

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.

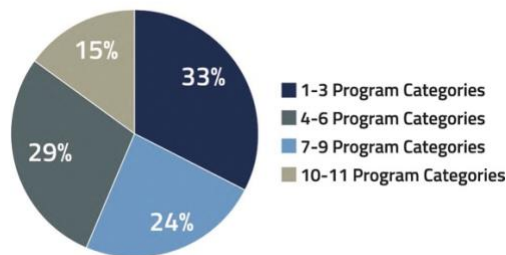
Byrne JAG is a critical resource for preventing and responding to gun violence and other forms of violent crime in urban and rural communities. The funds provide law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, public defenders and other organizations working on the ground with the resources they need to enhance 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 categories<sup>1</sup>, 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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



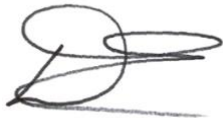
Veronica Cunningham  
Executive Director  
American Probation and Parole Association

*Lise Bram*

Lise Bram  
Deputy Executive Director  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America



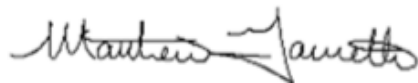
David LaBahn  
President/CEO  
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys



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  
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*Robin Kimbrough-Melton*

Robin Kimbrough-Melton, JD  
Executive Officer  
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Phil Nunes  
President  
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David Downey  
President/CEO  
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*Sam A Cabral*

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*Matt Josephs*

Matt Josephs  
Senior Vice President, Policy  
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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



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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  
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National Association for Rural Mental Health



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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*

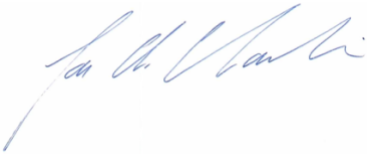
Claire Ponder Selib  
Executive Director  
National Organization for Victim Assistance

*James Burch*

James Burch  
President  
National Policing Institute



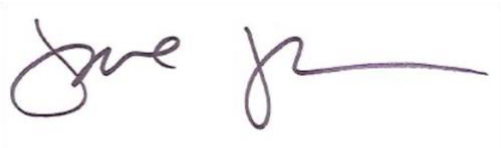
Jonathan Thompson  
Executive Director  
National Sheriffs' Association



Jac A. Charlier  
Executive Director  
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

