

TESTIMONY OF
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ON BEHALF OF
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF AMERICA
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BEFORE

THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE AND RELATED AGENCIES

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Mr. Chairman, I thank you and the subcommittee for once again permitting Big Brothers Big Sisters to testify in support of Fiscal Year 2013 funding for the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention. On behalf of the over 400,000 Bigs and Littles our network of 355 local affiliates screen, match, and support, I am here to respectfully advocate for the most robust funding possible for the competitive Youth Mentoring Grants program.

My name is Ted Qualli and I am the Vice President, External Affairs of Big Brothers Big Sisters Southeastern Pennsylvania. But today I am here to represent Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and the entire Big Brothers Big Sisters network. Big Brothers Big Sisters is the nation's only evidence-based mentoring program focusing on proven outcomes in a scalable model across all 50 states. Our mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one mentoring relationships with measurable impact. We are a grassroots organization of 355 local BBBS agencies serving thousands of communities throughout the country. We began over a century ago to provide services to at-risk youth in need of additional support and guidance, and last year as a national network we served over 200,000 children and youth in one-to-one mentoring relationships.

We know that our nation's children face greater obstacles today than ever before. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's 2006 National Report on Juvenile Offenders and Victims indicates that:

- In 2002, one in twelve murders in the U.S. involved a juvenile offender.
- One of every four violent crime victims known to law enforcement is a juvenile.
- Thirty-two percent of youth ages 12 to 17 report recently using alcohol and marijuana.
- Almost half of all juvenile arrests in 2003 included charges for larceny-theft, simple assault, a drug abuse or liquor law violation, and disorderly conduct.

According to two more recent OJJDP studies, police make approximately 2.1 million juvenile arrests each year, with 1.7 million youth referred to the court system and 200,000 youth prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system.¹ The average annual cost of incarcerating a youth in a juvenile facility is \$88,000 a year.² In many states, the single highest budget expense behind Medicaid is Department of Corrections spending. After decades of ever-increasing numbers of incarcerated individuals, the United States now has the highest rate of incarceration of any county in the world. Nearly 1 in every 100 citizens is currently incarcerated and a staggering 1 in every 31 adults is under some form of correctional control.³

¹ Puzzanchera, C. (December 2009). Juvenile Arrests, 2008. Washington, DC, Juvenile Justice Bulletin, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, available at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/228479.pdf>

Knoll, C. and Sickmund, M. (June 2010) Delinquency Cases in Juvenile Court, 2007. Washington, DC, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, available at: <http://ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/230168.pdf>

² *Costs of Confinement: Why Good Juvenile Justice Policies Make Good Fiscal Sense*, American Correctional Association as reported by the Justice Policy Institute, May 2009, page 4, http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09_05_REP_CostsOfConfinement_JJ_PS.pdf

³ http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/PSPP_1in31_report_FINAL_WEB_3-26-09.pdf

Beyond the human cost, in such a strained fiscal environment mass incarceration is not fiscally viable. As a nation we need to take a hard look at how we spend and how we invest. We need innovative responses that are evidence-based and that have real and long-term cost-saving benefits. At the adult offender level that may mean “justice reinvestment” and alternatives to incarceration. But we know the nation, and Congress, are genuinely concerned about the financial success and stability of our children and grandchildren. We need to reduce the number of individuals entering the criminal justice system - and that means investing in youth development.

There is a difference between investment and spending. We join with our Act-4-JJ Campaign colleagues in requesting adequate funding for critical juvenile justice and delinquency prevention programs such as the JJDP Title II State Formula Grant Program, JJDP Title V Delinquency Prevention Program and the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Program. We all recognize the challenges that Congress will face this year, especially given the discretionary spending caps contained in the Budget Control Act of 2011, but urge the Committee to continue to be thoughtful and invest in prevention and intervention.

