Corporate and Foundation Support for Youth-Serving Nonprofit Organizations at this Critical Time

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-222, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

Across the country, nonprofit youth-serving organizations are retooling programs and services during this public health crisis to prioritize the safety, healthy development, and continued education of young people. As supporters and funders of the work of these effective youth-serving organizations and the many positive outcomes they deliver, we write today to encourage you to keep these nonprofit organizations in mind as Congress continues to work on emergency and regular appropriations bills. We cannot allow this critical focus on the wellbeing of our young people during this traumatic and uncertain time to go unaddressed.

Mentoring programs, before and afterschool, and summer programs, and other academic and youth development organizations – in collaboration with schools, local governments, and other partners – are working to ensure the needs of young people are prioritized utilizing evidence-based practices, trauma-
informed care, and social and emotional support during this pandemic. Young people are facing enormous uncertainty with their everyday lives impacted by this public health crisis. One of the most important ingredients for healthy development provided by youth-serving organizations is a point of connection at a time when many young people may be most vulnerable and in need of support. This is especially true for young people whose households are in economic distress and for many whose parents and guardians are working on the front lines of crisis response whether in grocery stores, hospitals, or other essential businesses.

While adhering to guidance from government and health experts and keeping the health and safety of staff, volunteers, and young people in mind, youth-serving organizations have still demonstrated their commitment to all young people during this crisis. A few examples of the rapid responsiveness and dexterity of youth-serving organizations rising to meet the challenges facing their communities include:

- Despite nearly all 2,600 YMCA’s across the country being closed due to COVID-19, hundreds of Y’s are finding ways to continue to serve communities during this crisis, providing child care for first responders and other essential workers, providing food for children affected by school closures, and providing wellness checks for seniors and other vulnerable citizens. In Adair County, Missouri, the local Y has partnered with its area school district to serve more than 10,000 free meals since mid-March to area children. In Jacksonville, Florida, the local Y has set up mobile blood donation stations to combat blood shortages in area hospitals. And, the YMCA of Central Ohio has converted space in their buildings to provide emergency shelter while ensuring safe social distancing for people needing accommodation.

- During this time of physical distancing, youth-serving organizations play a pivotal role in ensuring that young people have access to the consistent, caring relationships they need to thrive. As mentoring programs hastened to support mentoring from a distance as schools, businesses and communities began to close, iCouldBe, Cricket Media, and MENTOR worked together to create a solution to ensure that relationships could go uninterrupted. Using iCouldBe’s existing online tool for youth over 13 years old and Cricket Media’s tool for those under 13 years old, the Virtual Mentoring Portals were set up. These safe and monitored mentoring platforms ensure mentors and mentees can continue their relationships so that physical distancing does not mean social disconnection. These free platforms are customized to support matches and provide training and ongoing support. To date the Virtual Mentoring Portals have attracted interest from hundreds of mentoring programs nationwide who serve over 132,000 matches.

- Communities In Schools across the country are mobilizing to beyond school walls to ensure that students basic needs do not go unmet. Affiliates are dropping off education packets to families who do not have transportation or internet access, collecting hygiene products, diapers, and household products for families, and are continuing to play their role of resource navigators, but in wake of school closings have expanded their efforts to meet multiplying needs. In San Antonio, their team of Licensed Professional Counselors began telehealth counseling sessions with students in need of additional mental health support. Recently, a student opened up about the depression and grief she was feeling. This team member helped the student identify triggers and develop a realistic daily routine to help her build structure into her day.

Not only do these organizations need further economic support to keep staff on payroll and their programs adjusted and running at this time, they will need to be prepared for young people to return to
their programs when this public health crisis ends. These programs will provide much needed support, stability, and guidance to young people and their families as the country heals and moves forward. They will provide critical child care and before and afterschool and summer programming supporting learning losses due to school closures. They will allow young people who haven’t been able to access in-person connection access to their mentors, peers, and other caring adults. Others will allow young people to fully engage safely in physical activity and sports after months of social isolation. Youth-serving organizations will be the backbone of helping America’s young people and their families and communities return to normalcy and the activities and programs they need to address the trauma, anxiety, and lingering physical and mental health challenges.

The critical nature of these organizations and prioritizing relationships as a necessary component to healthy youth development, cannot be understated. We are proud to collaborate with and support these organizations, their work, and young people throughout the nation and we encourage Congress to support them as well.

As Congress drafts stimulus and regular appropriations bills in the coming weeks and months, please remember the role nonprofit youth-serving organizations play in helping their communities endure, recover, and thrive, and how they have stepped up with ingenuity, creativity, and enduring commitment during this crisis. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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America’s Promise Alliance
American Student Assistance
CoLabL
Cricket Media
Cricket Together
Eluna
Federated Insurance
First Niagara Foundation
Highland Street Foundation
Hyde Square Task Force
iCouldBe
Kelly Family Foundation
Learning by Giving Foundation
Memphis Grizzlies Foundation
Moxy Up
Overdeck Family Foundation
Raikes Foundation
Players Coalition
Point Field Partners

CC: House Appropriations Committee
    Senate Appropriations Committee