



May 5, 2014

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

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski:

I am writing 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. The Campaign asks that you include adequate funding for critical juvenile justice and delinquency prevention programs in the Fiscal Year 2015 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill.

The House's recently-released CJS Appropriations bill includes an increase in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Juvenile Mentoring Grants, for which we are grateful. The bill would also cut several other key areas of federal investment in juvenile justice, however, and we ask that you ensure funding for these programs in your own bill. The House CJS bill, for example, again zeroes out funding for vital Juvenile Accountability Block Grants. It also eliminates money for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Title V grants. In all, the House CJS bill would reduce federal investments in our children's futures by nearly \$54 million, as compared to FY13 levels. We ask that in crafting the Senate's CJS Appropriations bill you at a minimum return funding levels to the President and Administration's budget proposal.

Federal investments play an essential role in state juvenile justice efforts to protect youth and promote safe communities. In order to ensure that state, local and private dollars continue to be leveraged effectively to promote public safety, prevent delinquency and protect some of our most vulnerable children and youth, we ask that you consider the following funding levels:

- **\$80 million for the JJDP A Title II State Formula Grants Program.** For nearly 40 years, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) has provided critical federal funding to states to promote the prevention of delinquency and assist them in complying 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 the JJDP A 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 FY14 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 A 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 FY14 and encourage you to restore these dollars.
- **\$10 million for Juvenile Justice Realignment Incentive Grants.** As a complement to JABG, we commend the Administration for putting forward a new initiative, the

Juvenile Justice Realignment Incentive Grants, to help states invest in evidence-based strategies that reduce youth incarceration and recidivism and promote public safety and better outcomes for youth. We ask that you support this effort.

- **\$2 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.

Finally, in view of the tragedy in Newtown, and the daily violence that plagues many communities, we are also supportive of the new monies allocated for community-based violence prevention using a multi-sector, public health approach.

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 FY15 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marie Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "W".

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