

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
H-310 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cartwright 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 2022 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request at least \$120 million in funding for this important program, which is the only mentoring-specific line item in the federal budget. The Youth Mentoring Grant supports the implementation, delivery, and enhancement of evidence-based mentoring services to improve outcomes and ensure that at-risk and underserved youth have the supports they need to thrive academically, personally, and professionally.

Youth mentoring is an evidence-based intervention that enhances life outcomes for young people and mentors. It is a powerful strategy to reduce the number of youth disconnected from school and work, increase social and economic mobility, and create a more productive and prosperous nation. A recent meta-analysis found that mentoring, across all studies included, had a positive effect on *all* youth outcomes included in the research.¹ Unfortunately, one in three young people in the United States will not have a mentor at some point in their childhood², constituting a “mentoring gap” that demonstrates the need for collaborative investment in mentoring services. Disadvantaged youth in particular are more likely to turn to formal programs to access highly impactful mentors;³ in the United States, of the young people served by mentoring programs, 51 percent are low-income, 36 percent are academically at-risk, 14 percent are first generation to go to college, and 8 percent have incarcerated parents or family members.⁴

¹ Raposa, Elizabeth B., et. al. *The Effects of Youth Mentoring Programs: A Meta-analysis of Outcome Studies*. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 2019.

² Michael Garringer, Heather McDaniel and Sam McQuillin. *Examining Youth Mentoring Services Across America: Findings from the 2016 Youth Mentoring Survey*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2017.

³ Bruce, Mary and Bridgeland, John, and Civic Enterprises, in association with Hart Research Associates. *The Mentoring Effect: Young People’s Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2014.

⁴ Michael Garringer, Heather McDaniel and Sam McQuillin. *Examining Youth Mentoring Services Across America: Findings from the 2016 Youth Mentoring Survey*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2017.

In addition to keeping youth from entering the juvenile justice system, quality early interventions like mentoring often divert youth from engaging in repeat criminal offenses; for example, youth who meet regularly with their mentors are also 46 percent less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs. Recent research funded by OJJDP found that mentoring programs potentially provide a benefit of three times the public expenditure, for every day in jail that program participants avoid.⁵ It is important to note, however, that programs that serve more children with adverse child experiences require additional funding. A recent study showed that in programs where 90% of mentees were pregnant or parenting, the average cost-per-youth increased nearly \$2,500. In the same study, programs where 90% of mentees were in foster care saw an increased cost-per-youth of over \$1,000.⁶ As programs continue to support as many young people with the highest need as possible, funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant program must increase.

Mentorship additionally promotes positive social development and behaviors in young people. With youth in America facing serious challenges related to substance abuse, mental health, and the effects of trauma—all exacerbated by the long-term effects of the COVID-19 lockdown and pandemic – a trusting relationship with an adult can help them manage these complex and difficult issues. For example, research has proven that mentoring can also be an effective mitigation strategy to address absenteeism and other difficulties preventing students from succeeding academically. Young people who meet regularly with their mentors are 52 percent less likely than their peers to skip class and generally maintain better attitudes towards school. In fact, youth who face opportunity gaps but had a mentor are 55 percent more likely to plan to enroll in college, 130 percent more likely to hold a leadership position, and have a higher rate of pursuit of employment from program entry to discharge.⁷⁸ That’s because many mentoring programs support students by focusing on specific topics like academic achievement, career exploration, college access, leadership development, life skills, resiliency, civic engagement and family support. These proven positive outcomes happen because 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 to industries they did not previously have access to.

Mentoring provides a young person 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, the average mentoring program has 63 young people on their waitlist⁹ - a challenge that can be addressed through investment in these programs. Funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant Program grant helps close the mentoring gap and create more meaningful relationships that help put youth on a track to academic, personal, and professional success.

⁵ Blakeslee, Jennifer E., and Keller, Thomas E. *Extending A Randomized Trial of the My Life Mentoring Model for Youth in Foster Care to Evaluate Long-Term Effects on Offending in Young Adulthood*. National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 2018.

⁶ Michael Garringer, Heather McDaniel and Sam McQuillin. *Examining Youth Mentoring Services Across America*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2016.

⁷ Mary Bruce and John Bridgeland. *The Mentoring Effect: Young People’s Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring*. Civic Enterprises with Hart Research Associates for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2014.

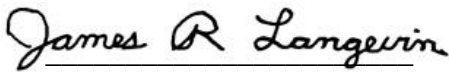
⁸ *OJJDP-Funded Research in Brief: Advocacy-based Mentoring Evaluation*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, 2017.

⁹ Ibid.

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 enabling positive health and psychosocial outcomes for young people.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical request to support our at-risk youth.

Sincerely,



James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress

Member of Congress

/s/
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress

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Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

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Don Bacon
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Karen Bass
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Joyce Beatty
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Earl Blumenauer
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Lizzie Fletcher
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Matt Gaetz
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Ruben Gallego
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John Garamendi
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Markwayne Mullin
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Richard E Neal
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Joe Neguse
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Ilhan Omar
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Frank Pallone, Jr.
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Jimmy Panetta
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Bill Pascrell, Jr.
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Stacey E. Plaskett
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Nikema Williams
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Frederica S. Wilson
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John Yarmuth
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