



Feb. 9, 2022

President Joe Biden  
1660 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition, a broad network of organizations representing states, territories, and the District of Columbia, we are writing to express our sincere thanks for your support for youth justice programs in your Fiscal Year 2022 budget, and hope to see it finalized through Congress soon.

At the same time, we are deeply troubled by a shifting narrative embraced by some lawmakers and public officials that blames predominantly Brown and Black children for a rise in violence in our country, and calls for failed policies of the past to get “tough on kids.” To overcome these baseless claims and harmful rhetoric, it is important that you renew your commitment to robust federal funding for these proven, developmentally appropriate, evidence-supported programs in Fiscal Year 2023. **Federal investments play an essential role in state juvenile justice efforts to protect youth, prevent delinquency, and promote safe and equitable communities.**

When Congress reauthorized the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA) at the end of the 115th Congress,<sup>1</sup> the law reflected the most up-to-date evidence-based practices, research, and progress made in states across the country. Much work is left to be done to implement this law though, and states are in need of federal investments, particularly in training and technical assistance, to ensure that this can be done in a meaningful way.

Under the law, which was reauthorized in 2018, states are being asked to do more to receive their federal formula grants under Title II of the Act,<sup>2</sup> and the Office of Juvenile Justice and

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<sup>1</sup> Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017, H.R. 1809, 115th Cong. (1st Sess. 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Coalition for Juvenile Justice, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act: State Plan Requirements (Jan. 2018), *available at*

<http://www.act4jj.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/State%20Plans%20H.R.%206964%20JJJPA.pdf>; Act 4

JJ, Overview of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (Dec. 2018), *available at*

<http://www.act4jj.org/sites/default/files/resource->

Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is also required to provide additional technical assistance to states and key stakeholders, as well as produce more research. Despite these requirements, overall federal support of key juvenile justice programs has declined by a little over forty percent since the previous reauthorization in 2002, and we are concerned about the impact that any further reductions in funding would have on states' ability to serve youth.<sup>3</sup> While we were grateful to see an increase in funding for juvenile justice programs in FY2020 and again in FY2021, the funding levels are still below authorizing levels. We strongly urge you to include in your FY2023 budget request full funding levels in line with currently authorized levels.

***Require full implementation of the JJDPA by appropriating \$350 million dollars for Titles II & V of the Act in FY2023 budget, including:***

- **\$250,000,000** to carry out programs under the Charles Grassley Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Program, Title II of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, as authorized by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018:
  - not more than 5% goes to provide training and technical assistance to states
  - not more than 10% goes to support research conducted by OJJDP

Title II of JJDPA provides federal funding to states to promote delinquency prevention and assist them to comply with federally-mandated core requirements designed to protect children from the dangers of placement in adult jails and lockups; keep status offenders/non-delinquent children out of locked custody; and address the racial and ethnic disparities faced by youth of color in the justice system an important measure in addressing equity within our country's legal system.

- **\$100,000,000** to carry out programs under the Incentive Youth Promise Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs Act of 2018, Title V of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, as authorized by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018
  - 11% goes to support the Tribal Youth Program
  - \$89 million goes to support the Title V PROMISE grants

Title V is the only federal program that provides delinquency prevention funding at the local level to reach at-risk youth and help keep them out of the juvenile justice system. The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 renames this title "Incentive Grants for Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education (PROMISE)" and expands the uses of this grant program to include 29 funding areas, and establishes local youth councils to develop prevention programming that ensures needs of at-risk youth are met.

Tribal Youth are over-represented in state and local delinquency systems. The Juvenile Justice Reform Act provides an increased percentage in Title V funding for Tribal Youth Programs to ensure Tribes are able to invest in traditionally-grounded, trauma-based delinquency prevention programs.

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[files/JJDPA%20Reauthorization%20Summary%20December%202018.pdf](#).

<sup>3</sup> ACT 4 JUVENILE JUSTICE, JUVENILE JUSTICE FEDERAL FUNDING CHART (2020), *available at*

<http://www.act4jj.org/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/Historic%20Funding%20Chart%20-%20FY20.pdf>.

