

The Sentencing Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/letter-to-house-committee-on-appropriations-regarding-juvenile-justice/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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May 14, 2013

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah:

As the Subcommittee prepares the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2014, I urge you to invest in our nations youth by providing robust funding for critical juvenile justice and delinquency prevention programs.

The Sentencing Project, a national nonprofit organization that works for a fair and effective U.S. criminal justice system, has long been engaged in research and advocacy regarding juvenile justice. While we recognize the challenges that come with discretionary spending caps and sequestration, we also know how essential the federal investments in state juvenile justice efforts are for youth and community safety.

In order to ensure that state, local, and private dollars continue to be leveraged effectively to promote public safety, prevent delinquency, and protect some of our most vulnerable children and youth, we ask that you fund juvenile justice programs at the following levels:

\$80 million for the JJDPA Title II State Formula Grants Program

For more than 35 years, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) has provided critical federal funding to help states prevent delinquency and comply with federally-mandated core requirements designed to: protect children from the dangers of adult jails and lockups; keep status offenders/non-delinquent children out of locked custody; and address the disproportionate representation of youth of color in the justice system. Title II of JJDP supports state compliance with these core protections and helps states to build effective prevention and intervention systems. While our request represents a \$10 million increase over President Obamas proposal, such a level would be in line with the true minimum costs of the Title II mandates and make up for deep cuts in funding to the states.

\$65 million for the JJDPA Title V Delinquency Prevention Program with no earmarks Title V is the only federal program that provides delinquency prevention funding at the local level to reach youth at risk and help keep them out of the juvenile justice system. Though Title V has brought together law enforcement with other stakeholders at the local level for sustainable prevention efforts, in recent years its funding has been slashed and allocated for other than statutory purposes. This request is \$9 million more than the Presidents request and, without any earmarks or set-asides, would represent a significant federal investment in proven, locally-based delinquency prevention programs.

We also support the Presidents recommendation to provide \$20 million to help communities reduce the use of arrest and engagement with the juvenile courts that unnecessarily push more young people into the justice system. However, we believe this investment should not detract from the resources available to local communities through the Title V program, and ask that these dollars be appropriated separately.

\$30 million for Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) Program

JABG is used by states and localities to reduce juvenile offending by providing judges and other juvenile justice officials with a range of age/developmentally-appropriate options to both hold youth accountable and get them back on track so they are less likely to reoffend. 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 the Presidents proposal and just less than the final FY 2013 allocation.

\$20 million for Juvenile Justice Realignment Incentive Grants

As a complement to JABG, we commend the Administration for putting forward a new initiative, the Juvenile Justice Realignment Incentive Grants, to help states invest in evidence-based strategies that reduce youth incarceration and recidivism and promote public safety and better outcomes for youth.

\$2 million grant program for girls in the juvenile justice system

We support this targeted investment in a competitive grant program to help states and localities better address the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system. Girls are the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice population. This program will help provide specific, targeted support for state efforts to implement best practices with respect to at-risk and system-involved girls.

Finally, in view of the tragedy in Newtown and the daily violence that plagues many communities, we are also supportive of the new monies allocated for community-based violence prevention using a multi-sector, public health approach.

While we urge you to invest in these key programs at these recommended levels, we also ask that, at a minimum, you work to restore some of the critical funding that has been lost over the last decade and include some new investment as recommended by the President and Administration in the FY 2014 budget proposal. 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 consideration.

Sincerely,

Marc Mauer
Executive Director

Increase in U.S. jail & prison population in the last 40 years

Incarceration

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