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Nationwide Coalition—including Washington State’s Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ)—Sues To Stop Trump-Vance Administration Cuts to Local Programs that Save Lives and Make Communities Safe

Seattle-based CCYJ Joins Organizations in Boston, Detroit, New York City, and San Francisco in Filing Class-Action Complaint to Stop Devastating Termination of Grants

Washington, D.C. - The Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ), and four other nonprofit and community organizations from major cities across the country are suing to stop devastating grant terminations by the Trump-Vance administration that threaten federal support for programs proven to keep communities across the United States safe. In multiple declarations in today’s filing, organizations have argued that people will die as a result of the termination in services.

In a class-action complaint intended to offer relief to hundreds of community organizations, the Children and Youth Justice Center d/b/a Center for Children & Youth Justice, Chinese for Affirmative Action d/b/a Stop AAPI Hate, FORCE Detroit, Health Resources in Action, and the Vera Institute of Justice are asking a federal court to stop the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs from unlawfully terminating these grants that save lives and make communities safer. The coalition is represented by Democracy Forward and Perry Law, and the case is *Vera Institute of Justice, et al. v. United States Department of Justice, et al.*

In April 2025, the OJP suddenly canceled hundreds of community violence intervention, victim services, youth and criminal justice grants to nonprofit community organizations and local governments, sending a form letter that offered a generic and inadequate justification for the disruptive decision to cancel existing grants. The terminated grant awards provided federal support for evidence-based programs that save lives, reduce violence, protect crime victims, and keep communities safe across the United States.

“Gun Violence is the leading cause of death for children in America—and we know how to stop it. But DOJ’s abrupt and unlawful funding decisions, which have led to the immediate cessation of investments in youth group violence prevention and Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs in Washington State—and across America—are taking us backward,” said **Rachel**

Sottile, President & CEO of the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ). “For nearly two decades CCYJ has been a trusted partner with communities and government, working to develop, coordinate, and implement reforms that protect children and youth, stabilize families, and strengthen communities. Now, suddenly, initiatives that are essential for keeping youth and communities safe are lost—as are years of planning and coordination with community, law enforcement, educational, and state and local government partners. At a time when young people need us more than ever, DOJ’s unlawful action threatens to reverse years of progress, planning, and efficiency. Despite a history of bipartisan support for these evidence-based, community-led, and increasingly crucial initiatives, young people will pay with their lives and families and communities will suffer unspeakable harm.”

“The sudden and unlawful termination of these public safety grants makes neighborhoods everywhere less safe and does irreparable harm to communities across the country,” said **Skye Perryman, President and CEO of Democracy Forward.** “Organizations that have worked for years to build trust in communities and are successfully reducing violence are having to fire dedicated staff and shutter programs that vulnerable populations rely on for services. We are honored to represent brave plaintiffs in this matter to keep our communities safe.”

“Since our inception in 2020, Stop AAPI Hate has led the nation in tracking anti-AAPI hate and raised unprecedented national awareness of its impact. We had already begun expanding our pioneering work based on the promise of the DOJ grant, building vital initiatives to prevent hate acts, improve public transit safety, and support victims – only for the Trump administration to abruptly halt this progress and put our communities at greater risk,” said **Cynthia Choi, Co-Founder of Stop AAPI Hate and Co-Executive Director of Chinese for Affirmative Action.** “The DOJ’s reckless cancellation of over \$810 million in public safety grants is a betrayal of communities across the nation – especially at a time when targeted hate is widespread. We’re proud to join this lawsuit to defend the safety, dignity, and justice that all communities deserve.”

“Community Violence Intervention funding saves money and lives,” said **Executive Director Dajuan Zoe Kennedy of FORCE Detroit.** “We have the data to prove it – up to 72 percent reduction in violent crime last year in our zone of Detroit. This work has resulted in Detroit’s lowest homicide rate since 1965. The President vows to support law enforcement, let it be clear that law enforcement supports this work. Eliminating federal grants adds incredible strain on our police departments, costs lives, and dismantles communities. The work that we achieve with proper funding saves taxpayer dollars while building safer cities. For every shooting injury in Detroit, Michigan for example, the cost is \$1.1 million. For every homicide shooting, it costs taxpayers \$1.7 million. To put that in perspective, shooting reductions from 2023 to 2024 in Detroit saved lives, prevented trauma, and saved \$31.3 million. The real solution to violence reduction and building stronger communities can be nonpartisan.”

“For decades, HRiA has worked across the country to advance a collaborative and cross-sector community violence intervention ecosystem that saves lives and makes communities safer. We work to address violence as a public health issue. Like disease, violence spreads and is preventable,” said **Steven Ridini, President and CEO of Health Resources in Action.**

“Community members drive effective solutions to prevent violence. These strategies engage people at the highest risk of violence and employ frontline workers who hold deep knowledge, credibility, and trust within communities to help people heal from violence and thrive. This sweeping termination of federal grants across hundreds of organizations guts the community violence intervention ecosystem, leaving lives and neighborhoods in jeopardy.”

“For over sixty years, Vera has worked in partnership with community and government leaders across the entire country—spanning geographic and political lines—to solve some of the most intractable problems in the criminal justice system. We bring the data, evidence, and solutions needed to end mass incarceration, and ensure dignity and fairness to everyone touched by the system, including those who work in it. Our goal is for all communities to be safe, healthy and just,” said **Nick Turner, president and director of the Vera Institute of Justice**. “The arbitrary termination of Vera’s federal funding and those of our essential partners and peers, totaling \$820 million across 200+ organizations in more than 35 states, undermines the very programs and services that save lives and make communities safer.”

The administration’s form letter that canceled these grants has already been disruptive to local organizations and the communities they serve. Included in the declarations filed with the case are revealing stories from groups that spent years building the infrastructure necessary to earn the trust of the communities in which they operated and spent millions of dollars supporting local organizations – hiring staff and building programs designed to achieve lasting change, only for these efforts to be rapidly dismantled as a result of the letter.

Attorneys Brian Netter, Lisa Newman, Skye Perryman, Jennifer Fountain Connolly, Cortney Robinson, and Somil Trivedi are leading the case for Democracy Forward, and the team at Perry Law working on this case includes E. Danya Perry, Joshua Perry, and Joshua Stanton.

Read the complaint [here](#).

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The Center for Children and Youth Justice (CCYJ) is the only statewide organization focused solely on reforming Washington state’s child welfare and youth legal systems. Founded by Justice Bobbe Bridge (ret.) nearly 20 years ago, CCYJ has pioneered, developed, and advocated for countless innovations that have led to more compassionate, equitable, and effective support for Washington children, youth, and families. Please visit ccyj.org.