

United States Senate

June 16, 2021

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

We write to thank you for your strong and consistent support of the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program in the past. We write to ask that you fund the program at the highest possible level in the fiscal year 2022 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. As such, Byrne JAG's strength in flexibility is paramount to fighting crime. States and local communities use Byrne JAG funds to focus on the most pressing issues facing them. For instance, regional, national, and international gangs and drug trafficking organizations continue to drive the crime on our streets, embedding criminal activity deeper into our rural communities, and encouraging addiction and drug abuse 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.

Furthermore, crime control and prevention 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.

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 and reducing recidivism. With over 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the U.S., cross-jurisdictional learning and coordination cannot happen effectively without federal support.

Since 2005, the Byrne JAG program has successfully funded advances in policing, information technology, recidivism reduction programming, pretrial diversion to treatment, better coordination between the criminal justice and behavioral health systems, and cross-jurisdictional coordination, each of which plays an integral role in decreasing the overall crime rate. States continue to rely on Byrne JAG's flexibility to apply the program tools that best address the needs of local units. Despite this progress, we must not become complacent when it comes to our citizens' safety and well-being. 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.

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 2022 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill.

Sincerely,