

March 13, 2020

Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Republican Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Shelby and Lowey, Vice Chair Leahy, and Ranking Member Granger:

Over the past two years, with your continued support, local, state, and federal government agencies and their grantees have made tremendous strides in driving increases of federal dollars towards creating pathways in education, employment, and training through national service programs for one million Opportunity Youth.

We, the undersigned organizations are dedicated to securing increasing federal investment in America's youth, are urging you to increase appropriations by a minimum of \$800 million/annually (over the next 5 years) for federal programs that provide education, training, employment opportunities, and supportive services to 16-24 year-olds who are not in school or work (Opportunity Youth) in the FY21 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill, as well as in the Defense Appropriations Bill.

There is currently an alarming rate of 4.5 million Opportunity Youth in the United States. Our 5-year annual \$800 million increase would allow federally-funded programs to provide Opportunity Youth, and the programs that serve them, with resources to reconnect Opportunity Youth to education, employment, and service opportunities that allow them to lead successful and productive lives. At this rate of increase, by 2025 the programs will be engaging one million Opportunity Youth each year, making a decisive difference in the economic and social well-being of communities across America.

With an increase in these pathways for success, local businesses will have a greater chance to find qualified candidates that can advance and expand their businesses and economic growth. Increased investments in federally-funded programs provide Opportunity Youth with avenues for training, skills, tools, and networks needed to reach their full potential.

Your Appropriations Committees have demonstrated continuous commitment to providing increased funding towards programs that create viable pathways to productive adulthood but much more must be done. Major increases in the federally-funded programs listed below will help strengthen these valuable organizations with the ability to reach Opportunity Youth and improve outcomes at the scale our country needs.

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs that invest in Opportunity Youth:
  - Title I Youth Activities

- Job Corps
- YouthBuild
- Title II Adult Secondary Education Programs
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation
- Department of Education's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- Department of Labor's Reentry Employment Opportunities
- Corporation for National and Community Service programs, including:
  - AmeriCorps State/National
  - AmeriCorps VISTA
  - AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps
- Department of Health and Human Services programs, including
  - Runaway and Homeless Youth Services
- Department of Defense's National Guard ChalleNGe Program

These programs improve the futures of young people, families, and communities by reducing persistent poverty; increasing civic engagement; and improving health, education, and career outcomes. Businesses that invest in hiring and training Opportunity Youth report that they outperform other entry-level employees, including lower interview-to-hire ratios, higher retention rates, higher job performance Scores, and faster promotion rates.

We hope that the Appropriations Committee will provide significantly increased funding for these programs across Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations and Defense Appropriations. We appreciate your consideration of our request.

If you have questions about this letter or would like additional information, please email Gerod Blue, Policy Manager at the Forum for Youth Investment at [Gerod@ForumFYI.org](mailto:Gerod@ForumFYI.org).

Thank you for your leadership and attention to these important matters.

#### **National Organizations**

Aspen Institute: Forum For Community Solutions  
 CFE Fund  
 Forum for Youth Investment  
 Gap Inc  
 Goodwill Industries International  
 Institute for Educational Leadership  
 JFF  
 Measure of America  
 Measure of America, Social Science Research Council  
 Monitor Institute by Deloitte  
 National Disability Rights Network  
 National Guard Youth Foundation  
 National Job Corps Association  
 National Network for Youth  
 Opportunity Youth United  
 Service Year Alliance

The Corps Network  
Voices for National Service  
Youthbuild  
Youth Villages

**State Organizations**

CSUN  
Forge City Works

**Local Organizations**

Big Thought (Dallas, TX)  
Cafe Reconcile New Orleans (New Orleans, LA)  
Center for Latino Progress – CPRF (Hartford, CT)  
DC Central Kitchen (Washington, DC)  
Dolls & Macs Inc (New York, NY)  
Forge City Works (Hartford, CT)  
Jermaine Brubaker Consulting (Crescent City, CA)  
JVS (San Francisco, CA)  
Louisiana Center for Children's Rights (New Orleans, LA)  
Milwaukee Christian Center (Milwaukee, WI)  
The Matthews House (Fort Collins, CO)  
Think Make Live Youth (Columbus, OH)  
Village of Niles (Niles, IL)  
YouthCare (Morley, WA)