

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, the House Judiciary's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security held a hearing on "Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System." Several leading criminal justice experts including Barry Krisberg, President of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, Marc Mauer, Executive Director of The Sentencing Project and Wayne McKenzie, Director of the Prosecution and Racial Justice Program at the Vera Institute of Justice testified about the on-going racial disparities that exist in the justice system.

In the United States, Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans are overrepresented at every stage of the criminal justice system compared to Whites. Racial disparities increase rather than diminish as offenders move further into the system. Several of today's witnesses testified that racial disparities are exacerbated by "tough on crime" policies such as mandatory minimum sentencing and school zone drug laws which have lead to disproportionate numbers of African Americans being incarcerated in this country.

Congressman Bobby Scott, Chairman of the Subcommittee, noted "the tragedy is that the money being spent to lock people up could be used for more productive purposes such as keeping young people out of trouble. There has never been a greater need to invest in our youth and prevent crime from happening." In response to the need to invest in young people, the Crime Subcommittee reported the Youth PROMISE Act to the full Committee. The Youth PROMISE Act, introduced by Congressman Scott, will provide local communities with the resources to implement evidence and research-based strategies to reduce gang violence and crime.

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