



March 31, 2015

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chair
Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Culberson
Chair
Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the Act-4-JJ Campaign and our broad network of more than 300 organizations representing all states, territories and the District of Columbia, we are writing to ask you to include adequate funding for critical juvenile justice and delinquency prevention programs in the Fiscal Year 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill.

Federal investments play an essential role in state juvenile justice efforts to protect youth and promote safe communities. Overall federal support of key juvenile justice programs has declined by more than 50 percent since FY 2002, and we are concerned about the impact of sequestration and the additional discretionary cuts it would impose on states' ability to serve youth. Instead of cutting this critical funding, Congress should be upping the investment in state efforts to promote public safety, prevent delinquency, and protect some of our most vulnerable children and youth. To that end, we encourage you to reject any additional cuts for FY 2016 and instead allocate the following:

- **\$80 million for the JJDP Title II State Formula Grants Program.**
For more nearly 40 years, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) has provided critical federal funding to states to promote the prevention of delinquency and assist them to comply with federally-mandated core requirements designed to protect children from the dangers of placement in adult jails and lockups; keep status offenders/non-delinquent children out of locked custody; and address the disproportionate representation of youth of color in the justice system. Title II of JJDP supports state compliance with these core protections and helps states to build effective prevention and intervention systems. While our request represents an increase over the FY15 level and the President's proposal, such a level would be in line with the true minimum costs of the Title II mandates and make up for deep cuts in funding to the states. We also ask that no Title II funds be permitted to be diverted for other purposes.

- **\$65 million for the JJDP Title V Delinquency Prevention Program with no earmarks.** Title V is the only federal program that provides delinquency prevention funding at the local level to reach youth at risk and help keep them out of the juvenile justice system. Despite the fact that Title V has been used to bring together law enforcement with other stakeholders at the local level for sustainable prevention efforts, in recent years it has been gutted and the funds allocated for other than statutory purposes. This is also an increase over prior years and, without any earmarks or set-asides, would represent a significant federal investment in proven, locally-based delinquency prevention programs. Taxpayers save \$2 million for each child who is prevented from beginning a life of crime.
- **\$30 million for Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) Program.** JABG is used by states and localities to reduce juvenile offending by providing judges and other juvenile justice officials with a range of age/developmentally-appropriate options to both hold youth accountable and get them back on track so they are less likely to reoffend. These funds are used to effectively strengthen juvenile court services, such as behavioral health screening and assessment for court-involved youth and alternatives to detention. We were dismayed to learn that Congress had zeroed out funding for this program in its omnibus appropriations bill for FY15 and encourage you to restore these dollars.
- **\$30 million for the NEW Smart on Juvenile Justice Initiative.** Recommended in the Administration's FY 2016 budget, these new federal dollars will promote evidence-based juvenile justice system reforms, provide training and technical assistance to juvenile justice prosecutors, and address racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.
- **\$25 million in community-based violence prevention initiatives** Given the daily violence that plagues many communities, we also encourage federal support for community based violence prevention using a multi-sector, public health approach.
- **\$10 million grant program for girls in the juvenile justice system** We also support this targeted investment in a competitive grant program to help states and localities better address the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system. Girls are the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice population and this program will help provide specific, targeted support for state efforts to implement best practices with respect to at-risk and system-involved girls.

While we encourage you to invest in these key programs at these recommended levels, we also ask that, at a minimum, you work to restore some of the critical funding that has been lost over the last decade and include some new investment as recommended by the President and Administration in the FY 2016 budget proposal. Any less would move even further away from the targeted federal involvement that has historically provided critical national leadership to states in preventing youth from entering the justice system.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Marie Williams
Executive Director, Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Co-Chair, ACT4JJ Campaign



Marcy Mistrett
CEO, Campaign for Youth Justice
Co-Chair, ACT4JJ Campaign

Cc: CJS Appropriation Members (House & Senate)
House Education & Workforce Committee Members
Senate Judiciary Committee Members