



The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Collins, and Vice Chair Murray,

The National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) represents over 170 organizations that provide direct services to opportunity youth, defined as young people ages 16-24 out of school and out of work. Our members include community-based organizations, state and local workforce development boards, intermediaries, and research organizations. NYEC's mission is to reconnect the 4.3 million opportunity youth in the U.S. to high-quality education, training opportunities or employment through advocacy, convenings, research, and professional development.

We write to urge you to maintain funding for federal programs that reconnect opportunity youth to the education and workforce system, enabling them to pursue careers that allow them to support themselves and their families and contribute to their communities.

Opportunity youth are in every community across the United States.

- **In OK-04, [13.6%](#)** of young people ages 16-24 are disconnected, for a total of 16,000 opportunity youth in the district.
- **In CT-03, [8.8%](#)** of young people ages 16-24 are disconnected, for a total of 8,200 opportunity youth in the district.
- **In Maine, [10%](#)** of young people ages 16-24 are disconnected, for a total of 13,800 opportunity youth in Maine.
- **In Washington, [11%](#)** of young people ages 16-24 are disconnected, for a total of 94,400 opportunity youth in Washington.

All young people need supports to succeed, including financial resources, strong mentors, and basic needs like housing, food, and reliable transportation. Opportunity youth are no different, yet they face barriers to accessing these crucial supports. Opportunity youth include young people who are disabled, are parents, have experienced homelessness, have been impacted by the juvenile justice system, or have been involved in the foster care system. Despite the steep climb that many opportunity youth face, they are [eager](#) to pursue the American Dream and build a better life for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Investing in opportunity youth has a large economic benefit – a 2018 Measure of America and Schultz Family Foundation [report](#) estimated that the federal government would gain, on average, \$11,900 per year in additional tax revenue per connected young adult. **If all opportunity youth were reconnected, the federal government would gain an estimated \$56 billion in tax revenue.** However, federal investments in programs that support opportunity youth have decreased substantially over the past few decades, adjusted for inflation. By robustly investing in the following federal programs and including the recommended report language, we can dramatically reduce youth disconnection in the United States, which will strengthen local communities and economies.

Department of Labor

- **Report Language:** “The Committee directs the Secretary of Labor, under its demonstration authority under section 169 of WIOA, to make competitive grants for the provision of subsidized summer and year-round employment opportunities as described in section 129 of WIOA. Such grants shall target opportunity youth or justice-involved youth and serve high poverty areas.”
- **WIOA Youth Training:** The WIOA Youth Training program provides young people who are out of school and face barriers to employment with industry-relevant skills, education, and training. The most recent program year [data](#) show that 73.4% of participants were employed in the fourth quarter after exiting a program.
- **Apprenticeship:** Apprenticeships combine paid on-the-job training with classroom instruction to prepare workers for highly skilled careers, while also helping employers recruit, build, and retain a highly skilled workforce.
- **YouthBuild:** YouthBuild is a community-based pre-apprenticeship program that provides job training and educational services for opportunity youth ages 16-24 who left school without a secondary diploma. Participants learn vocational skills in construction and in other in-demand industries including healthcare, information technology, and hospitality.
- **Job Corps:** Job Corps provides free residential career training and educational programs, along with crucial basic needs such as housing, food, and medical care to low-income young adults, giving them the skills and supportive services they need to attain good-paying jobs.
- **Reentry Employment Opportunities:** An increase in these funds will continue to provide funding towards community-based re-entry programs for justice-involved young adults who are currently or formerly incarcerated. These highly effective programs will continue to help more individuals overcome systemic barriers that formerly incarcerated young people face.

Department of Education

- **Adult Education State Grants:** Adult education programs provide learners with crucial life and work skills, including literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, and soft skills, to get them into well-paying jobs or on to postsecondary education.
- **Education for Homeless Children and Youth:** Continued investment in this program is necessary to ensure homeless youth have access to high-quality education.

AmeriCorps

- **AmeriCorps State and National:** An increase in these funds will allow AmeriCorps to continue its effective service models that respond to local and state needs across the country.
- **National Civilian Community Corps:** The NCCC provides participants team-building and professional experience while supporting crucial natural disaster response and prevention, building affordable housing, and supporting communities that are vulnerable to natural disasters.

Department of Justice

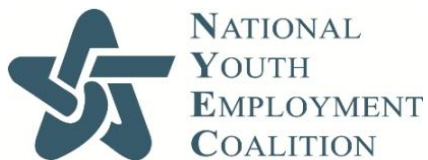
- **Juvenile Justice Program:** Increasing investments in this program will prevent youth violence, reduce delinquency, help justice-involved youth reenter society, and strengthen our communities.

Including our recommended report language and robustly investing in these select programs in a final Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations bill will help reconnect the 4.3 million opportunity youth in the United States to high-quality education and training opportunities, bolstering local economies, and strengthening our nation's workforce.

Thank you for considering our recommendations.

Sincerely,

The National Youth Employment Coalition



*For more information, please contact NYEC's Senior Advisor for Federal Policy, Nathan Hora
nathan.hora@nyec.org.*