FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA

May XX, 2023

Dear Members of the 118th Congress,

We are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, an organization of over 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors who support solutions to reduce crime and support healthy child and youth development. We know, from firsthand experience and research, the behaviors that lead children to success and away from crime are learned early on in a child's life. The research shows we can protect our communities and lower crime rates by ensuring kids are prepared to succeed. That is why we call on Congress to prioritize funding for existing early care and education (ECE) programs and juvenile justice programs.

Meaningfully improving public safety requires investments in evidence-based programs that support young people and prevent them from becoming involved in crime. That is why we urge Congress to increase funding for the following programs:

1) Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBG)
2) Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5)
3) Head Start and Early Head Start
4) 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC)
5) Juvenile Justice Programs
6) Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAE)

Investing in high-quality ECE, like CCDBG, PDG B-5, and Head Start, is crucial to improving kids' academic success, preventing future criminal activity, and saving community resources. For example, children who attend high-quality ECE programs are more likely to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn, with enhanced early math, language, and literacy skills. They are also less likely to be held back in school or need special education, more likely to be proficient in reading and math, and have an increased probability of graduating from high school and avoiding crime or incarceration. Lastly, a **federal preschool investment would return an estimated $3-$4 for every $1 spent** in reduced criminal justice expenses due in part to early learning's impact on curbing juvenile crime.

Other critical programs for improving academic performance and addressing youth mental health to prevent crime are 21st CCLC afterschool programs, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act Title II and Title V grants, Juvenile Mentoring, and SSAE flexible grants for school counseling and mental health. As **juvenile crime peaks in the hours immediately after school,** 21st CCLCs provide children a safe environment that reinforces the skills they learn during the school day and are shown to improve graduation rates. Additionally, juvenile justice programs support prevention and intervention efforts, including providing job training, mental health and substance abuse treatment, community-based programs and services, and school programs to keep kids on track for success.

As law enforcement leaders, we know firsthand the wisdom of investing in evidence-based early interventions and programs. **Immediate action by Congress to support these programs for children and youth is crucial to our efforts in reducing juvenile crime, creating safe communities, and forging a strong, productive nation.**

Sincerely,