Programs such as the OJJDP’s Youth Mentoring Grants are upfront and forward-thinking investments that divert at-risk and high-risk youth away from the criminal justice system. Investing in youth mentoring could be considered insignificant when compared to the alternative downstream costs of arrest, prosecution and incarceration. While it may require \$88,000 a year to incarcerate a juvenile offender, Big Brothers Big Sisters needs just \$1,220 a year to mentor a child in a one-to-one relationship. Furthermore, while States bear the entire cost of incarcerating an individual, funds appropriated for youth mentoring can and should be used to leverage hundreds of millions in private and foundation donations – thereby multiplying the effect of public investment.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters program model incorporates all leading best-practices and is effective at producing positive youth outcomes. There is strong evidence that makes the case for placing a Big Brother or Big Sister in the life of an at-risk youth in order to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. Our program model works as an effective and efficient strategy for supporting at-risk youth. According to 1995 Public/Private Ventures’ (P/PV) landmark impact study,⁴ children who are matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister were:

- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs
- 27% less likely to begin using alcohol
- 52% less likely to skip school
- 37% less likely to skip a class
- more confident of their performance in schoolwork
- less likely to hit someone
- getting along better with their families

⁴ Tierney, J.P., Grossman, J.B., and Resch, N.L. (1995) Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures

Minority children who were mentored by a Big Brother or a Big Sister experienced an even more significant impact as they were 70% less likely to begin using illegal drugs and alcohol than their (non-mentored) counterparts.

Intuitively we know that children with less drug or alcohol use, less truancy, better academic performance and strong family lives are less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system. However, Big Brothers Big Sisters is also relentless in our drive to develop hard data resources. Our current *Nationwide Strategic Direction* reinforces our dedication to expanding and improving the impact our mentoring programs have on the youth that are at the greatest risk of entering, or are already in, the juvenile justice system. This firm commitment to averting youth away from juvenile delinquency has manifested itself in the creation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Juvenile Justice Initiative.

In Fiscal Year 2010, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America partnered with the University of Illinois at Chicago and was awarded a Mentoring Best Practices Research grant to build off of our evidence-based model and attempt innovation in areas critical to yielding better outcomes for higher risk youth: match support, mentor training, match activities and overall staff development. This work has attracted great focus from the research community and we were able to leverage the investment in innovation and collaborate with the Thrive Foundation for Youth. As a result, we are piloting the integration of improved mentoring training and support into our mentoring model at 11 agencies. A randomized control trial conducted by Drs. David DuBois from the University of Illinois at Chicago and Tom Keller from Portland State University will evaluate the comparative effectiveness of this enhancement vis-à-vis Big Brothers Big Sisters' proven community-based mentoring model.

Big Brothers Big Sisters' Native American Mentoring Initiative, funded in Fiscal Year 2010 and 2011, is designed to reduce the juvenile delinquency, alcohol and drug use, truancy, and other risky behaviors of American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) youth in strategically selected communities in Indian Country. Through tribal mentorship, along with reduction of risky behaviors and promotion of health and wellbeing, BBBS seeks to support the foundation of Native self-identification through recognition of tribal morals and values of community. By pairing high-risk tribal youth with positive adult mentors and focusing on culturally-enriching mentoring programs that emphasize tribal specific activities and promote engagement with tribal elders, BBBS is increasing positive outcomes for tribal youth in need.

The program works with local tribal law enforcement agencies, tribal schools and tribal youth-serving programs to recruit high-risk and at-risk program participants. The Native American Mentoring Initiative has developed significant national partnerships including a resolution with the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) and National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). As a result of these combined efforts, we have matched 221 tribal youth with 221 tribal mentors - 17 months into the 36 month project. In addition, 22 tribal resolutions have been signed showing great commitment from tribal leadership to the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program.

