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MS–13 AND COUNTING: GANG ACTIVITY IN MONTGOMERY AND PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTIES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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MS–13 AND COUNTING: GANG ACTIVITY IN MONTGOMERY AND PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTIES

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2006

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Takoma Park, MD.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 12:30 p.m., in the Takoma Park City Council Chambers, Takoma Park, MD, Hon. Tom Davis (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Tom Davis, Cummings, Van Hollen, and Ruppersberger.

Also present: Representative Wolf.

Staff present: David Marin, staff director; Jennifer Safavian, chief counsel for oversight and investigations; A. Brooke Bennett, counsel; Mindy Walker, professional staff member; Benjamin Chance and Michael Galindo, clerks;

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me apologize for our tardiness. Representative Wolf and I were in a meeting with our Governor at the Capitol that went a little longer on the future of the rail at Tyson's Corner. We got out as quick as we could. Chris, we ran into some traffic, which does not surprise anybody.

Let me thank my distinguished colleague Chris Van Hollen for, really, his responsibility for this hearing, calling our attention to the problem over here. He has been a very active member of the Government Reform Committee legislatively and on this particular issue. Chris, thank you for hosting this today.

I would ask unanimous consent that my distinguished colleague from the Commonwealth of Virginia, Mr. Frank Wolf, be able to participate in today's hearing.

Mayor Porter, would you like to make a few opening remarks before we go to ours?

And thank you for hosting this, as well.

Mayor PORTER. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

We welcome you to the city of Takoma Park, and I welcome especially Chris Van Hollen, who has been here many times before, but we are very glad to have him representing us in Congress.

We are pleased to host this hearing on the extremely important topic of gang violence. As you know, I am sure, there have been some very serious incidents of gang violence in this area right across the border in the Langley Park area.

We are concerned because we know that gangs do not respect political boundaries, and because of the negative effects gangs have on our young people and on our community.

In Takoma Park, we have actually taken a few steps to address in some small way the issue of gang violence. I was very pleased to be a member of the Bi-county Task Force on Gangs created by officials in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. As a member of that task force, I learned that the most effective way of controlling gang activity is to prevent young people from joining gangs.

We also supported the location of the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center in Takoma Park. This was one of the recommendations of the Bi-county Task Force on Gang Violence, and it offers special services to young people at risk of joining gangs.

The city of Takoma Park has also hosted two public forums to educate parents and other adults about gangs, one focused on law enforcement and the other focused on other efforts to prevent young people from joining gangs.

Along with Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, we have also created a CSAFE area. CSAFE stands for Collaborative Supervision and Focused Enforcement in the Langley Park area. This program is State funded, and it helps to coordinate law enforcement and crime prevention in high crime areas. So it's very appropriate for that area.

We also regard many of the recreational and education programs that we offer in this new building as very important in steering young people away from gangs. It gives them constructive things to do with their time.

The issue of gang violence continues to be a very important issue in Takoma Park, and we thank you for taking the time to have us here and to address this very important topic.

Thank you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Well, thank you very much.

I want to thank everybody for coming out to Taloma Park. The examination of gang activity in Maryland is not just Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. In July, we looked at the strikingly strong presence of MS–13 and other Latino gangs in northern Virginia. Maryland also has a strong MS–13 presence, but it doesn't stop there: if you thought Crips and Bloods were the stuff of Los Angeles gang wars, think again.

During our July hearing, we learned two basic truths: one, gangs are transient; and, two, gangs require more than just a law enforcement response. The bottom line is that gangs do not observe neat jurisdictional boundaries. We have reports of Maryland law enforcement picking up gang bangers with Virginia license plates, and gang members from Maryland currently serving time in Virginia jails. With this level of mobility, law enforcement needs to be able to move easily across boundaries—whether city and State, Federal and local, or simply across State lines.

The northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force, which we heard from in July and which was set up by my colleague Frank Wolf, is doing just this. It is coordinating efforts among 13 Virginia jurisdictions. Law enforcement officials in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties are coordinating through a similar organization called the Regional Area Gang Enforcement Task Force. This

RAGE Task Force includes State, local, and Federal law enforcement, including the Park Police in whose jurisdiction gang activity often takes place.

Many recognize that the Northern Virginia Task Force has been extremely successful in its suppression and enforcement efforts, and some go so far as to attribute increased gang activities in Maryland and other jurisdictions to the success in northern Virginia. As we craft our regional strategies for combating gangs, we need to be careful not to cutoff one head only to see it sprout up somewhere else.

We need to recognize fighting gang activity requires regional coordination, and we look forward to hearing about this coordination from enforcement officials in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

But if our previous hearing taught us anything, it's that enforcement is only part of the equation. Any response to gang activity must include a prevention and intervention component also. Prevention and intervention help us answer the important questions, such as how you divert at-risk kids from the lure of gangs and how do you best address the needs of gang-involved youth looking for something more.

Gangs prey on young people who lack role models, who spend time on the street with no constructive activities, and who are simply lost in the system. These wanderers become the perpetrators of the gruesome murders, stabbings, and violent felonies we too often read about in the papers. And, that's all before they turn 16.

Fortunately, like the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties have developed effective prevention and intervention tools. We will hear from elected officials and representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services from these two counties regarding their public health approach to a public safety issue. We will also hear from the Director of the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, the Warden of the Montgomery County Correctional Facility, and a former gang member-turned-small-business-owner, each of whom directs their own unique approach to helping those who are at-risk or are current or former gang members.

None of the good news we will hear today would have been possible without the efforts of my good friends and colleagues Frank Wolf and Chris Van Hollen. Congressman Wolf's response to gang activity in his district triggered a region-wide recognition of the presence and prevalence of gang activity, and he secured significant Federal fundings to fight gangs in northern Virginia.

Congressman Van Hollen also secured over $2.3 million in Federal funding to support joint county initiatives, including the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, community-based after school programs, and increased policing activities.

When you put the Federal funding and the good activities it supports together, what you get are safer streets, safer schools, and alternatives for at-risk youth. Ultimately, this means your neighborhood is safer, and the region will not become a haven for gang activity and violence.

But challenges persist. When Frank and I went to El Salvador last year, we learned of prisons that are recruiting grounds for

MS–13 and other violent gangs in the region. In fact, a convicted murderer who escaped from a Salvador prison and sought refuge in Virginia's Loudoun County was just picked up by Federal and local law enforcement and is now in Federal custody awaiting deportation.

We are aware of the unique challenges gangs present. We should continue to try to identify and understand the sources of the problems—be they international jails or the streets and schools in our own backyards.

This is why we call hearings like this, to hear about the successes of our law enforcement and prevention communities and how we in Congress can continue to assist you.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today, and, again, I want to thank the city of Takoma Park for so generously making this facility available to us.

Members will have 7 days to submit opening statements for the record, and I will now recognize my colleague Mr. Van Hollen.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Tom Davis follows:]

Government Reform Committee
"MS-13 and Counting:
Gang Activity in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties"
Opening Statement of Chairman Tom Davis

September 6, 2006

Good afternoon, and thank you for coming out to Takoma Park. Today we follow our recent hearing exploring gang activity in Northern Virginia with an examination of gang activity in Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. In July, we looked at the surprisingly strong presence of MS-13 and other Latino gangs in Northern Virginia. Maryland also has a strong MS-13 presence, but it doesn't stop there: if you thought Crips and Bloods were the stuff of Los Angeles gang wars, think again.

During our July hearing, we learned two basic truths: (1) gangs are transient; and, (2) gangs require more than just a law enforcement response. The bottom line is that gangs don't observe neat jurisdictional boundaries. We have reports of Maryland law enforcement picking up gang bangers with Virginia license plates, and gang members from Maryland currently serving time in Virginia jails. With this level of mobility, law enforcement needs to be able to move easily across boundaries, too—whether city and state, federal and local, or simply across state lines.

The Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force, from which we heard in July, is doing just this: coordinating efforts among 13 Virginia jurisdictions. Law enforcement officials in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties are coordinating through a similar organization called the Regional Area Gang Enforcement Task Force. This "RAGE" Task Force includes state, local, and federal law enforcement, including the park police in whose jurisdiction gang activity often takes place.

Many recognize that the Northern Virginia Task Force has been extremely successful in its suppression and enforcement efforts. And, some go so far as to attribute increased gang activity here in Maryland to this success in Northern Virginia. As we craft our regional strategies for combating gangs, we need to be careful not to cut off one head only to see it sprout anew somewhere else. We need to recognize fighting gang activity requires regional coordination, and we look forward to hearing about this coordination from the enforcement officials from Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

But, if our previous hearing taught us anything, it's that enforcement is only part of the equation. Any response to gang activity must include a prevention and intervention component also. Prevention and intervention help us answer the important questions, such as how do you divert at-risk kids from the lure of gangs, and how do you best address the needs of gang-involved youth looking for something more. Gangs prey on young people who lack role models, who spend time on the street with no constructive activities, and who are simply lost in the system. These wanderers become the perpetrators of the gruesome murders, stabbings, and violent felonies we too often read about in the papers. And, that's all before they turn 16.

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We will also hear from the Director of the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, the Warden of the Montgomery County Correctional Facility, and a former gang member-turned-small business owner, each of whom directs their own unique approach to helping those who are at-risk or are current or former gang members.

None of the good news we will hear today would have been possible without the efforts of my good friends and colleagues Frank Wolf and Chris Van Hollen. Congressman Wolf's response to gang activity in his district triggered a region-wide recognition of the presence and prevalence of gang activity, and he has secured significant federal funding to fight gangs in Northern Virginia. Congressman Van Hollen also has secured over $2.3 million in federal funding to support joint county initiatives, including the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, community-based after-school programs, and increased policing activities.

When you put the federal funding and the good activities it supports together, what you get is safer streets, safer schools, and alternatives for at-risk youth. Ultimately, this means (1) your neighborhood is safer, and (2) this region will not become a haven for gang activity and violence.

But challenges persist. When Frank and I went to El Salvador last year, we learned of prisons that are recruiting grounds for MS-13 and other violent gangs in this region. In fact, a convicted murderer who escaped from a Salvadoran prison

and sought refuge in Virginia's Loudoun County was just picked up by federal and local law enforcement, and is now in federal custody awaiting deportation. We are aware of the unique challenges gangs present, and must continue trying to identify and understand the sources of the problem—be they international jails or the streets and schools in our own backyards.

This is why we call hearings like this one: to hear about the successes of our law enforcement and prevention communities and how we as Congress can continue to assist them best.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today, and, I would like to thank the City of Takoma Park for so generously making this facility available to us.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I will be brief because you have covered a lot of territory.

Let me also begin by thanking the mayor of Takoma Park, Kathy Porter, for her hospitality today and for all of her leadership in our area. I want to thank you for all that you have done for our community.

I also want to thank Chairman Tom Davis for his leadership on this very important issue. As he said, we had a hearing earlier on the Virginia side of the Potomac River. We are now here on the Maryland side of the Potomac River. He has done a terrific job of drawing attention to this very, very important issue and working on a regional basis and on a bipartisan basis to try and get things done.

Let me also thank my colleague Frank Wolf, who really launched this effort for our region a number of years ago. He saw what was an emerging problem, and he did not just sit by and look at it going by. He actually decided to take some very significant action, and we are very pleased that through working with him, Congressman Davis and others, he has been able to provide the resources, use his influence on the Appropriations Committee to provide the resources that we need in our region to fight gang violence.

And as Congressman Davis has pointed out and others, this is not just a Maryland problem or just a Virginia problem or D.C. problem. It is truly a regional issue. It is a national issue, and it is an international issue. And if you just succeed in fighting a gang in one place and it moves to another, it does not do you any good. So you have to fight it on a regional basis, and I want to thank them publicly for their real leadership on this issue.

Let me also thank County Executive Jack Johnson and County Executive Doug Duncan for also seizing the initiative on this a couple of years ago. Unfortunately County Executive Doug Duncan is having hip replacement surgery today and could not be here, but I want to thank both of them.

Jack Johnson and Doug Duncan teamed up. They did form the Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force. They understood we had an emerging problem, and again, they did not just want to sit and watch it get worse. They wanted to intervene and address the issue head on.

And as a result of that Joint County Gang Task Force and the local and Federal partnership, I do believe we have made considerable progress. We have a ways to go. No doubt about it, but we have helped address the issue, confront the issue, and now we are working to roll back the issue.

And I want to also thank the leaders from our county councils. I am very pleased to have George Leventhal here, who is president of the Montgomery County Council. They have been a real team player in this effort, and thank you for your leadership as well.

And I should also mention the State's Attorneys Glen Ivy in Prince George's County and the State's Attorneys Offices on both sides have also been very supportive and involved in this effort.

The task force essentially has representatives to deal with the multi-pronged approach. As you said, Mr. Chairman, we need to deal with three components: suppression, the law enforcement com-

ponent; make sure that people who are committing crimes are taken off the streets and dealt with appropriately.

But we also need to address the prevention part of this, and obviously, to the extent that we can prevent a young person from getting in trouble in the first place, getting involved in a gang in the first place, we have done an even better job of protecting the community and insuring that a young life is a life that is productive rather than one that is a cost to society.

So we want to focus on those prevention efforts. You have mentioned the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center. I think that's a terrific example of us moving forward in this Federal and local partnership. We also have the suppression component. I am very pleased that the representatives from the police department are here both on the Prince George's County side and the Montgomery County side. I think they have been working together as a team.

So this is an effort that I think we have seen success both in terms of regionally in Maryland, Prince George's County, Montgomery County working together, but also regionally throughout the D.C. metropolitan area where Virginians and Marylanders and representatives from the District of Columbia have been working together to address this issue.

So I want to thank my colleagues from Virginia for their support and effort in this regional partnership. And I see we have been joined by my colleague, Elijah Cummings, and I want to welcome him and thank him for all of his leadership as well.

Let me just if I could mention a few other elected officials that I have a list of who I know are attending. I am very pleased to have Council Member Howie Dennis here. I do want to recognize Howie. Thank you for being here.

And Council Member Marilyn Praisner. Thank you very much to both of you for your leadership.

