America must cut the pipeline that funnels young people into lives of crime and violence. We take a hard-nosed look at research on what keeps kids from becoming criminals and put that information in the hands of policy-makers and the public.

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California's High School Dropout Rate Threatens Public Safety

Law Enforcement Leaders Say Diplomas Needed to Fight Crime and Save Money

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FOR RELEASE: August 22, 2007

Law enforcement leaders across California point to newly released findings on the fiscal, social and public safety threat posed by the state's high school dropout rate as a wake-up call for taxpayers and lawmakers.

The data released today in Sacramento by the California Dropout Research Project (CDRP) show that high school graduation reduces crime by 20 percent for murder, rape, and other violent crimes; by 11 percent for property crime; and by 12 percent for drug-related offenses.

"The numbers are in. Kids who don't graduate from high school are more likely to end up earning less and costing the taxpayers more in terms of dollars spent on healthcare, welfare and crime," said Sacramento Police Chief Albert Nájera.

Citing data from the two new CDRP policy briefs entitled, *The Economic Losses from High School Dropouts in California* and *The Return on Investments for Improving California's High School Graduation Rate*, Nájera and other members of the bi-partisan anti-crime organization FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS California called for expansion of effective dropout prevention and early education programs proven to cut crime and generate benefits far in excess of the costs of providing the interventions. The fiscal benefits to federal, state and local governments for each new high school graduate amount to $168,000 without even including additional savings to individuals and businesses.

"We know that effective early education programs are a fiscally smart investment that gets kids started on the right track academically," said San Bernardino County District Attorney Michael Ramos. "A preschool education gives kids the foundation they need to succeed down the line in school, but we also need to provide ample support for kids who falter along the way by funding dropout prevention programs."

In previous testimony before the Senate Select Committee on High School Graduation, which held another hearing in the Capitol today, Nájera pointed to truancy prevention as an additional means of stemming the state's dropout rate and the crime it produces.

Senator Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), who chairs the Senate Select Committee on High School Graduation, has introduced a package of bills (SB 219, SB 344, SB 405 and SB 406) aimed at addressing the dropout crisis in California.

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS California is a bipartisan, non-profit, anti-crime organization led by more than 350 sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys, and victims of violence. Its mission is to take a critical look at the research about what really works to keep kids from becoming criminals. Among the strategies proven to be effective are preschool, after-school programs, child abuse and neglect prevention programs and intensive interventions for juvenile offenders. *www.fightcrime.org/ca*
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