

April 2, 2008

The Honorable Allan B. Mollohan
Chair, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
H-3 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515-6015

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
H-3 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515-6015

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

Your Subcommittee will soon consider Fiscal Year 2009 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 continue the trend, started in the FY 2008 appropriations process, of reversing the cuts made in overall federal juvenile justice funding since 2002. Continuing this trend is critical to restoring lost federal juvenile justice funding, which remains 36% below the FY 2002 appropriations.

For FY 2009, we urge you to reject the President's budget recommendation that would end dedicated funding for juvenile justice programs and consolidate them into a single block grant for Child Safety Initiatives, with a 57% cut in funding. Instead, we urge Congress 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 Title II State Formula Grants, the Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Grants, and the Juvenile Accountability Block Grants. We would note that even restoring funding for these programs to 2002 levels would still leave a \$126 million cut from funding streams that were consolidated in 2003 into the Delinquency Prevention Block Grant, which was never funded. We also recommend continued funding for Juvenile Mentoring grants.

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 2009 to the FY02 level of \$89 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. A growing body of research clearly establishes that early investment in youth development and prevention programs can dramatically reduce youth crime and violence. Estimates for cost savings range from \$4-\$7 for every dollar invested in prevention and intervention efforts. 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.

We urge that Congress restore Title V Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs to a baseline level of \$95 million with no earmarks in FY 2009. We also urge Congress to continue to fund the Juvenile Mentoring program at \$70 million in FY 2009.

The Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (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 rehabilitating adjudicated youth, and reducing juvenile recidivism rates. We ask that Congress fund the JABG at \$250 million in FY 2009.

Finally, over the past several years an increasing number of earmarks have precluded many of these programs from carrying out their primary purpose. We recommend that no more than 25% of these discretionary funds be earmarked for other purposes.

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 JJDPA 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, and to make our communities safer.

Sincerely,



Denise A. Cardman
Acting Director

cc: Honorable David R. Obey, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
Honorable Jerry Lewis, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Members of the Subcommittee