



Black, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucuses Respond to Covid-19: How Government Can Help Communities Recover Safely

Overview

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Release, and Economic Security (CARES) Act included \$850,000,000 for the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to support a broad range of activities to help state and local criminal justice systems prevent, prepare for and respond to Covid-19. These justice department funds are one of several streams of funding that the CARES Act provides as aid to help communities navigate and respond to Covid-19.

The CARES Act is an extraordinary response to extraordinary circumstances, but the processes it follows to distribute funds are well established. The federal government sends hundreds of billions of dollars to states and localities every year through a number of established funding streams. Each funding stream comes with its own rules and regulations for state and local recipients. State and localities, in turn, have developed established practices for accepting, spending, and disseminating those funds within the broader federal rules. At this moment, however, these funding streams are seeing substantial increases in federal allocation and, in many cases, relaxed federal requirements around how the funds can be spent. There is an opportunity for state and local policymakers to reexamine established patterns and leverage these increased funds in new ways.

Illinois Case Study

Most state and local funding mechanisms operate with minimal outside scrutiny or public input. Had this been true of the CARES Act in Illinois, the funds distributed through BJA, for example, would have likely gone to government agencies exclusively, with little discussion of alternatives that might be complementary or perhaps even more urgent.

However, a broad coalition united by a shared interest in communities of color that experience disproportionately high rates of crime, violence and incarceration —people who are disproportionately vulnerable to the coronavirus and its economic consequences—took an unprecedented interest in the BJA stimulus funds allocated to their state. Through a series of letters and outreach, the Illinois Coalition for Shared Safety highlighted the contribution of nonprofit and community-based providers of services such as domestic violence prevention, substance use and mental health counseling, and reentry planning that partner, formally or informally, with law enforcement. They also underscored the increased demand and diminished capacity that many of these organizations are facing as a result of Covid-19. The coalition's engagement led to a commitment to the Legislative Black Caucus by the state's administering body, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, to recommend that a significant portion of the BJA stimulus funds be allocated to sustain and expand the capacity of these much needed nonprofit and community-based service providers.



A Template for Action

As a founding member, the Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) saw a potentially powerful lesson in the Illinois Coalition for Shared Safety's experience. The federal government's response to Covid-19 is likely to include additional stimulus packages, in addition to funds authorized under ordinary circumstances. State legislators and other interested parties can draw upon Illinois' example to influence how these funds are disseminated. What is evolving in Illinois demonstrates what ASJ believes it can achieve by partnering with government and others who share our commitment to supporting those who have been most harmed and least helped by criminal justice practices of the past.

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Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) is a national organization that aims to win new safety priorities in states across the country, and brings together diverse crime survivors to advance policies that help communities most harmed by crime and violence.



Select Funding Streams

	Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA): \$850 million		Community Services Block Grant (CSBG): \$1 billion		Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV): \$5 billion		Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): \$425 million	
	<i>Funding can be used for a broad range of justice system purposes</i>		<i>Formula based grants to reduce poverty and empower low-income families</i>		<i>Funding activities include housing, community and economic development, public services, etc.</i>		<i>Includes \$100 million for behavioral health/crisis response grants and \$250 million for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics</i>	
	Amount Received	SAA₁	Amount Received	SAA	Amount Received₂	SAA	Amount Received₃	SAA
CA	State: \$58,518,568 Local: \$35,165,598	CA Board of State and Community Corrections	TBD	CA Dept. of Community Services & Development	State: \$19.3 million, \$112.99 million Local: \$215.9 million	CA Dept. of Housing & Community Development	Emergency: \$2 million CCBHCs: \$8 million	CA Dept. of Health Care Services
FL	State: \$31,797,466 Local: \$18,552,326	Florida Department of Law Enforcement	TBD	FL Dept. of Economic Opportunity	State: \$16.7 million, \$63.0 million Local: \$75.0 million	FL Dept. of Economic Opportunity	Emergency: \$2 million CCBHCs: \$4 million	FL Dept. of Children & Families
IL	State: \$19,956,148 Local: \$10,859,472	Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority	TBD	IL Dept. of Commerce & Economic Opportunity	State: \$17.8 million, \$39.3 million Local: \$80.5 million	IL Dept. of Commerce & Economic Opportunity	Emergency: \$2 million CCBHCs: \$12 million	IL Dept. of Human Services
MI	State: \$16,407,017 Local: \$8,443,973	Michigan State Police	TBD	MI Dept. of Health & Human Services	State: \$20.5 million, \$41.9 million Local: \$53.0 million	MI State Housing Development Authority	Emergency: \$2 million CCBHCs: \$38,530,722	MI Dept. of Health & Human Services
OH	State: \$15,954,497 Local: \$8,455,113	Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services	TBD	OH Development Services Agency	State: \$27.3 million, \$37.4 million Local: \$63.7 million	OH Development Services Agency	Emergency: \$2 million CCBHCs: \$4 million	OH Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services
TX	State: \$41,975,871 Local: \$24,592,948	Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division	TBD	TX Dept. of Housing & Community Affairs	State: \$40.0 million + \$63.4 million Local: \$104.0 million	TDHCA (Usually TX Dept. of Agriculture)	Emergency: \$0 CCBHCs: \$11,784,318	N/A

¹ State Administering Agencies (SAA). The state body that distributes funds.

² Under the CARES Act, HUD will allocate the \$5 billion into three pots: a \$2 billion pot allocated quickly according to the typical allocation formula (reflected above as the first state allocation and the local allocation), a \$1 billion pot allocated quickly to states to use as they see fit (reflected above as the second state allocation), and a \$2 billion pot allocated by HUD at its discretion on a rolling basis.

³ In addition to the allocations shown (Emergency Grants and CCBHCs), the \$425 million appropriation also included \$50 million for suicide prevention and \$15 million to tribes, tribal organizations, urban Indian health organizations, or health or behavioral health service providers to tribes. CCBHC expansion grants go directly to the clinic/provider (not an administering agency).