

April 23, 2020

Dear Members of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority,

As a group of more than 20 nongovernmental and community-based violence prevention and victim services organizations, we wish to make Members of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) aware of a new association we have founded, the Illinois Coalition for Shared Safety. This Coalition is dedicated to advocating for crime survivors, justice-involved people, and their communities during and after the COVID-19 crisis. We are committed to the reality of how we invest in our communities will determine our ability to stop the spread of this virus and prevent this crisis from recurring.

The Coalition's first goal is to ensure that funds the recently enacted federal stimulus support these essential nongovernmental service providers. This includes almost \$20 million appropriated to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) "to prevent, prepare, and respond to coronavirus." On March 30th, the Bureau of Justice Assistance published the Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Program FY 2020 Formula Grant Solicitation for these funds. Congress's mandate and BJA's solicitation make clear that this funding can support an expansive range of activities to be implemented by governmental and nongovernmental entities to fulfill the appropriation's purposes. (For the statutory authority for this funding, see Division B of H.R. 748, Pub. L. No. 116-136 (Emergency Appropriations for Coronavirus Health Response and Agency Operations); 28 U.S.C. 530C.)

To that end, we and our partner organizations wish to make an urgent set of recommendations to ICJIA, which we also sent to Executive Director Jason Stamps on April 16th.

At a fundamental level, Illinois' criminal justice system relies not simply on governmental entities to promote safety and justice, but also nongovernmental agencies that provide essential services to justice-involved people, victims, and their communities. This body of work includes helping prevent violence through street outreach and intervention, providing substance abuse, mental health, and case-management services to promote deflection, diversion, and reentry efforts, and delivering critical assistance to victims. Without these essential services, Illinois' criminal justice system simply cannot do the work that the people of Illinois need it to do.

Illinois' nongovernmental organizations serve communities that are suffering from the highest rates of COVID-19 infection and death. And just like governmental criminal justice entities, these organizations are in desperate and immediate need of resources that will help them and the people they serve "prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus."

Based on the needs of Illinois' criminal justice system, essential service providers, and the individuals and communities they serve, the Illinois Coalition for Shared Safety asks that in ICJIA's application for stimulus funds to BJA, the agency allows the use of stimulus funds to support nongovernmental essential service providers. This includes nongovernmental agencies like the ones our Coalition represents.

Once ICJIA receives the stimulus funds, we further request ICJIA both to ensure that nongovernmental essential service providers are able to benefit from all relevant funding opportunities and to reserve a portion of these funds to address essential service providers' specific needs in this crisis. Finally, consistent with the theme of ICJIA's June 2019 Board meeting that highlighted the need for the agency to partner with community-based organizations and impacted people in its grant making, we also offer our assistance to ICJIA in helping to design funding opportunities to help essential service providers "prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus."

We note that in ICJIA's Acting Executive Director Jason Stamps' April 16th response to these requests, he wrote that ICJIA is making "budget revisions for existing projects to address immediate needs that are brought about by the outbreak of the virus," and that "for grantees whose source of funds are state dollars we have been similarly working with them on shifting budgets and allowability for needs arising during the crisis."

We are grateful for ICJIA's flexibility in these times. At the same time, we are hopeful that Executive Director Stamps' response does not mean that ICJIA does not intend to support nongovernmental and community-based organizations or work with community stakeholders to design funding opportunities that meet their needs. Executive Director Stamps wrote that ICJIA is working with "stakeholders in the Governor's Office (including the Governor's Office of Management and Budget) and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor on programming this funding, and that "state and local government entities will be eligible to apply." It is not too late to include nongovernmental and community-based organizations in this funding.

We also believe that it is critical that Illinois learns from past federal interventions. In the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Congress also infused significant resources into agencies like ICJIA. Across the country, these funds were used primarily to strengthen the criminal justice system's use of surveillance and punishment, while they neglected nongovernmental and community-based essential service providers that focus on prevention and victim services. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Coalition wants to make sure that federal and state decision makers distribute the state's limited resources based on a comprehensive framework of what is needed to promote safety and justice, which includes the state's nongovernmental essential service providers.

While we understand that government agencies are under severe stress and that you all are incredibly busy during this crisis, we would appreciate the opportunity to work with ICJIA's staff and Board Members to ensure that Illinois is making the most of its limited resources, and that in particular it directs resources to people and communities who are in desperate need of the state's assistance. Please direct follow-up communication to Ron Holmes at ron@ronholmesconsulting.com.

Thank you for all you do to promote safety and justice in Illinois.

Sincerely,

The Illinois Coalition for Shared Safety

The founding members of the Illinois Coalition for Shared Safety include: Acclivus Inc.; Alliance for Safety and Justice; Alliance of Local Service Orgs (ALSO); Apna Ghar, Inc.; Breakthrough Urban Ministries; Chicago CRED; Claretian Associates; Communities Partnering for Peace; Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice IL; Enlace Chicago; Heartland Alliance; Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Inner-City Muslim Action Network; Institute for Nonviolence Chicago; New Life Centers; Metropolitan Family Services; Mothers on a Mission; New Life Centers; ONE Northside; Padres Angeles; Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation; Project Hood; READI Chicago; Roseland Ceasefire; Sarah's Inn; Sisterhood; SWOP (Southwest Organizing Project); Target Area DevCorp; and UCAN.