

January 21, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr:

We, the undersigned national groups representing a broad cross-section of the criminal and juvenile justice systems, thank you for the Department of Justice's (DOJ) strong and consistent leadership overseeing the federal assistance to state, tribal and local criminal justice systems. In particular, we applaud your steadfast support for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) and the COPS Hiring programs and respectfully request that the Administration's Fiscal Year 2021 budget request to Congress begin to return funding to these programs that have been lost in recent years.

The Byrne JAG and COPS programs are the cornerstones of the federal government's support for state and local law enforcement. Since their inception, the Byrne JAG and COPS programs have provided urgently needed resources and tested new strategies for reducing violent crime and recidivism.

Byrne JAG powers innovation in states and local communities. Its flexibility is its strength, allowing states and local governments to address their most pressing challenges and fill gaps across the entire criminal and juvenile justice systems – in law enforcement, courts, prosecution, indigent defense, corrections, prevention, treatment, victim assistance, and other community supports. In recent years, states and localities have been able to draw upon Byrne JAG funds to jumpstart their efforts to fight the crisis of opioid misuse. This flexibility is the hallmark and the advantage of the Byrne JAG program.

Byrne JAG funding also serves 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 cybercrime, while saving money and increasing efficiency in the process.

Likewise, the COPS Office and its corresponding programs provide invaluable resources and technical assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies, keeping our communities safe. Sufficient funding is critical to ensuring that law enforcement has the resources necessary to effectively and efficiently protect the public, because in recent years law enforcement agencies have experienced shrinking budgets and difficult decisions concerning operational readiness and number of officers on patrol.

We recognize the competing pressures you face as you present the Department's budget request to Congress. Yet funding for Byrne JAG has been reduced by 35 percent and COPS Hiring by 50 percent since Fiscal Year 2010, causing a serious contraction in the reach of Byrne JAG-funded programs and law enforcement officer hiring across the states and territories. This is hindering our ability to prevent and deter a rise in violent crime, to confront the opioid epidemic, to reduce recidivism, and to improve outcomes for individuals with addiction and mental illness who come into contact with the justice system. For these reasons we respectfully request that the Administration's Fiscal Year 2021 budget request to Congress begin to return funding to these programs that have been lost in recent years.

Sincerely,

Addiction Policy Forum
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Jail Association
American Probation and Parole Association
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies
Campaign for Youth Justice
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
IJIS Institute
International Community Corrections Association
International Union of Police Associations
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Major Cities Chiefs Association
Major County Sheriffs of America
National Alliance of Gang Investigators' Associations
National Alliance of State Drug Enforcement Agencies
National Association of Counties
National Association of Drug Court Professionals
National Association of Pretrial Service Agencies
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators
National Center for Victims of Crime
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
National Criminal Justice Association
National District Attorneys Association
National Juvenile Justice Network
National League of Cities
National Narcotics Officers Associations Coalition
National Organization for Victim Assistance

National Police Foundation

SEARCH

Stop Child Predators

Treatment Advocacy Center

U.S. Conference of Mayors