DIRECTOR'S 2023 YEAR-END MESSAGE

My name is Kevin Scott, and I am the acting director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. I'm in my seventh year at BJS and I've never been happier to be here. We have a great mission and I get to work every day with some of the nicest and most talented people I've ever met.

2023 was an impactful year for BJS. We pursued modernization efforts across the board, improvements to the publishing and promotion of our content, engagement with our stakeholders, strategic planning, and fulfilling our obligations under the Evidence Act, to name a few. These efforts are central to our identity as a principal federal statistical agency, and we continue to build on them.

BJS had many firsts in 2023. We published results from our first-ever survey of law enforcement officers and our first estimates of criminal victimization for the 22 largest states. And for the first time in nearly a decade, we published estimates on the work of publicly funded forensic crime laboratories. In partnership with the FBI, we successfully released the second year of reported crime estimates, including the first-ever set of comprehensive gun violence statistics produced by the federal government. To help others analyze our data, we archived 90 new datasets at the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data.

In 2023, we made several investments to improve the quality and quantity of data in the criminal justice system. For example, as part of our Criminal Justice Data Improvement Program, BJS made 86 awards totaling about $163 million for states and state courts and invested $1.5 million for data collection in Indian country, which advances our mandate to collect data on the operation of tribal justice systems in the United States.

We published data tools that expand data access and provide visualization capabilities, including the Federal Criminal Case Processing Statistics tool, FCCPS, and the Survey of Prison Inmates Data Analysis tool, or SPIDAT. We also developed and published interactive data pages, providing key statistics on jail and prison populations in the United States months in advance of the annual reports.

In 2023, BJS took important steps to prepare for new data collections, including a survey on post-academy law enforcement training and officer wellness programs and a new research and development effort on the types of requests police receive from the public. We laid the groundwork to update existing data collections, including conducting stakeholder engagement activities and a redesign for the Survey of Sexual Victimization, as well as an extensive pre-test in multiple jail facilities for the next Survey of Inmates in Local Jails. We also awarded funding for several new developmental activities, in areas such as campus climate and access to justice.

This past year, we at BJS had the privilege of engaging and collaborating with colleagues in the criminal justice and victim services fields and other federal and statistical agencies across the country and the world. Right here in DC, we were able to gather with colleagues to honor 20 years of data collection under the Prison Rape Elimination Act and celebrate 50 years of the National Crime Victimization Survey. BJS staff presented at a wide array of conferences around the country and deepened ties with national statistical agencies outside the US.

Looking back at 2023, we are grateful for the strong support of our partner agencies and the assistance of our respondents and data providers, without whom our work wouldn't be possible. As we continue

existing areas of work and tackle new ones, we have great opportunities ahead. I'm incredibly excited about what this new year holds for us.

We have a lot on tap for 2024, which is BJS's 45th year! In addition to continued efforts to enhance access to our data, the change I'm probably most excited about is the rollout of the new instrument for the National Crime Victimization Survey. For years, we've been working on developing an instrument that reflects both the changing nature of criminal victimization and the best survey design practices. 2024 is the year that we get to incorporate those changes into the NCVS core. We expect to learn even more about crime and criminal victimization as a result.

For more information about our work and what else we have in store for 2024, visit our website, sign up for our JUSTSTATS listserv, and follow us on social media. Thank you.