In addition, we urge you to include funding to make your campaign promises come to fruition, including:

- **\$100,000,000 to support state planning grants to close and repurpose failed and ineffective youth prisons to reduce inequities and improve youth outcomes.** Funding would support a robust state planning process to 1) close failed and ineffective facilities, 2) expand access to more effective and cost-efficient, community-based alternatives, and 3) address economic concerns, such as the re-employment of prison workers and the economic impact of facility closures on communities.

The youth prison model has failed young people and their families as well as undercut public safety. Racial inequities are pervasive—Black youth are 5 times more likely than their white peers to be incarcerated for similar offenses.<sup>4</sup> Children and youth who are incarcerated experience disproportionate rates of mental illness, physical and sexual abuse while incarcerated, are 39% less likely to graduate from high school, face greater obstacles to employment and earn lower incomes throughout their lifetimes.<sup>5</sup> Incarcerating youth disrupts natural engagement with families, school, and work, and as a result, incarcerated youth are 41% more likely to have entered adult prison by age 25.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the cost of youth incarceration is astronomical, especially considering these poor outcomes. The average cost of the most expensive confinement option in 48 states was *\$588 per day, or \$214,620 per year.*<sup>7</sup> There are community-based and family-centered interventions that are more effective at a fraction of the cost. Closing failed youth prisons would allow more young people and communities nationwide to receive effective interventions and programming that would dramatically improve outcomes, address racial disparities, reduce long-term costs, and ensure public safety.

Finally, these additional resources can ensure a strong federal response to youth delinquency and community safety:

- **\$30,000,000** for the Tiffany Joslyn Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Reauthorization and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Act of 2019 (H.R. 494), as passed by unanimous consent in the U.S. House of Representatives in the 115th and 116th Congress.<sup>8</sup>

Historically, funding through the JABG program has supported state efforts to effectively

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<sup>4</sup> “Statistical Briefing Book, Juveniles in Corrections: Demographics” Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2017. Available at:

<https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/corrections/qa08205.asp?qaDate=2017>.

<sup>5</sup> Aizer, Anne and Joseph Doyle. “What is the long-term impact of incarcerating juveniles?” 2013.

Available at: <https://voxeu.org/article/what-long-term-impact-incarcerating-juveniles>.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> “Sticker Shock: Calculating the Full Price Tag for Youth Incarceration,” Justice Policy Institute, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Tiffany Joslyn Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Reauthorization and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Act of 2019, H.R. 494, 116th Cong. (2019).

strengthen supports for court-involved youth. These funds support vital state efforts to effectively strengthen juvenile court services, such as behavioral health screening and assessment for court-involved youth and alternatives to detention.

- **\$100,000,000** to support OJJDP, and to ensure that it is able to return to at least 50% of its operations levels. The office saw major reductions in staffing over the past four years and has not seen staffing levels this low in more than a decade, directly impacting their ability to support states and serve our young people.

*The JJDPA has been an extremely successful program*, yet cuts to these programs have weakened the federal-state partnership and stymied national, state, and local progress in this area. We need federal leadership that encourages states to stay the course and invest in programs that work for our children and communities. A lack of deep investment would inhibit the improvements made by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 and result in fewer youth having access to services designed to keep them from engaging in unlawful behaviors and penetrating deeper into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

The vision for youth articulated by your Youth Justice Action Month proclamation set a critical tone, that our children deserve supports and second chances, and that the United States is no place for racism. Existing federal law advances these principles, but needs adequate funding to be successful. Additionally, states need to close harmful, punitive failed youth prisons and plan to repurpose them to achieve truly effective and cost efficient programming and outcomes for young people, families, and their communities. The National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition urges you to include these essential supports for youth and communities as part of your FY2023 budget request.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,  
*The Steering Committee of NJJDP:*

Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth  
Center for Children's Law and Policy  
Coalition for Juvenile Justice  
Justice Policy Institute  
National Juvenile Justice Network  
Rights4Girls  
The Sentencing Project  
Youth First Initiative