May 21, 2020

The Honorable José Serrano
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Appropriators:

During the current pandemic, youth mentoring organizations across the country swiftly retooled their programs to best support the young people and families they serve and the communities they reside in. Like other nonprofits, these mentoring organizations shifted tactics but kept their values in tact by supporting young people and keeping relationships a priority so that during a time of physical distancing young people are not socially isolated. Strong, healthy mentoring relationships are key to young people's success; this is never truer than in times of crisis.

In recent weeks, nonprofit mentoring programs have become a critical lifeline for youth and families, identifying community resources and partnerships to connect them to appropriate agencies or providers of food, shelter, and other essentials. While meeting government and health restrictions, mentoring programs are meeting as many basic needs as they can while keeping relationships at the center of their work.

Today, we write to you regarding the regular Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) appropriations process and specifically, the Part G Youth Mentoring Program grant funded via the Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee. This important program supports youth serving organizations throughout the country as they provide our nation’s young people with caring adult mentors during some of the most challenging times in their lives. Mentoring supports positive outcomes, including social development, academic
achievement, and improved self-confidence among young people facing myriad risk factors.¹

Mentoring can be an effective prevention and intervention-based strategy for young people that 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. Unfortunately, the available funding fails to address the needs of communities and organizations that support the healthy, positive development of our young people. The bipartisan leadership on the Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittees have always demonstrated strong support for the needs of our young people and for quality practices in youth mentoring.

Mentoring has a positive effect on 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 problems who have a mentor maintain better attitudes towards school. Evaluations of mentoring programs report significant increases among youth in self-confidence, self-efficacy and a 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.

We are entering a new and difficult chapter in American history with unknown challenges. Now more than ever, society needs mentoring programs and the resiliency they build within youth. Young people are facing mental health needs, anxiety, and isolation among many other complex issues as they navigate this pandemic, mentors are there to connect them to resources when they need it. At the same time, the costs associated with safely operating programs for staff and young people is increasing. Mentoring programs will have to adjust their budgets to account for increased staffing needs, growing technology and sanitation expenses, and more.

The Youth Mentoring Program grants are the sole remaining source of federal funding dedicated to the important work of mentoring; we cannot afford to lose this resource in this time of crisis for our nation’s youth. Collectively, we call on Appropriators to invest in the future of our young people by funding the program at a minimum of $120 million in the FY21 bill.

We appreciate your attention to this support, intervention, and prevention tool that positively affects our nation’s young people. Please contact us should you require additional information.

Sincerely,

A World Fit For Kids!
Afterschool Alliance
After-School All-Stars
Amachi, Inc.
America SCORES
America’s Promise Alliance
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
Big Buddy Program
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Center for Supportive Schools
College Mentors for Kids
Communities In Schools, National Office
Compeer
Eluna
Encore.org
First Focus Campaign for Children
Friends of the Children
Girls Inc.
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Institute for Educational Leadership
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
National 4-H Council
National Association of Police Athletic/Activities Leagues, Inc.
National Disability Mentoring Coalition
National Organization of Concerned Black Men, Inc.
National Recreation and Park Association
National Urban League
Silver Lining Mentoring
Sisters Circle
Sisters Circle
US Dream Academy
YMCA of the USA
Year Up, Inc.
Youth Collaboratory
YouthBuild USA