SAG Letterhead

Date

President Barack Obama

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of [**name of your SAG**], the advisory body of citizen-volunteers appointed by [**title and name of state’s chief executive**] to improve [**state’s**] juvenile justice system under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), we are writing to urge you to continue to include adequate funding for key juvenile justice programs as you work on the Administration’s budget recommendations for Fiscal Year 2015.

Our message is simple: even in times of budget belt-tightening, it is critical that we continue to respond effectively to the needs and behaviors of youth charged with delinquent offenses or at risk of coming into contact with the courts. To achieve this, we look to the federal-state partnership on juvenile justice and delinquency prevention to obtain important information on what works and what doesn’t, and to leverage modest amounts of federal dollars that enable our state and local dollars to go farther and do more. To maintain our successes in reducing delinquency and preserving community safety, we ask that you include the following funding levels for juvenile justice programs as follows:

* $80 million for the JJDPA Title II State Formula Grants Program;
* $65 million for the JJDPA Title V Delinquency Prevention Program with no earmarks;
* $30 million for Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) Program;
* $25 million for the new Juvenile Justice Realignment Incentive Grants to help states implement evidence-based strategies that reduce youth incarceration and foster better outcomes for youth;
* $25 million in community-based violence prevention initiatives, 50% of which will support public health approaches to violence prevention; and
* $10 million for competitive grants that focus on girls in the juvenile justice system.

For more than 35 years, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) has provided critical federal funding to states to comply with a set of core requirements designed to protect children from the dangers of adult jails and lockups; keep status offenders out of locked custody; and address racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system. Title II of JJDPA funding supports state compliance with these core protections and helps ensure that states have the resources to build effective state systems and Title V is the only federal program that provides delinquency prevention funding at the local level to reach youth at risk and help keep them out of the juvenile justice system. In addition to these JJDPA programs, funding through the JABG program supports state efforts to effectively strengthen supports for court-involved youth.

Here in [**your jurisdiction],** we have made tremendous progress with the guidance and opportunities provided by federal juvenile justice funding. **[Talk briefly about one or two examples.]**

We also want to commend the Administration for putting forward several new initiatives in last year’s budget proposal. Specifically, we support allocating resources for the Juvenile Justice Realignment Incentive Grants which can help states implement systems reforms that promote the use of community-based alternatives to reduce overall youth incarceration and the prevalence of racial and ethnic disparities. It is critical that as we continue to work to reduce youth incarceration we also address problems in our systems that have seen racial and ethnic disparities grow. These grants will provide targeted resources to assist states build more effective, fairer systems and, as a result, better outcomes for youth and the public.

In response to the Newtown tragedy and the daily violence that plagues many communities, we are also supportive of the new monies allocated for community-based violence prevention using a multi-sector, public health approach.

Finally, the Administration’s proposal to invest in a competitive grant program to help states and localities better address the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system should continue to be advanced. Girls are the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice population and this program will help provide specific, targeted support for state efforts to implement best practices with respect to at-risk and system-involved girls.

Appropriations for federal juvenile justice programs have declined to the ***lowest levels in more than a decade***. It remains critical that the Administration put forward a budget proposal that reinforces the important role of the federal law recommending funding levels sufficient to ensure that states are able to continue to comply or to come into compliance with the JJDPA, and to invest in innovative and cost-effective reforms that keep youth out of trouble and communities safe. At a minimum, we ask that you include the same funding levels for these key programs put forth by the Administration in last year’s budget proposal. Any less would move even further away from the targeted federal involvement that has historically provided critical national leadership to states in preventing youth from entering the justice system.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

[**SAG Chair**]

cc: Eric H. Holder, Jr., Attorney General of the United States
 Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Director, Office of Management and Budget