

**TO: Youth Council**

**DATE: 09/08/04**

**FROM: Youth Council Staff**

**For Action**

**For Information**

**For Discussion**

**SUBJECT: Senate Bill 215 – Youth Development Act**

**PROPOSED MOTION(S): Information Only**

**DISCUSSION:** The following is taken from literature produced by proponents of SB 215.

California State Senator Dede Alpert has proposed SB 215 – Youth Development Act, which is currently pending in Assembly Appropriations. The bill creates the California Youth Policy Council that would serve as a vehicle for policymakers across the state systems to think, plan and act in new, cross-sector ways to foster and promote the positive development of all California youth. The council would include, among others, decision-makers from the three state entities that interface with children and youth—education, juvenile justice, and health and human services. State government is uniquely positioned to be able to look across the wide array of services and supports provided to young people. It can join forces with non-profit youth-serving organizations to both leverage the investments of these programs, and utilize the talents and interests of young people themselves, to create a more comprehensive, cost effective and cross disciplinary response to young people’s needs.

Opponents of this bill feel that the State Youth Council already exists and accomplishes what this bill proposes.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**  
SB 215 Fact Sheet  
SB 215 Goals  
SB 215 Background

## **SB 215: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ACT**

*introduced February 13, 2003*

**author: Senator Dede Alpert**

### ***Why is this bill necessary?***

Adolescence is a crucial time when youth need to acquire the attitudes, competencies, values and social skills that will carry them forward to successful adulthood. Substantial research now exists to suggest that developing the strengths, interests, and competencies of young people is also a powerful prevention strategy. The research further suggests that when consistently applied in the schools, youth developing principles and practices lead to increased commitment to learning and improved academic performance. State agencies administer many programs that provide services and education to young people. Over the past 15 years, reports, task forces and commissions, including several reports by the Little Hoover Commission, have called both for improved communication, coordination and collaboration among agencies that serve children and youth, and a greater voice for youth in the planning process. The intent of this bill is threefold: (a) to provide a state level coordinating mechanism for efforts to help youth reach their full potential; (b) to allow state level decision makers to benefit directly from the input of youth, and (c) to suggest a research-based unifying theme for the state's youth developing efforts.

Since the beginning of Senator Alpert's legislative career, she has attempted to create a coordinating body, such as a council or a commission, to bring the various stakeholders in children's and youth programs, services and education together in ways that reduce duplication of effort and increase efficiency and effectiveness. Many state and local youth-serving institutions share similar goals and responsibilities, but often work in isolation from one another. Recent events have confirmed both the critical importance of information sharing and collaboration and the need to make better use of existing resources.

**SB 215** proposes to create an autonomous statewide youth policy council, with state level representation from education, health and human services, juvenile justice, workforce and employment, along with youth and adult partners from the local level and non-profit organizations. All representatives who sit at the policy council table must be decision-makers within their organizations, be connected to an identified constituency, and be willing to work in a collaborative manner.

The State of California should have a comprehensive system of programs, services and supports for youth that is integrated, cost effective and sustainable. State government is uniquely positioned to be able to look across the wide array of services and supports provided to youth people and make recommendations for systemic change.

**Fiscal:** There are no state funds attached to this proposal. Foundation and non-state funding will be secured to support the work of the council, at least during the initial phase. In the future, when the state's fiscal position improves, it would appear prudent for the state to support the work of the council.

**Status:** Pending, Assembly Floor

**Sponsor:** Junior Leagues of California & the Attorney General of California

## **YOUTH POLICY ACT SB 215 (ALPERT)**

### **Goal**

To use a research based developmental framework to streamline, simplify and make more cost effective California's currently fragmented programs and services for children and youth.

### **Current Legislation**

SB 215 is fully aligned with the:

- Governor's After School Initiative,
- White House Task Force Report for Disadvantaged Youth,
- Little Hoover Commission report *Never Too Early, Never Too Late: To Prevent Youth Crime & Violence*,
- Attorney General's guide *Effective Youth and Adult Partnerships: Mentoring Strategies*; and,
- Student-centered focus of the K-University Master Plan for Education.

### **SB 215 supports the Governor's goal of:**

#### *"Blowing up" silos*

- Department and agency leaders work toward the common goal of developing the talents and interests of all California youth rather than promoting the narrow interests of a specific agency.
- Causes bureaucrats (decision-makers) to talk and work with one another and identify common developmental goals before committing scarce public resources.

#### *Making for more efficient government*

- Works to eliminate duplicative efforts and programs that don't work.
- Promotes information sharing, identification of collaborative options, and making flexible use of funding streams.

### **A Developmental Approach:**

The research is compelling. Effective youth development programs consistently demonstrate positive results across problem behavior categories, while developmental approaches to education reform (small learning communities, student voice, internships, project based learning, etc.) promise to better prepare all students for learning, and for transition to and success in education, the workplace and society at large.

### **Little Hoover Commission**

In 2000 The Little Hoover Commission was charged with studying violence prevention. During its year long study of the issue, the advisory committee and study team came to see the wisdom of approaching violence prevention from a developmental

perspective. They continued to use the violence prevention title due to the original charge for this Commission study; however, recognizing the need for approaching youth policy with a broad approach, one of their key recommendations was for a new Secretary for Youth Development and Violence Prevention.