We also have Maryland Deputy Secretary of State Luis Borunda representing the Secretary of State of Maryland's Office.

We also have a number of folks who are going to be testifying a little later, and we will introduce them as they come up.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

I want to welcome all of the guests in the room.

Mr. Wolf.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you, Chairman Davis.

I want to thank you for putting all of the time and attention in this, which is very important because the public has to be part of this. I also want to thank Chris for his leadership. Many times we would walk over to the floor together to a vote, and Chris raised this issue and said how important. And I think he is exactly right.

This region has to work together. You cannot just solve the problem in Fairfax without it popping up in Loudoun, and the same way if you cannot solve it in just Virginia you come over here. So I think he is exactly right.

The last thing I would say is it is a tough problem, but it is doable. It is solvable. It can be dealt with in a very successful way.

And I think finally, with the education and the suppression and the intervention combined, and not thinking just in terms of the law enforcement, I think we are well along the way in northern Virginia to solving it, and you are here. but I want to thank both

Tom and Chris Van Hollen for their leadership and making the effort and showing that we can work together both across political lines, but also political boundaries. So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cummings.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to thank you and certainly Congressman Van Hollen for your leadership, and I want to thank Congressman Wolf for being here and all of you who are here and are witnesses.

No one is immune from the impact that gangs can have on a community. Gang violence is widespread, dangerous, and often deadly. Drive-by shootings, carjackings, home invasions, intimidation tactics, and the loss of innocent life have become all to frequent, paralyzing neighborhoods and simply destroying lives.

People who join gangs often establish a lifelong pattern of involvement with the criminal justice system. For some the gang life style has even passed down as a family tradition leading to endless cycles of violence and endless cycles of despair. Notably, this is not simply an inner city problem. Gangs reach every corner of every county of every State in this country. Today gangs and the aspects of the violence they attract draw young people from all walks of life, from all races, and from all economic backgrounds.

Gang violence is a persistent problem facing not only the more publicized locations of Montgomery County and Prince George's County, but also my constituents in the Seventh Congressional District of Maryland, which includes neighborhoods in Baltimore City and Howard County and Baltimore County.

Hundreds of gangs exist in Baltimore City, including youth gangs that operate in neighborhoods or schools and drug gangs. The vast majority of our neighborhood gangs composed of 18 to 15 youth who focus their activities in a specific housing area, but a smaller number follows the culture of nationally recognized gangs, such as MS–13.

In Baltimore County, approximately 35 gangs are in operation. About half of these are the smaller neighborhood or school variety, and the rest identify with national gangs, such as the Crips, the Bloods, and to a lesser extent MS–13.

In Howard County an entire suburban and rural area, the greatest gang threat comes from MS–13. Police observe MS–13 members traveling into Howard County from Prince George's and Montgomery Counties and Washington, and so as Congressman Wolf and Congressman Van Hollen have said, this is a regional problem that we must all address.

In Howard County last year about 25 to 30 incidents were linked to MS–13 ranging from tagging and vandalism to robberies, theft, auto theft, and sometimes violent crimes, such as stabbing and rape.

In Takoma Park, MS–13 has similarly infiltrated the community. That is why the FBI in 2004 established an MS–13 National Gang Task Force, to bring together State, local, Federal and foreign agencies to address the growing trend of violence by MS–13 and similar such gangs.

Other partnerships include the Mid-Atlantic Regional Gang Investigators Network in which the agencies seek to improve officer and public safety through a variety of means, and the Gang Intervention Partnership Unit, which conducts outreach to the community to educate residents about the dangers of gang, how to identify possible gang activity, and whom to call to report it.

Furthermore, because of the nexus between violent gang activity and drug trafficking, the Washington-Baltimore HIDTA headed by my good friend Tom Carr and funded by the Officer of National Drug Control Policy has been an active participant in MARGIN (phonetic).

We must continue to work together to address this growing threat, to win this battle on behalf of innocent law abiding citizens. If we do not put an end to the vicious terror of the gang culture, the impact will continue to be felt by generations yet unborn.

I commend our panelists today who work to combat the threat of gang activity. I welcome Kathy Porter, Jack Johnson, George Leventhal and the rest of the panelists who have been working tirelessly to help our area rid ourselves of gangs and gang violence, and so I look forward to the hearing today, and again, I want to thank you, Mr. Van Hollen and Mr. Chairman, for your leadership.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Elijah E. Cummings follows:]

U.S. House of Representatives
109th Congress

Opening Statement

Representative Elijah E. Cummings, D-Maryland

Full Committee Field Hearing:
"MS-13 and Counting: Gang Activity in Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties"
Committee on Government Reform

September 6, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for holding this vitally important hearing to examine efforts to end the activities of transnational gangs that operate right here in our backyards.

No one is immune from the impact that gangs can have on a community. Gang violence is widespread, dangerous and often deadly.

Drive-by shootings, carjackings, home invasions, intimidation tactics, and the loss of innocent life have become too frequent, paralyzing neighborhoods and destroying lives.

People who join gangs often establish a lifelong pattern of involvement with the criminal justice system.

For some, the gang lifestyle is even passed down as a family tradition leading to endless cycles of violence and despair.

Notably, this is not simply an inner-city problem. Gangs reach every corner of every county of every state in this country.

Today, gangs and the aspects of the violence they attract draw young people from all walks of life, from all races, and from all economic backgrounds.

Gang violence is a persistent problem facing not only the more publicized locations of Montgomery and Prince George's County, but also my constituents in 7th District of Maryland, which includes neighborhoods in the city of Baltimore ***and*** its suburbs.

Hundreds of gangs exist in Baltimore City, including youth gangs that operate in neighborhoods or schools and drug gangs.

The vast majority are neighborhood gangs composed of 8 to 15 youth who focus their activities in a specific housing area, but a smaller number follows the "culture" of nationally recognized gangs such Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13.

In Baltimore County, approximately 35 gangs are in operation. About half of these are the smaller, neighborhood or school variety, and the rest identify with national gangs such as the Crips, Bloods and to a lesser extent MS-13.

In Howard County, an entirely suburban and rural area, the greatest gang threat comes from MS-13. Police observe MS-13 members traveling into Howard County from Prince George's and Montgomery counties and Washington, D.C.

In Howard County last year, about 25 to 30 incidents were linked to MS-13, ranging from tagging and vandalism to robberies, theft, auto theft, and sometimes violent crimes such as stabbing and rape.

Here in Takoma Park, MS-13 has similarly infiltrated the community.

This transnational behemoth has spread its influence throughout the National Capital Region, and our response to it must be equally far-reaching.

That is why the FBI in 2004 established the MS-13 National Gang Task Force, to bring together state, local, federal and foreign agencies, to address the growing trend of violence by MS-13 and similar such gangs.

Other partnerships include the Mid-Atlantic Regional Gang Investigators Network (MARGIN), in which agencies seek to improve officer and public safety through a variety of means, and the Gang Intervention Partnership Unit (GIPU), which conducts outreach to the community to educate residents about the dangers of gangs, how to identify possible gang activity, and whom to call to report it.

Furthermore, because of the nexus between violent gang activity and drug trafficking, the Washington Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program, headed by my friend Tom Carr and funded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, has been an active participant in MARGIN.

We must continue to work together to address this growing threat—to win this battle on behalf of innocent, law-abiding citizens.

If we do not put an end to the vicious terror of the gang culture, the impact will continue to be felt by generations yet unborn.

I commend our panelists today who work to combat the threat of gang activity. I welcome Jack Johnson and George Leventhal and the rest of the panelists who have been working tirelessly to help rid our area of gang violence.

I look forward to the testimonies of today's witnesses and yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

We are now ready to get to our panel. Thank you for your patience. Again, our apologies for starting a little late.

Members will have 7 days to submit opening statements for the record. Our first panel, the Honorable Jack B. Johnson, the county executive from Prince George's County, MD; the Honorable George Leventhal, the chairman of the Montgomery County Council; Assistant Chief John King, Montgomery County Police Department; and Captain Bill Lynn, the commander of Violent Crimes Task Force, Gang Unit, Prince George's County Police Department.

It is our policy that we swear all witnesses in before you testify. So just rise with me and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson, we will start with you and we will move on down. We have a light in front of you. It is green and turns orange after 4 minutes and red after 5. Your entire statement is part of the record, so please try to keep it within 5 minutes. It moves things along, but I am not going to gavel you down if you feel you want to go on.

Thank you very much for being with us.

STATEMENTS OF JACK B. JOHNSON, COUNTY EXECUTIVE, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD; GEORGE LEVENTHAL, CHAIRMAN, MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL; JOHN KING, ASSISTANT CHIEF, MONTGOMERY COUNTY POLICY DEPARTMENT; AND CAPTAIN BILL LYNN, COMMANDER, VIOLENT CRIMES TASK FORCE, GANG UNIT, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

STATEMENT OF JACK B. JOHNSON

Mr. JOHNSON. I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I hope my microphone is working.

Let me first say, Mr. Chairman, we are just so really pleased that you and the committee have come down here today to speak to us.

Mr. Wolf, we want to really thank you so much. Congressman Wolf, when I first met you at the opening of the Wilson Bridge, I personally told you how much I appreciate what you are doing on the gang and for bringing recognition that this is a problem not only in this region, but in the entire country. We really appreciate your effort on that.

And to Congressman Van Hollen, we want to thank you for what you have done in our community assisting us in the region, and so likewise Congressman Cummings. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

You have my statement and so, therefore, I will not read all of this.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me have whoever is getting the volume up to turn it up a little bit.

Mr. JOHNSON. OK.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I can hear you, but I am not sure everybody can.

Mr. JOHNSON. We have submitted our written statement. So, therefore, I will not read the entire statement because I want to really touch on some of the core issues that I think are just really important.

The first one is to recognize that gang is a problem in the United States and the region.

The second is that the idea that suppression is the way to go is something that really does not work in and of itself. As you know, I was a State's Attorney for Prince George's County for 8 years, and we took that approach in terms of gang tough prosecution, and I remember in many of the cases that I prosecuted there were very young people, and we thought for a long time that was the way to do it: infiltration of the gang and get the intelligence and then go after them when they commit criminal activities.

That is absolutely important, critical to the part of suppression that we believe that's so important, but it is only one factor.

The other thing that we recognize is that you cannot do it alone, and I think that is why this task force was formed. Doug Duncan called me 1 day and said, "Jack, you have a gang problem. We have a gang problem. We sit right next to each other, and unless we work together we cannot get it done."

So Doug and I met and we decided that, you know, it cannot be suppression alone, that what we have to do is look holistically, look at why young people enter into a gang. What are the social factors? What are the family structures? What are the health issues concerning those young people? What are the attractors, and why do they deal with the gang?

And so we decided then to bring the police department and all segments of our community together. We have lifted them for you. Juvenile services, as I indicated, the health services, the police department, social services, all of that, and we formed this joint task force.

Now, they have 20 recommendations that they will lay out for you as to what they came up with, but what we determined is that in order to be successful, it must be a holistic approach, and the holistic approach must include every segment of the community: teachers, very important; family; recognition of colors; why young people are alone; what are the signs of gangs; all of those kinds of things that will first bring to the public the idea that it exists and that we need to recognize signs of gangs.

And I think that is one of the great things, Congressman Wolf, that you have done, is to say to the public it does exist and it is time to find out what is going on so that we can be effective in stopping that.

So we began by creating, as I indicated, the task force. But I want you to know that so we decided, therefore, then that we have to put our moneys into it, and so the county, Prince George's County and Montgomery County, decided that we would contribute I think it was $400,000, and that we will find a place on the order where young people who are at risk could come and interface with the professionals, the health providers, the social workers, the school teachers, the folks in the neighborhood who can assist them with the loneliness and isolation and help them resist the urge to join these kinds of organizations.

Because we have found that young people do not wake up 1 day and decide that they want to join a gang. What they focus on is some kind of family structure, some kind of good relationship, something that makes them feel secure, and we realize then that the security has to come from the collective community through our Crossroads initiative.

And we call it the Crossroads because it is right on the crossroads of Prince George's County and Montgomery County. The Crossroad opening was just amazing. Congressman Van Hollen, you were there. We had all of the social workers and all of the other people that were involved, but more importantly, we had ex gang members who were touched by folks when they testified as to the significance and why they formed gangs and why they joined gangs, and they were really excited to have the recognition from the larger society.

We realize then that recognition and the self-work of individuals were so important. I say that to say that, Congressman Van Hollen, we called you because we recognized that we cannot do it on the local level alone, and you were the face of the Federal intervention, the Federal help, the Federal partner that we must have, and so I think that is the message today, that prevention can make a huge difference. it is the key. The local communities must put resources into gang prevention. It must be holistic, and that the Federal partners must be a part of this solution.

We will do our part in terms of law enforcement, but we really need you on the suppression side, and we think that together we can really turn this thing around and put many of our young people on the right track, give them the kind of choices that they need to be productive citizens and move in the right direction.

So, again, I just want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of this committee for allowing us to be here today and to talk about how important this activity is and how important the work of your committee is and how important the Federal partner is in helping us deal with this problem.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Johnson follows:]

TESTIMONY OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY EXECUTIVE JACK JOHNSON BEFORE THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

FIELD HEARING ON GANG ACTIVITIES TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND SEPTEMBER 6, 2006

Good Afternoon. I would like to thank Chairman Davis and the entire Committee for holding this important field hearing today in Takoma Park, Maryland. I would also like to thank Congressman Frank Wolf for his ongoing commitment to promoting community safety through gang reduction strategies in the region and across the United States. I would also like to acknowledge and commend Congressman Van Hollen for his tireless efforts to bring resources to Prince George's and Montgomery Counties for gang prevention, suppression, and intervention.

As you know Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, gangs across the United States have undermined and destabilized communities. Not only have they contributed to violent and other crime, they have also created an alternate social network for at-risk youth. Children don't suddenly wake up one morning and decide they want to be in a gang. Critical factors such as nuclear family decay, lack of strong role models, and lack of educational tools, limited job potential are among the most common factors making children susceptible to gang influence.

