

April 5, 2023

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

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

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

We thank the subcommittee for its long support of the Youth Mentoring Grant over the years, including \$107 million in funding in Fiscal Year 2023. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bill, we respectfully write to request robust funding for this program, 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 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. Recent research suggests that this gap is growing, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors, with 40% of today’s 18-21 year olds reporting never having a mentor while growing up. Almost 70% of them say they remember a time when they needed mentoring but no adult was available to help them.¹

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. And while programs often seek out those with the most need, there is considerably more to be done—only 36% of young people with four or more adverse childhood experiences received the help of a mentor.²

¹ Garringer, Michael, & Benning, Chelsea. *Who Mentored You?: A Study Examining the Role Mentors Have Played in the Lives Of Americans Over the Last Half Century*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2023.

² Garringer, Michael, & Benning, Chelsea. *Who Mentored You?: A Study Examining the Role Mentors Have Played in the Lives Of Americans Over the Last Half Century*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2023.

Quality intervention, like mentoring, can divert youth from engaging in first-time or 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. As programs continue to provide for 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, a trusting relationship with an adult can help them navigate complex and difficult issues at home, at school, and everywhere they go. For example:

- Mentoring programs can prevent and help youth cope with depressive symptoms, reduce mental health stigma, and increase treatment entry and adherence. Over 25% of today's youth who never had a mentor say that they specifically wanted a mentor to support their mental health; help they never received.³
- School-based mentoring programs can have a positive impact on truancy and absenteeism, scholastic efficacy, school-related misconduct, and peer support.
- Mentoring can be integrated into multi-component violence prevention and intervention efforts, reduce aggressive behaviors such as fighting, bullying, and delinquency, and provide comprehensive support to youth at risk for committing violence or victimization.
- Mentoring programs can support youth in career exploration and early employment experiences by providing social-emotional support and hands-on skill-building, which can lead to higher retention rates, wage increases, and professional development.
- Mentoring programs can reduce the likelihood that youth start to use illegal substances, nonprescription drugs, and alcohol.

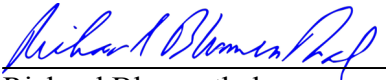
Despite the clear benefits of youth mentoring, the average mentoring program has 63 young people on their waitlist – and recent reports and studies have found that inflationary costs and workforce shortages have prevented a full recovery in the nonprofit sector, including youth mentoring programs. This increase in funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant helps close the mentoring gap and create meaningful relationships that will help youth recover and put them on a track to academic, personal, and professional success.

To that end, we respectfully request robust 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.

³ Garringer, Michael, & Benning, Chelsea. *Who Mentored You?: A Study Examining the Role Mentors Have Played in the Lives Of Americans Over the Last Half Century*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2023.

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

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



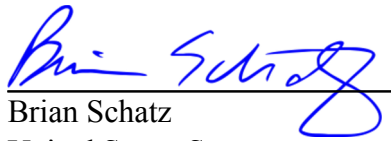
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



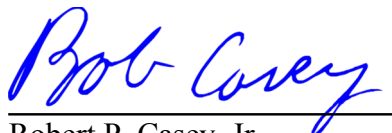
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



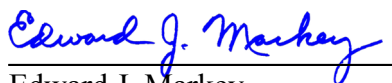
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



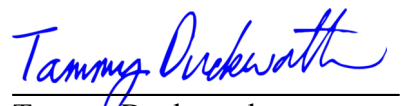
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



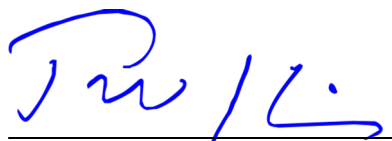
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



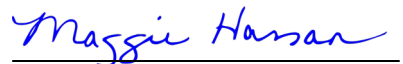
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



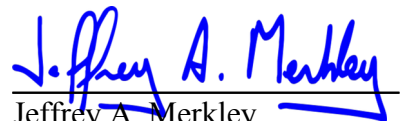
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



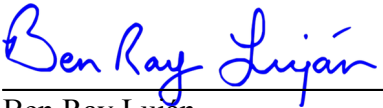
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



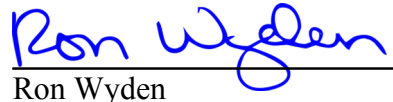
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
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Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



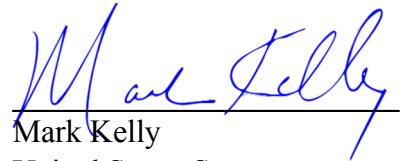
Jack Reed
United States Senator



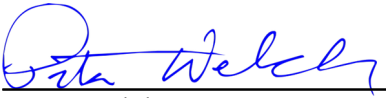
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



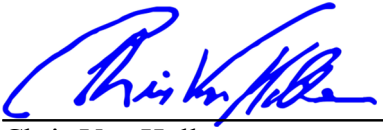
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator