

Date

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

We write to thank you for your strong and consistent support of the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program, and for the funding in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015. We write to ask that you maintain funding for the program in the fiscal year 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill.

As thoughtful stewards of taxpayer money, we must continually assess where federal support is necessary and appropriate. It is clear to us that the strong foundation of federal, state, and local partnerships built from the Byrne JAG program remains as vital as ever.

One of the highest responsibilities of government is to protect its citizens and ensure public safety. We are concerned that regional, national and international gangs and drug trafficking organizations are increasingly driving the crime on our streets, embedding criminal activity deeper into our rural communities, and driving a dangerous new wave of heroin addiction across the country. Byrne JAG-funded programs facilitate cross-governmental intelligence and information sharing on terror and criminal threats, drug and human trafficking organizations and sexual predators. This collaboration is essential to address today's criminal networks that cross city, state and even international boundaries.

Nationwide, the overall crime rate is at its lowest level since the 1960s due in part to advances in policing, information technology, offender management, and cross-jurisdictional coordination support by the Byrne JAG program. Crime in some communities, however, is on the rise again, reminding us that we must never become complacent when it comes to the safety of our citizens. Federal support for Byrne JAG and state and local law enforcement is our first line of defense against criminals and the Byrne JAG program is vital in combating crimes of all types.

Through Byrne JAG, the Department of Justice (DOJ) plays a crucial role in spurring innovation and testing cost-effective, evidence-based approaches to fighting crime. With over 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the U.S., cross-jurisdictional learning and coordination cannot happen effectively without federal support.

Furthermore, crime prevention and control can be truly successful only when the criminal justice system is in balance, with all of the parts functioning effectively. Byrne JAG's flexibility allows state and local governments to target their most pressing needs in law enforcement, prevention, pretrial services and treatment, courts, corrections, crime victims' services, prosecution and defense, and post-incarceration reentry services. Byrne JAG also leverages the massive investment that already occurs regularly in these programs at the state and local level.

We know of your steadfast commitment to the Byrne JAG program in years past, and we ask for your continued support in the fiscal year 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill.

Sincerely,