

March 27, 2007

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
Chair, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
144 Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6025

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
123 Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6025

Dear Chair Mikulski and Senator Shelby:

Your Subcommittee will soon consider Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations recommendations for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies. The American Bar Association joins a broad range of organizations concerned with strengthening the nation's juvenile justice system in urging your Subcommittee to restore funding for three critical grant programs that provide for services for at-risk youth that have been severely cut in recent years: the State Formula Grants, the Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Grants, and the Juvenile Accountability Block Grants. In addition, we urge you to reject the President's budget recommendation that would end dedicated funding for juvenile justice programs and to increase funding for the Delinquency Prevention Block Grant program.

State Formula Grants (Title II) provide essential support for public agencies to develop and strengthen juvenile justice systems to prevent delinquency, reduce youth crime, meet vital protection requirements and keep our communities safe. In addition, these grants have funded programs to provide follow-up post placement services, counseling, and training opportunities for youth, and to expand the use of probation officers to allow more nonviolent offenders to remain in family and/or community settings. We ask that funding for Formula Grants be restored in FY 2008 to \$88.8 million.

To keep all children and youth safe and out of trouble, sufficient funds must be provided to continue to support youth development, prevention and intervention efforts. To this end, we ask that Congress make a strong commitment to keep children and youth safe from harm and to help children and youth realize their full potential by increasing investment in Title V Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Program and the Delinquency Prevention Block Grant Program.

The Title V Program is an effective model of community collaboration in which community stakeholders – including locally elected officials, law enforcement, public recreation, private nonprofit organizations and youth workers – come together to develop a plan for juvenile delinquency prevention. Title V provides states with matching funds for community-based prevention programs that include primary prevention aimed at high-risk youth with no prior contact with law enforcement. Title V was funded for four consecutive years prior to FY 2003 at \$95 million. We ask that Congress restore Title V Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs to a baseline level of \$95 million with no earmarks in FY 2008.

The Delinquency Prevention Block Grant program (DPBG) is included in the 2002 re-authorized Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), and funds activities designed to prevent and reduce juvenile crime in communities that have a comprehensive juvenile crime prevention plan. Eligible recipients include community-based organizations, law enforcement agencies, local education authorities, local governments, social service providers and other entities with a demonstrated history of involvement in juvenile delinquency prevention. The DPBG was created by consolidating five separate program authorities that focused on mentoring, state challenge activities, gang-free schools and communities, and other related activities which cumulatively had received \$126.4 million in FY 2003. While the DPBG was authorized beginning in FY 2004, no funds have been appropriated leaving communities without these vital resources. We ask that Congress fund the Delinquency Prevention Block Grant at \$126.4 million in FY 2008.

In order to strengthen state and local juvenile justice systems to meet the prevention and rehabilitative needs of adjudicated youth, and those at risk of being adjudicated, we urge you to increase funding for the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG). JABG provides states and units of local government with funds to develop programs to promote greater accountability in the juvenile justice system. Program purpose areas were expanded in 2002 and again in 2005 with the JABG reauthorization for a total of six additional program purposes, including re-entry and gang prevention and intervention. The JABG reauthorization also articulated the critical importance of funding evidence-based strategies for delinquency prevention and intervention. By supporting these additional purposes, JABG will provide needed resources to proven strategies for preventing and intervening in delinquent activity, rehabilitating adjudicated youth, and reducing juvenile recidivism rates. We ask that Congress fund the JABG at \$250 million in FY 2008.

Your dedicated advocacy in support of programs to support at-risk youth, prevent delinquency, and keep our communities safe helps to focus constructive public policies on these important issues. We hope we can count on your leadership to support and restore funding for these critical JJDP programs that provide the resources needed to implement the Act and support our nation's at-risk youth in building productive, lawful and healthy lives.

Sincerely,

*Denise A Cardman*

cc: Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Members of the Subcommittee