

October XX, 2007

The Honorable XXXX  
United States Senate  
XXXX  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator XXXX:

As Congress completes its work on the FY 2008 Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) appropriations bills, the \_\_\_\_\_ your SAG or organization \_\_\_\_\_ takes this opportunity to react to present tensions in Washington around spending bills, and to articulate how critical it is that juvenile justice-related appropriations be secured for the 2008 fiscal year.

Youth and communities across America are at a crossroads. Even as youth crime in the United States remains near the lowest levels seen in the past three decades, the national violent crime is on the rise. Youth today confront a number of pressures to engage in delinquent and criminal behavior, including criminal gang activity.

Given this reality, we would expect Congress to prioritize funding for prevention and intervention to help youth avoid or quickly age-out of delinquent and criminal behavior. But this has not been the case. Overall, juvenile justice funds have been slashed by nearly 60% in recent years. At the same time, Congress continues to support legislation like S. 456, the Gang Abatement and Prevention Act of 2007, which recently passed Congress by unanimous consent and which emphasizes resources for suppression and incarceration over prevention and intervention.

To avoid or age-out of delinquent and criminal behavior, youth need community-based supports like mentoring, after-school programs, education assistance and, in appropriate cases, graduated sanctions that teach youth to take responsibility for their actions and be accountable for their own behavior. These and other similar programs are currently supported through a number of CJS-related funding streams, including the Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Program, currently the only federal funding source dedicated solely to delinquency prevention, and the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) Program, which allows States and units of local governments to enhance their juvenile court programs and practices. The funding for these and other related funding streams, however, is in jeopardy due to tensions between Congressional members, and Congress and the President.

At this critical time in our nation's children's lives, we call upon you as our representative and the representative of the communities we serve to stand firm in favor of children, youth and families.

Thank you for taking our concerns regarding federal funding of state and local efforts and opportunities into account as you consider the FY 2008 Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill and juvenile justice-related appropriations.

Sincerely,