



JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY GROUP
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PAUL R. LEPAGE
GOVERNOR

PAUL K. VESTAL, JR.
CHAIR

July 10, 2013

The Honorable Susan Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

As a key member of the Senate Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee with jurisdiction over critical funding for the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) and related juvenile justice programs, we ask that you support the following:

- **Restore JJDP Title II funding to \$80 million.** This request is \$10 million more than the President's budget proposal, but we feel strongly that such a level is in line with the true minimum costs of the Title II requirements and is necessary to make up for deep cuts in funding to the states. At a minimum, we ask that you come as close to the requested level as possible and certainly no lower than the \$55 million proposed in last year's Senate CJS appropriations bill.
- **Provide \$65 million for JJDP Title V program without any set-asides or carve-outs.** 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.
- **Allocate \$30 million for the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Program (JABG),** which provides juvenile justice practitioners and systems with support for graduated sanctions and continuums of care to address the needs of adjudicated youth. 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 last year's Senate CJS bill and the President's FY04 proposal and just slightly less than the final FY 2013 allocation.
- **Ensure that any funding for more law enforcement or school resource officers (SROs) be part of a comprehensive approach to school and community safety, and establish clear criteria for how such funding can be used.** In the wake of the Newtown shootings and other recent tragedies, we are concerned that the impulse to increase funding for law enforcement and school resource officers (SROs) in our schools may have the unintended consequence of creating a less stable and healthy school environment and lead to an increase in the number of children who unnecessarily come in contact with the justice system. Schools should be encouraged to take an approach to school safety that includes all adults who come in contact with students and that has at its core the goal of promoting and sustaining the social/emotional well-being of all students. Attached is a set of principles we encourage you to consider in deciding where and how to invest limited federal resources.

Federal juvenile justice funding is a relatively modest, targeted investment in state and local juvenile justice programs that can pay huge dividends in the form of public safety, reduced recidivism, and better outcomes for youth, all of which would result in cost savings. Unfortunately, this funding has steadily declined over the last decade, and the appropriations caps contained in the Budget Control Act of 2011 and sequestration have only accelerated the scope of the cuts.

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"The mission of the Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group is to advise and make recommendations to state policy makers and to promote effective system level responses that further the goals of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act."

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For 2013, Maine received just over \$527,000 in federal funds through these key programs, down almost a half from the \$926,000 allocation in 2011. While the amounts are modest and have continued to decline, even these limited dollars are highly leveraged at the state, local and tribal levels, and go a long way in helping Maine sustain important progress in juvenile delinquency prevention and in keeping youth from re-offending and penetrating deeper into the justice system. For example, Title II dollars have helped support a range of prevention activities across the state including the STAR after-school program for 5th through 8th grade students from Appleton, Camden, Hope, Lincolnville, and Rockport. Federal funding also supports Penquis – the Community Action Agency serving Penobscot, Piscataquis and Knox Counties – to deliver the Coping And Support Training (CAST) program for high school students. CAST provides life-skills training and social support in small groups to students at Hampden Academy and Dexter Regional High School. In the fall, there are plans to expand program delivery to two additional schools in the Bangor area.

Reduced federal investment in Maine’s efforts to enact effective reforms and keep young people on the right track will only further disadvantage youth in the justice system, increase recidivism rates, decrease public safety, and ultimately cost the public more money in the form of lifetime criminal justice costs. As you work with your colleagues to pass federal appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2014, we call on you to ensure adequate funding for effective delinquency prevention and community safety programs in the CJS Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul X. [unclear]", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chair

