

April 23, 2024

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States Senate
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
2406 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
2102 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Shaheen, Ranking Member Moran, Chair Rogers and Ranking Member Cartwright:

We, the undersigned national organizations representing a broad cross-section of the criminal and juvenile justice systems and impacted communities, thank you for your strong, consistent and thoughtful leadership on federal assistance to strengthen and improve state, tribal and local justice systems. In particular, we thank you for your steadfast support for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program and respectfully request that the Fiscal Year 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill continue to restore funding the program has lost in recent years.

Byrne JAG is the cornerstone federal justice assistance grant program. It is one of the most important tools states and localities have for spurring innovation and for testing and replicating promising practices that keep people safe and make our justice systems more responsive to the needs of their communities. Because Byrne JAG is distributed by formula, it reaches every state and a broad cross-section of local communities, from large urban areas to smaller townships and rural counties. Due to Byrne JAG's flexibility, grantees use these funds to address their most pressing needs as well as to fill gaps across the entire justice system – for crime and violence prevention, law enforcement, courts, specialty courts, prosecution, public defense, corrections, community corrections, alternatives to incarceration, crisis response, mental health and substance use treatment and services, as well as a wide array of reentry programs.

This flexibility is the hallmark and advantage of the Byrne JAG program. It allows states to respond quickly to emerging needs and crises. It also means that states and localities can work across systems. This is helpful, even necessary, when considering alternative-to-incarceration programs, particularly for people with mental health and substance use disorders.

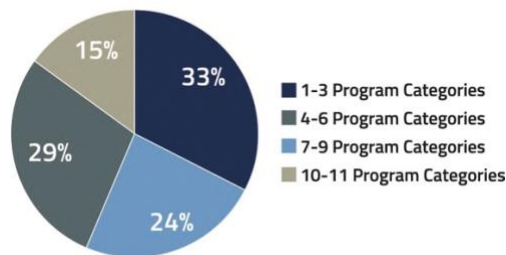
Byrne JAG is a critical resource for preventing and responding to gun violence and other forms of violent crime in urban and rural communities. The funds provide law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, public defenders and other organizations working on the ground with the resources they need to enhance operations and share information, adopt prevention and diversion strategies and purchase needed equipment and diagnostic tools. State and local law enforcement agencies can use Byrne JAG to respond quickly to new and emerging public safety challenges in their communities, including in recent years the opioid epidemic, and augment cross-agency responses to regional crime, including drug, violent crime, anti-gang and anti-human trafficking efforts.

According to the [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#), “The [Byrne JAG] program has supported and promoted improvements in every aspect of the justice system, from policing to prosecution and public defense, to corrections and reentry from incarceration. Its impact on advancing public safety and equal justice has been consequential.... It is impossible to describe a ‘typical’ program that is supported by Byrne JAG grants because the program intentionally rejects a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, public safety agencies design and submit plans that address the unique challenges facing their communities...[and have] latitude to innovate.”

The statute describes the justice system, and authorizes spending, in any or all of nine program areas, the ninth having been added by the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022: (1) law enforcement; (2) prosecution and courts; (3) prevention and education; (4) corrections and community corrections; (5) drug treatment and enforcement; (6) planning, evaluation, and technology improvement; (7) crime victim and witness programs (other than compensation); (8) mental health programs and related law enforcement and corrections programs, including behavioral programs and crisis intervention teams; and, (9) implementation of state crisis intervention court proceedings and related programs or initiatives, including but not limited to mental health courts, drug courts; veterans courts; and extreme risk protection order programs (with strict constitutional safeguards).

Data reported by the State Administering Agencies shows the vast majority of states extend the reach of Byrne JAG program dollars across the justice system. When the nine program area data (representing spending in 2023) is disaggregated into 11 program categories¹, two-thirds of states reported distributing at least a portion of the dollars in four or more categories, and nearly 40 percent in seven or more.

**Percent of States Spending
in Multiple Program Categories**



Based on spending in 2023

In addition, in December 2022, Congress passed and President Biden signed the [Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022](#). This legislation directs the Department of Justice to identify best practices in de-escalation training and law enforcement/mental health treatment partnerships. It authorized (and Congress appropriated) \$20 million in FY24 and \$40 million in FY25 to identify quality training, to support train-the-trainer trainings nationwide and prepare for a new grant program that will flow through the Byrne JAG formula program. The COPS Office and Bureau of Justice Assistance are making excellent progress in the early steps of implementation which will allow law enforcement agencies and mental health responders from across the country, in communities small and large, to access high-quality training at no additional cost.

