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August 20, 2014

## **THE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS IS A TRAGEDY** *Co-sponsor the Employ Young Americans Now Act*

Dear Colleague:

Most Americans are appalled that in the year 2014 an unarmed African-American teenager was brutally shot to death by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. A thorough federal investigation needs to be done and justice must prevail. All of us have a responsibility to make sure that what happened in Ferguson never happens again.

But, not only do we have to take a stand to end the violence that is being committed against young Americans, we also must recognize that there is an economic crisis facing our nation's youth, particularly young African-Americans.

Today, the youth unemployment rate is above 20 percent. African-American youth unemployment is nearly 35 percent. If we are serious about solving the economic crisis facing our young people today, instead of providing police departments with free military equipment, it would be a much better use of our resources to create the jobs that young Americans desperately need.

Over 5.5 million young people today have either dropped out of high school or graduated high school and have no jobs. When young people cannot find a job they get demoralized. They are more likely to do drugs and turn to other forms of destructive and self-destructive behavior. And they are more likely to go to jail.

According to an August 2013 report submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Committee by the Sentencing Project: "one of every three black American males born today can expect to go to prison in his lifetime." That is simply unacceptable.

It is a much better investment for our society to create jobs for young Americans than it is to throw them in jail.

Therefore, I hope you will join me in being an original co-sponsor of the Employ Young Americans Now Act.

This legislation will provide \$5.5 billion in immediate funding to states and localities to employ 1 million young Americans between the ages of 16 and 24, and provide job training to hundreds of thousands of young Americans.

Under this bill, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) would provide \$4 billion in grants to states and local governments to:

- provide summer and year round employment opportunities for economically disadvantaged youth, with direct links to academic and occupational learning; and
- provide important services such as transportation or child care, necessary to enable young Americans to participate in job opportunities.

Under this legislation, DOL would also award \$1.5 billion in competitive grants to local areas to provide work-based training to low and moderate income youth and disadvantaged young adults.

If we are going to reduce youth violence and instill hope and a bright future for the young people in this country, we have got to provide them with the jobs and the skills they need to pay for a college education and to move up the economic ladder.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please let me know or have your staff contact Warren Gunnels in my office at 8-6358.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bernard Sanders".

Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator