

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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### Opening Statement

**Ranking Member Stacey Plaskett (VI)**

**Subcommittee on Government Operations**

*Examining Mismanagement in Office of Justice Programs Grantmaking*

**July 14, 2016**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding today's hearing to highlight a very important office in the Department of Justice—the Office of Justice Programs (OJP).

Currently, OJP oversees 7,000 active grants, some of which are mandated by Congress, totaling more than \$7.5 billion. As a former prosecutor with DOJ—I know firsthand what an important partner OJP is to our local and state governments by providing resources for training, coordination, and equipment to support law enforcement efforts. OJP funds are used to support anti-gang initiatives, bulletproof vest purchases, and programs to counter spousal or child abuse and trafficking

These grants make a difference in peoples' lives. Just two weeks ago, OJP reported that the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces—funded through an OJP grant program—arrested more than 1,300 suspected child predators. Last Fall, OJP announced the addition of five cities to the Violence Reduction Network, a collaborative program between DOJ and cities which has contributed to the arrests of criminals suspected of violent crimes such as sexual assault and homicide.

As part of its own oversight, OJP assesses the risk of all grant applicants and grantees to identify any high-risk grantees that may require additional controls or corrective actions. In fact, OJP actually exceeds the 10% statutory goal for conducting extensive monitoring of grant dollars, and less than 1% of grants are currently considered as “high-risk.” To supplement its internal efforts, OJP relies on the Office of the Inspector General. Independent audits of grantees and reviews of OJP grant management—like those conducted by the Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office—have aided the office in making improvements to its management processes. While both the IG and GAO have singled out specific grant programs for concern in recent years, OJP has acted in good faith to implement corrective recommendations and close out

those cases. As a result of IG recommendations, OJP has taken significant steps to change its policies and procedures, clarify or issue guidance, put in place performance controls, and remedy unallowable costs. For example, OJP has requested Treasury send a collection notice to recoup unsupported expenditures from one grantee, and it has offered individualized technical assistance to all grantees under the DNA Backlog Reduction Program as it works to update its program guidance.

In 2012, GAO found that DOJ needed to put into place better controls to reduce the risk of the duplication of grant awards—including OJP grants. As a result, DOJ granting agencies now coordinate with one another to ensure that grantees are not unnecessarily receiving duplicative awards.

OJP's improvements to its grant management controls over the past decade have been welcomed by grant applicants and recipients. For example, OJP created the Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management (OAAM) in fiscal year 2007 to conduct audits of OJP processes and risk assessments of grant programs, oversee program monitoring, and create policies to improve OJP grant management. Since then, applicants report experiencing better communication of the grant peer review process, receiving a more transparent and timely review of the strengths or weaknesses of their grant proposals, and having frequent communication about grant requirements and policy changes.

The changes made by DOJ and OJP are lowering the risk to taxpayers.

But there is always room for more improvement. It is essential for OJP to continuously evaluate its programs with the IG and GAO for lessons learned and to identify ways to improve its oversight and monitoring of grant programs to ensure that funding is effectively and efficiently used by grant recipients.

I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses about their observations and suggestions for assisting OJP and this Subcommittee in conducting robust oversight of these grant dollars, which are vital to our state and local partners. Thank you.

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