



GOVERNOR'S JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION

TONY EVERS, GOVERNOR
DIANE RONDINI, CHAIR

To: Senator Ron Johnson

From: Governor's Juvenile Justice Commission

Re: Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2025

Date: 8/13/2025

Support Passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2025

The Wisconsin Governor's Juvenile Justice Commission (GJJC) writes to support the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2025 (JJDPRA), introduced by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and Senator Chuck Grassley reauthorizing the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJPA) until 2030.

State Executive Order #43¹ authorizes the GJJC to advise the Governor and the Legislature on matters critical to juvenile justice. The GJJC is a collaborative body made up of professionals and individuals representing a broad swath of the juvenile justice system. Members include a Chief Circuit Court Judge, a psychologist, a Public Defender, a Deputy District Attorney, a social worker, elected officials, victim advocates, youth advocates, and tribal representatives. There are representatives from the Department of Corrections-Division of Juvenile Corrections, and the Department of Children and Families-Bureau of Youth Services. Each Commissioner uses their expertise to identify best practices and advocate for necessary reforms.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJPA) established the US DOJ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to support local and state efforts to prevent delinquency and improve juvenile justice systems. Through its divisions, OJJDP sponsors research, programs, training initiatives, and awards funds to states to support local delinquency prevention programming.² OJJDP awards Wisconsin Department of Justice (WI DOJ) annual Title II Formula Grant funds based on state compliance with the JJPA.

Wisconsin DOJ monitors for compliance with the core requirements of the JJPA, including deinstitutionalization of status offenders, separation of youth from adults in secure facilities, removal of youth from adult jails and lockups, and reducing racial and ethnic disparities within juvenile justice systems. An effective system of monitoring gives Wisconsin access to grant funds that support state and local efforts to plan, operate, and evaluate projects that prevent at-risk youth from entering the juvenile justice system and intervene with offenders early. The grant funds support services that maximize youth's chances of leading productive, successful lives. The Title II Formula Grant provides funds to enhance the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system. This funding is critical for Wisconsin youth and communities and for the GJJC to meet its vision of a state in which all youth and families are safe, healthy, educated, supported equitably, and provided opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Title II funding supports Wisconsin's innovative efforts to reduce the risk of harm to court-involved youth, ensure fair treatment of minority youth, improve delinquent behavioral interventions, and ensure citizen involvement and expertise through the GJJC. Counties, tribes, and agencies apply for grant funds to advance juvenile justice system improvements,

¹ <https://evers.wi.gov/Documents/EO/EO043-GJJC.pdf>

² <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/about>

prevent juvenile delinquency, and support safe communities, youth and families.³ Title II has funded projects across Wisconsin.

In just the past two years, nineteen local government, law enforcement, school districts, and youth serving nonprofits received grants for delinquency prevention and intervention programs. There are programs funded in every congressional district in the state serving communities from Bayfield to Milwaukee, and Outagamie to La Crosse. A total of \$2,199,415 from awards between 2019-2022 was allocated for local projects and distributed to agencies to implement innovative and effective interventions to improve the outcomes for youth, families, and community safety. More is allocated to be distributed in coming years. As a result of this funding, grant projects provided services to thousands of youth, their parents, and family members across the state. Programming included mentoring programs, delinquency diversion programs, Family Centered Treatment, restorative practices, law enforcement and youth engagement circles, Native La Crosse and other cultural youth development programs, truancy prevention, intensive mental health services, and substance use prevention and treatment. Programs have reported improvements in youth's self-esteem, school engagement including attendance and grades, feelings of belonging at school and community centers, and relationships with family members. Programs have seen reductions in suspensions and expulsions; reductions in substance misuse; and reductions in youth justice referrals. This program, while small, is significant in its impact. These innovative programs serve numerous youth and produce measurable impact.⁴ Reauthorizing the JJDPA would provide support for continued funding for such effective programs.

JJDPA reauthorization includes amendments that will empower state and local stakeholders to tailor their juvenile justice systems to fit the needs of their communities. The amendments clarify that state advisory groups and stakeholders can direct funds to numerous focus areas. This change empowers local communities and gives stakeholders greater flexibility to respond to youth's specific needs in their communities. In addition, reauthorization will improve the effectiveness of State Juvenile Justice Advisory Groups by ensuring they reflect the communities they serve by promoting the inclusion of members with relevant youth experience.

Further, reauthorization will bolster and clarify federal protections for youth involved in the justice system by eliminating harmful loopholes and expanding those protections to additional classes of youth. The JJDPA clarifies that core federal protections against the detention of our children in adult facilities apply to those children held in adult prisons and strengthens the prohibition on the incarceration of youth solely for "status offenses," like skipping school or running away. The JJDPA boosts sustainability and efficacy by ensuring that only states that act in good faith to comply with both core protections and all thirty-three statutory requirements receive funding.

Finally, reauthorization will increase safety for youth in state juvenile corrections facilities by requiring ongoing staff supervision and training in trauma-informed approaches to investigating allegations of sexual and physical abuse and enhance regular screening for domestic human trafficking exposure or risk.

In conclusion, the GJJC urges Congress to reauthorize the JJDPA. Reauthorization will prevent juvenile delinquency and improve treatment of youth within the justice system, both protecting our children and our communities.

Diane Rondini

Diane Rondini
GJJC Chair

Aidan Raney

Aidan Raney
GJJC Vice Chair

Attachments – GJJC Membership, Title II Grant Highlights by Congressional District

³ <https://gjjc.widj.gov/initiatives>.

⁴ Brief descriptions of several programs are attached and available online on the GJJC's website: <https://gjjc.widj.gov/initiatives>.