



February 22, 2024

Dear Members of the Missouri State Legislature,

We are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a bipartisan, national, nonprofit organization of 5,000 law enforcement leaders—including 120 here in Missouri—who believe that the best way to stop crime is to invest in evidence-based programs that prevent it.

We are very thankful for the investments you made last year in early childhood care and education programs. Your investments protected the system from collapse and helped many kids, working families, and providers.

Unfortunately, child care is still out of reach for too many families, and early childhood educators are still quitting in droves, further expanding child care deserts. **We urge you to build on this opportune moment and prioritize early childhood funding in the budget this year.**

Chiefly, we hope to see:

- **Child care subsidies** raised to the 100th percentile for infants and toddlers, in accordance with Governor Parson's proposed budget – and to the federally-recommended 75th percentile of market rate for preschool-aged children
- **Child care tax credits** passed that are designed to help more kids and families afford child care, and to keep more providers' doors open
- **Appropriation** to match local investments in early childhood education
- **Expanded pre-K supports and slots** for children in low- to middle-income families and additional pre-K provider grants

We know from our own experiences in law enforcement and from decades of research that high-quality child care and early learning don't just prepare kids to succeed in school and life; they also protect public safety. Kids who are given the opportunity in their earliest years to develop and learn in age-appropriate ways are less likely to become involved in the criminal justice system as young adults.

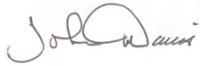
Numerous longitudinal studies support this link between high-quality early education and crime reduction. For example, one study found that children not served by the Chicago Child Parent Centers early education program were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

High-quality early education helps kids meet school readiness benchmarks at kindergarten entry, reducing the likelihood that they underperform in elementary school, increasing the likelihood they graduate from high school on time, and improving later behavioral outcomes.

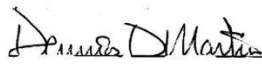
But Missouri parents struggle to access and afford any child care – much less high-quality care – with more than half of Missouri residents (54 percent) living in a child care desert. And early childhood professionals often receive poverty wages - inhibiting their ability to provide children with the enriching care and learning they need.

Thank you for your commitment to our state's kids and families, especially those who are most vulnerable. There is no better time than this budget cycle to invest in our next generation.

Sincerely,



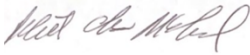
John Davis
Chief of Police
Ash Grove Police Department



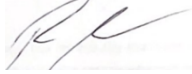
Dennis Martin
Sheriff
Atchison County Sheriff's Office



Jacob Shellabarger
Prosecuting Attorney
Audrain County Prosecutors Office



Chris McPhail
Chief of Police
Battlefield Police Department



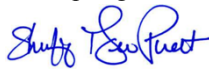
Robert Muenz
Chief of Police
Blue Springs Police Department



Mark Webb
Chief of Police
Bolivar Police Department

/s/ Eric Schmitt

Eric Schmitt
Chief of Police
Branson Police Department



Bill Puett
Sheriff
Buchanan County Sheriff's Office

/s/ Ruth Ann Dickerson

Ruth Ann Dickerson
Sheriff
Cape Girardeau County Sheriff's Office



Mark McCall
Chief of Police
Carl Junction Police Department



Jeffrey Lofton
Chief of Police
Clever Police Department



Larry Fish
Sheriff
Clinton County Sheriff's Office



Bob Holder
Sheriff
Dunklin County Sheriff's Office



Leonard Sanders
Chief of Police
Fordland Police Department



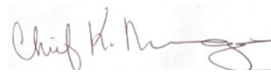
Brian Parker
Prosecuting Attorney
Iron County Prosecutors Office



Todd Lemoine
Chief of Police
Kimberling City Police Department



Mike Nienhuis
Chief of Police
Laurie Police Department



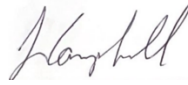
Kristin Nenninger
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John Panning
Chief of Police
Mound City Police Department



Joe Campbell
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Mark Owen
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James Eaton
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Reeds Spring Police Department



Scott Bagley
Chief of Police
Richmond Police Department

/s/ Jody Intravia
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Chief of Police
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Trampus Taylor
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Sparta Police Department

Paul Williams
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Mike Lucas
Chief of Police
Village of Indian Point Police Department

Kelly Clark
Chief of Police
Weston Police Department

Clint Danforth
Chief of Police
Wheaton Police Department

Dominic Orlando
Chief of Police
Woodson Terrace Police Department