



Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission

815-823 East Monroe Street • Springfield, Illinois 62701

Telephone: 217-557-2109 • Facsimile: 217-524-5586

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July 12, 2013

VIA FAX:

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Senate Majority Whip
230 S. Dearborn St.
Chicago, IL 60604
Fax: (202) 228-0400

Dear Senator Durbin:

As you consider the FY 2014 Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill, I write to share the views of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, the advisory body of citizen-volunteers appointed by Governor Pat Quinn to improve Illinois' juvenile justice system under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA). Our collective view represents the needs and interests of thousands of youth, families and constituents across Illinois.

While we recognize the current challenges that come with spending caps and sequestration, it is essential that the modest federal investment in state efforts to prevent juvenile delinquency and protect those youth who come in contact with the just system be retained. 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 support minimum federal funding levels in key juvenile justice programs as follows:

- **\$80 million for the JJJPA Title II State Formula Grants Program.** For more than 35 years, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA) 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 JJJPA supports state compliance with these core protections and helps states to build effective prevention and intervention systems. While our request represents a \$10 million increase over 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.
- **\$65 million for the JJJPA 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 request is \$9 million more than the President's request 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.

We also support the President's recommendation to provide \$20 million to help communities reduce the use of arrest and engagement with the juvenile courts that unnecessarily push more young people into the justice system. However, we believe this investment should not detract from the resources available to local communities through the Title V program, and ask that these dollars be appropriated separately.

- **\$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. This request is consistent with the President's proposal and just slightly less than the final FY 2013 allocation.
- **\$20 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.
- **\$2 million grant program for girls in the juvenile justice system.**
We 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.

In 2012, Illinois received \$865,895 in JJDPAs and \$771,463 in JABG dollars. This money is used to support programs that are aimed at achieving one or more of the following four goals: 1) ensuring that Illinois remains in full compliance with the core requirements of the JJDPAs, which ensures continued access to federal funds and application of human and effective practices within the juvenile justice system; 2) ensuring that no youth and families will enter or penetrate deeply into the juvenile justice system unnecessarily, but instead should receive community-based support and resources to meet their needs, build strengths and prevent them from growing up in the juvenile justice system; 3) ensure that those youth entering the juvenile justice system will receive developmentally appropriate and effective services, supervision and support; and 4) ensure that youth leaving the juvenile justice system will have skills and strengths and the supportive aftercare services to help them succeed. By addressing these goals, the programs supported with JJDPAs and JABG funds also enhance public safety.

The modest federal investment in these programs has been essential in supporting state and local prevention and intervention initiatives and improving public safety in communities across the state. Unfortunately, appropriations for juvenile justice programs has declined by 50% over

the past decade. In Illinois, federal dollars are critical for leveraging other state and local funding to improve our justice system and implement effective reforms that keep youth out of trouble and communities safe. Additional federal cuts would seriously cripple these on-going efforts.

As you work to pass appropriations legislation for FY 2014, we ask you to ensure that juvenile justice programs receive the necessary federal funds to help Illinois continue to improve outcomes for youth and to protect public safety. We also ask that 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 2014 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.

We thank you for your kind consideration. Please feel free to contact Heidi Mueller, Executive Director of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, at (312) 793-3401 or heidi.mueller@illinois.gov if you have questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "G. Timberlake", written in a cursive style.

Hon. George W. Timberlake, Retired
Chair, Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission