

March 8, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking member
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Mikulski and Shelby:

As you craft your FY13 full year Continuing Resolution, we urge you to protect and sustain the extraordinary contribution of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) state and local justice assistance and other grant programs that support the prevention of crime, enforcement of laws, and the health of our nation's communities. ***The DOJ grant programs have been cut by 43 percent, or \$1.5 billion, since FY10. Sequestration in FY 13 would cut an additional 5 percent*** (if implemented across-the-board). ***Further, the state and local grant programs have borne the full burden of the reductions required of DOJ*** in order to maintain or increase funding for the federal law enforcement and investigative agencies and activities.

We are very concerned that the grant programs will be reduced further in the final FY13 appropriations bill. If that happens, successful programs will be pulled from the field, more jobs will be cut, and the partnership between federal, state and local law enforcement will be further weakened. Hundreds of communities will lose a range of critical grant funding, from Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) and Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) funding, to reentry, juvenile justice and victim support funding. Scores more communities will lose the ability to test and replicate proven, evidence-based strategies for increasing public safety and fairness, including programs that help to prevent crime, reduce recidivism, support fair systems of justice, and serve and protect victims.

Criminal justice is a system that can only be successful and fair if all parts of the system – prevention, enforcement, courts, corrections, victim assistance, and community supports – are in balance, utilize strategies rooted in data, and consistently measure performance. The federal contribution to state and local criminal justice services is very small (only 3.3 percent of the amount spent by state and local governments according to a 2008 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics), but it is the much-needed spark which allows state and local governments, as well as our organizations and local partners, to test new initiatives and coordinate across the justice system to find solutions that work.

Crime prevention is absolutely central to our nation's economic recovery. Business does not invest where crime flourishes. And individuals returning from confinement often need support, treatment, and tools for stable employment if they are to become productive members of society who contribute to our nation's economic vitality. According to the most recently available report, the total economic loss to victims in 2008 exceeded \$17 billion for both violent and property crimes.

Finally, the federal grant programs have been the catalyst for many initiatives that have brought about cost savings and broad changes in state criminal justice policy. States serve as the laboratories for these initiatives that, once proven successful, can be replicated on the federal level. Texas, Ohio, Kansas, Michigan, and many other states have shown remarkable success in reducing crime, lowering recidivism, restoring families, and saving taxpayer money – all at the same time. Programs based on the Justice

Reinvestment model can be adopted in the federal prison system to reduce overcrowding, break the cycle of recidivism, and reduce the rate of growth in the Bureau of Prisons' budget.

As practitioners and local, state, and national organizations that work across the entire criminal justice system - including juvenile delinquency prevention, crime prevention, law enforcement, victim services, prosecution, indigent defense, innocence programs, drug and other problem solving courts, corrections and community corrections, correctional reform, mental health and substance use treatment, and reentry support services - we know first-hand the indispensable role the federal grants play in our success. The reduction in federal funding since FY10 has been truly devastating, as reported by respondents to a survey conducted in the summer of 2012 by the National Criminal Justice Association and the Vera Institute of Justice. Crime fighting budgets have been slashed, jobs have been cut, and the impact has been felt across the criminal justice system.

In addition, over 3,600 chiefs, sheriffs, and practitioners from all 50 states signed letters in December 2012 expressing the importance of the federal grant programs and raising their concerns about future cuts. (To read a summary of the survey results and view the two stakeholder letters, visit www.ncja.org/sequestration.)

We thank you for the work you do and ask that the federal, state, local partnership supporting crime prevention and control is not cut any further in the final FY13 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Jack Cutrone
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CEO and Executive Director
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cc:

The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Frank Wolf, Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Science, Justice and Related Agencies

The Honorable Chaka Fattah, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Science, Justice and Related Agencies