

June 22, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr:

I write to you regarding the implementation of Public Law No: 115-435, the 'Evidence Act.' As you know, as part of a broader evidence and evaluation framework, the Evidence Act requires federal agencies to develop multi-year learning agendas as well as designating an Evaluation Officer in order to ensure that agencies can identify short- and long-term policy questions relevant to the agency and develop rigorous evidence to provide policymakers additional information on how best to address those policy questions.

I would like to commend the Department of Justice (DOJ) for its past leadership on performance-based and evidence-based programming. For example, in conjunction with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the DOJ supported pay-for-success (PFS) projects such as permanent supportive housing. The DOJ has one of the most important roles to play in helping promote opportunity and reducing recidivism amongst formerly incarcerated individuals, and it has taken that role seriously both in the past and in the present.

The recent protests and violence surrounding the death of George Floyd has been a stark reminder that policing power is one of the most critical responsibilities that we give the State in our free society. Its importance cannot be understated, for without the certainty that they will be protected from violence, citizens are unable to go about their lives. However, with that power comes the expectation that the power granted the State is used responsibly and equitably. The DOJ's commitment towards developing rigorous evidence on effective policing practices will be extremely important to ensure that all citizens feel that their rights are respected while police officers can ensure that they are as safe as possible while carrying out their duty to serve and protect all citizens in their necessary and difficult work. To that end, I make the following recommendations:

1. **Ensure timely development of a learning agenda:** First and foremost, the DOJ should prioritize the importance of developing a learning agenda as part of its broader evidence framework. Interim learning agendas should be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget this September. I urge the DOJ to develop and submit a learning agenda on time so that they can be included with next years' budget submissions.
2. **Emphasize Best Practices around Policing:** All levels of government have worked towards developing evidence-based programs around community policing. The DOJ's learning agenda should continue to prioritize that, with an emphasis on effective strategies to reduce violence, including police violence, while ensuring the safety of police officers.

3. **Ensure Opportunity for Incarcerated Individuals:** We all hope that individuals who have been incarcerated can return to their communities and avoid returning to crime. DOJ should prioritize the evaluation of BOP programming and its effectiveness at reducing recidivism, working when possible with state and local authorities to provide them with additional capabilities to evaluate their own programs.
4. **Deepen and Strengthen Data Sharing:** I commend you for the Administrations recent executive order, and the requirements made on increased data sharing as it relates to excessive use complaints. As the DOJ continues to develop its data strategy, renewed emphasis should be placed on ensuring voluntary compliance by state and local law enforcement agencies to submit data. As DOJ consider opportunities to bolster data sharing capabilities, I encourage incorporating appropriate and necessary privacy and security protections.

Our nation's law enforcement officials have challenging jobs. They are also given immense powers to complete those tasks, and we have seen far too many high-profile examples in recent weeks of the misuse of those authorities. I urge the DOJ to prioritize learning how best to continue guaranteeing the safety of our citizens and law enforcement personnel, through a lens of both better measurable outcomes and increasing equity.

Sincerely,



Paul D. Ryan
President
American Idea Foundation