



March 16, 2017

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

The Honorable José Serrano
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 final Fiscal Year 2017 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill. We also ask that you to work to secure the highest 302(b) allocation possible for the Fiscal Year 2018 proposal and within that amount ask that you consider the following:

- \$80 million for the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) Title II State Formula Grants Program;
- \$100 million for the JJDP A Title V Delinquency Prevention Program, including \$10 million for competitive grants that focus on girls in the juvenile justice system, and \$25 million for the Tribal Youth Program with no additional earmarks;
- \$30 million for Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) Program;
- \$25 million for the Juvenile Justice Realignment Incentive Grants to help states implement evidence-based strategies that reduce youth incarceration and foster better outcomes for youth; and
- \$25 million in community-based violence prevention initiatives, 50% of which will support public health approaches to violence prevention.

For more than 40 years, the JJDP A has provided critical federal funding to states and tribes to comply with a set of core requirements designed to protect children from the dangers of adult jails and lockups; keep status offenders out of locked custody; and address racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system. Title II of JJDP A funding supports state compliance with these core protections and helps build effective state systems. Title V is the only federal program that provides delinquency prevention funding at the tribal and local level to reach youth at risk and help keep them out of the juvenile justice system. The Tribal Youth Program, included in Title V of JJDP A, is the primary program through which tribal governments regularly receive juvenile justice funding and should be restored or, at a minimum, preserved at its current level.

In addition to these JJDPA programs, funding through the JABG program has supported state efforts to effectively strengthen supports for court-involved youth. Congress has zeroed out this funding in recent years, but we encourage you to call for these critical dollars to be restored. These funds support vital state efforts to effectively strengthen juvenile court services, such as behavioral health screening and assessment for court-involved youth and alternatives to detention.

Speaker Paul Ryan's Opportunity Agenda recognizes the importance of the JJDPA to help states improve their juvenile justice systems with a focus on the education and rehabilitation of at-risk youth. In that spirit, bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the JJDPA passed the House of Representatives in September 2016, by a vote of 382-29. A similar bi-partisan bill – that also included reauthorization of the JABG program – was approved by a voice vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee (S. 1169) in April 2016. This year, both the House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over juvenile justice have already held hearings and we are encouraged that this unfinished business will move forward this year.

Congress has a critical role in supporting reform efforts in all States, tribal governments, territories, and the District of Columbia, that embodies the principles of adolescent development and is true to the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile system. The federal government is an important state and local partner in building on innovative and evidence-informed approaches to create and sustain juvenile justice systems that cost less in terms of both human suffering and financing, enhance public safety, prevent delinquency and court contact, and give court-involved youth the best possible opportunity to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

Appropriations for federal juvenile justice programs have declined to *the lowest levels in more than a decade*. It remains critical that Congress affirm this important federal-state partnership to protect children and to invest in innovative and cost-effective reforms that keep youth out of trouble and communities safe.

While we encourage you to invest in these key programs at these recommended levels, we also ask that, at a minimum, you retain levels reflected in the current Continuing Resolution set to expire on April 28 for the balance of FY2017 and in FY2018. 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,



Naomi Smoot
Executive Director, Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Co-Chair, ACT4JJ Campaign



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