that our work is not just about reducing confinement rates, but about making sure that youth who come through the juvenile and criminal justice systems get the support they need to succeed after they are released. And as he said, making sure they achieve academically is fundamental to that success.

At the last Coordinating Council meeting, you heard from the Associate Attorney General about our Supportive School Discipline Initiative. We've been working closely with our friends at the Department of Education to keep kids in school and out of the school-to-pipeline prison. But this does not mean that when a young person enters a confinement facility, that we give up on educating him or her. On the contrary, we have to see it as an opportunity for getting that young person on the right academic path.

In too many cases, unfortunately, we're losing those opportunities – many confined youth don't have access to educational services. But we should be encouraged that there are some promising educational programs for young people in juvenile facilities.

For our part, OJJDP and the Department of Education are collaborating to design and support new demonstration grants for youth returning from secure confinement. And as part of the work of the Reentry Council, the Attorney General and the Secretary of Education recently sent a joint letter to every state school chief and every state attorney general signaling our commitment to ensure that confined youth have access to high-quality educational services. I'm sure you'll hear more about these efforts from our colleagues at Education.

I'm heartened by the progress we're making, and I think we can be optimistic that this work – in communities, in states, and here at the federal level – represents a trend toward accessible quality education, lower recidivism rates, and a better future for youth throughout America.

Thank you.

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