As evidenced by the signatories below, Byrne JAG has the broad support of a dedicated coalition of national organizations from across the criminal and juvenile justice systems, including impacted communities. We

¹ The 11 program categories are: Law Enforcement, Community Corrections/Reentry, Prosecution, Public Defense, Behavioral Health/Crisis Response, Juveniles/Crime Prevention, Courts, Crime Labs/Forensics, Victim Services, Corrections, Planning, Assessment and Evaluation.

recognize the central role Byrne JAG plays in preventing victimization, supporting innovative law enforcement practices, advancing the fair administration of and access to justice, serving and protecting crime victims, improving outcomes for the justice-involved, interrupting the cycle of crime and leveraging other federal, state, local and private dollars in the balanced functioning of the criminal justice system.

We recognize the competing pressures you face as you seek to prioritize funding for the many important programs in the CJS bill. Funding for Byrne JAG was reduced by over one-third over several years beginning in FY10 which caused a serious contraction in the reach of Byrne JAG-funded programs. We were grateful for the steady increases in funding over the past several years and, hence, were saddened to see the program be cut, along with so many others, in the final FY24 bill. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Fiscal Year 2025 CJS appropriations bill begin to return to the FY10 funding of \$520 million for the Byrne JAG formula program plus \$40 million to continue implementation the Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Act.

Sincerely,



Jessica Hulsey
President and CEO
Addiction Policy Forum



Carson Fox
Chief Executive Officer
All Rise

Penny Rosen

Penny Rosen, LCSW-R, BCD-P
Legislative Committee Chair
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work



Robert Green
Executive Director
American Correctional Association



Laurel Stine, J.D., M.A.
Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention



Chris Daniels
Executive Director
American Jail Association



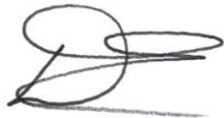
Veronica Cunningham
Executive Director
American Probation and Parole Association

Lise Bram

Lise Bram
Deputy Executive Director
Anxiety and Depression Association of America



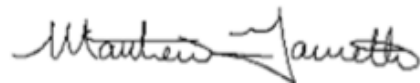
David LaBahn
President/CEO
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys



Drew Evans
Superintendent, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
President, Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies

Barrye Price

Barrye L. Price, Ph.D. Major General, US Army Retired
President and CEO
CADCA



Matthew Gamette

Chair

Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations on behalf of its members:

American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Board of Forensic Toxicology
American Society of Crime Lab Directors
International Association for Identification
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists



Kevin Kempf
Executive Director
Correctional Leaders Association



Megan Quattlebaum
Director
CSG Justice Center

Robin Kimbrough-Melton

Robin Kimbrough-Melton, JD
Executive Officer
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice



Maria M. Cardiellos
Executive Director
IJIS Institute



Michael Becar
Executive Director
International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training



Phil Nunes
President
International Community Justice Association

David Downey

David Downey
President/CEO
International Downtown Association

Sam A Cabral

Sam A. Cabral
International President
International Union of Police Associations

Matt d. josephs

Matt Josephs
Senior Vice President, Policy
Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Laura Cooper

Laura Cooper
Executive Director
Major Cities Chiefs Association

Bill Brown

Bill Brown
Sheriff, Santa Barbara County, CA
President
Major County Sheriffs of America

John Snook

John Snook

Chief Policy Officer
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute



Don Payton
President
National Alliance of State Drug Enforcement Agencies



Hannah Wesolowski
Chief Advocacy Officer
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness



Jonah C. Cunningham
President/CEO
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors



Matthew D. Chase
CEO/Executive Director
National Association of Counties



Regena Spratling, PhD, RN, APRN, CPNP-PC, FAANP, FAAN
President
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners



William J. Johnson
Executive Director
National Association of Police Organizations



Jim Sawyer
Executive Director
National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies



Jonah C. Cunningham
Executive Director
National Association for Rural Mental Health



Anthony Estreet, PhD, MBA, LCSW-C
Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Social Workers



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



Joey Orduna Hastings
Chief Executive Officer
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges



Chris Asplen
Executive Director
National Criminal Justice Association

Nelson O. Bunn, Jr.

Nelson Bunn
Executive Director
National District Attorneys Association

Clarence Anthony

Clarence Anthony
CEO/Executive Director
National League of Cities

Beverly Malone

Beverly Malone, PhD, RN, FAAN
President and Chief Executive Officer
National League for Nursing

Eric Brown

Eric Brown
President
National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition

Claire Ponder Selib

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Executive Director
National Organization for Victim Assistance

James Burch

James Burch
President
National Policing Institute

Jonathan Thompson
Executive Director
National Sheriffs' Association

Jac A. Charlier
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Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative

Penny Rosen

Penny Rosen, LCSW-R, BCD-P
Steering Committee Member
Psychotherapy Action Network

Joel K. Johnson
President and CEO
TASC, Inc. (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities)

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
The U.S. Conference of Mayors

cc:

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Kay Granger, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
Members of the Senate Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Members of the House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittee

