March 13, 2020

The Honorable José Serrano  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, 
Commerce, Science and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-310 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on 
Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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 2021 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 mentoring is an evidence-based service that improves positive life outcomes supporting young people and mentors as they navigate this critical relationship. It is a powerful factor in reducing the number of youth disconnected from school and work, in increasing social and economic mobility, and in creating a more productive and prosperous nation. 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[1]. Mentoring 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[1]. 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. Based on estimates, the average cost-per-youth across all mentoring programs is $1,695 a year. However, as the percentage of higher-needs youth in a program increases, so does the average cost-per-youth. For instance, programs where 90% of the mentees being served were pregnant or parenting the average cost-per-youth went up to $5,048 and programs where 90% of the mentees were in foster care the average cost-per-youth went up to $2,718.2 As the Youth Mentoring Grant continues to support populations of young people who need the highest levels of support, funding for these services must increase to meet their needs.


Youth mentoring is an important support that improves positive social development and behaviors in young people. Young people in America are increasingly facing challenges related to substance abuse, mental health, and the effects of trauma—mentoring can help them navigate these complex issues at home, at school, and everywhere they go. Mentoring has a positive effect on students that are at risk of falling off track. 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 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,

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Ted S. Yoho, DVM
Member of Congress

---


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Raj Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

Ben McAdams
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Pete Stauber
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Jiminy Panetta
Member of Congress
Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard  
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider  
Member of Congress

Ron Kind  
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress

Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress

Susan Wild  
Member of Congress

Jennifer González-Colón  
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress
Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

André Carson  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress
Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Rep. Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Richard E Neal
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress
Joaqin Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress

Greg Stanton
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress
Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

David Trone
Member of Congress

Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress

Kendra S. Horn
Member of Congress

Susie Lee
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

Conor Lamb
Member of Congress