

QUICK REFERENCE: MESSAGING TO ASSIST DURING YOUR CONGRESSIONAL MEETINGS



Use this as a quick-reference guide for messaging to aid your conversations on Capitol Hill.

The Importance of Youth Mentoring & Why Federal Investment Matters

- **Youth mentoring is a proven, cost-effective strategy** that connects young people with caring adults who help them stay in school, enter the workforce, and navigate critical life transitions.
- Decades of **research show high-quality mentoring improves outcomes** across education, mental health, and workforce readiness – all top bipartisan priorities.
- Youth with mentors are more likely to:
 - Stay engaged in school and graduate
 - Report better mental health and a stronger sense of belonging
 - Gain career exposure, job skills, and pathways to employment
- **Mentoring works best when programs follow evidence-based practices**, including screening, training, and ongoing support for mentors.
- **Nearly 4 in 10 young people lack access to a mentor.** This “mentoring gap” continues to widen with Gen Z and Gen Alpha.
- Federal leadership helps close gaps where the private sector alone cannot, particularly in rural, low-income, and high-need communities.
- Congress has demonstrated its strong, bipartisan support for youth mentoring and we ask them to continue to invest in quality mentoring activities for youth.

Why Federal Funding for Mentoring is Critical

- The federal government plays a catalytic role in scaling what works – ensuring quality, accountability, and equitable access nationwide.
- The **Youth Mentoring Program grant (YMG)** is the only federal funding line dedicated exclusively to mentoring. It is funded through the Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) appropriations bill.
- It is small in the federal budget but outsized in its impact on communities.
- YMG ensures programs:
 - Use evidence-based, accountable practices
 - Serve youth with the highest needs
 - Leverage federal dollars to attract state, local and private investment to scale services
- **Mentoring is a low-cost, high-impact investment** that helps prevent more expensive downstream outcomes in education, justice, and workforce systems.
- Funding asks:
 - Thank Congress for the FY26 increase to \$105 million
 - Urge support for \$130 million in FY27 to meet demand and expand access

Priority Youth Mentoring Legislation

Tip: emphasize how each bill targets a specific gap with a proven solution.

Foster Youth Mentoring Act (Bipartisan)

- Targets **youth in foster care**, who face some of the highest risks for poor education and workforce outcomes.
- Establishes a discretionary grant to support consistent, trained mentors
- Focuses on **emotional stability, academic success, and career readiness**
- Allows for particular attention to young people soon to be aging out of the foster care system to support this critical transition period
- We are currently **seeking a Republican Senate lead** to advance bipartisan introduction

Mentoring to Succeed Act

- Expands **school-based mentoring** in communities with high rates of violence
- Requires trauma-informed, high-quality training of mentors and student supporters
- Aims to **improve college access, skill development, and career exploration**

Transition to Success Mentoring Act

- Support students during the **critical transition from middle to high school**
- Funds partnerships between schools and mentoring programs
- Addresses **dropout prevention and long-term educational attainment**

Building Congressional Support (Clear, Low-Lift Asks)

National Mentoring Month Resolution

- Ask Members to sign on as original sponsor *before* introduction on February 5
- A **nonpartisan, low-burden** way to demonstrate support for mentoring
- Signals alignment with youth, families, and community organizations

Congressional Youth Mentoring Caucus

- Encourage Members to join the bipartisan caucus
- Provides: Education on mentoring research and best practices and a forum for bipartisan collaboration
- Caucuses help Members engage on issues that matter to their districts and states

In addition to providing your contact information, feel free to share MENTOR's contact information with Congressional staff. This will be useful if they have specific questions about any of the bills you discuss. I'm happy to follow up with or respond to any queries from Congressional offices.

MENTOR serves as a national resource for Congress on evidence-based mentoring policy and practice and is available to provide district-specific information, research, or technical assistance.

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