April 20, 2017

The Honorable Richard Shelby  The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chairman  Ranking Member
United States Senate  United States Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building  506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510  Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Culberson  The Honorable Jose Serrano
Chairman  Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives  United States House of Representatives
241 Cannon House Office Building  2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515  Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Shelby and Shaheen and Congressmen Culberson and Serrano:

We, the undersigned national groups representing a broad cross-section of the criminal and juvenile justice systems, thank you for your strong, consistent and thoughtful leadership on federal assistance to state, tribal and local evidence-based criminal justice programming. In particular, we applaud your steadfast support for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program and respectfully request funding for the program in the final FY17 and the FY18 bills that meets or exceeds the amount provided in the FY17 House version of the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) bill.

We recognize the competing pressures you face as you seek to prioritize funding for many important programs in the CJS bill. Funding for Byrne JAG has been reduced by one-third since FY10, causing a serious contraction in the reach of Byrne JAG-funded programs across the states and territories. We are concerned that additional reductions will further hinder our ability to prevent and deter a rise in violent crime, confront the opioid epidemic, and reduce recidivism.

Byrne JAG is the cornerstone federal crime-fighting program, supporting the federal government’s crucial role in spurring innovation, as well as testing and replicating evidence-based practices nationwide. Because Byrne JAG is flexible, states and local communities are able to use funding to address needs and fill gaps across the entire criminal and juvenile justice systems — in prevention, enforcement, courts, prosecution and indigent defense, corrections, victim assistance, and other community support. This flexibility is the hallmark of the Byrne JAG program.

In most states, the state formula grant awards are made using a peer-reviewed, competitive application process based on a statewide strategic plan developed in conjunction with the state’s system stakeholders. In partnership with the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), the State Administering Agencies (SAAs) are engaged in a concerted strategy to increase investment in data-driven programs that can be evaluated and replicated. Because of these efforts, Byrne JAG is advancing the evidence-based practices movement within the criminal justice field at a remarkable pace.

Byrne JAG grants also serve as a catalyst for collaboration within communities and across states, including the critical role multijurisdictional drug task forces play in targeting regional drug trafficking organizations. This cross-jurisdictional model is being replicated in states across the country to tackle other cross-boundary crimes, such as human trafficking and cyber crime, while saving money and increasing efficiency in the process.
The National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) periodically surveys the SAAs, gathering a wealth of information about how states and local governments allocate Byrne JAG funding to meet system needs. From that survey, we know that Byrne JAG dollars were invested broadly across all segments of the criminal justice system in FY14, as illustrated in the chart below.

As you can see from the signatures below, Byrne JAG is supported by a broad and dedicated coalition of national organizations from across the criminal and juvenile justice systems. We recognize the central role Byrne JAG plays in preventing victimization; supporting innovative law enforcement practices; supporting the fair administration of and access to justice; serving and protecting crime victims; and leveraging other federal, state, local and private dollars in the balanced functioning of the criminal justice system.

We very much appreciate your leadership in fighting for a strong, vibrant Byrne JAG program. We thank you for your steadfast support and respectfully request strong funding for Byrne JAG in the FY17 and FY18 CJS appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Karhlton Moore
President
National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA)

Michael Bouchard
Vice President of Government Affairs
Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA)
Jonathan Thompson  
Executive Director  
National Sheriffs Association (NSA)

Thomas Manger  
President  
Major City Chiefs Association (MCAA)

Michael A. Ramos  
President  
National District Attorneys Association (NDAA)

Bob Bushman  
President  
National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition (NNOAC)

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Executive Director  
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)

Matt Chase  
Executive Director  
National Association of Counties (NACo)

Clarence Anthony  
Clarence Anthony  
CEO/Executive Director  
National League of Cities (NLC)
Michael Thompson
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Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG)

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National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

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David LaBahn  
President/CEO  
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA)

Jo-Ann Wallace  
President and CEO  
National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA)

Chief Justice Richard Barajas (Ret.)  
Executive Director  
National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)

Carson Fox  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP)

Robert L. Morrison  
Executive Director  
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)

Arthur T. Dean  
Major General, U.S. Army, Retired  
Chairman and CEO  
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

Pamela F. Rodriguez  
President and CEO  
Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC), Illinois
Robert J. Kasabian
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American Jail Association (AJA)

Dan Eddy
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National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards (NACVCB)

James A. Gondles, Jr.
Executive Director
American Correctional Association (ACA)

Steve Derene
Executive Director
National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators (NAVAA)

Melvin H. Wilson
Manager, Department of Social Justices and Human Rights
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

Clinton W. Anderson
Interim Executive Director
Public Interest
American Psychological Association

Jim Bueermann
President
Police Foundation
Matt Josephs  
Senior Vice President, Policy  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)  

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Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ)  

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Executive Director  
IJIS Institute (IJIS)  

Veronica Cunningham  
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Executive Director  
American Probation and Parole Association (APPA)  

Scott Berkowitz  
President  
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)  

Frank Papish  
President  
National Alliance of State Drug Enforcement Agencies (NASDEA)  

Matthew Gamette  
Chair  
Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO)
Charles P. Schoville
President
National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations (NAGIA)

Sam A. Cabral
International President
International Union of Police Associations (IUPA)

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Association of VAWA Administrators (AVA)

Mai Fernandez
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National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC)

Scott Came
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Director of National Policy  
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Mari Kay Bickett  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)

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National Network for Youth (NN4Y)

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Marcy Mistrett  
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Lovisa Stannow  
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Virginia Sloan
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Marc Schindler
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Susan Vivian Mangold
Executive Director
Juvenile Law Center

Grace Bauer-Lubow
Grace Bauer-Lubow
Executive Director
Justice for Families

Copies to:

Senator Thad Cochran, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Senator Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Representative Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies