OBAMA-BIDEN TRANSITION PROJECT

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Changing the Way Children Grow Up in America
Citizen-Based One-to-One Mentoring
Policy Recommendations of Big Brothers Big Sisters

"Opportunity is scarce, role models are few, and there is little contact with the normalcy of life outside those streets." President-elect Barack Obama, July 18, 2007

There is an urgent youth development crisis in this country. A large, increasing percentage of our youth are falling through the cracks. Too many of our children are exposed to risk factors that seriously diminish their chances for success in life: family poverty, insufficient school and community resources, incarceration, violence, and a lack of successful role models. Exposure to these risk factors leads to childhood failures, including academic disengagement, lack of learning, poor relationship development and misbehavior. For example, more than a million kids drop out of high school every year – roughly one dropout every half minute. A third of all American teenagers today will not finish high school. The Educational Testing Service estimates a dropout rate "closer to 50%" among what it terms "disadvantaged minorities."

The socioeconomic consequences of these failures – insufficiently educated adults, poverty, crime and violence, inadequate access to health care and social services – are threatening an entire generation and the well-being of our society. More than twelve million of our children live below the federally-defined poverty line; too many of them do not get enough to eat and do not have adequate health care. Many children's lives are marked by the absence of one or both birth parents; and where parents are absent due to incarceration, statistics suggest that their children have a significantly higher risk of becoming incarcerated themselves at some point in their lives.

Mentoring works to change the odds for America's children who are most at-risk and the communities where they live. The transformational power of these relationships opens doors for the children involved and changes the way they see their world. It works because it is not separate from the community, but of the community, powerfully answering the question that so many of our citizens ask: what can I do to be part of the solution?

Ultimately, everyone grows and learns from the relationships forged, and that transforms lives – of the child, the caring adult who mentors that child, the child's family and the community itself.

Mentoring should be an integral part of the Obama-Biden Administration's holistic solution to the long-term structural problems of poverty and crime in some of our most troubled

communities. We urge the Obama-Biden Administration to sustain and grow current federal mentoring initiatives and, in doing so, continue to demonstrate that through public/private partnership we can solve some of our toughest societal problems – one family, one child at a time. Recognizing the need to implement proven holistic "cradle-to-college" approaches to combat generational poverty in America, Big Brothers Big Sisters stands ready to work closely with you to affect major change via the powerful, transformational tool of mentoring.

Mentoring – An Essential Part of the Solution

Quality mentoring programs represent a unique part of the solution for vulnerable children who are falling through the cracks and perpetuating the cycle of despair, poverty and crime.

1. Mentoring organizations work in community partnerships, consistent with the "promise zone" concept. Engaging with parents/guardians, schools, congregations, businesses and other service organizations in order to ensure a holistic look at the children and bring volunteer and other resources to bear, we offer a remarkable example of the power of private-public partnerships and community collaboration.

2. These programs are proven to help vulnerable children reach their potential. Youth involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters community-based mentoring matches are: 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs; 27% less likely to begin using alcohol; 52% less truant (and 37% less likely to skip class); more confident in their school work performance; and able to get along better with their families.

3. Mentors help children see new possibilities, take responsibility and make good decisions. They provide another central access point to vulnerable families, along with parents and schools, as a primary way to distribute an array of messages and services.

4. Mentoring offers a compelling answer to the question of what the average American can do to help – capitalizing on American's spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy.

5. Mentoring organizations now serve hundreds of thousands of children in thousands of communities. The Big Brothers Big Sisters network alone has grown by over 150% in the past decade and now serves over 250,000 children nationwide. But there are still so many more we need to reach. Mentoring programs are scalable on the local, state and national levels.

The Transformative Role of Federal Funding on Mentoring Programs

Federal funding for mentoring has helped transform mentoring into a large- scale growth field, targeting the most at-risk children and communities.

1. Targeted programs have helped the mentoring field to become much more "intentional" in the children targeted, focusing on those who need our programs the most. These targeted programs include Mentoring Children of Prisoners, school-based

mentoring in Title I schools, and Justice Department programs focused on minority youth in communities where truancy and dropout rates are so high.

2. Federal funding has created a model for strong public/private partnerships. Big Brothers Big Sisters has been able to leverage public funds effectively, raising four private dollars for every public dollar received.

3. This powerful federal investment is cost-effective. It costs just over $1000 annually to mentor a child, but over $45,000 to incarcerate a juvenile.

4. Federal funding ensures growth with quality. Speaking from our own experience, Big Brothers Big Sisters has invested in essential infrastructure to enforce standards and to assure child safety –technology, training and performance management systems that our local affiliates could not afford on their own. The National Office enables each Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliate to achieve a higher quality of service and a greater impact in its community than would otherwise be possible, as well as spurring incredible growth.

Recent History of Federal Mentoring Programs

Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

1. Juvenile Mentoring Programs (JUMP)

   Authority:

   - *Section 1, Part G of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Amendments of 1992 (P.L. 102-586).*
   - *Note: This program was deauthorized under Section 12210 of the 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-273), but Congress continued to appropriate funding for the program.*

Recognizing the important role that mentoring can play in reducing the odds that a child will be remanded to the juvenile justice system, Congress established the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) in 1992. The funding level for this competitive grant program grew from $4 million in Fiscal Year 1994 to $16 million in Fiscal Year 2001. As noted above, the program was deauthorized in 2002. However, Congress has continued to cite the authority and appropriate additional dollars for the program.

Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies used these grants to leverage new partnerships and substantially grow their programs to serve far more children.

2. Congressionally-directed Justice appropriations for the National Office of Big Brothers Big Sisters

In Fiscal Year 1998, at Congress' direction, OJJDP began providing direct funding to the National Office of Big Brothers Big Sisters to keep more youth out of the juvenile justice system, to prevent them from dropping out of school, and to keep them away from drugs. As a result, we have made significant progress: doubling the number of at-risk youth we serve annually to over a quarter million; conducting further nationally recognized research; enhancing our internal data systems to ensure greater accountability and accuracy; and sharpening our focus on the children most in need of our services. In 2006, Congress authorized BBBS' annual appropriation, under Section 601 of P.L. 109-248, to support the network's effective service delivery system.

3. New Youth Mentoring Grants

Authority:

The House Commerce Justice Science Appropriations Committee established this new competitive pot of mentoring funds in FY08 to address the House Appropriations Committee's commitment to reduce earmarks by 50 percent. The funding level in FY08 was $70 million. In FY09, the House has proposed $100 million and, citing the JUMP authority, the Senate proposed $80 million.

In Fiscal Year 2008, OJJDP ran three competitions: (1) National Mentoring Programs; (2) Strengthening Youth Mentoring through Community Partnerships; and (3) Latino Youth Mentoring Program.

As a result of this competitive process, Big Brothers Big Sisters was awarded $8.6 million under the National Mentoring Programs solicitation. This funding will enable us to: (a) provide direct and targeted investments to our agencies serving dozens of the country's highest-need communities, particularly those with high populations of African-Americans, Hispanics or Native Americans; (b) enhance technological infrastructure to ensure detailed measurement and evaluation of the program; and (c) strengthen National Office support of agencies through program enhancement, training, volunteer recruitment, staff and volunteer development, materials and resource acquisition.

Our stated goal is to reduce truancy by at least 15% among the targeted youth population during the program year and ensure that over 29,000 underserved minority youth have the best possible chance to achieve in school, in work and in life.

4. Mentoring Programs for At-Risk Tribal Youth *(solicited grant in FY07 and competitive grant in FY08)*

With the support of a solicited Fiscal Year 2007 OJJDP grant of $2 million, the Big Brothers Big Sisters Native American Mentoring Initiative began in January 2008. This funding will enable us to establish 1,125 new matches by December 2010 involving one

American Indian mentor or mentee, to create a Native American Mentoring Model for eventual nationwide adoption, and to establish and increase the capacity of Big Brothers Big Sisters Native American Mentoring Initiative pilot agencies.

In Fiscal Year 2008, Big Brothers Big Sisters received a second two-year, competitive grant of $2 million from OJJDP to accelerate the growth and impact of the Initiative.

Department of Justice Recommendations:

- Congress should reauthorize JUMP, a valuable program that enables local mentoring programs to compete for OJJDP funds. Congress should further provide OJJDP with the authority to make challenge grants to national mentoring organizations.

