

November 5, 2018

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

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

We, the undersigned national groups representing a broad cross-section of the criminal and juvenile justice systems, thank you for your strong and consistent leadership, in the Senate and now at the Department of Justice, for federal assistance to state, tribal and local criminal justice programming. In particular, we applaud your steadfast support for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) and the COPS Hiring programs and respectfully request full funding for these programs in the Administration's FY20 budget request to Congress.

The Byrne JAG and COPS programs are the cornerstone 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 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 grants also serve 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.

Funding for Byrne JAG has been reduced by Congress by one-third and the COPS Hiring program by one-half since FY10, causing a serious contraction in the reach of Byrne JAG-funded programs and law enforcement officer hiring across the states and territories. Additional reductions will further

hinder our ability to prevent and deter a rise in violent crime, confront the opioid epidemic, and reduce recidivism.

We very much appreciate your leadership in fighting for law enforcement including for the strong, vibrant and fully funded Byrne JAG and COPS programs. We thank you for your steadfast support and respectfully request full funding for Byrne JAG and COPS Hiring in your Fiscal Year 2020 budget request to Congress.

Sincerely,

Addiction Policy Forum
American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Association of Psychiatry and the Law
American Board of Forensic Toxicology
American Correctional Association
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers
American Jail Association
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
American University Justice Programs Office
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations
Council of State Governments
International Association for Identification
International Association of Chiefs of Police
International Community Corrections Association
International Union of Police Associations
Justice Research & Statistics Association
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Major Cities Chiefs Association
Major County Sheriffs' Association
National Alliance of Gang Investigators' Associations
National Association of Counties
National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards
National Association of Medical Examiners
National Association of Police Organizations
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 Conference of State Legislatures
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
National Crime Prevention Council
National Criminal Justice Association

National District Attorneys Association
National Fusion Center Association
National League of Cities
National Narcotics Officers Associations Coalition
National Organization for Victim Assistance
Police Foundation
PreTrial Judicial Institute
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network
Society of Forensic Toxicologists
Stop Child Predators
U.S. Conference of Mayors