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67th Montana Legislature

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August 29, 2022

Heather Tubman-Carbone, PhD
Senior Policy Advisor, Bureau of Justice Assistance
810 Seventh Street NW
Washington, DC 20531

DRAFT LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR JUSTICE COUNTS METRICS/ REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

Dear Dr. Tubman-Carbone,

As state and local leaders, we share the priorities of safety and justice for all Montana residents. Like many states across the country, the lack of access to timely and accurate criminal justice data is a challenge for Montana.

After participating in a year-long legislative study of criminal justice in Montana, it is clear that Montana must commit to improving the collection and accessibility of basic data about the criminal justice system, from law enforcement to prosecutors to courts and prisons. Smarter criminal justice policy requires data that are up to date, consistently available, and easy to understand and use. To meet this standard, we need useful metrics that are feasible for agencies and local governments, committed agency and local government leaders to contribute data, and digital infrastructure and displays that are easy to use and understand.

We aim to ensure that we, our fellow state and local leaders, and the public have accurate, accessible, and actionable data to drive decisions about the criminal justice system. We request the technical assistance support of The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center and the support of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to participate in the Justice Counts Initiative's Founding States Program. This support will provide the hands-on help that will benefit our agencies in sharing Justice Counts metrics, will steward the publication of those metrics, and help Montana policymakers effectively use Justice Counts data in their decision-making going forward.

The co-signers of this letter recognize that cross-system implementation of Justice Counts is critical to its success and impact. We each pledge to make our individual agencies a Justice Counts agency and will work as a coalition to encourage other agencies to join our effort.

We hope to work with the CSG Justice Center and BJA to take this step toward better criminal justice data and policy.

Sincerely,

Department of Justice signatory

Judicial Branch signatory

Office of State Public Defender signatory

Department of Corrections signatory

County Detention Centers signatory

Additional signatories as desired