Gang reduction strategies have been employed across the country with varying degrees of success. When gangs such as the Crips and Bloods began getting attention around the United States in the 1970s and 80s, the primary focus of law enforcement was suppression. Resources in New

York, Los Angeles, Chicago and other large cities were primarily focused on breaking up gangs by infiltrating them and vigorously prosecuting members for crimes. That strategy, while effective to some extent, did not get to the root causes of why impressionable young people and teenagers were drawn to gangs. We know this because despite vast resources used for suppression, gangs continued to grow across America.

We recognized there was an increase in gang activity in our county and the region in the 1990s. When I served as State's Attorney we began seeing cases involving members of gangs and crews. They were not always members of MS-13, Vatos Locos or other well known groups, but often were smaller crews engaged in violent crimes. I distinctly remember some of the more violent cases that involved gang members. As a prosecutor my main emphasis was on the suppression side and vigorously prosecuting the individuals responsible, but I recognized that if we were going to fix the problem we had to get at the root causes.

The rise of gang activity in the past decade is not because gangs suddenly appeared in the region, they have been here a long time. Little, if anything, was being done on the prevention and intervention side. Consequently, their influence began to increase. Governments had failed to address why children entered gangs and or saw them as alternative family and social structures.

This was the primary reason that Montgomery County Executive Doug Duncan and I entered into an historic agreement in February 2004 to jointly address gang activities in both counties. We understood that gang activity

and youth violence was a regional problem. We knew we couldn't do it alone, and that federal resources were essential to reducing gang presence in our counties and the entire region. Our approach was different than other strategies previously used. While we would continue to vigorously pursue gang suppression, our primary emphasis was going to be on prevention and intervention with young people at-risk of joining gangs, and those eager to get out of them.

We began by creating a Joint Gang Prevention Task Force that was co-chaired by the police chiefs in each jurisdiction. Members of the group also included our lead people in Health and Human Services, our county health officers, representatives from social services, juvenile justice, educators, local activists, and others on the ground most familiar with youth and the powerful influences over them. It even included former gang members eager to prevent others from getting involved in that lifestyle. This holistic approach recognized that if we did not address gang issues at every level, our success would be limited.

The Task Force developed and released a comprehensive report in September 2004. It made 20 specific recommendations, and it concluded something we all know, prevention is the key to reducing gang influence. As we say the ounce of prevention can avoid the pound of the cure. We had to identify those children at risk and develop alternative programs with more productive outlets for our youth.

Prince George's County's efforts are not limited just to the activities of the Task Force and the programs developed by them. In addition to others that

will be discussed in a few minutes, we established several other programs to target the same at-risk population. We have established dozens of conflict resolution centers around the county to bring children and their families together to discuss serious issues and get children back on the right path and to open channels of communication between children and parents. We have developed the Men2Men mentoring program matching young males without a strong male parental figure with mentors. We even established a strong summer youth program designed to provide high school age students with gainful and productive use of their summer vacations and to give them tangible social and professional skills. Thousands of children have benefited from this program already.

Police Chief Melvin High and others will address today the specific programs we have undertaken in the joint effort, but I am here to say that our approach has been comprehensive and inclusive. It provides alternatives for young people potentially caught in the grips and pressures to join gangs. Through our Task Force, more resources have been dedicated to eradicating gang violence and influence than ever before.

We are very grateful to Congressman Wolf and Van Hollen for securing $2 million in the FY 2006 budget to be used to implement Task Force recommendations. A detailed budget has been prepared on how these additional resources will be put to work as soon as the federal funds are released. They will help pay for additional police gang intervention staff, as well as social workers and pilot programs designed to turn youth away from the gang life.

In May of this year, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties jointly opened the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center on the border between our counties. The center is designed to provide services for up to 200 young people offering job training assistance, language skill development, counseling and referral services and well as recreational programming. The facility is now open six days a week including evenings. Each of our critical county agencies is providing staff during work hours to better assist those in the community. This one-stop shop has never been attempted before, and the utilization thus far has told us that the model is working.

We must continue to do even more, but we have made a great start. We must continue to educate teachers and parents about recognizing gang colors and other signs that children may be engaged in gang activity. We must continue to fund more appropriate outlets and after-school activities to keep our children engaged mentally, physically, and emotionally. But one thing we do know is that children presented with dilemmas about joining gangs now have a place to turn to and people who can assist them. People wanting to get out of gangs have a place to come to and people who can work with them. Together we are addressing these issues with our sister county, and with other regional representatives, to ensure that the best practices are followed and that our resources will have the greatest impact.

I want to thank the Chairman and the Committee for taking time to hold this hearing in Maryland, and I look forward to working with you as we develop more programs to reduce gang activity. We will be seeking additional funds in the future and we know that Congressman Wolf is eager to provide

resources for this critical issue here, in our county, and throughout the United States.

Thank you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Chairman Leventhal, thank you for being with us today.

STATEMENT OF GEORGE LEVENTHAL

Mr. LEVENTHAL. Chairman Davis thank you so much for inviting us. Congressman Van Hollen, we appreciate your effective and responsive leadership. Our colleagues and friends, Mr. Cummings and Mr. Ruppersberger from Maryland, welcome to Montgomery County. It's great to have you here, and thank you for your work to solve our gang problems here.

And, Mr. Wolf, a special thanks to you for your work on the Appropriations Committee. You see here on this panel cooperation between Prince George's and Montgomery Counties and the description of the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, but we also absolutely agree with your comments and Chairman Davis' comments that we cannot solve this problem on one side or the other of the Potomac, and we're very, very grateful to you for your assistance and look forward to continuing to work with you.

Gang violence is increasing throughout the metropolitan Washington area. In Montgomery County we are trying to combat this increase with a comprehensive and regional approach. There are between 20 and 28 active gangs in Montgomery County, and 680 to 930 persons identified as gant members. The numbers change as gangs come and go, arrests are made, and as people move in and out of the area often to other jurisdictions represented here.

Primarily gang members are young people between the ages of 15 and 21. I agree with County Executive Johnson that the prevention and early intervention are a critical approach to this problem, and we have taken this approach as Mr. Johnson has outlines.

When young people cannot find stability, support, friendship and activities in their own homes, schools, and communities, they become vulnerable to the invitations of gang recruiters, and the other side of the equation is, of course, effective law enforcement and prosecution. Often gangs are held together by a small number of older gang members. When these individuals are taken off of the street, many times the gang will dissolve.

The number of gang members being held in our local jails and being supervised in community programs is also increasing, and this brings challenges to our corrections department in terms of housing inmates and providing effective rehabilitation services.

We need help from the Congress. We're investing significant resources of our own. We were very, very grateful to the assistance we received from the Congress in fiscal 2006, and we are requesting additional help in fiscal 2007. We're requesting $1.4 million for after school programs. Keeping our young people active and engaged during after school hours is important not only for preventing gang activity, but for many other problem behaviors, including drug use, teen pregnancy, and the increasing problem of childhood obesity.

The county council has expanded our Rec Extra Program in this year's budget under the leadership of Council Vice President Marilyn Praisner, who is here, so that we have after school programs in every middle school in Montgomery County.

We responded to request from Blair High School Students to make sure its sports academy program will continue, and we've expanded this to Einstein High School as well.

We are partnering with the public schools and with nonprofit and faith based organizations to make sure that after school programs provide not only recreational opportunities but also programs to improve young people's academic performance.

We're asking for 1.4 million, and we expect to receive the following benefits in terms of a Federal appropriation: an increase in school attendance and student participation in school activities; reduction in suspensions and disciplinary actions; improvement in school completion; reduction in illegal and risky behavior; improved sense of safety and belonging on the part of young people; increased sense of competence and confidence; and reduction in disproportionate minority representation in the juvenile justice and adult correctional systems.

We're also asking for $260,000 for a street outreach network composed of former gang members. We're asking for $485,900 to continue funding our centralized gang investigation unit; $1 million to help us expand our efforts to provide high school wellness centers in high risk schools which would create two new centers with targeted services to high risk youth who face challenges with poverty, youth, and gang violence, teen pregnancy and school failure.

And finally, just over $3 million to help us expand the Youth Opportunity Center Program, which you heard Mr. Johnson describe, which we believe has been very successful and has been a great example of cooperation between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

We are not only expecting to do this with Federal resources with county dollars. We have invested $5.8 million this year of county dollars in 22 different programs, nonprofit organizations and agencies, to address the multi-faceted problem of gang violence.

Montgomery County is trying to make comprehensive and take a regional approach to the growing problem of gang activity. We need to continue to be partners. We need to continue to work with our neighboring county, Prince George's, and with our friends and colleagues from the State of Virginia.

And thank you very, very much for allowing me to testify today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Leventhal follows:]

Testimony of Montgomery County Council President, George L. Leventhal
to the Committee on Government Reform
September 6, 2006

As you know, gang violence is increasing in the Metropolitan Washington area. In Montgomery County, we are trying to combat this increase with a comprehensive and regional approach – one that addresses prevention and early intervention, as well as enforcement. We are doing this not only through our joint efforts with Prince George's County but also through work at the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments.

I would like to thank our friends from Virginia, Representatives Tom Davis and Frank Wolf for their tremendous support in Congress for anti-gang initiatives that will benefit all citizens of the metro region.

There are between 20 and 28 active gangs in Montgomery County and 680 to 930 persons identified as gang members. The numbers change as gangs come and go, as arrests are made, and as people move in and out of the area. The majority of gang members are young people between the ages of 15 and 21. We know that, while gang issues are county-wide, activity is more prevalent in areas with higher numbers of economically disadvantaged persons.

Prevention and early intervention are critical. When young people cannot find stability, support, friendship, and activities in their own homes, schools and communities, they become vulnerable to the invitations of gang recruiters.

Effective law enforcement and prosecution are also critical because often, gangs are held together by a small number of older gang members. When these individuals are taken off the street, many times the gang will dissolve.

The number of gang members being held in our local jails and being supervised in community programs is also increasing. This brings new challenges to housing inmates and providing effective rehabilitation services.

We are very appreciative of the Federal funds that have been provided. I would like to take this opportunity to focus on our FY 2007 request:

After School Programs. Montgomery County is requesting $1.4 million in funds to help us provide high quality after school programs. Keeping our young people active and engaged during after school hours is not only important for preventing gang activity but many other problem behaviors. The County Council hears from young people who ask us to help make sure they have activities and places to go. The County will expand our Rec Extra program so it is available in all our middle schools. We responded to requests from Blair High School students to make sure their Sports Academy program could continue and we are expanding this to Einstein High School as well. We are partnering with the public schools and non-profit, and faith-based organizations to make sure that after school program not only provide recreational opportunities but are also successful in improving young people's success in school. Our request to you stated the following expected benefits from the $1.4 million requested:

- Increase in school attendance and student participation in school activities;
- Reduction in suspensions and disciplinary actions;
- Improvement in school completion rates;
- Reduction in illegal and risky behavior;
- Improved sense of safety and belonging on the part of youth;
- Increased sense of competence and confidence; and

- Reduction in disproportionate minority representation in the juvenile justice and adult criminal justice systems

Street Outreach Network. The County asks you to provide $260,000 to support our efforts to establish and sustain a Street Outreach Network. This team would be comprised of former gang members and modeled after the "Roving Leader" program. The team will work directly for the Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator, and will allow the County to establish strategic relations with gang involved youth.

Centralized Police Gang Unit. The County asks that you provide $486,900 to continue funding for a centralized gang investigation unit. The County currently has officers who work out of each of the district stations but have a centralized unit of investigators. This effort is expected to greatly enhance our enforcement capabilities.

High School Wellness Centers. The County is requesting $1 million to help us expand our efforts to provide high school wellness centers at high-risk schools. The funds would allow 2 new centers to be established. They would provided targeted services to youth who face significant challenges with poverty, youth and gang violence, teen pregnancy, and school failure.

Youth Opportunity Centers. The County is requesting just over $3 million to allow us to establish to Youth Opportunity and Development Centers in addition to our joint Center in Takoma/Langley Park. You will hear Carolyn Colvin, our County Health and Human Services Director, tell you about the activities at the current center which I believe will be very successful in helping young people who may have already been in trouble to work on their education, job training, and employment.

In addition to the federal funds that we are requesting, Montgomery County has already made a significant investment in combating gang activity. For the current fiscal year alone, the County Council has appropriated $5.8 million to 22 different programs, non-profit organizations and agencies to address to address the issue, including funds for additional police officers, after school programs, mental health initiatives and community programs.

As you can see, Montgomery County is trying to take a comprehensive and regional approach to the growing problem of gang activity. We will continue to work with our neighboring counties, our municipalities, and our partners in the both the private and non-profit sectors, but we will not be successful without the needed resources that federal funding will provide. I look forward to working with you to bring an end to gang violence in our region.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chief King, thanks for being with us.

STATEMENT OF JOHN KING

Asst. Chief KING. Thank you, sir.

I am John King, assistant chief of police, Montgomery County Department of Police.

On behalf of our Chief of Police Tom Manger and the men and women of the Montgomery County Department of Police, I want to thank the committee. Clearly, from your opening comments it is really clear to us on the panel here that you have a good grasp of what is needed and what is being done with the resource, and we are very thankful to you for your continued support.

It is an opportunity for us to discuss what we are doing in Montgomery County in response to the gang activity in our community. As with most criminal activity, gang crime does not adhere to any jurisdictional boundary. That is why it is important and our area law enforcement agencies have united to work together to address this issue.

The Montgomery County Police have joined other regional agencies, including Maryland State Police, Prince George's County Police, Maryland National Capital Park Police to work with the ATF on a regional area gang enforcement unit, the RAGE unit. This unit enables each of the participating agencies not only to gather valuable criminal intelligence, but it also gives law enforcement a very effective operational arm.

In our community of Montgomery County, we have seen gang membership and gang related crime increase at a steady rate over the last few years. What is more alarming to us, however, is that from November 2005 to May 2006, we have witnessed a 30 percent increase in active gangs, from 20 to 28; a 30 percent increase in documented gang members, from 680 to 930; and a corresponding 30 percent increase in crime which we have attributed to gang members. Most of these crime increases have been in burglaries, robberies, and vandalisms.

In the second quarter of 2006, 24 different gangs were involved in documented incidents in Montgomery County. Three of those 24 gangs accounted for 67 percent of all reported gang involved activities. Those gangs were identified as the Crips, the Bloods, and MS–13.

The Crips were involved in 21 incidents, while both the Bloods and MS–13 were involved in 18 incidents each. No other gang was involved in more than five documented incidents.

Our intelligence indicates that these Crips and Bloods are not formally associated with their popular namesakes in California, but the presence of these two groups highlight the importance of our actions on this issue.

In addition to the enforcement efforts, Montgomery County Police work with other government and non-government agencies to prevent young people from becoming involved in gangs. Over the last year we have noted a significant increase in results for our educational presentations on gang prevention both from our schools and from our community groups.

In addition to providing us education to our general population, we work to identify potentially at risk youths and their families and target them for focused prevention efforts.

In our wing community, our gang task force officers and Choices, a nonprofit group, work together to help young people who are considering joining a gang. Officers identify these children and then involve them and their parents in the program. A plan is then developed with the assistance of the Montgomery County Social Service agencies to provide wrap-around services to that family. These services continue for up to 6 months.

These type of responses are consisting of the department's community policing philosophy wherein we identify problems and then work with multiple shareholders to work on solutions.

It is important for us to note and thank the U.S. Congress for the support that you have given us on this important issue of gang activity. With a grant of $500,000, the Montgomery County Police Department is able to, in addition to other things, fund six full-time gang investigators who will be dedicated to conducting county-wide gang investigations from a centralized office. These gang investigators will also work closely with our county level partners who include Health and Human Services, the State's Attorney's Office, the public schools, our County Detention Center, and our community-based organizations, such as Identity, the Youth Crossroads Opportunity Center, and Choices.

This Federal funding from Congress is very important, and we are thankful for the assistance. It is having a positive impact on our fight for the expansion against gang related activity.

A special partner of ours in this battle is the Prince George's County Police Department. Chief High and his officers have taken a proactive role in facing this challenge head on, and we, the Montgomery County Police, are thankful for their efforts in working with us on a regional level, and I appreciate Captain Bill Lynn being next to us. I think it is very appropriate that we are sitting shoulder to shoulder here because that is really the way we are working to approach this regional issue.

The Montgomery County Police Department will continue to be aggressive as we deal with this issue of gang activity. We will seek out new activities, initiatives not only to suppress gang criminal acts, but also to intervene and prevent young people from becoming active gang members.

Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Assistant Chief King follows:]

Committee on Government Reform

Wednesday September 6, 2006

John King

Assistant Chief of Police

Montgomery County Police Department

Testimony

On behalf of our Chief of Police, Tom Manger, and the men and women of the Montgomery County Department of Police, I want to thank the committee for this opportunity to discuss our response to gang activity in our community. As with most criminal activity, gang crime does not adhere to any jurisdictional boundary. That is why it is important that our area law enforcement agencies have united to work together to address this problem.

The Montgomery County Police have joined other regional agencies, including the Maryland State Police, Prince George's County Police, and the Maryland Park Police, to work with the ATF on the Regional Area Gang Enforcement (R.A.G.E.) unit. This unit enables each of the participating agencies to not only gather valuable criminal intelligence, but it also gives law enforcement a very effective operational arm.

In our community of Montgomery County we have seen gang membership and gang related crime increase at a steady rate over the last few years. What is more alarming to us is that, from November 2005 to May 2006, we have witnessed a 30 % increase in active gangs (from 20 to 28), a 30% increase in documented gang members (from 680 to 930), and a corresponding 30% increase in crimes attributed to gang members. Most of these crime increases have been in burglaries, robberies and vandalisms.

In the 2nd quarter of 2006 (April, May and June), 24 different gangs were involved in documented incidents in Montgomery County. Three of those 24 gangs accounted for 67% of all reported gang involved incidents. Those gangs were identified as the Crips, Bloods, and MS13. The Crips were involved in 21 incidents, while both the Bloods and MS13 were involved in 18 incidents each. No other gang was involved in more than five documented incidents.

Our intelligence indicates that these Crips and Bloods are not formally associated with their more popular namesakes in California. But the presence of these two groups highlights the importance of our actions on this issue.

In addition to our enforcement efforts, the Montgomery County Police Department is working hard with other government agencies to prevent young people from becoming involved in gangs. Over the last year we have had a significant increase in requests for educational presentations on gang prevention from our schools and our community groups. In addition to providing this education to our general population, we work to identify potentially at-risk kids and work with them and their families.

In our Wheaton community, our Gang Task Force officers and Choices (a non-profit group) work together to help young people who are considering joining a gang. Officers identify these children and then involve the child's parents in the program. A plan is then developed with the assistance of Montgomery County social services agencies to provide "wrap around" services to the family. These services continue for up to six months.

These types of responses are consistent with our community policing philosophy wherein we identify problems and then work with multiple shareholders to provide some solutions.

It is important to note, and thank, the support that the United States Congress has given to us to address this issue of gang activity. With a grant of $500,000 the Montgomery County Police Department is able to fund six full-time gang investigators who will be dedicated to conducting county-wide gang investigations for a centralized office. These gang investigators will also work closely with our county level partners who include: Health and Human Services; the State's Attorney's Office; Montgomery County Public Schools; the Montgomery County Detention Center; our Educational Facilities Officers; and community based organizations such as Identify, Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center and Choices.

This federal funding from Congress is very important and we are thankful for the assistance. It is having a positive impact on our fight against the expansion of gang related activities.

A special partner of ours is the Prince George's County Police Department. Chief High and his officers have taken a proactive role in facing this challenge head-on and we, the Montgomery County Police, are thankful for their efforts in working with us on a regional level.

The Montgomery County Police Department will continue to be aggressive as we deal with the issue of gang activity and will seek out new initiatives to not only suppress gang criminal acts, but to intervene and prevent young people from becoming members.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Well, thank you very much as well.

Captain Lynn, thanks for being with us.

STATEMENT OF CAPTAIN BILL LYNN

Captain LYNN. Good afternoon, Chairman Davis and the distinguished members of the committee. I am going to be brief on behalf of Chief Melvin High, the Prince George's County Police Department.

Chairman Davis and the Committee members' opening statements this morning pinpoint the important aspects of gang prevention, intervention and suppression. Also, you stressed the importance of funds to start and maintain our programs and to keep our efforts going in the long term.

Gangs and their criminal enterprises pose an ever increasing concern for local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies more than ever before. Today gangs and gang related violence leading to the erosion of the basic quality of life in many of our communities is widespread, more so even compared to the gangs of the 1920's that plagued many of our U.S. cities.

As I stated during a hearing in July 14th of this year, the Prince George's County Police Department started a gang unit in 2003, and shortly thereafter began the framework for what has resulted in the multi-agency task force, the Regional Area Gang Enforcement [RAGE].

The task force is comprised of Prince George's County police officers, officers from Montgomery County, Howard County, Maryland State Police, Prince George's County Sheriff's Department, the Maryland National Park and Planning Police Department, the Hyattsville City Police Department, ATF, ICE, and the FBI.

Prince George's County Gang Unit and the Task Force have seen tremendous success through the hard work and determination. Coupled with the various State's Attorneys Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office, we have a formidable front against the threat.

As we are well aware, the most notable gang in our area is MS–13. This group has been active throughout the region, in D.C., Virginia, and Maryland. No community has escaped its influence, burden, and violence, and no one community is the central hub for its occupation.

Fortunately, lawmakers like you, law enforcement and civilian agencies have come together on several fronts to cause the united effort to combat an organization that depletes the cultural and economic resources of our communities.

Our law enforcement partnership has brought to bear the strong arm of the Federal Government against MS–13. In 2005, we opened a Federal RICO case against several cliques of MS–13. The success of this investigation has generated additional arrests and more intelligence on the reach and violence of the group.

The first phase or trial begins today and is expected to last for several weeks. The success and importance and impact of this investigation are clear to everyone that is involved. It has also been demonstrated the need for additional personnel to pursue the countless avenues that MS–13 travels.

However, it is not just MS–13 that we need to focus on. Whether it is in northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, Montgomery or

Prince George's County, we are all seeing the emergence of young people associating themselves with violent groups known as Bloods and Crips. Again, these groups, born on the West Coast, influence our youth in many ways, including television, movies and music.

Many of the things that draw youth to MS–13 also draw them into these terrible organizations. So our approach to combatting the Crips and Bloods must be similar to that of MS–13, but we must have an action plan, and we cannot ignore these groups.

In Prince George's County and Montgomery County, we have been fortunate that our county leaders recognize the importance of all aspects of combating gangs and created the bi-county gang task force. This endeavor brings the executive levels of government, law enforcement, and other government agencies, schools, and private organizations together to focus their resources, efforts, and expertise in fighting gangs.

As we all well know, we cannot simply put handcuffs on MS–13, the Crips or the Bloods and make the problem disappear. With the work of the Bi-county Gang Task Force, along with our efforts in law enforcement, we believe great strides have been taken to address these criminal enterprises. Each of the participating agencies, governmental and civilian, should be commended for their dedication to this effort. Certainly our strength is in our numbers, coordination, and determination.

While MS–13 cliques in our regions do not demonstrate the level of sophistication and criminal activity equal to their counterparts in Los Angeles, it is not for lack of trying. This disorganization should not be seen as a weakness. Leadership from Los Angeles is known to visit our area and provide guidance, organization to the cliques and try to define their criminal activity. These same statements can be applied to the Crips and Bloods.

The Prince George's County Gang Unit constantly evaluates the changing face of gang activity in our communities, as do many of our allied agencies. We constantly evaluate our approach to all issues generated by gangs. We not only concentrate on the traditional law enforcement approaches to the problem, but we maintain the open lines of communication and stay actively involved in our schools, along with counseling and intervention programs.

The dismantlement of gang cliques via the RICO case and our gang unit operations have disrupted the organization and operating ability of local MS–13 cliques. Strong sentencing and the possibility of life sentences as well, the possibility of release have sent a dramatic message to gang members.

But with the long lasting and multi-agency, multi-pronged approach to a complicated, deep rooted problem, if we don't have these, we will be revisiting some of the same issues over and over again. This is why I feel that Prince George's County and our allied regions will be successful in their war against gangs. We are putting police, schools, private and governmental service providers, local, State, and Federal Government together on the front lines of the battle.

We recognize that MS–13, Bloods and Crips are active in our schools and recruit new members there. This is why the Prince George's County Gang Unit will increase its already steady involvement in schools by educating the educators. We will continue our

efforts at training teachers, school administrators, certainly in the early signs of gang involvement. We will increase our efforts at making contact with at risk youth, their family, and before they become members of gangs.

We will continue our efforts at staying current on gang activity and trends. We will maintain contacts in the networking throughout the anti-gang community, which is an extremely important part of the overall fight.

Our collective efforts, whether they be local, State or Federal, are the key to controlling violent, disruptive gangs in our communities. Chief Bratton of the L.A. Police stated, "Gangs have made a gallant attempt at taking our streets from us. However, law enforcement as a whole, connected family will never allow this to happen."

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today and share not only the work of the Prince George's County Police Department, but the Bi-county Gang Task Force and our allied agencies that participate in the effort to combat gangs.

Mr. Chairman and the members of the committee, again, thank you for your interest and support.

[The prepared statement of Captain Lynn follows:]

Testimony of Captain Bill Lynn
Commander, Gang Unit
Prince George's County Police Department
Before the
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform
September 6, 2006

Good morning, Chairman Davis and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to again speak with you concerning gangs in our communities. Gangs and their criminal enterprises pose an ever increasing concern for local, state and federal law enforcement agencies more than ever before. Today, gangs, and gang related violence leading to the erosion of the basic quality of life in many communities is more widespread than compared to the gangs of the 1920's that plagued many of our U.S. cities.

As I stated during the hearing on July 14th of this year, the Prince George's County Police Department started a Gang Unit in 2003, and shortly thereafter began the frame work that resulted in the formation of a multi-agency task force called the Regional Area Gang Enforcement, also known as R.A.G.E. The task force is comprised of Prince George's County Police officers, officers from Montgomery County, Howard County, Maryland State Police, Prince George's County Sheriff's Department, Maryland National Capitol Park and Planning Police Department, Hyattsville City Police Department, ATF, ICE and the FBI. The Prince George's County Gang Unit and the Task Force have seen tremendous success through hard work and determination. Coupled with the various States Attorney's Offices and U.S. Attorney's Office we have formidable front against this threat.

As we are all well aware, the most notable gang in our area is MS-13. This group has been active throughout our region, in DC, Virginia and Maryland. No, community has escaped its influence, burden and violence, and no one community is the central hub for its occupation. Fortunately, lawmakers like you, law enforcement and civilian agencies have come together on several fronts to cause a united effort to combat an organization that depletes the cultural and economic resources of our communities.

Our law enforcement partnership has brought to bear the strong arm of the Federal Government against MS-13. In 2005, we opened a Federal RICO case against several cliques of MS-13. The success of this investigation has generated additional arrests and more intelligence on the reach and violence of the group. The first phase of the trials begins today, and is expected to last several weeks. The success, importance and impact of the investigation are clear to everyone involved. It has also demonstrated the need for additional personnel to pursue the countless avenues MS-13 travels.

However, it's not just MS-13 that we need to focus on. Whether, it is Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, Montgomery or Prince George's County, we are all seeing the emergence of young people associating themselves with the violent groups known as the "Bloods" and "Crips". Again, these gangs born on the west coast influence our youth in many ways including television, movies and music. Many of the things that draw youth to MS-13 also draw them into these other terrible organizations. So, our approach to combating the Crips and Bloods must be similar to that of MS-13, but we must have an action plan. These groups can not be ignored.

In Prince George's County and Montgomery County we have been fortunate in that our county leaders recognize the importance of all aspects of combating gangs and created the Bi-County Gang Task Force. This endeavor brings the Executive levels of government, law enforcement, other government agencies, schools and private organizations together to focus their resources, efforts and expertise on gangs. As we all know, we can not simply put handcuffs on MS-13, Crips or Bloods and make the problem disappear.

With the work of the Bi-County Gang Task Force along with our efforts in law enforcement, we believe great strides have been taken to address these criminal enterprises. Each of the participating agencies, governmental and civilian should be commended for their dedication to this effort. Certainly, our strength is in our numbers, coordination and determination.

While MS-13 cliques in our region do not demonstrate the level of sophistication in criminal activity equal to their counter parts in Los Angeles, it is not for a lack of trying. This disorganization should not be seen as a weakness. Leadership from Los Angeles is known to visit our area to provide guidance and organize cliques to define their criminal activity. These same statements apply to the Bloods and Crips in our area.

The Prince George's County Gang Unit constantly evaluates the changing face of gang activity in our communities, as do many of our allied agencies. We constantly evaluate our approach to all issues generated by gangs. We not only concentrate on the traditional law enforcement approaches to the problem, but we maintain open lines of communication and stay actively involved in our schools along with counseling and intervention programs.

The dismantlement of gang cliques via the RICO case and our Gang Unit operations has disrupted the organization and operating ability of our local MS-13 cliques. Strong sentencing and the possibility of life sentences without the possibility of release has sent a dramatic message to gang members, but without a long lasting, multi-agency, multi-pronged approach to a complicated, deep rooted problem we will be re-visiting many of the same issues over and over again. This is why I feel Prince George's County and our allied regions will be successful in our war against gangs. We are putting the police, schools, private and governmental service providers, local, state and federal government *together* on the front lines of the battle.

We recognize that MS-13, Bloods and Crips are active in our schools and recruit new members there. This is why the Prince George's County Gang Unit will increase its already steady involvement in our schools by educating the educators. We will continue our efforts at training teachers and school administrators concerning the early signs of gang involvement. We will increase our efforts at making contact with at-risk youth and their families before they become a member of a gang. We will continue our efforts at staying current on gang activity and trends. We will maintain contacts and networking throughout the Anti-Gang community, which is an extremely important part of the overall fight.

Data and intelligence collection must be on the forefront of every law enforcement agency waging this fight. Sharing of information is crucial. With the FBI's nation data base along with HIDTA and ATF's use of Gang-Net our ability to track a very transient violent group and share information will increase dramatically.

Our collective efforts, whether they be local, state or federal are the key to controlling violent disruptive gangs in our communities. Chief Bratton, of the LAPD stated, "gangs have made a gallant attempt at taking our streets and communities from us, however, law enforcement as a whole connected family will never allow that to happen."

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today and share the work of not only the Prince George's County Police Department, but the Bi-County Task Force and all allied agency participating in our Regional Area Gang Task Force. Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee – Thank you interest and support of our endeavors.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Let me ask. We have talked a lot about the prevention side and what we do to try to keep kids out of gangs and the like. What programs do you have for the non-school age population, including kids maybe who have dropped out of school or kids 18 to 20, 22. Is there any strategy for that, because a lot of these gang members are not just young kids.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. Mr. Chairman, one of the programs that has been mentioned here is a nonprofit called Identity, Inc. It is one of the most successful nonprofits approaching this problem, and they have a special program for dropouts, which is primarily in Spanish. There is peer counseling. There is a lot of interaction, and they have had great success in getting people back into school and getting affected young people to get their GED and pursue successful careers.

One of the most important things in dealing with the gang problem is that young people talk to peers, that they have someone that they can relate to and trust, and we have been very supportive of this group, Identity, Inc., which brings to bear this kind of peer counseling to help people turn away from that life style.

Mr. JOHNSON. And, Mr. Chairman, we have what we call Men to Men Program, and I know that does not include the women, but it is a mentoring program. Actually last year we had about 5,000 people and about 2,000 men hooked up, and the word went out. And many of the mothers brought their young sons who they felt were having issues and many of these were 16, 17, and 18 years old, and we hooked them up one on one with the person after we did background and all of those type of things, and they are a real strong mentoring making a huge difference for some of the young people.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Now, do I understand the Federal money correctly? Montgomery and Prince George's Counties get one allocation of Federal funding to combat gangs, but the State of Maryland receives a separate allocation of Federal funding which cannot be spent in Montgomery and Prince George's. Is anybody familiar with that?

Captain LYNN. That is correct.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Is that true, Captain?

Captain LYNN. That is correct, yes.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Do you know what the reason is for the delineation? Is there any thought of collapsing the two and coordinating?

Captain LYNN. I do not know the answer to that question, no, sir.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. I will answer that question. A lot of the focus of the State is usually now in the prisons and attempting to deal with the issue of the gang issues and putting money into the development and working to deal with the issue in prison. Have you heard that or is that your understanding?

Captain LYNN. I do understand that, yes, sir.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK. So a lot of the State funding is going into that and is specifically targeted for that.

What is the awareness of the general constituency about gang issues? I have done meetings on gangs. I think some of my colleagues have done that, and you get a certain level of people, par-

ticularly those who have kids in the schools, that get interested. But I go out and talk to other groups that mention the gangs, and it is just like you get these blank stares.

What is the general level that you are seeing of awareness among the public on these issues? Does anybody want to take it? Let me ask the politicians, I mean.

Mr. JOHNSON. Well, I think you hit the nail on the head. If there is a crime, a big crime, everybody is aware for a short time, and then it seems like it just kind of goes out the window, and that is the reason why I talked to Congressman Wolf about his effort, because I think that it just has to be sustained.

I do not want to change the topic, but people do not want to recognize that they live among gang members or in a community where gangs exist. They want to say, well, my neighborhood does not have those kinds of things, and I think that is probably some of the liability.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. I have certainly been interacting with a lot of my constituents over the last several weeks, and there is an awareness that there is a gang problem. I do not think there is enough awareness that county government and the two counties together are making really to address the gang problem. I think our State's Attorney's Office has had a particularly effective approach, and that has been perhaps a little bit mischaracterized in the course of this election season.

But certainly voters are aware of it. I think it is important that we try to misspell stereotyping and misperceptions. The fact that someone may come from an immigrant family does not mean that they are responsible for a gang problem, and so we have to be clear where there are problems we are working on them. We are working on them in the ways we have described, but we should not use the gang issue as the way of evoking, you know, fear just for its own sake.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Van Hollen.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me thank all of you for your testimony. I just want to emphasize the point that Mr. Leventhal just made as well, which is that no matter what community you come from, you can be susceptible to gang activity.

Obviously if you are a recent immigrant, in some cases, given the whole range of factors and pressures you are facing, sometimes people prey on people who are in that position, and clearly, there have been successful recruiting efforts, and that is why we are here, to try and make sure that we address those issues and deal with them.

I want to thank you, Jack Johnson, again. You sort of had both hats. If you could just elaborate a little more. You were a State's Attorney and you dealt with the criminal aspect of this, and you understand that is an important focus, but also, as county executive you have the hat on where you deal with this on a comprehensive manner.

If you and Mr. Leventhal could just talk about how this has also helped bring the counties together, it seems to me that we need to develop a greater cooperative relationship between the counties on

a whole host of issues. I think we are moving in the right direction, and how this has helped create a better working relationship between law enforcement and our social service agencies.

Mr. JOHNSON. Well, let me say, first of all, that in 1994, when I became the State's Attorney, I probably did not know that there was a gang problem until there was a murder coming out of one of our high schools, and there was a small gang. There was a guy who was the head of the gang, and I think many of the students knew it. He ordered one of the young ladies killed, and she was killed by a knife, and it became a huge public issue.

And I think that was the first real awareness in our county in 1994 that there were gangs in our county and that we had to really begin to address it.

But as I indicated, suppression, and the law enforcement authorities were to handle that, and that is why I want to give Doug Duncan, county executive for Montgomery County, a lot of credit, because he called me, and he tells the story of a gang fight that started in northern Virginia, came through Prince George's County, and someone ended up dying in Montgomery County.

So you had three jurisdictions involved in that one act, and he said we have to come together. The lines where we have some of the activities are right here on the border, but we just cannot do it through prosecution alone, and that we need to figure out how we can use the prevention side, and how we can bring all of the community involved.

And I think that was the recognition and the coming together. And of course, as I indicated, we called you because we wanted the Federal authorities to be involved, and so that is where we are now.

We think that with the two strong law enforcement authorities that spoke today in terms of what we are doing, the Federal people are very much involved in these prosecutions, and they are helping us. I think we have the approach that can really pay tremendous dividends, and we want to thank the chairman for all that you are doing in terms of the moneys.

We have a budget. I think we have put a really great budget together, and we are going to spend the money mostly on prevention. Many of the prosecution moneys are coming from our own pockets in terms of what we allocate through the budgetary process.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. Congressman Van Hollen, we have had a lot of discussion in our last two county budgets about the gang initiative, and in the previous county budget when the proposal was made that we should fund the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, that funding came through the committee that I chair, the County Council's Health and Human Services Committee, and we asked some skeptical questions of Director Colvin, who will be speaking later, as to what really would be Prince George's County's commitment to this project since we knew that it was going to be located right on the border and that many of the unfortunate incidents of violence had occurred on the other side of the county line in some of the neighborhoods in and around Langley park.

And what has occurred is that Prince George's County absolutely has come through, that the costs have been very fairly allocated, and that all of our questions have been answered satisfactorily, and

so in the second year we came forward and funded all of the requests because we were confident that it was moving ahead successfully as a bi-county cooperation, and we have been very pleased with everything we have heard from County Executive Duncan, from Chief Manger, from our State's Attorney Doug Gansler and from Director Colvin about the cooperation with their counterparts on the Prince George's County side.

And in particular, I have heard the success that County Executive Johnson's administration has had in incorporating the input of the Latino community in the planning and in the outreach.

Thank you.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Wolf.

Mr. WOLF. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

In northern Virginia, the task force that we have set up goes from Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, Manassas, Manassas Park, Loudoun, Prince William, Fauquier, and out into the Shenandoah Valley, and down actually into Harrisonburg.

And I wonder if you have or if your area is broad enough because last week I was up in Pennsylvania, up in Bucks County, and their biggest problem is coming out of Trenton, coming out of Allentown, and coming out of north Philadelphia, and I wondered should Baltimore County not be part of your effort in the other counties so that it is a broader jurisdiction.

Because the problems we were having when they would leave Alexandria and go to Arlington, leave Arlington and go to Fairfax, but we felt we had to broaden it out so that we had the whole area.

Now, each county has its own education and intervention program. They are buying a machine whereby they will take the tatoos off and do different things like that. Different school systems are teaching the teachers colors, signs, but from the law enforcement, the task force goes from actually the Potomac River in Alexandria and Arlington down into Harrisonburg, and normally those communities never talk to each other.

Should your area be broader? Should this task force be a little broader than it is?

Asst. Chief KING. Mr. Wolf, that is an excellent observation. I think what we have seen here in our area is that we initially get more return on investment for focusing it in the areas of our joint counties here, but we also have this member of the task force, the Maryland State Police, that we can expand up to Baltimore County when need be.

Most of our data indicates that our region here, the members that are active when they are going through this area, do not necessarily come up. A smaller percentage do that actually come across the river from Virginia, and they are sort of localized this way.

But we do have the State Police involved to give us that expansion capabilities and the Federal partners so that we can go across the river.

Mr. WOLF. The other question, I heard you and I am sure the answer is yes, but in ours, we have FBI, DEA, ATF, and Marshal Service, all assigned. Are all four working with your task force?

Captain LYNN. We have ATF, ICE, and the FBI as current members of our task force.

Mr. WOLF. Well, wouldn't you want to ask DEA and ATF to be part of that?

Captain LYNN. ATF is a member. They are responsible——

Mr. WOLF. Marshal Service?

Captain LYNN. Marshal Service has been in conjunction with us, yes. We have not seen a whole lot of involvement in drugs traversing back and forth with MS–13. We have shared information with DEA. We do not have them as a signed on member of the task force, but we certainly do work in conjunction with them.

Mr. WOLF. OK. Well, I guess that is one of the things. In our area you do have very much drug involvement, and the cooperation of the four, you know, ATF, a lot of it is gun activity, and then you have a lot of drugs. You have the combination particularly.

You have not seen yet, but I think you may very well see—well, let me ask you: have you seen methamphetamine here yet?

I mean, it is coming up the Shenandoah Valley, coming in, and so the combination of these groups getting involved, and you know, it is up to you all, but if you would like to, we would certainly intercede. They all come before my committee, but I think that DEA would offer you a unique approach, that they could be very, very helpful.

But I will wait to hear from Chris and wait to hear from you.

The other question is would it be a good idea, or maybe you already do it, that your people sit down with our task force and with the District of Columbia on a monthly basis. And I am a main cog, but I mean the law enforcement is the law enforcement to exchange. Is that taking place on a regular, every first Tuesday of every month that all of the task forces get together or is it on an ad hoc basis?

Captain LYNN. We have not set up that every Tuesday, every Wednesday type of schedule that you are referring to, but the advantage that we have now is the Northern Virginia Gang Task Force knows that we exist, vice versa. We all know everybody's home telephone numbers. The exchange of information is tremendous back and forth. Everybody knows that if you need some information, you're going to get it here. Here is where you go to, and again, the exchange of information has just been tremendous between all of the groups.

Mr. WOLF. So you are dealing with the northern Virginia and the District in exchanging information?

Captain LYNN. Absolutely.

Mr. WOLF. Do you ever meet?

Captain LYNN. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Mr. WOLF. OK. Last, you might want to look at Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs and Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and different groups like World Vision and some of those other groups. We are trying to bring many as a nonprofit for after school programs, for soccer programs, Boys Clubs, Girls Clubs.

Are they active? How many Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs do you have?

Mr. LEVENTHAL. We do have very active Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs in Montgomery County, and the County Council has sup-

ported a number of their programs, and we do interact closely with them on the after school programs as well.

Mr. WOLF. OK. Well, thank you very much. Thank you for your service, too. I appreciate it.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. Thank you for your support.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Cummings.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I want to pick up on some questions that Congressman Wolf was asking, and as I listened to you all, I did not hear the word "drugs." You almost said it, Captain, until the questions were just asked.

It seems to me that drugs can have a phenomenal impact on keeping people in an organization, getting them in the organization, and for a lot of the violent activity that happens. In our subcommittee, we deal with drugs. In the subcommittee that I rank on, I mean, we deal with this subject every day.

And I am just wondering how much of an impact does drugs have on these gangs and their involvement from what you have seen.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. If I may.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Yes.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. For MS–13, we do not see, at least in our region in Prince George's County, we do not see a tremendous involvement in the distribution of narcotics.

Mr. CUMMINGS. OK.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. Now, we certainly see narcotics use, whether it be cocaine or marijuana. Now, a differing factor between MS–13 and the Bloods or the Crips are drugs, are narcotics, and a differing factor between MS–13 and the Bloods and the Crips is Bloods and Crips are for profit organizations to a great extent. MS–13 is not. A lot of times for a lack of a lengthy description, MS–13 is more of a violence driven type of organization where the Bloods and the Crips certainly do not step away from violence, but there is that for profit type of thought or thinking in what they are doing, and certainly part of that is the distribution of narcotics.

Mr. CUMMINGS. You know, it just seems to me, like I said, when you put drugs in the midst of something, you get a whole other set of dynamics going on, and I was just curious about that.

Mr. Johnson, you and Mr. Leventhal have talked about organizations, and Mr. Wolf, helping out with these young people and Congressman Wolf also mentioned the Girls and Boys Clubs. I am just thinking about the people in my district. I am a former Cub Scout and Boy Scout, and a lot of the young people in my district, they look at Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts as it is just not something that they are that interested in. I means that is just reality. I mean if you start real little, like 6, 7 years old, but after they get about 10 years old and they see what is going on on the streets and they get involved in a gang, it is almost like probably one of the most negative times you could do is being a part of the Scouts. I am just telling you.

And I am just wondering. What we have seen though is the faith based organizations getting a hold of these kids, creating a very positive peer group, getting a critical mass of people, showing that it is OK not to commit crime. It is OK to do things the right way.

It is OK to be smart in school. So then you get this group, this critical mass, and the very peer pressure that some of you all talked about, it flows back and forth.

I mean, what have you found? You have talked——

Mr. JOHNSON. Well, Congressman Cummings, I was the chairman of the Two Rivers District for the Boy Scouts of America for 4 years, and the Two Rivers sits between the Patuxent and the Potomac. So I had pretty much all of Prince George's County.

The one conclusion that I can make is that the prosecutor for 8 years, now my Boy Scout years were before that. I never prosecuted a Boy Scout in 8 years. So to the extent that they get involved in Cub Scouts and stay there, it is just a phenomenal program. It just really works.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I do not want you to think I am knocking it.

Mr. JOHNSON. No, I know that.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I am on the board of the Boy Scouts, too.

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, and I say that to say that it is harder to get the churches to have the kind of after school programs, the consistency that we need. It is something that we have to work at.

Mr. CUMMINGS. All right.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. I guess I would just comment. I want to be very careful because we are a successful economy, and we attract people from around the world and we have a highly motivated and successful immigrant community that brings a lot of skill and ability here, and we also do see among some elements of the immigrant community this gang phenomenon growing, and so I think the challenge for nonprofit groups is to find culturally competent ways to reach out and incorporate the growth communities into their activity.

I am not familiar with efforts that Boy Scouts of America may be making in that regard. It is a challenge for all of us in government. It is a challenge for all of us in the nonprofit sector. How do you reach the growth communities in ways that the recipient of the services is going to accept the services, and you have to be culturally competent. You have to have language skills. You have to some extent appear cool and like an activity that would be fun and interesting to be involved in.

So that is a contemporary challenge that all service providers are facing.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. Chairman, may I be excused? I have to leave.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Sure.

Also, Mr. Cummings, also we do some things that are maybe not formally the Boy Scouts, but there are church-based activities in Montgomery County, and they are mainly driven by the community they are in, but some of them are also very successful.

We also have the Police Activities League, who provides another venue, and it is really socially acceptable and cool to be doing that after school.

And then Mr. Leventhal has mentioned the after school programs, where we have formal after school programs so that we keep the kids there and provide that instruction, and when Mr. Wolf mentioned about the recent immigrant population, using the game of soccer to reach out. We do a Kids with Cops Program

where we have officers do soccer clinics, and it really breaks down that barrier and gives them a goal, something to do after schools and stuff. So we do a lot of pieces and try to find a lot of bites out of the elephant, if you will.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Ruppersberger.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Sure. Well, first, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for having this hearing, and, Chris Van Hollen, I want to thank you for hosting this hearing.

Clearly, we have identified we have a gang problem. Sitting here listening to the testimony and the statements of my colleagues, I think we have a tremendous opportunity to make a difference, and one of the reasons is because of the regional approach that we are taking.

I was a former prosecutor, former Baltimore County executive, and one of the things that I saw as it related to law enforcement is that crime has no geographical boundaries, and if law enforcement gets off the turf and works together, you can make a difference, and I think that is really starting to happen: this hearing and what we are hearing about the relationship between Montgomery and Prince George's.

We had a hearing in Virginia, and I was very impressed with what my colleagues have been doing, Congressman Wolf and Davis and Moran, and how they have come together. I was impressed with some of the issues that we have talked about here today, but also the legislative side, giving the tools to prosecutors to deal with the issue of suppression.

So I think it really bodes well that we are coming together as a region, but we have to step it up a little bit more, I think, in the Baltimore region, and Elijah Cummings and I represent the Baltimore region. So you have the players here from a Federal level who work very closely at the local level, I think, to start pulling this together.

I think Congressman Wolf talked about New Jersey and areas like that and Philadelphia, which probably Baltimore is going to have to reach north because, again, crime has no geographical boundaries, and I think though that we are on the right track.

Now, County Executive Johnson talked about the holistic approach, and I think that we need to address this problem in different ways, and those priorities are suppression. Clearly, we have to deal with the issue of suppression and what we are going to do, and then we even have problems beyond that once these members go into prisons, and that is causing a big problem also.

But I think the prevention is a very important approach. Congressman Davis and I went to El Salvador, and we were at the heart really of MS–13, and over and over the message was that the gang members come from poverty. This is their only family; this is their family.

And so we have to address that issue, and then when gang members want to get out of gangs they cannot, and how do we deal with that? These are issues that we have to deal with.

So with that statement about where we are, I think what I would like to ask you three is that from a Federal level where would you

like to see our priorities from a Federal level, helping you in coordination.

I think the coordination, and Congressman Wolf addressed it, is extremely important. We are fighting terror, and I think one of the most effective ways we are fighting terror is in the Federal Government we have the Joint Terrorism Task Force. We have Federal, State and local. You have those jurisdictions. You have FBI; you have DEA; you have CIA, and it is all pulling together as a team.

And I think we can help in that regard, or do you need more resources in the area of different types of suppression tools? And I would like to hear your thoughts on that. Or is it more in the prevention area? Where do you think we, through a Federal level, this body here? And you do have the players here.

And I think it is going to bode well eventually to pull the team together, to communicate, and we will be able to be effective. So if you can tell me where you think your priorities are and what you would like us to do from a Federal level, whether it is funding, coordination, whatever.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. Sure. Well, this hearing is very helpful, and in my testimony I have outlined some requests that we have made and with continuing support from the Congress, we hope we can leverage the county money that we are spending. So certainly we need funds. Certainly we appreciate that this committee has brought different jurisdictions together to share experiences.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. But funds where?

Mr. LEVENTHAL. Well, my testimony outlines both.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Yes, I heard your testimony.

Mr. LEVENTHAL. Yes. So health care, law enforcement prevention, some of these intervention programs, these are the approaches that we hope are going to bear fruit, and we have benchmarks. We have measurements that we are going to be reporting on the data as to the success we are achieving in these young people's lives.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Is there anything that we are not doing that you would like to see us do on the Federal level? I should ask the two members of law enforcement.

Asst. Chief KING. First, I do want to compliment you. I think this committee is really on the mark here. You guys have a good grasp of the issues and have been very supportive. That continued support is critical as we continue to expand the partnership, and just to let you know, we do work with Terry Sheridan and Bill McMahon, the Chiefs of Baltimore County and Howard County. It is just the focus right now is a little bit south fortunately, but we do have regular communication.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Hartford County? Do you have Hartford or Anne Arundel?

Asst. Chief KING. We do not with Hartford County.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. We will deal with that.

Asst. Chief KING. OK, but I think that we can expand. We have regular communication with them, although it may be ad hoc. We have valuable exchange of information with them, even though they may not be actively involved with us.

In my police hat, I always like to see us as the tip of the spear, but we just don't see it as the enforcement effort. We know we usually are the first contact with them, but then we share with our

other partners, and so we realize too under the community policing clause there's a lot of aspects to it, but we usually come in contact with them for better or worse usually first.

I think the coordination piece that you speak of is extremely important. The Joint Terrorism Task Force, if you were to apply that same type of philosophy to gangs I think would be very beneficial. You know, we find gang members. The RAGE Unit has traveled out to the West Coast and done some training out there and attended conventions and has gone and ridden with the border patrol out there and LAPD and San Diego Police Department, and we have run into gang members that were on the East Coast and we've run into them out on the West Coast.

So you know, they travel just as much and probably a great deal more than we do, and that information exchange is going to be the key to dealing with this problem.

We have a great deal of local lines of communications now just simply because of the task forces, whether they be northern Virginia or whether they be RAGE task force that are being set up. We now know who to call in one particular place or another to obtain some information, but certainly could there be more coordination? Could there be funds to facilitate that? Yes, and I think if that was to occur, then our efforts were going to increase tenfold.

From a law enforcement perspective and even to reduce it down if you're talking about items that we need that we lack, there certainly is. I mean, there are simple things like digital cameras and the quality digital cameras that we need out on the street because to get that intelligence information to be able to put it into a data base, whether it be GangNet, whether it be something that the FBI has in their national data base or even at a local level that we're maintaining simply on a desktop. If we don't have the equipment to do that, then we're fighting an uphill battle.

So you reduce it down to even those smaller items like that, the funding is important to take care of those things, whether it be something in a joint gang task force or something if you're talking about $300 or $400 for a quality digital camera across the spectrum if the phones are needed.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK. Thank you all very much. It has been a very, very helpful hearing. We will take about a 2-minute recess as we move our next panel forward.

Thank you.

[Recess.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Our goal is to try to get out of here in the next 45 minutes if we can just because Members have things. So I would like to swear in our first panel if I could.

Carolyn Colvin, the director of the Department of Health and Human Services for Montgomery County; Warden Robert Green from the Montgomery County Correctional Facility; Mike Butler, gang prevention coordinator, Prince George's County; Luis Cardona, the youth violence prevention coordinator, Montgomery County; and Daniel Arretche, the director, Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center; Richard Brown, the small business owner.

It is our policy to swear you in.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you. Again, your entire statement is in the record, but if we could keep it 5 minutes a piece, I think we can move through this. Ms. Colvin, I will start with you and we will move right on down.

Thank you very much for your patience in being here. It is very important to us.

STATEMENTS OF CAROLYN COLVIN, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, MONTGOMERY COUNTY; ROBERT GREEN, WARREN, MONTGOMERY COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; MICHAEL BUTLER, GANG PREVENTION COORDINATOR, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY; LUIS CARDONA, YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION COORDINATOR, MONTGOMERY COUNTY; DANIEL ARRETCHE, DIRECTOR, CROSSROADS YOUTH OPPORTUNITY CENTER; AND RICHARD BROWN, SMALL BUSINESS OWNER

STATEMENT OF CAROLYN COLVIN

Ms. COLVIN. Good afternoon, Chairman Davis, Congressman Van Hollen, and members of the Government Reform Committee, Mayor Porter, and officials of the city of Takoma Park, our elected officials, and other partners in the area of youth violence prevention. We certainly want to thank you, Congressman Van Hollen and Chairman Wolf for supporting our efforts in this area.

I'm Carolyn Colvin, director of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, and I am a co-chair along with Montgomery County Police Chief Thomas Manger of the Montgomery County's Gang Prevention Steering Committee.

It is my privilege to speak to you today to share the strides that we have made in Montgomery County and Prince George's working together to address the gang issues. I am going to limit my comments because, as you have indicated, you have our written comments.

I do want to say up front that we are most appreciative of the financial support that we have received from you, as well as the other assistance in our efforts in this respect. As was noted by president of the Council, Joyce Leventhal, the county has funded significant areas of this initiative, but we really rely on your continued support for us to be able to continue to do what we have been able to do. You may know that our current operations stem from the work of the Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force which was formed in 2004 by Montgomery County Executive Douglas Duncan, along with Jack Johnson, the county executive for Prince George's County.

The task force provided guidance and support to individual task forces convened within each county and agreed upon a set of recommendations to further our shared interest in addressing gang violence and preventing youth involvement in gangs and criminal activity. In our effort to operationalize gang prevention, we followed guidance by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its comprehensive gang model and the model provided a multi-layered approach consistent with our approach to address prevention, intervention and suppression of gang activity.

The Department of Health and Human Services offers a series of services and programs and interventions to address gang prevention and youth violence. The department has a long history of collaborative community-based partnerships in the delivery of prevention and intervention.

The Youth Provider Council whose membership well represents public-private partnerships and service to youth is committed to implementing best practices, engaging in collaborative grants, seeking opportunities and coordinating services to specific community issues.

The Youth Leadership Council's membership includes former gang members and young people at risk for gang membership and guides the development and implementation of community-based services. The Youth Leadership Council has participated in county and statewide forums and trainings in the schools and in the community where they have educated, youth, families, and practitioners about the consequences of joining gangs and how to effectively get out of gangs.

In addition, the department funds linkages to learning programs which are programs which deliver comprehensive services to our youth and their families whose needs have been identified by school staff. We recently have a staff training for our linkages program, which is provided by Luis Cardona, who is your youth violence prevention coordinator, and that training has strengthened our provider's capacity to serve gang involved youth and families.

The department is also actively partnering with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and we have partnerships with the Juvenile Justice System to provide assessment and diversion services, a swell as some transition services to help young people reenter the community successfully.

We have attempted to centralize coordination of gang prevention efforts through the work of the country's Gang Prevention Steering Committee and through the extensive work of the county's youth violence prevention coordinator. The Steering Committee's membership includes directors of, in addition to the Police Department and the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, we have representatives from the county Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Recreation and the Montgomery County Public Schools, as well as representatives of the county's executives African, American, Asian, and Latino Advisory Boards.

The Steering Committee provides oversight at a high level of government and is responsible for implementation of the nearly 100 recommendations that came from the various task forces.

We are expanding our efforts through the creation of the Street Outreach Network, which will place community resources directly in targeted areas, that will serve gang involved youth, youth at risk of joining gangs and their parents as well. Street outreach workers may be former gang members who have successfully left gang life behind and serve as community role models for youth.

We will also be establishing high school wellness centers that will provide youth development, somatic and behavior health care, educational and familial supports and other outreach services. This effort is essential as it demonstrates a vital coordinated effort between the Department of Health and Human Services and Mont-

gomery County Public Schools to better serve gang involved youth as well as those at risk of joining gangs.

These centers will provide an intensive support environment for youth to resolve conflicts that would otherwise escalate without appropriate guidance.

An important element of our gang prevention effort is to centralize coordination offered by the county's youth violence prevention coordinator. Luis Cardona, who is that individual, provides critical services through community education, participating in community forums, providing support to individual young people and families as they strive to exit gangs, serving as a mentor when needed, and maintaining liaison with relevant departments and agencies.

And Luis will talk with you about some of his activities. He works very closely with his counterpart in Prince George's County, and they recently convened a regional meeting of gang prevention coordinators, including gang coordinators from northern Virginia to facilitate regional prevention intervention efforts.

The cornerstone of Montgomery County's partnership with Prince George's County is the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, and again, we certainly thank you for your support of that initiative. This partnership fully implements a recommendation of the Joint County Task Force to offer a presence in the Takoma Park-Langley Park communities to combat youth violence.

The youth participants have clearly identified this center as a neutral territory, free from the influence of gangs. The center offers a one stop shop in the community for direct service and/or referrals for behavior and somatic health care, employment training, job referrals, educational income supports, mentoring and other support services.

Since its opening in May, the center has served almost 15—I'm sorry—100——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Your entire statement is in the record.

Ms. COLVIN [continuing]. And 50 young people and their families.

I want to mention that we awarded seven community mobilization grant awards, and those awards were youth led and youth planned. They determined what they thought they would like to see funding for, and those went to groups like the Gap Busters, the Mental Health Association, the Cambodian Duty Society, Identity, Boys and Girls Club, Montgomery County Tennis Foundation and Arts on the Block.

So we have tried to use the nonprofits to actually provide services that will be meaningful and culturally sensitive.

We have been very fortunate to have your support to continue funding the centralized gang unit here in the county, as well as the Youth Opportunity Center. Your leadership and foresight on this issue makes it possible for local jurisdictions to design solutions that will work long into the future. It gives communities the confidence that these supports will be present for the long term and not just the passing fan. Again, we thank you for your support and implore you to continue funding our regional activities.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Colvin follows:]

Testimony of Carolyn W. Colvin
Before the United States House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform
Delivered September 6, 2006

Good Afternoon, Chairman Davis, Congressman Van Hollen and members of the Government Reform Committee, Mayor Porter and officials of the City of Takoma Park, elected officials and other partners in the area of youth violence prevention. We thank you Congressman Van Hollen, Congressman Wolf and the Maryland Delegation for supporting this effort.

I am Carolyn W. Colvin, Director of Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services, and co-Chair, along with Montgomery County Police Chief J. Thomas Manger, of Montgomery County's Gang Prevention Steering Committee. It is my privilege to speak before you today to share the significant strides that we have made in Montgomery and Prince George's counties to address gang issues.

Today I will share with you information on the importance of prevention and intervention services as complements to law enforcement action in discouraging, reducing and eliminating gang involvement and activity. I will offer information regarding the current focus and nature of services offered in the Department of Health and Human Services, and the partnerships which promote and provide community based services to at-risk youth and their families. I will discuss with you the importance of and the benefits we've realized as a result of centralized coordination of the initiative through the services of our Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator, the operations of the Montgomery County Gang Prevention Steering Committee; and our partnership with Prince George's County in delivering services via the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center. I will share with you information related to the manner in which we've served young people and their families through our efforts.

As you may know, our current operations stem from the work of the Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force, seated in February 2004 by Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan, along with Prince George's County Executive Jack Johnson. The Joint County Task Force provided guidance and support to individual task forces convened within each County, and agreed upon a set of recommendations to further our shared interests in addressing gang violence and preventing youth involvement in gangs and criminal activity.

In our effort to operationalize gang prevention, we followed guidance offered by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, in its Comprehensive Gang Model. The model provided a multi-layered approach, consistent with our approach to address prevention, intervention and suppression of gang activity in our community.

We know that young people do well who have positive role models, who feel connected to their families and communities, and who have the opportunity to develop a sense of possibility for their futures. We know that young people need care and guidance, boundaries and monitoring – oversight. The lack of fundamental social constructs that families provide, offer fertile ground for groups and individuals promising friendship, familial relationships and protection. This is not to indicate that every child who is not adequately supervised will join a gang. But when you add language or cultural barriers, perceived lack of opportunity to live beyond the narrow confines of your community, lack of adequate recreational and educational offerings, and fear of physical violence or abuse to this equation, it may appear the only option to find friends, to have someone watching your back, to be safe is to join a gang. These conditions drive gang membership irrespective of race, irrespective of cultural background, irrespective of income.

Disaffected youth sometimes join gangs. Their kinship and connectedness to gangs drives their participation in violent and/or criminal acts in deference to gang leadership and in support of the continued success of the gang enterprise. We know that the gang problem is not limited to Latino gangs; and we have redoubled our efforts to reach out to underserved communities, as well as to look at young women, who have become increasingly involved in gang activity. Because of these conditions, it is necessary to include prevention and intervention services in our repertoire to fight gang activity. Incarceration without rehabilitation will not stop gang violence; we have to stop the flow of members to gangs through broad based community interventions.

The Department of Health and Human Services offers a series of services, programs and interventions to address gang prevention and youth violence. The Department has a long history of collaborative, community-based partnerships in the delivery of prevention and intervention services. The Youth Provider Council, whose membership well represents public-private partnership in service to youth, is committed to implementing best practices, engages in collaborative grant-seeking, and coordinates services/responses to specific community issues. The Youth Leadership Council's (YLC) membership includes former gang members and young people at risk for gang membership, and guides the development and implementation of community based services. The Youth Leadership Council (YLC) has participated in county and state wide forums and trainings in the schools, and in the community where they have educated youth, families, and practioners about the consequences of joining gangs and how to effectively get out of gangs. The Youth Leadership Council (YLC) has also appeared before this committee to talk about how to effectively work with gang involved youth and how to develop programs that will keep youth out of gangs. The Youth

Leadership Council (YLC) has also been instrumental in helping to support several national gang prevention efforts, whereby they have played a major role of providing technical assistance to such efforts as 2Cooltura.com, which is aimed at helping youth get out of gangs as well as educate parents about the consequences of gang life and how they can help their kids stay out of gangs. The website includes several public service announcements developed by Luis Cardona, providing youth and parents with solution-based approaches to the gang issue and where to go for help.

Further, the Department funds Linkages to Learning Programs, which deliver comprehensive services to youth and their families whose needs have been identified by school staff. We recently held a staff training for our Linkages program provided by Luis Cardona, that has strengthened our providers' capacity to serve gang involved youth and families. The Department actively partners with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and we have partnerships with the Juvenile Justice System to provide assessment and diversion services, as well as some transition services to help young people re-enter the community successfully.

We have attempted to centralize coordination of gang prevention efforts through the work of the County's Gang Prevention Steering Committee and through the extensive work of the County's Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator. The Steering Committee's membership includes directors of the Montgomery County Departments of Corrections and Rehabilitation; Recreation; and Montgomery County Public Schools, as well as representatives of the County Executive's African American, Asian, and Latino Advisory Boards. The Steering Committee provides oversight at a high level of government, and is responsible for oversight of implementation of the nearly 100 recommendations made by the Gang Prevention Task Forces. Work in this area is coordinated through a series of Task Groups (including the Community Action, Community Awareness and Information Management Task Groups), responsible for implementing designated recommendations. The Task Groups have broad representation from community organizations, business, and community advocates.

We are expanding our efforts, through the creation of the Street Outreach Network (SON), which will place community resources directly in targeted areas that will serve gang involved youth, youth at risk of joining gangs, and their parents as well. Street outreach workers may be former gang members who have successfully left gang life behind and serve as community role models for youth. We will also be establishing High School Wellness Centers that will provide youth development, somatic and behavioral health care, educational and familial supports, and other outreach services. This effort is essential as it demonstrates a vital coordinated effort between the Department of Health and Human Services and Montgomery County Public Schools to better serve gang involved youth, as well as those at risk of joining gangs. These centers will also provide an intensive support environment for youth to resolve conflicts that would otherwise escalate without appropriate guidance.

An important element of our gang prevention effort is the centralized coordination offered by the County's Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator, Luis

Cardona. Luis provides critical services through community education, participating in community forums, providing support to individual young people and families as they strive to exit gangs, serving as a mentor when needed, maintaining liaison with relevant departments and agencies of government. Luis works closely with his counterpart in Prince George's and recently convened a regional meeting of gang prevention coordinators, including gang coordinators from Northern Virginia to facilitate regional prevention/intervention efforts. Luis regularly participates in meetings with community stakeholders and other partners to resolve issues. Luis has a sense of what activity is occurring in the community, and has sufficient standing and credibility both in government and on the street to positively impact operations in both arenas.

The cornerstone of Montgomery County's partnership with Prince George's County is the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center. This partnership fully implements a recommendation of the joint County Task force, to offer a presence in the Takoma Park/Langley Park community to combat youth violence. The youth participants have clearly identified the CYOC as a neutral territory free from the influence of gangs. The Center offers a one stop shop in the community for direct service and/or referral for behavioral and somatic health care, employment training and job-referral, educational and income supports, mentoring and other supportive programs. Since its opening in May, the Center has served more than 100 young people and their families. The CYOC has recently expanded services to families through the inclusion of a parent support social worker. We have done this through a partnership with the state funded Collaborative Supervision and Focused Enforcement program (CSAFE), a multi agency law enforcement effort program that covers costs for the social worker. In the few months of operation it has become quite clear that the parents of the youth served at the CYOC need as much if not more services than the youth. Several youth participants from our positive youth development program have participated in focus groups to help tailor a national gang prevention message that will reach youth and families from around the nation.

Additionally, the County awarded seven community mobilization grant awards on behalf of the Joint County partnership, to fund recreational, arts, leadership and employment programs; and we anticipate funding up to ten additional programs during the coming year. Two members of our Youth Leadership Council (YLC), former gang rivals, are part of the mini grant review committee that determines which projects are funded.

We have had notable successes as a result of our work: individuals are undergoing tattoo removal to facilitate their gainful employment; individuals have been diverted from gang involvement. Many more have received the services and supports that will enable them to move on to safer and more successful endeavors. We are continuing to strengthen our efforts to relocate gang involved youth to safe havens.

We have been very fortunate to have your support to continue funding for the County's centralized gang unit, as well as the Youth Opportunity Center. Your leadership and foresight on this issue makes it possible for local jurisdictions to design

solutions that will work long into the future. In addition, it gives communities the confidence that these supports will be present for the long-term and are not just a passing fad. We thank you for your support and implore you to continue funding our regional partnership, and the County's efforts. We believe this model is sound and may be replicated across the nation.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you this afternoon. I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Warden Green, thank you.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT GREEN

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Chairman Davis, Congressman Van Hollen, distinguished members of this committee.

You have my written testimony. I will not read through it. There are four vital points that I would like to bring forward.

First, I would like to also recognize Counsel Brooke Bennett and Mindy Walker of your staff who spent 5 hours on the ground in our facility watching what we are doing, how we are doing it, talking to the people that are doing it, and also talking to the population that we are serving. So we greatly appreciate that.

I am here representing Director Wallenstein, director of the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation in Montgomery County, the men and women of the department, our various division chiefs that run the pre-release center, our Pretrial Services Unit, Management Services Division, and our Intake and Assessment Facility.

The four points I want to talk about is our role in this initiative, where we're at, and what we're doing in local corrections, some characteristics of the gang involved youth within our jurisdiction. I want to talk about a promising program of cognitive behavioral change that we utilize within the walls of the facility, 16 step program, moral recognition therapy, and I want to close hoping to dispel a little bit of this myth of Federal prison, State prisons and local corrections. That is something we need to understand and truly the numbers we are talking about.

First and foremost, our role in this issue. I sit before you today with 103 validated gang members in the Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. Those gang members represent 38 nationally known or locally recognized regional gangs and street crews.

My role, our department's role in this issue is twofold. It's law enforcement public safety and human development, keeping the public safe, my staff safe, the inmates that we are tasked to taking care of safe, but also making sure that when they leave our facilities, they are leaving better informed, more well prepared to face the challenges that they are dealing with when they walk out the door.

To that end, we hold a couple of things to be very true within our facility. There are no gangs inside the walls of the Montgomery County correctional facility. The only gang is the staff that runs those facilities. We make that very clear at the front end. We do not let crime run rampant in the street within our correctional facility. We view it as a pertinent philosophy of Montgomery County that there is no more acceptance of crime within the walls of our jail than it is within the streets of our community, and those laws are applied.

Graffiti, colors, recruiting, signs and symbols, none of that is tolerated. It's administratively handled, and it is also criminally handled with our State's Attorney's Office who has helped us successfully prosecute 38 cases since we opened in 2003. Of course, all of those not directly gang related, but again, prosecution of crime

within a correctional facility. That is very vital to be able to do the work that needs to be done.

So everyone you have talked to here today is involved in what we're doing: identity, Health and Human Services, the police. We're all working together collaboratively, and that does make a difference in Montgomery County. It is the people that are involved in how you are doing it, not necessarily how much money you throw at a problem as to how well you fix it.

