

March 24, 2020

The Honorable John Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Coons:

We write in strong support of funding the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) program, authorized by section 8203 of Subtitle K of the SUPPORT Act (P.L.115-27), and the training and technical assistance authorized by section 8204, from within the appropriated amount for this program, at the highest possible levels in FY 2021. For FY 2020, these programs were funded at just over \$101.2 million and \$2.5 million. Additionally, consistent with Congressional intent outlined in Subtitle K of the SUPPORT Act and Section 103 of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (P.L. 114-198), we request that the DFC program and the Community Based Coalition Enhancement Grant program, remain at the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

In the midst of the devastating drug overdose epidemic, the DFC program warrants the highest possible funding level because it has proven effective in reducing youth substance use. According to independent research in communities where DFC coalitions exist, rates of past 30-day use among middle school students for alcohol, tobacco and marijuana declined at 30.7%, 45.2% and 16.2% respectively. Among high school students in DFC-funded communities, rates for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs declined by 23.0%, 43.8%, 7.6% and 24.6% respectively. (ICF International, National Evaluation of the Drug-Free Communities Support Program, June 2019 Report)

DFC coalitions exist in 713 communities across the nation and provide support to 2.5 million middle school students and 3.6 million high school students. The program requires a community to demonstrate local commitment before it is eligible to receive federal funds, which means that at least 12 sectors within the community must come together to plan and implement evidence-based programs that will meet the community's unique needs in reducing drug use. All grantees are required to provide a dollar-for-dollar match in non-federal funds, up to the maximum grant amount of \$125,000 per year.

The required emphasis on local data collection, community buy-in and participation among multiple sectors is central to the DFC coalitions' success and allows grantees to respond effectively to all new and emerging drug trends.

The DFC program has achieved impressive results largely because of ONDCP's commitment to managing the policy level components of the program. ONDCP's prioritization and funding of data collection and analysis associated with the DFC program demonstrates both national level outcomes for the entire program, as well as local outcomes for every grantee. Moving the DFC and CARA section 103 enhancement grant programs out of ONDCP and into the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would undermine a number of program requirements that ensure cost effectiveness and a direct relationship between the federal and community levels; severely impact the program's effectiveness by limiting its essential partners and strategies; and force the program to compete with other non-drug prevention priorities for funding and emphasis.

For these reasons, we urge you to fund the DFC program at the highest possible level in FY 2021, but at least commensurate with the FY 2020 funding level. We also urge you to ensure that this program as well as the CARA section 103 enhancement grant program, remain intact in ONDCP. This will ensure the maximum number of communities are equipped to effectively reduce all types of youth drug use and have the evaluation results to prove it.

For any questions or concerns, please contact Rachel Wright for Senator Grassley's office at Rachel_Wright@judiciary-rep.senate.gov or Anna Shepard for Senator Feinstein's office at Anna_Shepard@feinstein.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Charles Grassley
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Angus S. King, Jr.
Senator Benjamin L. Cardin
Senator Bernard Sanders
Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Senator Brian Schatz
Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
Senator Chris Van Hollen
Senator Christopher S. Murphy
Senator Cory A. Booker
Senator Dan Sullivan
Senator Debbie Stabenow
Senator Doug Jones
Senator Edward J. Markey
Senator Elizabeth Warren
Senator Gary C. Peters
Senator Jack Reed
Senator Jacky Rosen
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley
Senator Joe Manchin III
Senator John Cornyn

Senator Jon Tester
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Kyrsten Sinema
Senator Margaret Wood Hassan
Senator Mark R. Warner
Senator Martha McSally
Senator Mazie Hirono
Senator Richard Blumenthal
Senator Richard J. Durbin
Senator Rob Portman
Senator Robert Menendez
Senator Ron Wyden
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Senator Sherrod Brown
Senator Susan M. Collins
Senator Tammy Baldwin
Senator Tammy Duckworth
Senator Thom Tillis
Senator Tim Kaine
Senator Tina Smith
Senator Tom Udall