December 9, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Appropriators:

We write to thank you for your support of our nation’s most vulnerable and at-risk young people through the Youth Mentoring Program grant, funded via the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies subcommittee bill. This competitive grant supports the work of youth serving organizations across the country as they provide our nation’s young people with caring adult mentors during some of the most challenging times in their lives. As appropriators finalize the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) funding agreement, we ask that you support the House-passed level of $100 million for the Youth Mentoring Program grant.

Mentoring supports positive outcomes, including social development, academic achievement, and improved self-confidence among at-risk young people.\(^1\) It is an effective prevention and intervention-based strategy for youth. Quality, evidence-based mentoring decreases chronic absenteeism and youth violence, and increases critical-thinking, problem solving, and other skills that support academic and workforce achievement, as well as life goal attainment.

Mentoring shows positive outcomes for students who are at-risk of falling off track. Those 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 issues who have a mentor maintain better attitudes towards school.\(^2\) Evaluations of mentoring programs report significant increases among youth in self-confidence, self-efficacy and a

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positive attitude about their futures. Unfortunately, 1 in 3 young people in the United States reaches the age of 19 without having a mentor of any kind. This number includes 9 million at-risk youth who are missing out on the critical support and connections that mentoring can provide.³

Mentoring occurs in a variety of settings and systems, including before- and after-school programs, summer camps, schools, sports programs, public parks, as part of juvenile justice diversion programs, and in many other settings. Mentoring can also be utilized to help address community challenges like the opioid epidemic. When strategically integrated into a community’s organized response, mentoring strengthens efforts to prevent drug and other substance abuse, supports young people experiencing opioid addiction in their families, and promotes healthy decision-making, positive behaviors, resiliency and strong futures.

Research on youth mentoring demonstrates that, at a minimum, for every dollar invested in quality mentoring programs there is a return of at least three dollars.⁴ This positive return on investment reflects projected increases in lifetime earnings gained by leading at-risk youth down the path towards becoming productive adults. It also derives from dollars saved through reduced juvenile delinquency and crime, improved school attendance, increased high school graduation rates, and lowered risk of youth involvement in unsafe and costly behaviors such as drug and alcohol use. Mentoring represents a sound public investment grounded in quality and evidence-based practices.

As you finalize negotiations for the FY20 spending we call for continued investment in the Youth Mentoring Program grant, a proven prevention and intervention program, at a level of at least $100 million.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

A World Fit For Kids!
Afterschool Alliance
After-School All-Stars
America SCORES
Bender Leadership Academy
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
Big Buddy Program
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Supportive Schools
Child Welfare League of America
College Mentors for Kids, Inc.

³ Bruce and Bridgeland, *The Mentoring Effect: Young People’s Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring*.
Communities In Schools National Office
Compeer
Concepts, Inc.
Disability: IN & NextGen Mentoring Uinta County
EIN SOF Communications
Encore.org
Friends of the Children
Girls Inc.
iMentor
Institute for Educational Leadership
Kid Power, Inc.
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
National 4-H Council
National Disability Mentoring Coalition
National Recreation and Park Association
National Summer Learning Association
Results For America
Search Institute
Silver Lining Mentoring
University of Kansas
U.S. Dream Academy
U.S. Soccer Foundation
WrightChoice Consulting Group
Year Up
YMCA of the USA
YouthBuild U.S.A.
Youth Collaboratory

CC: Chairman Jerry Moran, Senate Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittee
    Ranking Member Jeanne Shaheen, Senate Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittee
    Chairman José Serrano, House Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittee
    Ranking Member Robert Aderholt, House Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Members of the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittees