

June 21, 2021

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

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

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations bill for this subcommittee, we respectfully write to request at least \$120 million in funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant, which is administered by the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). This program is the only mentoring-specific line item in the federal budget and supports the implementation, delivery, and enhancement of evidence-based mentoring services. These services improve outcomes and ensure that at-risk and underserved youth have the support needed to thrive personally, academically, and professionally.

Mentoring provides young people with 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, and keep youth from entering the juvenile justice system. In addition, mentoring can increase social and economic mobility and help create a more productive and prosperous nation. But, one in three young people in the United States will not have a mentor at some point in their childhood—constituting a “mentoring gap” that demonstrates the need for collaborative investment in mentoring services.

At its core, mentoring provides young people with consistent, stable adults in their lives when they need it most. 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. Quality intervention, like mentoring, can also divert youth from engaging in repeat criminal offenses. 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. However, as the percentage of higher-needs youth in a program increases, so does the average cost-per-youth. These programs require additional funding. For instance, programs where 90% of the mentees being served were pregnant or parenting, the average cost-per-youth increased nearly \$2,500 and programs where 90% of mentees were in foster care saw an increased cost-per-youth of over \$1,000. As programs continue to support young people who need the highest levels of support, funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant program must increase to meet their needs.

In addition, mentoring 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 COVID-19 pandemic—a trusting relationship with an adult can help them navigate these complex and difficult issues at home, at school, and everywhere they go. For example, research has proven that mentoring can be an effective mitigation strategy to address absenteeism and other difficulties that prevent students from succeeding academically. Young people who meet regularly with their mentor are 52% 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% more likely to plan to enroll in college and 130% more likely to hold a leadership position in a club, student government, or sports team.

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 them to resources, helping them set career goals, and even using personal contacts to help connect them to industries they otherwise would not be able to access.

Despite the clear benefits, the average mentoring program has 63 young people on their waitlist – a challenge that can be addressed through investment in these programs and in their future. Funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant helps close the mentoring gap and create more meaningful relationships that help put youth on a track to academic, personal, and professional success by providing young people with powerful tools to grow, develop, and connect to social and economic opportunities. To that end, we respectfully request at least \$120 million in funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant program. This critical funding 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,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senate



MARGARET WOOD HASSAN
United States Senate



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/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

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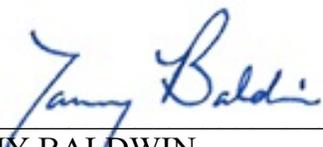
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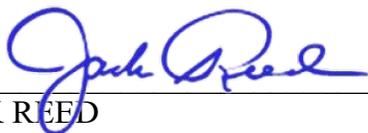
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