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Testimony of Congresswoman Madeleine Dean (Pennsylvania's Fourth District)
Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee
Member Day Hearing – May 18th, 2022

Chairman Cartwright, Ranking Member Aderholt, and members of the Subcommittee – thank you for hosting today's Member Day hearing and for allowing us to share our priorities for the Fiscal Year 2023 Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Appropriations bill. It is with great enthusiasm that I am sharing the priorities for Pennsylvania's Fourth Congressional District with you today.

Community Project Funding

First, thank you for the great work of this subcommittee, and the Appropriations Committee in general, during Fiscal Year 2022 to establish and grant funding for Community Projects. This funding – direct to our home districts – will strengthen our communities. I specifically want to point out the importance of this funding for projects in our community that may not have the resources to apply for standard federal grants. By allowing our office to submit these proposals, we were able to help organizations gain needed funding to launch and continue their programs.

To that end, thank you for funding \$400,000 for the JEVS Human Services the Choice is Yours program which will be used for a 13-month innovative diversion program for first-time, nonviolent felony drug sellers. The funding will be used for strong, evidenced-based rehabilitation, allowing those who have entered our criminal justice system to leave with new opportunities to contribute to society in a meaningful way.

This year, I hope that you will grant funding for the one Community Project Funding request I have submitted in the CJS bill: \$442,287 for the Montgomery County Racial Justice Improvement Project (RJIP). The funding would be used for expanding The Racial Justice Improvement Project's diversion services for minority youth through two primary streams; (1) school districts with elevated rates of disproportionate minority contact (DMC), and (2) Magisterial District Courts. Students and their families from two target districts with the highest rates of DMC; Abington and Cheltenham, will receive services through the project, which will serve as a pilot for additional districts in the county to provide an alternative to police referral for school-based offenses.

Each family is assigned a Youth Aid Panel (YAP) Case Manager. This component is essential to reducing the barriers that prevent high-risk youth and their families from accessing and completing YAP, including low literacy levels to understand paperwork, distrust of the police/court system, disengaged caregivers, chaotic home environments, lack of transportation, and constitutional factors/behavioral health needs of the youth. The assigned Youth Case Manager engages the student and their caregivers to complete mandated programs, activities, and/or community service requirements to successfully complete the program.

Funded Programs

I also ask for continued support for program requests that I have led that the Subcommittee and Committee have funded in the past. First would be the **highest possible funding for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)**. Increases to the ATF would allow for critical investments in enforcement, gun tracing, dealer inspections, and support hiring of special agents, investigator, and inspectors.

The gun violence epidemic in our country continues at an unprecedented pace compared to other industrialized nations —Over 45,000 Americans are killed by firearms each year, while more than 100,000 others are wounded in the crossfire. These figures do not include the hundreds of thousands of people – including children, left traumatized by the harm and loss due to continuous gun violence. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention deemed gun violence a "serious public health threat" last year. Strong investments in the ATF will allow the federal government to take strong action to help prevent deaths and injuries hurting every community in the United States.

Additionally, in FY22 your Subcommittee generously supported \$10 million for the Crisis Stabilization grant program. **This year, my colleagues and I have requested another \$10 million for this important program.** Authorized through the Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Act passed in the 116th Congress, this important program funds training for justice agencies and community behavioral health centers that ensure access to needed care for the incarcerated. Specifically, the grant program funding allows for community-based substance use and mental health providers to partner with local jails and prisons to provide treatment and crisis stabilization – using warm handoffs upon reentry to the community.

Importantly, in FY22 your Subcommittee funded the John R. Justice prosecutor and defender student loan repayment program – continuing the long tradition of providing this funding for young lawyers. In FY23, I request that the Subcommittee increase funding for this program to \$10 million.

As you know The John R. Justice program is the only federal program targeted specifically to bolstering staffing at state and local prosecutor and defender offices. Prosecutor and public defender offices across the nation face serious challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified

attorneys. According to the American Bar Association, in 2014 the average public law school graduate had \$84,000 in student debt and the average private law school graduate had \$122,000. This debt deters many qualified graduates from even considering a criminal justice career. Of those law graduates who initially accept jobs in the criminal justice system, many soon leave because they cannot pay off their student loans on a prosecutor or public defender salary and because their practical experience makes them marketable for higher-salaried positions at law firms.

Unfunded Programs and New Language Requests

One program incredibly important to the constituents of Pennsylvania's Fourth District is the Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act grants. **However, these grants have gone unfunded since being signed into law. I request that STOIC Act grants be appropriated at \$7.5 million for FY23.** In the 116th Congress, Congressman Reschenthaler and I had the opportunity to introduce, pass, and have signed into law the STOIC Act – authorizing grants to law enforcement agencies to support efforts for mental health treatment and suicide prevention.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of suicide among workers in protective services is 50% higher than the national average. This unacceptable reality illustrates that resources are needed to support our law enforcement professionals – ensuring those who serve our communities are not consumed by the stress and anxiety of their work. **I also ask that the Committee include bill language prohibiting the use of “live tissue training” at the Department of Justice (DOJ).** Live tissue training is the practice of intentionally wounding live animals – including pigs, goats, and dogs – and having trainees attempt to repair the damage. This inhumane practice is unnecessary, as many other federal

agencies have switched to using human patient simulators. Human simulators can be continuously reused, and do not involve harming living animals.

Furthermore, I also ask that in FY23, the Department of Justice Edward Byrne Memorial Assistance (JAG) Program to include language and funding in the amount of \$6 million “for a single grant to an experiences organization in law enforcement-assisted deflection or pre-arrest and pre-booking deflection programs to establish a national center”. Pre-arrest deflection allows for law enforcement to divert people away from the criminal justice system and into community based behavioral health services when it is appropriate. This allows for individuals to get needed care and rehabilitation. This request is consistent with other Byrne-JAG funding items – in FY22, JAG line items included funding for at least two national centers: restorative justice and drug data and research.

General Requests

Finally, I simply ask the Subcommittee to pay special attention to programs and funding opportunities to help end the triple epidemics of **gun violence, substance use disorder, and mental health**. As highlighted above in my requests, these areas are especially important to constituents of Pennsylvania’s Fourth District – and to Americans across the United States. Everyone knows someone effected by one of these disasters. As you continue to look for ways to fund solutions, I ask that the Committee work to lift community-based solutions.

Thank you for your attention to these important program and language requests, as well as your attention to the many important funding obligations the Subcommittee handles.

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress