

July 13, 2016

The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress
2252 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Jackson Lee:

I am writing with sincere thanks for your strong support of youth mentoring, and specifically, the youth mentoring grant managed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at the Department of Justice. Further, we appreciate your leadership on addressing the needs of young people involved in the juvenile justice system by emphasizing the importance of evidence-based interventions and practice. Your continued dedication to improving the lives of vulnerable youth has made a significant impact on bringing these issues to light in Congress. Mentoring is an important part of expanding support and opportunity for young people both at risk and already engaged in system involvement, and we look forward to continued work on expanding quality mentoring opportunities for youth who can most benefit.

As you know, the measurable positive impact quality mentoring programs can make in the present and future outcomes of a young person's life is well documented. Mentoring is a critical part of the constructive framework helping guide young people towards successful pathways to adulthood. Just as importantly, it also can be effectively utilized as a strategy to equip young people with the tools they need to navigate away from harmful activities and behaviors and towards healthy and productive futures. In both instances, evaluations of these mentoring programs report significant increases among youth in self-confidence, self-efficacy and a positive attitude about their futures. Still, based on recent research, 1 in 3 young people in the U.S. reaches the age of 19 without being able to identify a mentor of any kind outside their family. This number includes 9 million at-risk youth who are missing out on the critical support and connections that mentoring can provide.

Public investment in quality mentoring programs has a positive return on the nation as whole. Research demonstrates that, at a minimum, for every dollar invested in quality mentoring programs there is a return of at least three dollars. This positive return on investment reflects projected increases in lifetime earnings gained by leading at-risk youth down the path towards becoming productive adult citizens, and dollars saved through reduced juvenile delinquency and crime, improved school

attendance, increased high school graduation rates, and lowered risk of youth involvement in unsafe and costly behaviors such as drug and alcohol use.

Again, we appreciate your continued support of youth mentoring and the critical assets that makes our kids and communities thrive and strive, especially those most in need of structural connection and opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Shapiro', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Shapiro
Chief Executive Officer