

May 29, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

The Reconnecting Youth Campaign urges you to ensure robust funding for the range of programs that provide *education, training, national service, employment opportunities and supportive services* to 16- to 24-year-olds who are not in school or work (Opportunity Youth) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill. The Reconnecting Youth Campaign is a diverse coalition of national and local organizations that calls for scaling up effective federally funded programs to provide one million Opportunity Youth per year a real chance to reconnect to education, employment and national service.

Across the United States, 4.6 million 16- to 24-year-olds have been separated from pathways to productive adulthood. Federally funded programs that help Opportunity Youth gain the skills, tools and networks needed to reach their potential consistently demonstrate positive impact. Yet, these highly effective programs lack the resources to meet the demand. For example, in program year 2015, the core youth-serving programs at the Department of Labor (WIOA Youth, Job Corps, and YouthBuild) together served 216,103 young people. Every day, these programs turn young people away who are seeking opportunities to build their job skills and enhance their educational credentials.

Congress should fund programs that serve Opportunity Youth at levels sufficient to reconnect one million young people each year, which entails increased appropriations of approximately \$4.1 billion per year. For more details on this proposal, including the benefits that it would yield and the current and potential numbers of youth served by different programs, see the *Bridge to Reconnection* report. Therefore, we call for at least \$4.1 billion in cumulative increases, above fiscal year 2018 levels, for the following programs so they can collectively reach one million Opportunity Youth:

- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** programs that invest in Opportunity Youth, including:
 - **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 (NCCC)**
- Department of Health and Human Services programs, including:
 - **Chafee Education and Training Vouchers**
 - **Runaway and Homeless Youth Services**

These programs stand ready, with increased investment, to scale up and provide one million Opportunity Youth a viable pathway toward productive adulthood.

Investing in young people is the right thing to do, and it works. Decades of research shows that investment in Opportunity Youth more than pays for itself by improving the futures of young people, families and communities through reductions in persistent poverty, increased civic engagement and improved health, education and career outcomes. Businesses that invest in hiring and training Opportunity Youth report that they outperform other entry-level employees, as evidenced by lower interview-to-hire ratios, higher retention rates, higher job performance scores and faster promotion rates. To become productive adults, all young people need access to a wide variety of experiences, opportunities, and supports. Opportunity Youth hold this same tremendous potential if given the chance – if we make the choice to invest in them.

We ask that the Committee provide significantly increased funding for these programs as you finalize the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations. We appreciate your consideration of our request.

If you have questions about this letter or would like additional information, please email RYC@nyec.org.

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

Sincerely,
The Reconnecting Youth Campaign: Unleashing Limitless Potential

National Organizations

America's Promise Alliance
 American Youth Policy Forum
 Campaign for Youth Justice
 Center for Law and Social Policy
 Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute
 Child Welfare League of America
 Children's Advocacy Institute
 The Corps Network

Forum for Youth Investment
Heartland Alliance
Institute for Educational Leadership
Jobs for the Future
National Crittenton
National Job Corps Association
National Network for Youth
National Youth Employment Coalition
Opportunity Youth United
Public Allies, Inc.
Service Year Alliance
SparkAction
Year Up
YouthBuild USA
Youth Villages
UnidosUS

Local Organizations

CCEO YouthBuild (Lennox, CA)
CCLA- AYE (Los Angeles, CA)
Community Youth Services (Olympia, WA)
EntreNous Youth Empowerment Services (Compton, CA)
Institute for Workforce Innovation-Project YouthBuild (Gainesville, FL)
Juvenile Justice Coalition (Columbus, OH)
La Causa YouthBuild (Los Angeles, CA)
Massachusetts YouthBuild Coalition (Worcester, MA)
Mississippi Action for Community Education Inc. (Greenville, MS)
New Settlement YouthBuild (Bronx, NY)
Northcentral Arkansas Development Council, Inc. (Batesville, AR)
Our Piece of the Pie (Hartford, CT)
Rising Stars Business Academy Youthbuild (Moreno Valley, CA)
St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE)
Valencia College (Orlando, FL)
Venice YouthBuild (Venice, CA)
Venice Community Housing (Venice, CA)
Youth Action Programs and Homes, Inc. (New York, NY)
YouthBuild Dayton (Dayton, OH)
YouthBuild Inland Empire (San Bernadino, CA)
YouthBuild Lake County (North Chicago, IL)
YouthBuild Quad Cities (Rock Island, IL)
YouthCare (Seattle, WA)
Youth Development, Inc. (Albuquerque, NM)
Youth Policy Institute (Los Angeles, CA)
YouthWorks, Inc. (Santa Fe, NM)