Dear Chairman Serrano and Ranking Member Aderholt:

We are writing to express our strong support for the Youth Mentoring Grant program managed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). As you develop the Fiscal Year 2020 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request at least $120 million in funding for this important program, which supports the implementation, delivery, and enhancement of evidence-based mentoring services to improve outcomes and ensure that at-risk or underserved youth have the supports they need to thrive academically, personally, and professionally.

Youth who grow up in poverty or low-resource families or communities are more likely than their peers to be at risk for juvenile delinquency\(^1\). They are also more likely than their peers to have contact with the juvenile justice or child welfare systems\(^2\). Nationwide, of the young people being served by mentoring programs, 51\% of them are low-income, 36\% are academically at-risk, 14\% are first generation to go to college, and 8\% have incarcerated parents or family members\(^3\). Mentoring provides an evidence-based support for youth that improves positive outcomes and can keep young people from entering the juvenile justice system. In addition, quality early interventions like mentoring that divert high-risk youth from engaging in repeat criminal offenses can save the public nearly $5.7 million in costs over a lifetime\(^4\). This compares with the median youth mentoring program’s yearly operating budget, which is under $50,000 (two-thirds of programs are under $100,000); these programs are performing critical services for our young people with very little.

Youth mentoring is an important support that improves positive social development and behaviors in young people. Mentoring programs are able to support young people by focusing on specific youth outcome areas like academic achievement, career exploration, college access, leadership development, life skills, resiliency, civic engagement, and family support. Young people who meet regularly with their mentors are 52 percent less likely than their peers to skip a day of school, and youth with recurring behavioral problems who have a mentor maintain better attitudes towards school. Youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46 percent less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs. Young people who face opportunity gaps but have mentors are 130 percent more likely to hold a leadership position. Mentors also provide youth, especially those at risk of being disconnected from school and work, with access to critical social capital. Young people who face opportunity

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gaps but had a mentor were 55 percent more likely to enroll in college than their peers. Mentors prepare young people for higher education and careers by introducing youth to resources they weren't familiar with, helping them set career goals and even using their personal contacts to help connect them and find careers in industries they did not have access to within their networks.

Mentoring provides young people at risk of engaging in negative behaviors with powerful tools to help them grow, develop and connect to social and economic opportunities. Despite the clear benefits of mentoring, the average mentoring program has 63 young people on its waitlist, a challenge that can be solved by an increased investment in these programs. One in three young people is currently growing up without a mentor in the United States, constituting a "mentoring gap" that demonstrates a need for collaboration, resources and investment in mentoring services. Funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant program helps close the mentoring gap and create meaningful relationships for young people at some of the most challenging times in their lives.

We respectfully request at least $120 million in funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant program, which will save federal dollars over the long-term by reducing rates of incarceration, bolstering student academic achievement, and creating positive outcomes for young people.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical request to change the lives of our highest-needs young people.

Sincerely,

Jim Langevin
Member of Congress

Ted S. Yoho, DVM
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

Kaja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.
Pete Stauber  
Member of Congress

Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress

Dan Kildee  
Member of Congress

Val Demings  
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Jeff Van Drew  
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

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Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress

Jim Himes
Member of Congress

Jesus G. "Chuy" Garcia
Member of Congress

Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress
Anthony Brown
Member of Congress

Jennifer González-Colón
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

Sharice Davids
Member of Congress

Steven Horsford
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Susan Wild
Member of Congress
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress
Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Denny Heck  
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland  
Member of Congress

Frederica Wilson  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress

David Trone  
Member of Congress

Conor Lamb  
Member of Congress