

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

JENNIFER L. McCLELLAN
9TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT
ALL OF CHARLES CITY COUNTY; PART OF
HANOVER AND HENRICO COUNTIES; AND PART
OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND
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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND
NATURAL RESOURCES
JUDICIARY
FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS
TRANSPORTATION

October 17, 2022

The Honorable Jackson Miller
Director
Department of Criminal Justice Services
1100 Bank Street, 12th Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Director Miller:

I write to raise concerns with the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)'s implementation of grand funds authorized by the Virginia General Assembly in the fiscal year 2023-2024 budget, 2022 Special 1 Chapter 2, Item 408 N2a through c. That language appropriated \$2.5 million per year for the newly created Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund, to be managed by DCJS for the purpose of "implementing violent crime reduction strategies, providing training for law-enforcement officers and prosecutors, providing equipment for law-enforcement agencies, and awarding grants to organizations such as state and local law-enforcement agencies, local attorneys for the Commonwealth, localities, social services providers, and nonprofit organizations that are engaged in group violence intervention efforts."

At the October 13, 2022, Criminal Justice Service Board meeting, under an Agenda item designated "Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Grants," the Department sought approval of a memorandum of understanding between DCJS and the Office of the Attorney General ("OAG") to allocate more than half of the amount allocated for Operation Ceasefire Grants to hire federal prosecutors to prosecute violent crime generally rather than providing resources to address the root causes of violent crime. The lack of transparency around this agenda item, which appears to conflate two separate funds established in Item 408, is troubling.

Item 408N2c mandated that DCJS "establish an application process for awarding grants from the Fund, including criteria and procedures for determining the amount of a grant." However, in response to my questions at the CJSB meeting, it became clear that the Department ignored this mandate, and instead simply sought approval to allocate more than half of all funding to the OAG through an MOU rather than an open, transparent grant process open to any eligible entity.

The process sought to approve this MOU violates not only the express requirements of Item 408, but the spirit of the purpose and eligible uses for the grants.

Accordingly, I request prompt answers to the following questions about this process:

- Has DCJS established an application process for awarding grants from the Operation Ceasefire Fund, including criteria and procedures for determining the amount of a grant. grant guidelines for Operation Ceasefire Grants as required by Item 408N2c open to all eligible applicants? If so, please provide a copy of such guidelines, including a grant application deadline? If not, please explain when such criteria will be made public for interested eligible organizations to apply for the grants.
- Please explain how allocating all funding provided for Operation Ceasefire Grant to the OAG for the purpose of hiring federal prosecutors to prosecute violent crime furthers the goals of the Operation Ceasefire Grants as outlined in Item 408N2.
- Please explain the status of the status of guidelines and the grant process required by 2021 Special Session 1 Chapter 2, Item 408N1b under the Virginia Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund to make funds available to agencies of local government, community-based organizations, and hospitals for the purpose of supporting implementation of evidence-informed gun violence intervention and prevention efforts, including street outreach, hospital-based violence intervention, and other violence intervention programs.

Moreover, I expect that future CJSB meetings will be transparent and give sufficient notice to the public through publication of an accurate and clear agenda, meeting materials and presentations on the DCJS webpage in advance of the meeting and the agenda on the meetings page of the Legislative Information Services webpage when the meeting date and location is published.

I appreciate your attention to these issues.

Sincerely,

Senator Jennifer L. McClellan
9th District



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cc: Craig Branch, Chairman, Criminal Justice Services Board