With another competitively awarded Fiscal Year 2010 National Mentoring Programs grant we committed to reducing the incidence of juvenile crime in underserved communities across the country by expanding our evidence-based mentoring services to more than 7,500 newly

identified high-risk and at-risk youth – and to date we have exceeded our goal by 45%. We also established ten pilot sites, and my agency is one of them, to direct our learning around how to effectively build relationships with juvenile justice systems and organizations that will yield referrals of youth who are currently or previously involved with the juvenile justice system. The pilots have enabled the BBBS network to study which segments of youth Big Brothers Big Sisters can best impact, what resources agencies need to effectively serve this population, and how to efficiently navigate the juvenile justice system as a youth service organization. Outcome data and assessments from all ten locations are reviewed and research-based practices are extracted and broadly applied to other Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliates serving communities with particularly high populations of high-risk delinquent youth.

OJJDP defines “at-risk youth” as youth exposed to high levels of risk in their families, homes, communities, and social environments to such a degree that it could lead to educational failure, dropping out of school, or juvenile delinquency. Historically, this has been the population that Big Brothers Big Sisters has served. The Department of Justice’s investment in our Juvenile Justice Initiative represents confidence in our network’s ability to increase the number of high-risk youth – youth with present or past involvement with the juvenile justice system - that we serve across the country.

To date we have formalized high-risk referral sources, built resources for the larger mentoring and delinquency prevention field, and set up the infrastructure to measure the specific diversionary impact Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs have on at-risk and high-risk youth from juvenile delinquency, alcohol and drug use, truancy, and other problem behaviors. Some of the specific settings where high-risk youth could benefit from Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs that have been identified for preferred partnerships include: delinquency and dependency courts, probation, schools and detention and correction centers. Currently 117 of these local partnerships have formally been established and we are just 17 months into the 36 month Juvenile Justice Initiative.

The second phase of the initiative, being funded with a competitively awarded Fiscal Year 2011 grant, is aimed at expanding the reach of the Juvenile Justice Initiative to 29 additional local affiliates and enhancing its impact with an increased focus on truant youth and youth living with military or deployed parents. The work with my agency and nine other pilot sites continues with an increased emphasis on extracting truancy prevention and intervention best practices – as well as testing improved measurements of Big Brothers Big Sisters risky behavior outcome data. A number of National Juvenile Justice partnerships, including the American Probation and Parole Association and the National Center for School Engagement, have already been established to help drive network capacity to better serve at-risk and high-risk youth.

The final phase of the Juvenile Justice Initiative, scheduled for Fiscal Year 2012, is aimed at expanding the Big Brothers Big Sisters Juvenile Justice mentoring model to the entire network. This vast expansion includes the ability for all agencies to collect relevant juvenile justice data, the rollout of mentor and staff trainings specific to working with this population, and real-time tracking of youth outcomes as they relate to risky behaviors and delinquency. In addition, Big Brothers Big Sisters will release a formal publication of best practices for working with high-risk youth and an analysis of the Juvenile Justice Initiative successes. Ultimately, by the end of this

three-phased initiative, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America will have the infrastructure, data, and commitment to expand the Juvenile Justice Initiative to all 355 Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies and the over 42,000 youth on Big Brothers Big Sisters waiting lists to better substantiate the necessary role of mentoring in juvenile delinquency prevention and share with the larger community the practices, data, and research to maximize impact.

The vision for Big Brothers Big Sisters' future work in the juvenile justice arena is for our efforts to progress further than this initial Juvenile Justice Initiative. We aim to become both a preferred alternative to youth incarceration, as well as a critical prevention-based partner to the exceptionally vulnerable youth in the child welfare system. The Big Brothers Big Sisters network will need to continue to develop innovation, trainings, research, partnerships and models to accomplish these ambitious, but achievable, goals.

In closing, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America fully understands the legitimate pressure on Congress to reduce the scope, size and cost of government. However, we urge the Committee to view juvenile justice programs in general and the Youth Mentoring Grants and Tribal Youth programs in particular as small investments with big dividends. We ask you to keep in mind that the children we mentor today are the future parents of our grandchildren. If we are to be serious about the long-term fiscal and social success of our country, we need to ensure the success of our children today. Big Brothers Big Sisters sincerely thanks this Committee for its past leadership on behalf of youth-development and respectfully appeals for your continued support.