

April 13, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
Room S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
Room S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

Thank you for your ongoing leadership as we work to address the current public health crisis caused by the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). While the Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) passed by the United States Senate on March 25 makes massive investments necessary to meet this historic crisis, we can—and must—do more. To that end, we respectfully request that as the Senate considers additional coronavirus-related aid that we provide at least \$250 million in emergency funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant, administered by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the Department of Justice. This program supports the implementation, delivery, and enhancement of mentoring services to improve outcomes for millions of at-risk, high risk, and underserved youth—including those who have been affected by this national health crisis.

At the time this letter was written on April 13, the United States has confirmed more than 557,590 cases and over 22,109 associated deaths—numbers rising by the hour.¹ With COVID-19 continuing to spread, action remains fiercely urgent. It is critical that any future action protects and supports our children and their families.

Mentoring, at its core, provides young people with consistent, stable adults in their lives when they need it the most. The current public health crisis is no exception. In response to COVID-19, mentoring programs and mentors have become even more instrumental in their support for young people and their families, helping them access essential services and connecting them to resources including medical services, food, and technology. This support is critical as young people in America, separate and apart from COVID-19, are increasingly facing challenges related to substance abuse, mental health, and

¹ CENTER FOR SYSTEMS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 GLOBAL CASES: UNITED STATES (last updated April 13, 2020 at 8:11 AM), available at <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>.

the effects of trauma. COVID-19 is, unfortunately, likely to exacerbate these challenges—directly or indirectly. Mentoring programs across the nation are equipped to use their social capital and connections with other social service providers to connect young people and their families with the support they need right now to navigate these challenges during this difficult time.

To do so, mentoring programs need our support. As we continue to practice physical distancing, mentoring programs are facing the technical and financial challenges of moving from in-person activities and services to those that are virtual. Current recipients of the Youth Mentoring Grant will need the technical assistance, training, and technology to retool their existing programming to virtual platforms while, at the same time, maintaining quality relationships and ensuring youth safety. For many young people, these relationships may be the only consistent part of their lives at this time. In our holistic and evolving response to COVID-19, we must work together to help maintain and strengthen these important relationships. Mentoring programs must ultimately respond to their communities when they are most in need and providing additional funds and flexibility will allow programs to meet those demands.

We therefore strongly encourage, as we consider additional aid in response to the growing public health crisis caused by COVID-19, that you provide at least \$250 million in emergency funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant for immediate use.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senate

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
United States Senate



TINA SMITH
United States Senate