- Native American youth have many needs that mentoring can effectively address. OJJDP should continue to support mentoring models that integrate rich tribal customs.

- OJJDP has been a powerful delinquency prevention partner in accomplishing our shared goals of keeping kids on track and in school. We have recently devoted ourselves to determining which of our mentoring model's array of positive outcomes should be our highest priority – the connection between school achievement and delinquency prevention rose to the top. Truancy is frequently an indicator of our most serious juvenile problems and is thus referred to as a "gateway" crime – linked in studies to delinquent activity in youth and negative behavior in adulthood, including an increased propensity for violence and a greater likelihood of dropping out of school.

  In Fiscal Year 2010, we respectfully request that President-elect Obama's budget include robust funding for youth mentoring, including a $13 million investment in Big Brothers Big Sisters as authorized by Section 601 of P.L. 109-248.

Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Mentoring Children of Prisoners

Authority:

- *Section 439 of the Social Security Act as amended by the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-288).*
- First funded in FY03 at the level of $8.5 million, the appropriation in FY08 was $49 million.
- 83 BBBS affiliates have been awarded Mentoring Children of Prisoners grants, for a total of $44.6 million.

Mentoring Children of Prisoners as a federal program was born from an innovative Big Brothers Big Sisters program, Amachi (named from a Nigerian Ibo expression meaning

"who knows what God has brought us through this child"). Eight years ago we had little awareness of the impact of incarceration on children, few strategies to reach their families, and few partnerships with religious congregations. In 2000, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., BBBS of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Public/Private Ventures and 42 local congregations, forged the Amachi partnership in Philadelphia to serve children of incarcerated parents.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) support of the Amachi model spread the effort across the country and involved other mentoring agencies, recognizing the risk factor that having an incarcerated parent poses for a child. This year, HHS is on track to celebrate its 100,000th match of a child of a prisoner with a mentor.

Department of Health and Human Services Recommendations

- In Fiscal Year 2010, we respectfully request that President-elect Obama's budget include $ 100 million for the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program.
- In preparation for reauthorization in 2012, HHS should publish and distribute research-based effective mentoring practices.
- HHS should work with Congress during the reauthorization process to redesign the program so that grantees are required to use proven, effective practices.
- The reauthorized program should also require collaboration with quality re-entry programs, community-based youth development programs and violence prevention programs; in addition to family support, incarcerated parent education and family visitation.

Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools

Mentoring for Success

Authority:

- *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (*ESEA*), as amended, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, Sec. 4130; 20 *U.S.C.* 7140.
- Congressional support for the Mentoring for Success grants is strong. In FY08, Congress appropriated $48.5 million for the program.
- 134 BBBS affiliates have been awarded Mentoring for Success grants, totaling $21.9 million.

Federal support for school-based mentoring has increased the nationwide pool of mentoring volunteers, has brought supports to schools under stress, and has increased the academic performance of many children in need. Because school-based mentoring occurs during the day, the pool of mentoring volunteers now includes business employees, college students, high school students and senior citizens. Volunteers go into the schools to meet with their Little Brothers and Little Sisters, giving fresh supports to staff who welcome

assistance with their neediest children. An independent, nationwide, randomized study of Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring found that children benefit through a wide array of academic outcomes including increased grades, higher scholastic efficacy, more assignments completed, and better school attendance.

Department of Education Recommendations:

When No Child Left Behind is reauthorized, we would recommend the following changes to improve and expand Mentoring for Success grants.

- Add language allowing current grantees to reapply for a second three-year grant if they meet the following qualifications:
  - Performance is deemed satisfactory, with a demonstrated high-quality program
  - Number of successful matches
  - Proposal expands service or serves a new population
  - The second grant would be at the 50 percent match for the entire grant
- Update the purpose of the program to include fostering character education and enhancing the learning environment through engaging students, reducing school absentee rates, and improving academic performance.
- Require a sustainability plan as part of the grant application.
- Authorization the program at the level of $100 million annually.

Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration

Reintegration of Ex-Offenders

Authority:

- *The FY07 Supplemental Appropriations Bill included $24 million for 5 counties/cities experiencing significant youth violence. School Districts used the funds to implement mentoring programs that integrated educational and employment interventions.*

In Fiscal Year 2008 Congress established a competitive Department of Labor mentoring initiative to meet the needs of schools that had self-identified as persistently dangerous. The Fiscal Year 2009 Senate Labor/HHS Committee Report includes $60 million to continue the program and make additional grants targeted to schools with high dropout rates.

