

March 18, 2025



Dear Committee Members,

Family Freedom Center provides no-cost, out-of-school programming for youth in Duluth's Central Hillside community. Our youth center offers a safe and supportive space where young people access academic support, mentorship, and skill-building opportunities designed to **disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline**. The reality in Duluth Public Schools is stark; BIPOC and low-income students experience disproportionate proficiency gaps, lower graduation rates, and higher disciplinary referrals. Without targeted intervention, these disparities continue to limit economic mobility and increase justice system involvement.

For several years, **the funding support we received through OJP YIP** has been critical in sustaining **preemptive programming** that reaches youth before they become entangled in these cycles. This support allows us to strengthen academic performance, build leadership skills, and expose young people to career pathways that offer a future beyond survival. As we look ahead, the need for early intervention continues to grow, and sustained investment in these efforts is essential to ensuring that youth in our community have access to opportunities that keep them engaged and thriving.

We urge you to fully fund OJP YIP to ensure that youth-serving organizations like ours can continue providing the interventions necessary to keep young people on a path to success. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about Family Freedom Center and our programs, please feel free to reach out to me directly at Jacob@familyfreedomcenter.org.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

In community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacob Bell".

Jacob Aaron Bell
Executive Director
Family Freedom Center

ENGAGE, EMPOWER & EDUCATE

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