



January 28, 2016

Honorable Shaun Donovan
Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Donovan:

As you complete your work on the President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2017, I urge you to include at least \$120 million within the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for the Youth Mentoring Grant program to ensure that vulnerable young people have the necessary supports to stay out of the juvenile justice system.

Youth from low-resource homes or communities are more likely than their more affluent peers to come into contact with the juvenile justice system.¹ For the 31.8 million American children growing up in such circumstances,² the complex problems associated with low economic status may become significant risk factors for juvenile delinquency.³

Evidence shows that mentorship is an effective prevention and intervention strategy for supporting these at-risk youth. According to a report by the National Mentoring Partnership, at-risk young adults who had a mentor are 55 percent more likely to be enrolled in college or other postsecondary education than their peers without mentors; 78 percent more likely to volunteer regularly in their communities; 81 percent more likely to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities; and more than twice as likely to hold a leadership position in a club, school council, or sports team.⁴

School-based mentorship programs are an especially effective strategy for reaching youth from low-resource communities. Teachers and school faculty can identify students whose social, emotional, or academic behaviors signal a need for prevention or intervention services. Mentorship programs based in schools also promote the school connectedness associated with lower levels of delinquency.⁵ Such programs provide mentoring along with academic supports, service learning, college tours, and life skills to reach success in higher education and beyond.

As a former principal and the architect of the nationally-recognized 5000 Role Models program, I can attest that school-based mentoring is a proven and positive prevention and intervention strategy. I stand ready to continue working with the Administration on this issue, and I look forward to your taking into close consideration this important request as part of that effort.

Sincerely,



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

¹ National Center for Juvenile Justice (2014) *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2014 National Report*. Washington, D.C.: Melissa Sickmund and Charles Puzzanchera (eds.).

² According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, 21.9 million children under the age of 12 and 9.9 million children between the ages of 12 and 18 live in low-income families. National Center for Children in Poverty (2013) *Basic Facts About Low-income Children*. New York, NY: Yang Jiang, Mercedes Ekono, and Curtis Skinner.

³ Sickmund and Puzzanchera 2014.

⁴ Bruce, Mary and Bridgeland, John (2014). *The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring*. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research Associates for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.

⁵ Monahan, Kathryn C., Oesterle Sabrina, & Hawkins, David. "Predictors and Consequences of School Connectedness: The Case for Prevention." *Prevention Researcher*, 17, 3-6.