

April 7, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations bill for this subcommittee, we respectfully write to request \$120 million in funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant, which is administered by the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. This program supports the implementation, delivery, and enhancement of mentoring services to improve outcomes for at-risk, high-risk, or underserved youth.

Mentoring provides young people with evidence-based support that improves positive outcomes and prevents them from entering the juvenile justice system. Quality early interventions that steer high-risk youth away from engaging in repeat criminal offenses can save the public nearly \$5.7 million per youth over a lifetime. At its core, mentoring provides young people with consistent, stable adults in their lives when they need it most. Nationwide, of the young people being served by mentoring programs, 51% of them are low-income, 36% are academically at-risk, 14% are first generation to go to college, and 8% have incarcerated parents or family members. This compares with the median youth mentoring program's yearly operating budget, which is under \$50,000 (two-thirds of programs are under \$100,000), these programs are performing critical services for our young people with very little.

However, as the percentage of higher-needs youth in a program increases, so does the average cost-per-youth. For instance, programs where 90% of the mentees being served were pregnant or parenting, the average cost-per-youth went up to \$5,048 and programs where 90% of the mentees were in foster care, the average cost-per-youth went up to \$2,718. As the Youth Mentoring Grant continues to support populations of young people who need the highest levels of support, funding for these services must increase to meet their needs.

Young people in America are increasingly facing challenges related to substance abuse, mental health, and the effects of trauma—mentoring can help them navigate these complex issues at home, at school, and everywhere they go. Academic studies have also demonstrated that mentoring improves positive social development and behavior. Young people who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and are more likely to maintain better attitudes towards school. Those with mentors are also 46% less likely to start using illegal drugs, 130% more likely to hold a

leadership position in a club, student government, or a sports team, and 55% more likely to enroll in college. Mentors prepare young people for higher education and careers by introducing them to resources, helping them set career goals, and even using personal networks to help them find careers they otherwise would not be able to access.

Unfortunately, one in three young people will reach age 19 without having a mentor of any kind. Funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant helps close this gap and ensures program quality to produce maximum positive outcomes. Despite the clear benefits of mentoring, the average mentoring program has 63 young people on their waitlist, a challenge that can be solved by an increased investment in their future. Without this funding, at-risk youth in high needs areas across the nation will not have access to this important program. Funding this program at \$120 million will save federal dollars over the long-term by reducing rates of incarceration, bolstering student academic achievement, and creating positive outcomes for young people.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

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United States Senate

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United States Senate

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United States Senate

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