



February X, 2021

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

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

The Honorable Matt Cartwright  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Moran and Cartwright and Ranking Members Shaheen and Aderholt:

On behalf of the Act 4 JJ Coalition, a broad network of organizations representing states, territories, and the District of Columbia, we are writing to express how important it is to fully fund critical juvenile justice and delinquency prevention programs for Fiscal Year 2022. **Federal investments play an essential role in state juvenile justice efforts to protect youth, prevent delinquency, and promote safe communities.** This was affirmed by Congress when it reauthorized the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) at the end of the 115th Congress.<sup>1</sup> The reauthorization brings this critical federal law up to date with evidence-based practices, research, and progress made in states across the country.

Under the law, which was reauthorized in 2018, states are being asked to do more to receive their federal formula grants under Title II of the Act,<sup>2</sup> and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is also required to provide additional technical assistance to states and key stakeholders, as well as produce more research. Despite these requirements, overall federal support of key juvenile justice programs has declined by a little over forty percent since the last

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<sup>1</sup> Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017, H.R. 1809, 115th Cong. (1st Sess. 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Coalition for Juvenile Justice, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act: State Plan Requirements (Jan. 2018), available at <http://www.act4jj.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/State%20Plans%20H.R.%206964%20JJDP.pdf>; Act 4 JJ, Overview of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (Dec. 2018), available at <http://www.act4jj.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/JJDP%20Reauthorization%20Summary%20December%202018.pdf>.



reauthorization in 2002, and we are concerned about the impact that any further reductions in funding would have on states' ability to serve youth.<sup>3</sup> While we were grateful to see an increase in funding for juvenile justice programs in FY 2020 and again in FY2021, the levels were still below authorizing levels. We strongly encourage you to consider raising the funding levels in line with the reauthorization bill, including the following amounts:

***Require full implementation of the JJDPA by appropriating \$176 million dollars for Titles II & V of the Act in FY2022 budget, including:***

- **\$80,000,000** to carry out programs under the Charles Grassley Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Program, Title II of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, as authorized by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018;
  - of which not more than 5% goes to provide training and technical assistance to states; and
  - of which not more than 10% goes to support research conducted by OJJDP.

Title II of JJDPA provides federal funding to states to promote delinquency prevention 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 racial and ethnic disparities faced by youth of color in the justice system.

- **\$96,053,401** to carry out programs under in the Incentive Youth Promise Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs Act of 2018, Title V of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, as authorized by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018;
  - of which, 11% goes to support the Tribal Youth Program; and
  - the remaining \$86.4 million goes to support the Title V PROMISE grants.

Title V is the only federal program that provides delinquency prevention funding at the local level to reach at-risk youth and help keep them out of the juvenile justice system. The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 renames this title “Incentive Grants for Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education (PROMISE)” and expands the uses of this grant program to include 29 funding areas, and

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<sup>3</sup> ACT 4 JUVENILE JUSTICE, JUVENILE JUSTICE FEDERAL FUNDING CHART (2020), available at <http://www.act4jj.org/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/Historic%20Funding%20Chart%20-%20FY20.pdf>.

# ACT 4

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establishes local youth councils to develop prevention programming that ensures needs of at-risk youth are being met.

Tribal Youth are over-represented in state and local delinquency systems. The Juvenile Justice Reform Act provides an increased percentage in Title V funding for Tribal Youth Programs to ensure Tribes are able to invest in traditionally-grounded, trauma-based delinquency prevention programs.

In addition, we urge you to include funding for additional juvenile justice programs, including:

- **\$100,000,000 to support states to close and repurpose youth prisons.** Funding would be used to support a robust planning process to 1) help redirect state resources freed up by closures to support more effective alternatives to incarceration and community-based programs for system-involved youth and needed services and opportunities outside of the justice system, and 2) address economic concerns such as the re-employment of prison workers and the economic impact of youth prison closures on communities.

The youth prison model has failed young people and their families as well as undercut public safety. Children and youth who are incarcerated experience disproportionate rates of mental illness, physical and sexual abuse while incarcerated, are 39% less likely to graduate from high school, face greater obstacles to employment and earn lower incomes throughout their lifetimes. Racial inequities are also pervasive—Black youth are five times more likely than their white peers to be incarcerated for similar offenses. Incarcerating youth interferes with the “aging out” of delinquency upon young adulthood by disrupting natural engagement with families, school, and work. As a result incarcerated youth are 41% more likely to have entered adult prison by age 25.

Finally, the cost of youth incarceration is astronomical, especially considering these poor outcomes. The average cost of the most expensive confinement option in 48 states was *\$588 per day, or \$214,620 per year*. There are community-based and family-centered interventions that are more effective at a fraction of the costs. Closing youth prisons would allow more young people and communities nationwide to receive effective interventions and programming that would dramatically improve outcomes, address racial disparities, reduce long-term costs, and ensure public safety.

- **\$30,000,000** for the Tiffany Joslyn Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Reauthorization and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Act of 2019 (H.R. 494), as passed by unanimous consent in the U.S. House of Representatives in the 115th and 116th Congress.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Tiffany Joslyn Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Reauthorization and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Act of 2019, H.R. 494, 116th Cong. (2019).



## JUVENILE JUSTICE

Historically, funding through the JABG program has supported state efforts to effectively strengthen supports for court-involved youth. 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.

- **\$100,000,000** to support OJJDP, and to ensure that it is able to return to at least 50% of its operations levels. The office saw major reductions in staffing over the past four years and has not seen staffing levels this low in more than a decade, directly impacting their ability to support states and serve our young people.

*The JJDPA has been an extremely successful program*, yet cuts to these programs have weakened the federal-state partnership and stymied national, state, and local progress in this area. Many states have already had to significantly reduce services. Further cuts would inhibit the improvements made by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 and result in fewer youth having access to services designed to keep them from engaging in unlawful behaviors and penetrating deeper into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

It is critical that Congress fully fund JJDPA programs, and other critical youth justice initiatives in order for implementation of the new requirements of the law to be successful Congress must 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. Additionally, Congress must help states close and repurpose youth prisons in order to invest significant savings to achieve truly effective and cost efficient programming and outcomes for young people, families, and their communities. Especially during this time of economic downturn when state and local budgets are strapped, it is important for Congress to invest new funding to achieve these critical goals, outcomes, and savings. The Act 4 JJ Coalition urges you to consider these critical supports for youth and communities in this year's CJS Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

CC: House and Senate Appropriations Committee Members

