April 15, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable José Serrano
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Moran, Chairwoman Lowey, Chairman Serrano, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Members Shaheen, Granger, and Aderholt:

The undersigned organizations urge you to protect and sustain funding for key justice assistance grant programs within the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs, Office of Violence Against Women, and COPS Office in the FY20 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill by reaching a bipartisan FY20 budget cap agreement that raises the caps, and by ensuring a robust 302(b) allocation for the FY20 CJS bill.

The organizations listed below represent stakeholders from across the justice system – including states, counties, municipalities, and organizations that work on juvenile justice, crime prevention, law enforcement, victim services, prosecution, indigent defense, problem solving courts, behavioral health treatment, corrections and community corrections, justice system reform, and reentry, as well as those that represent justice system-involved individuals and families. We know first-hand that federal justice assistance grant programs have helped secure cost savings and changes in federal, state, and local criminal justice policy. Justice assistance grants have spurred innovations and initiatives replicated by federal agencies and jurisdictions nationwide.
In recent years, federal funding for these important grant programs has declined steeply. Since FY10, or passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA), funding for state and local justice assistance grant programs has been cut by up to 40 percent. These reductions impose harmful limits on the federal government’s crucial role in testing and replicating evidence-based approaches and advancing justice system reform.

As Congress faces return of the BCA’s automatic spending cuts, we urge you to negotiate a new budget agreement that averts these cuts and provides additional funding overall and for the FY20 CJS bill to support new investments that would help expand effective programs as well as help achieve bipartisan criminal justice reform. Over the past six years, Congress routinely has reached bipartisan budget agreements that have reduced the BCA’s harmful sequestration cuts. Without a new FY20 budget agreement, overall non-defense discretionary (NDD) funding would fall by 12 percent (adjusting for inflation) compared to fiscal 2019 levels. Since FY10, DOJ grant programs have contributed almost $1.5 billion to deficit reduction and these programs often have suffered deeper percentage cuts than other NDD programs. Our nation’s criminal justice system is shouldering the costly burden of responding to a national health and mental health crisis. Further cuts in funding will significantly set back the progress made over the past several years in addressing these needs, as well as advancing juvenile justice reform and reducing recidivism. These funding cuts have a direct impact on public safety and slow progress towards implementing bipartisan criminal justice reform nationwide.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this very important issue. We look forward to working with you as the budget and appropriations process moves forward this year.

Sincerely,

American Jail Association
American Probation and Parole Association
American Psychological Association
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
Campaign for Youth Justice
Center for Children's Law and Policy
Children's Advocacy Institute
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
College & Community Fellowship
District 3 Drug and Violent Crimes Task Force, Atlus, Oklahoma
District 19 District Attorney's Office, Durant, Oklahoma
District 23 Drug and Violent Crimes Task Force, Shawnee, Oklahoma
District 27 Drug and Violent Crimes Task Force, Sallisaw, Oklahoma
District Attorney #25, Okmulgee, Oklahoma
District Attorney's Office, Eufaula, Oklahoma
District Attorneys Council, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
District of Columbia Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
District Three District Attorney, Oklahoma
Eufaula Police Department, Oklahoma
Futures Without Violence
Guthrie Police Department, Oklahoma
Harmon County Sheriff's Office, Oklahoma
Healthy Teen Network
Innocence Project
Interfaith Action for Human Rights
Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office, Oklahoma
Justice for Families
Justice Innovations
Justice Roundtable
JustLeadership USA
Juvenile Justice Coalition, Ohio
Lincoln County Sheriff’s Office, Oklahoma
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Major Cities Chiefs Association
Major County Sheriffs of America
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance
McIntosh County Jail, Oklahoma
McIntosh County Sheriff’s Office, Oklahoma
Montana Board of Crime Control
Morris Oklahoma Police Department
NAACP
National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies (NAPSA)
National Network for Youth
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
National Association of VOCA Assistance Administration (NAVAA)
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
National Crime Prevention Council
National Criminal Justice Association
National Crittenton
National District Attorneys Association
National Legal Aid & Defender Association
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
North Dakota Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation
Office of the District Attorney, District 12, Claremore, Oklahoma
Oklahoma Department of Corrections
Oklahoma District Attorneys Council
Okmulgee County District Attorney's Office, Oklahoma
Pretrial Justice Institute
Safenet Services, Inc.
Safer Foundation
School Social Work Association of America
SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics
StoptheDrugWar.org
The Daniel Initiative
Treatment Communities of America
True Colors United
Tulsa County District Attorney's Office, Oklahoma
W. Haywood Burns Institute