

Dear:

We, the undersigned national, state and local organizations are writing to express our concern about the grave implications of the proposed FY 2010 budget to eliminate the State Grants portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program. If this proposal is implemented, the school based drug and violence prevention infrastructures, currently in place in almost every local educational agency (LEA) in the nation, would be totally dismantled

The State Grants portion of the SDFSC program is the is the only source of funding that directly targets all of America's youth in grades K-12 with substance use and violence prevention and intervention services. The program is the nation's safety net for youth drug and violence prevention and currently serves more than 37 million youth per year. The proposal in the FY 2010 budget to eliminate the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program and move \$100 million into a competitive national program will result in only a small number of youth receiving vital and cost effective prevention services. As a result, most school districts in the nation will be left without any prevention infrastructure at all.

The State Grants portion of the SDFSC program requires all schools receiving funding to conduct strategic planning, implementation and data collection efforts. This is the prevention safety net in most communities, and also serves as an early warning network for identifying and dealing with emerging drug trends, such as meth and "cheese." Without this funding, all of these planning and data collection efforts, which are now required by law, would become an unfunded mandate and disappear.

The State Grants portion of the SDFSC program serves as a platform for other drug and violence prevention efforts within schools throughout the country. This program is *the* portal into schools for a host of other prevention, intervention activities as well one of the largest sources of funding for school resource officers. If the program is eliminated, schools will have nothing to build on, and this portal will be closed.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently commented that the United States needs to focus more resources on demand reduction efforts. Unfortunately, the proposal to eliminate the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program does just the opposite. In fact, it cuts demand reduction at a critical time because the latest *Monitoring the Future Survey* reveals the beginning of some very disturbing trends. Eighth graders have the perception that regular use of substances such as marijuana and inhalants are less dangerous than previous cohorts. This is extremely disconcerting as research demonstrates that substance use among youth increases as attitudes soften. Therefore, NOW is not the time to cut prevention funding. This is especially true in light of the fact that historically when funding for drug prevention wanes, as it did in the mid-to late 1990's, youth drug use surges.

Addiction is a developmental disorder that begins in adolescence, sometimes as early as childhood, for which effective prevention is critical.¹ Clearly, the focus should be on preventing substance use before it starts. This is the most cost effective approach, as every dollar invested in research based substance abuse prevention has the potential to save up to \$7 in areas such as substance abuse treatment and criminal justice system costs.² The proposal to zero out the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program undermines the basic prevention infrastructure for most of America's students and will result in large downstream costs in drug abuse, addiction and criminal behavior.

Eliminating the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program would totally dismantle the drug and violence prevention infrastructure that is currently in place in every LEA in the nation and leave the vast majority of our nation's schools and students with no drug and violence prevention programming at all. Zeroing out the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program and moving \$100 million into National Programs to give discretionary grants to a tiny portion of America's school districts is NOT a sound proposal, and should be reconsidered.

Thank you for considering my views and for your years of prior support for substance abuse prevention.

¹ Quote by Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse

² National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2007). *Research Update from the National Institute on Drug Abuse — Drug Abuse is a Preventable Behavior*. Bethesda: MD. Available: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/tib/prevention.html>.