



Genesee County Prosecutor's Office David Leyton, Prosecutor



Flint Area Law Enforcement Leaders Say School Reform Bill Can Help Fight Crime

Prosecutor, police chief back early childhood education, dropout prevention programs

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 28, 2010) -- Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton and Mundy Township Police Chief James Petres traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with Representative Dale Kildee (D-MI) to discuss opportunities to reduce crime through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Representative Kildee will be a key legislator in the reauthorization of that bill as the chair of the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education.

They said that providing at-risk kids with early education, keeping school-age kids on track to graduation, and reducing bullying, school violence and drug abuse would all have a positive effect on preventing later crime.

"I'd much rather focus our time, energy and taxpayer dollars on effective school reforms than pay room and board for career criminals," Prosecutor Leyton said. "Public safety pays the toll when kids drop out of school and turn to crime rather than a career or higher education. We need to make sure kids get the right start to their education and stay on track through their school years."

Research compiled by the anti-crime group Fight Crime: Invest in Kids also shows that a one-year increase of staying in school reduces murder and assault by almost 30 percent, motor vehicle theft by 20 percent, arson by 13 percent and burglary and larceny by about 6 percent. A study funded by the Gates Foundation found that high school dropouts are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than graduates.

Providing at-risk children with high-quality early care and education from ages birth to five can significantly reduce later involvement in crime and improve graduation rates. A study of the Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Mich. found that at-risk kids left out of the high-quality program were 5 times more likely to be chronic offenders by age 27 than their peers left out of the program. The kids who attended were also 44 percent more likely to graduate from high school than those left out.

"By making sure the more at-risk kids can receive early education, we'll help set them on a path toward graduation day instead of a sentencing date in court," Chief Petres said. "These approaches have a significant impact on reducing juvenile crime, and law enforcement leaders strongly support them because they will make our communities safer in years to come."

The law enforcement leaders asked that the reauthorization of the federal education bill provide new funding for states with the purpose of increasing access to high-quality early education programs, including pre-kindergarten.

They also urged that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ensure graduation rates are

calculated consistently and accurately, and hold schools accountable for improving graduation rates. Additionally, they asked that the reform measure include evidence-based programs that cut down on bullying, school violence and drug abuse.

Chief Petres and Prosecutor Leyton are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national anti-crime organization of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and violence survivors with over 330 members in Michigan and more than 5,000 members nationwide.

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