### **Attorney General**

The Attorney General, in collaboration with the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, released a guide in summer 2003 on Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships that also reflects a developmental perspective. The guide reaffirms "**positive youth development**" as a primary objective, and states that *"a decade ago youth workers focused on 'risk factors' that correlated with negative behaviors. In the last ten years, researchers and practitioners have shifted their focus from the prevention of specific disorders to a more general focus on positive youth development."*

### **Master Plan for Education**

Recognizing the need for a California Education System that is fully responsive to the needs of our state and our people, the Master Plan for Education asserts that: *"an effective and accountable education system must focus first and foremost on the learner. Education policies, practices, structures, and financing must all be supportive of learners and their acquisition of the knowledge and skills that will enable them to be successful throughout their lifetimes."*

### **Legislative Efforts**

Past legislation has allowed select counties to collapse silos, braid funding, and conduct "pilot" programs, but the state has been a reluctant partner in aligning efforts across agencies. Initial efforts, such as the youth development planning group, have been promising. It is time for the state to walk the collaborative talk!

Senator Alpert has worked for nearly a decade to create a statewide body that will streamline and coordinate the various parts of the youth developing and youth serving network, and will cause decision-makers and agency heads to work together for more effective youth developing outcomes.

**SB 215** proposes to establish a coordinating body, that includes youth themselves, to align the efforts of all state agencies designed to ensure the well being of California's young people.

## Youth Policy Act: California Youth Policy Council Senate Bill 215 (Alpert)

SB 215 would enact the Youth Policy Act and create the California Youth Policy Council (CYPC) within the Governor's Office. The CYPC would promote positive youth development and coordinate state policy related to youth services. It would provide the mechanism for policymakers across state systems (education, health, human services, youth employment, and juvenile justice) to plan and act in new, cross-sector ways to maximize state resources. CYPC activities would include:

1. Developing cost-effective youth serving strategies that streamline state government procedures and demonstrate cost avoidance.
2. Developing an overarching multidisciplinary youth policy framework in order to guide, monitor, and coordinate the state's overall commitment to youth across departmental lines.
3. Developing common standards for evaluating and assessing whether any given policy, regardless of its origin, promotes positive youth development,
4. Developing an organized cross-sector method for collecting and reporting indicators of positive outcomes for youth.
5. Conducting ongoing assessments of the array of services, supports, and opportunities available to youth, including the ways they are being allowed to develop decision-making and leadership skills while contributing to all levels of policymaking.
6. Establishing clear evaluation criteria and program quality standards to be applied across departments and agencies, and developing capacity building strategies to assist departments and agencies to meet and exceed those standards.
7. Strengthening action alliances among organizations and individuals committed to youth across all sectors and systems.

### WHAT IS POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

Positive youth development is a policy perspective that emphasizes providing services and opportunities to support all young people in developing a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and worth. It is a life process that everyone goes through. Central to the positive youth development approach is an understanding that all youth need access to opportunities for healthy growth. The goal is to ensure that all youth experience this stage positively.

### Federal and State Efforts

Establishing a youth council is not a unique approach. Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels have embraced the youth development model as a guiding framework to improve coordination and effectiveness of youth programs, and to include youth in policymaking. They are increasingly developing and implementing youth development policies and more comprehensive youth development systems.

- In 2002, President Bush created the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth to develop a comprehensive federal response (under existing authorities and programs) to the problems of youth failure. The Task Force focused on enhanced agency accountability and effectiveness and presented a **national youth policy framework**, an outcome-focused

approach that encompasses four guiding principles: Better Management; Better Accountability; Better Connections; and Give Priority to the Neediest Youth. Specifically, it proposes a that a Disadvantaged Youth Policy Initiative, coordinated through the Executive Office of the President, develop and coordinate policy within existing policy processes and structures, maximize interagency collaboration, coordinate federal research, and find/replicate successful program models.

In June 2004, bipartisan legislation, H.R. 4703 – the **Federal Youth Coordination Act**, was introduced in Congress in response to the recommendations of the White House Task Force. The purpose of the Act is to coordinate and improve federal youth programs.

- According to the National Governors Association (NGA), *“Governors can play a critical role in the success of such efforts. Governors can transform categorically driven youth programs into prevention-oriented systems that encourage positive youth development. They can promote shared accountability and coordination among agencies. They can urge local leaders, including those from community- and faith-based organizations, to take on youth issues as a priority and to cooperate in statewide youth development efforts.”* The NGA identifies four measures that states can take to significantly advance youth development:
  - Create governance structures for youth development.
  - Develop and formalize service integration frameworks.
  - Establish shared accountability among agencies through common outcomes.
  - Work with local governments to integrate services and funding more effectively.
- Governors (or in some cases, Legislatures) in over 25 states have established children’s cabinets, youth councils, or similar entities focused on youth. Duties range from developing and implementing a shared vision across agencies and fostering coordination to producing cost-savings, increasing efficiency, and improving service delivery and effectiveness. For example:

The **New Mexico Children’s Cabinet** was created in 2003 by Executive Order. Its intent is to focus state resources on improving the lives of Mexico’s children and youth by increasing the interaction among state departments to streamline services and decrease bureaucratic red tape. Cabinet members include department secretaries from Labor; Economic Development; Finance and Administration; Health, Children; Youth, and Families, Human Services; Corrections; and other departments.

The **New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Office of Youth Development** was created to design, coordinate and promote innovative strategies to advance youth development. The Office led efforts to update New York’s original plan (developed in 1997) for state-level youth development work. “Promoting Positive Youth Development in New York State: Moving from Dialogue to Action” is the new guide; it is used as a tool for state policymakers and a virtual yardstick for measuring progress.

---

Resources: “Positive Youth Development,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families; “White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth,” Final Report, October 2003; “Early Lessons from States to Promote Youth Development,” Issue Brief, National Governors Association, 2000; and “ForumFocus: A Portfolio Approach to Youth Policy,” Forum for Youth Investment, November 2003.