



FRIENDS OF JUSTICE RESEARCH & STATISTICS

April 19, 2024

The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Matt Cartwright, Ranking
Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

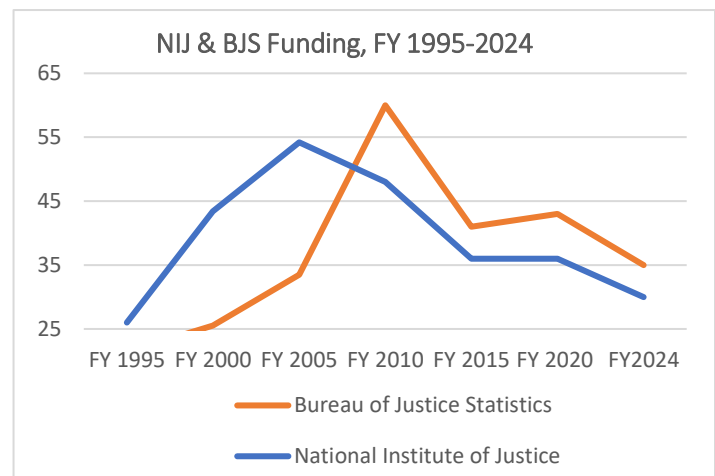
The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rogers, Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Cartwright, and Ranking Member Moran:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to urge the highest possible funding level in the fiscal year (FY) 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill for the **National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) within the Department of Justice. Specifically, we ask that Congress appropriate \$60 million for NIJ and \$75 million for BJS.** These agencies collectively serve as the research and data-gathering arm of the Department of Justice, filling an important role in helping to understand and implement science-based strategies for crime prevention and control.

The nation's justice system has reached an inflection point as we work to balance the continued pursuit of effective strategies to prevent and control crime, support law enforcement personnel, and advocate for victims with the need to confront the long-term effects of mass incarceration, over-policing, and racism in our legal system. It is important now more than ever to invest in criminal justice research and data collection to develop a rigorous evidence base that can help inform equitable and just policies. Unfortunately, funding for these research and data collection efforts have been on a steady decline in recent years, including in the final FY 2024 appropriations bill. We greatly appreciate the financial limitations facing all discretionary spending in FY 2024 and FY 2025.

Unfortunately, the most recent round of cuts has returned BJS to its lowest level since 2008 and NIJ back to its lowest level since 1996, not accounting for inflation.



As you prepare spending legislation for FY 2025, the justice research and statistics stakeholder community respectfully request the Subcommittee take the following actions:

For more information, contact wnaus@cozza.org



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- (1) Appropriate **\$135 million for the Research, Evaluation, and Statistics account within the Department of Justice budget**, which includes **\$60 million for the National Institute of Justice** and **\$75 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics**.
- (2) **Increase the Research and Statistics Set-Aside (RSS)** from 2% of the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) programmatic budget to 3% in FY 2025. This transfer provides BJS and NIJ with an important source of funding to evaluate existing OJP programs without taking away resources from each agency's primary responsibilities.
- (3) **Maintain flexibility to NIJ with respect to funding for individual research topics**. We were pleased that the final FY 2024 bill eliminated specific funding amounts for research topics of interest to the Committee. Providing NIJ such flexibility allows it to direct precious resources to research questions that hold the greatest potential for near-term impact while also addressing priorities identified by Congress. We ask that you maintain this flexibility in FY 2025 by not including individual funding levels for NIJ research activities.

Additional information about the unique roles and needs of NIJ and BJS is provided below.

National Institute of Justice

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) provides funding for research, development, and evaluation projects at institutions across the country to shed light on the most pressing issues facing our nation's criminal justice system today, including the drivers of domestic radicalization, addressing the drug epidemic, reducing violent crime, improving school safety, and fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Despite the nation's growing need for objective, science-backed solutions, NIJ's budget has been on a gradual decline for more than a decade. Funding shortfalls limit NIJ's ability to disseminate critical findings to law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders who need the most up-to-date information to improve policies and practices that promote public safety and equitable access to justice.

For FY 2025, the justice research and statistics stakeholder community urge the Committee to appropriate \$60 million for the National Institute of Justice. In addition, we respectfully request that funding amounts not be specified for individual research topics.

Bureau of Justice Statistics

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) produces high-quality data on many aspects of the United States criminal justice system, including corrections, courts, crime type, law enforcement personnel and expenditures, federal processing of criminal cases, Indian country justice statistics, and victims of crime. As the Department's principal statistical agency—one of 13 federal principal statistical agencies—BJS is bound by a unique set of responsibilities and standards that governs its role in producing data that is relevant, objective, trustworthy, and timely.¹

¹ <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24810/principles-and-practices-for-a-federal-statistical-agency-sixth-edition>



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Despite growing demand from policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders for high-quality criminal justice data across an expanding array of variables, BJS has also faced significant budgetary challenges over the past decade. Since FY 2010, the BJS budget has decreased by 42%, not accounting for inflation. Steady declines in funding have resulted in antiquated systems and, especially, staffing shortfalls, which can only be resolved through sustained investment. Further, despite its growing responsibilities, BJS remains one of the smallest of the 13 principal statistical agencies.

Inadequate funding means that data are not being collected on major segments of the criminal justice system, such as prosecution and sentencing including how fines, conditions of supervision, and mandatory treatments are applied; and data on mental health and substance use and their connection to incidents of crime; among others.

An appropriation of \$75 million in FY 2025 would bring the agency back up to its FY 2011 level, when adjusting for inflation, and set BJS on a path toward right-sizing its budget. It would allow BJS to modernize data collection and dissemination systems, hire the necessary experts, and begin to develop the next generation of statistical products to keep pace with the ever-changing criminal justice landscape and fill critical knowledge gaps.

Thank you again for your consideration of this request. Please contact Wendy Naus (wnaus@coffa.org) at the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

American Anthropological Association
American Educational Research Association
American Political Science Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Association of Population Centers
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Fines and Fees Justice Center
Justice Information Resource Network
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
Population Association of America
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
The Executive Committee of the American Society of Criminology
University of Miami