The funding appropriated to-date has enabled a number of community-based mentoring organizations to expand their school-based mentoring programs and significantly increase their partnerships with local school districts and neighboring corporations. This in turn has enabled them to target some of the most at-risk students at so-called "persistently dangerous" schools in large urban markets.

Corporation for National and Community Service

As the federal agency charged with supporting service and volunteerism, the Corporation for National and Community Service is a natural home for the mentoring cause.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America received a four-year challenge grant from CNCS in 2002 to expand School-based Mentoring. As a result of this grant, 90,368 hours were spent with 2,772 new Littles.

The National Office received a second grant CNCS grant in 2005 to engage Baby Boomers as youth mentors. During the grant period, 864 Boomer-aged volunteers were recruited, screened and matched with children living in Gulf Coast areas impacted by the hurricanes. The challenge funds from CNCS were used to leverage an additional $1 million in new private funding.

Corporation for National and Community Service Recommendations:

- The Corporation should invest in efforts to increase the number of male and minority mentors. Research has shown that same-gender, same-ethnicity mentors help children to concretely see different options. But a majority of volunteer mentors are still white women.
- The Obama-Biden Administration should reform the interagency Federal Mentoring Council to better leverage federal mentoring efforts. The work of the Council should be strategic and emphasize successful mentoring models and organizations. The Council should also better coordinate best practices at the federal, state and local levels.
- Congress should authorize a Volunteer Generation Fund to expand the supply of volunteers and the capacity of evidence-based organizations such as BBBS to recruit and match volunteers. A Volunteer Generation Fund could also support corporate volunteer outreach and engagement to fully leverage the potential of business professionals to serve their community through skilled pro-bono service such as marketing, IT, human resources and finance. Competitive matching grants would spur innovation in volunteer recruitment and management.

Conclusion

Publicly supported mentoring organizations should be:

- Evidence-Based: effective mentoring organizations are learning organizations that evaluate and refine their practices on the basis of independent research in order to ensure positive outcomes for the children and communities they serve.

- Sustainable: mentoring organizations should have a record of leveraging public funding to catalyze support in the private sector. Organizations should operate on a sustainable revenue model that includes substantial and diverse private-source funding reflective of broad-based support. Public funds should be used not for on-going operating support, but as investment capital to drive growth and quality in local and regional services.
- Accountable: mentoring organizations should meet the highest standards of transparency and accountability in their operations, finances and programs, and should cooperate with independent watchdogs such as the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Navigator and the American Institute of Philanthropy.
- Partnership-Oriented: mentoring organizations should partner (not compete) with schools, faith-based organizations, corporations, and other non-profits to leverage impact for children and communities served.
- Scalable with Quality: mentoring organizations most suitable for federal funding are those organizations working on a regional or national scale with the goal of achieving significant impact through their services. Such organizations are led by a regional or national office that provides strategic direction, catalyzes the acquisition of resources, oversees compliance with standards of quality at the local level, and maintains the data and technology infrastructure necessary to provide highest-quality mentoring at scale.

We know that quality mentoring programs can help change what it means to grow up in America, while offering inspiring opportunities for those seeking engagement. The volunteer mentoring network cannot and does not claim to be the answer to the problem of cyclical poverty. Rather it is a critical component to a successful cradle-to-college cure for the disease of poverty that has infected generations of Americans. It is a network driven by dedicated staffers, volunteer board members, individual donors, foundation and corporate partners, and a quarter million Americans who give of their time and their personalities month after month and year after year. By a conservative estimate, Big Brothers Big Sisters volunteers spend an hour each week with the children they mentor which translates to over $250 billion annually (source: Independent Sector). They do it because they see first-hand that they are making a difference, offering that one precious thing that every child and every community needs in order to beat negative odds – hope.

As you look for models in positive youth development, it is our sincere hope that the Obama-Biden Transition Project will call upon our 100+ year history of on-the-ground experience and consider us a helpful thought partner in addressing the needs of America's at-risk youth.