

April 16, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jose Serrano
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Shaheen, Chairman Serrano, and Ranking Member Aderholt:

The undersigned organizations request that as you draft the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, you consider including \$89 million for the Research, Evaluation, and Statistics account within the Department of Justice budget: \$41 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and \$48 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics. These agencies collectively serve as the research and data-gathering arm of the Department of Justice, filling an important role in helping the agency to understand and implement science-based strategies for crime prevention and control, efficient victim services, and use of forensic breakthroughs. As you continue to make strides in reforming our nation's criminal justice system, it is more important than ever to support the agencies that demonstrate what strategies are most effective.

Congressional mandates placed on NIJ and BJS' work continue to grow despite annual budgets for the agencies that today are nearly half what they were ten years ago. This leaves increasingly fewer resources each year for the agencies' core programs and new innovative research activities. Congress must prioritize federal data collection and research if we are to provide local, state, and federal officials with the information they need to develop strategies that improve public safety in our communities. NIJ and BJS findings help justice and law enforcement professionals identify what works, adopt best practices, and improve public safety.

Missing and Delayed BJS Data

In addition to our general concerns about declining NIJ and BJS budgets, we would also like to raise the issue of missing and delayed BJS data and publications and request Subcommittee action to remedy it. The social science and statistical research community has learned that the release of existing, some longstanding, BJS data tables and publications have been delayed and/or contain less information than past iterations. Further, the agency had not informed the data user community (through the Federal Register or otherwise) about changes to BJS's publication timeline. These data resources are critically

important for the reasons outlined earlier. We request that the Subcommittee include language in its Appropriations Report directing the Bureau to release its data in a timely manner, communicate any changes in the timing of data releases, and report to the Appropriations Committee on its recent record of data releases and reasons for delay.

Thank you again for your attention to this request. With support from the Subcommittee, the Department of Justice can continue to provide the evidence our criminal justice enterprise needs to keep Americans safe.

Please contact Julia Milton (jmilton@coffa.org) at the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

American Anthropological Association
American Psychological Association
American Sociological Association
Association of Population Centers
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Crime and Justice Research Alliance
Population Association of America
Society for Research in Child Development