The characteristics of our gang involved youth. The primarily 17 to 22 years of age, very low functioning in the educational range, low reading levels, sixth, seventh, eighth grade reading levels at best. The population is getting younger. We are seeing 15, 16 year olds coming into our facility. We're seeing generational trends, brothers and sisters following their older siblings and following in the footsteps of fathers. Uniquely this youthful offender population 17 to 22, the average individual has one or more children left in the community when they are incarcerated, very much have a lack of impulse control both inside the facility and outside in the community, have severed family ties or at best severely damaged those family ties, have minimal to no work experience, and in context to your question, sir, they are heavy substance abuse users. We are finding that to be true, not necessarily the crime that brought them there, but heavy substance abuse users.

What are we doing? Within the walls of our facility, we believe that we can impact every individual that comes in the door whether we have them for an hour, 30 days, 60 days or 90 days. We can allow them to leave our system, our correctional system with something they did not have coming in the door, be it a resource, a card, some attachment to the community, and in Montgomery County we are fortunate to have such community resources that are incredible. We do not reinvent resources inside the walls of the facility. We bring those that are already providing it inside the walls. We network so that when Johnny is leaving our facility he is going to assist them that he already has a relationship with. Those things are vitally important.

The MRT program, 16 step cognitive behavioral change program looks at structure, looks at highly skilled staff that help with issues of education, anger management, domestic violence. This is a structured, therapeutic community, and I have given you some pictures to show you in your mind what that unit looks like, but 64 people living inside those walls as a community 24–7 eat, drink, and sleep a structured program of change that has shown great promise. It has been part of what we have been doing since 1997 within our correctional system.

One of the photos you have is a group of gang members graduating from a baby program. On that day 71 percent had children, but they very uniquely told me they were not very well aware of how to be fathers. So we are doing just a whole myriad of programs that would take me much longer than 5 minutes to talk about.

Last, I think at the national level we need to dispel a myth, a reality, whatever you want to refer to it as. You know, we read with great interest when we read the Bureau of Justice statistics that there are 713,000-plus people in America's local jails and re-

gional jails, 1.4 million in State prisons and Federal prisons. We are funneling a lot of money that State and Federal direction.

The reality is Dr. Alan Beck, Bureau of Justice Statistics, the number that local corrections will touch in and out the doors in a year, this year 12 million people. Local corrections is the deep end of the pool. Resources to provide these programs, to make a change, make a difference before they are going on into State and local systems; that number of 600,000 coming in and out of State and Federal facilities pales to 12 million people, and local corrections is very uniquely situated with our local community to make a difference in that area.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Green follows:]

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

MS13 AND COUNTING – GANG ACTIVITY IN MONTGOMERY AND PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTIES

SEPTEMBER 6, 2006

Robert L. Green
Warden

Montgomery County Correctional Facility

My name is Robert Green. I am the Warden of the Montgomery County Correctional Facility, a 1029 bed facility in Boyds, Maryland. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony before this Congressional Committee on behalf of the Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. As a community, we are very fortunate to have exceptional leaders who have made this a priority issue in our county and who approach the issue with a comprehensive mindset. Corrections can very easily be relegated to a position of afterthought. That is clearly not the case in Montgomery County.

The outcome of gang suppression creates a natural increase in the number of inmates involved in gang activities within our correctional settings. Today as I sit before you, the Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation has in custody 108 validated gang members. These gang members represent 38 nationally recognized gangs, as well as regionally and locally known street crews, all of whom are involved in illegal activities.

WHAT ARE WE DOING IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY CORRECTIONS THAT APPEARS TO BE WORKING?

We immediately engage gang members coming into our system through a process that allows us to know what their affiliation is, and the nature of that affiliation. Also on the very front end of intake into our facility we let the population know that inside our walls "There are no gangs". We exercise our security, safety and control measures to assure that the inmate population, our staff and the public remain safe at all times. Gang activity and crime is no more acceptable within the walls of our correctional facility then it is on the streets of our community. We are strongly supported in this principle by our States Attorney's Office and the Montgomery County criminal justice system. We do not hesitate to prosecute crimes that occur within our facility and have done so 38 times to date.

It is important to note that not all of the 108 validated gang members within our system were arrested for direct gang related crimes. Some are known to the Montgomery County Public Safety agencies and some are not. Our efforts at validation are a continuing process of identification and suppression exercised within the walls of our facility.

Left unattended, gang activity can quickly become a very negative and violent influence in a correctional setting. Management of this population is continuous. Adjustments in housing and other security functions are on-going to maintain balance and safety. Collaboration and information sharing is key.

A PROMISING PROGRAM OF CHANGE

THE "YOUTHFUL OFFENDER UNIT" (YOU)

Offenders in our system who have not yet reached their 22nd birthday are compelled to enter a youthful offender unit and participate in MRT (Moral Reconation Therapy), a very comprehensive behavioral modification program. Originally targeting male inmates, MCCF expanded the program to include female youthful offenders in 1999. The YOU is housed in a Direct Supervision pod that can house up to sixty-four (64) youthful offenders. There is one correctional officer working in the pod at all times and there is also a correctional specialist dedicated to the unit. The program utilizes cognitive-behavioral treatment, *Moral Reconation Therapy* (MRT). MRT is a sixteen step program developed by Dr. Kenneth Robinson and Dr. Greg Little in 1985 for working with substance abusers in the correctional setting. This treatment modality is a cognitive learning approach to changing inmate behavior by focusing on how offenders think and make decisions. It is the core of the therapeutic unit.

In addition to the MRT program, extensive supplementary programming is provided. The programs offered are intended to help individuals build coping and decision-making skills that will assist them in redirecting their behavior toward non-criminal and non-substance abuse activities. Participants in the program are required to attend school if they do not have a high school diploma or a GED. Participants also are required to participate in a variety of educational and therapeutic programs within the unit, including substance abuse related classes, and Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Early morning calisthenics are an integral part of instilling the discipline required for this unit to succeed. The calisthenics program is highly structured, allowing the adolescent offender the opportunity to channel his or her energy in a more constructive manner. Examples of other activities offered include: therapeutic recreation; courses in domestic violence and anger management; victim impact classes; and a conflict resolution program. Community meetings are held in the unit weekly to ensure that the lines of communication between staff and offenders remain open and frequent.

The YOU program expanded shortly after its opening to include a family group that meets once a month. This component of the program has grown steadily which illustrates the family's need for support and involvement in their loved ones' treatment program.

STAFFING AND STAFF TRAINING

The YOU is managed by a Correctional Specialist IV who is the program manager, along with a Custody and Security unit manger. Staff assignment to the YOU is voluntary and competitive. This program also utilizes a unit counselor, correctional officers, interns, and community volunteers. All full-time MCCF staff working in the YOU have been trained in MRT and facilitate MRT groups. Staff members have been trained in basic child and moral development theories, and in behavior management techniques. The YOU, by its nature, requires a substantial amount of staff time to consistently enforce appropriate behavior. Staff communication is essential to the functioning of this specialized unit. The use of pass-on logs, face-to-face contact, an online server list, and telephone

communication is vital. Inmate manipulation of staff can only be controlled by the constant communication between all staff.

The three most important elements in effectively working with the youthful offender are: ***consistency, consistency, consistency!*** In support of this premise, there are regularly scheduled staff meetings for all team members. Administrative support for a program of this nature is crucial. The unit meetings are costly due to the overtime involved that allows all of our staff, no matter the shift assigned, to be involved. We are extremely fortunate to have the Administrative support that allows this to occur.

The *Jail Addiction Services* (JAS) unit, a therapeutic substance abuse treatment community housed within MCCF, has offered continuing invaluable support and training to the YOU.

A JAS counselor, with inmate peer counselors from the JAS unit, organizes and supervises ongoing Substance Abuse Education and Narcotics Anonymous programs for the YOU.

PEER LEADERS / POD REPS

Peer leaders/pod reps are MRT participants, chosen by unit staff, to serve as mentors and role models to other unit members. Peer leaders are selected for their leadership skills and for the behavior they have exhibited while in the unit, specifically their ability to follow rules. Peer leaders are dorm representatives and earn five (5) days industrial time per month for fulfilling this responsibility.[1] Obviously, this is a closely monitored function of the program to assure appropriate relationships at all times. Being appointed peer leader confers a great deal of responsibility on these young inmates. They are expected to fulfill the following duties.

1. Be positive role models
2. Follow all rules
3. Provide positive feedback to peers regarding their behavior and program participation
4. Provide peer mediation
5. Participate actively and positively in all groups
6. Assist in facilitating MRT groups
7. Organize chairs/tables for MRT groups

[1] A maximum of five (5) days good conduct time may be earned by any one inmate.

8. Ensure all group members are on time, properly dressed with ID's, and bring group materials to meetings

9. Assist with wake-up and notification for all activities and groups

10. Assist with orientation for new YOU participants

11. Assist with distributing facility supplies

ADMISSION CRITERIA

1. In most cases the participant must be twenty-one (21) years of age or younger, at the time of their first admission to the unit, and not be over twenty-two (22) years for any subsequent admission.

2. Must be able to read and write at a sixth grade level (in order to complete the MRT workbook exercises). When exceptions are made, another unit participant is assigned to work with him or her.

3. The youthful offender must be infraction-free for thirty days (30) prior to entry into the unit, unless a classification waiver has been granted.

4. May not have been returned from the Pre-Release Center in the past thirty days, unless a waiver has been granted.

5. May not have a "keep separate" from any other person housed in the unit ("keep separate" is an action to separate any two or more inmates).

6. **Gang affiliation is not a factor in accepting an individual into the unit. Having members of rival gangs has not presented a problem in the unit. The inmates understand that they will only remain in the unit as long as they follow all rules and behavioral expectations. Gang recognition, affiliation, signs and graffiti are grounds for administrative and criminal charges.**

DISCIPLINARY ISSUES AND CONSEQUENCES

All program participants are expected to follow all institutional rules listed in the Inmate Guide Book, which they receive prior to being classified to permanent housing. The Inmate Guide Book lists category 100A, 100B, 200, and 300 disciplinary infractions. Commission of any category 100A offense will lead to automatic and immediate removal from the unit. Violation of any 100B and 200 category offenses may lead to removal from the unit. Category 100 and 200 rule violations will result in an institutional disciplinary report, a DCA 71, being written. The adjustment hearing board will consist of a unit correctional specialist and supervisory correctional officer, with the correctional specialist

chairing the board. The sanctions will be determined by the severity of the offense, past offenses by the inmate, the inmate's overall program performance, and treatment considerations. Sanctions can include: loss of good conduct time; full disciplinary lock-up, either in the YOU or in a disciplinary housing area; full restriction within the YOU, or in general population; loss of recreation, canteen, and/or visiting; loss of school; loss of an institutional job; removal from MRT and/or all other programs; a work detail within the unit; a form of restitution; a writing assignment; a suspended sentence, or criminal charges[2]

Unit rules and category 300 violations (minor violations) may be dealt with informally if the behavior is not a persistent problem. For minor offenses, e.g. the use of profanity, making excessive noise, etc., the individual may be given a warning by a peer leader or a staff member. Consequences are assigned by staff and can be as minor as a written exercise about the behavior in question, extra duties, lock in, television restriction, room ban, telephone ban, or a contract. They may be as severe as receiving a written disciplinary report.

An individual may be removed from the YOU administratively if he is not a productive member of the community. One strategy is temporary removal so that the inmate can have "a dose of reality", called a reality check, by living in a general population unit. At the conclusion of the specified time period, the individual will be given the opportunity to return to the YOU on the condition that he will actively participate in and follow the rules of the program. Whether removed for administrative or disciplinary reasons, the individual may write a request to return to the unit. The request will be brought before unit staff and a decision on the request will be made. On rare occasions an administrative decision will be made by the correctional specialist supervisor or the captain of the unit.

PRIVILEGES

Privileges to reward achievement and positive behavior are just as, if not more important, as are consequences for inappropriate behavior. In a detention setting, it is necessary to be creative to find rewards that are not cost prohibitive. Staff members meet with the inmates in the unit to ask for suggestions for rewards and privileges that could be earned. Some of the ideas that are currently being implemented are earning privileges based on the achievement of milestone MRT steps. One example of a privilege that can be earned by completing a particular step is for the inmate to have access to one of the pod computers. Other privileges afforded inmates in the YOU are programs provided by such organizations as Identity and Project Youth Art Reach of Class Act and Arts. Community programming plays a vital role in providing services to this population. It is also a connection to the community upon release.

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[2] Due to the treatment aspect of the *YOU* program creative discipline is used and, therefore this should not be considered a definitive list of sanctions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.
Mr. Butler.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BUTLER

Mr. BUTLER. Good afternoon, Chairman Davis, members of the committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Michael Butler. I am executive director, Office of Youth Strategy and Programs, Prince George's County.

The Office of Youth Strategy and Programs functions to manage and control youth violence, gang activity in Prince George's County through effective implementation of prevention and intervention strategies working under one umbrella. Our goal is to implement a collaborative effort to better serve the needs of youth in Prince George's County, and we do this by mobilized communities, public, private, inter-faith communities, representatives, and youth in neighborhoods and schools.

I am going to cut my testimony short and get to the meat of things. The Youth Opportunity Center is one of the initiatives that I oversee in the Office of Youth Strategies, and I want to thank the committee and Congressman Van Hollen for the $364,000 that was given to the center, awarded to the center to make their Crossroads Youth Opportunity Centers work.

In the center, it is the Joint Youth Center is we have different partners, and as the Department of Social Services comes to the center, where the Health Department, drug addiction, mental health, case management. We have work force services, and this talks about what you were talking about, Congressman Cummings: job readiness, job placement. We have legal services, the Public Defender's Office, criminal, civil, and legislative cases. We have positive youth development programs at the center, and we also have job training and replacement. The YMCA does that, and we have mental health services.

In summary, we have served over 100 youth at the center and their families, but also, the Office of Youth Strategies and Programs is creating a youth directory for Prince George's County for all of the services and providers in Prince George's County. We are partnering with Maryland National Capital Park and Planning to create this directory to talk about all of the providers, the services that a parent or youth can have.

We are going to put it online. It is going to be updated on a regular basis, and that is in the working stages.

We have strategies where we have workshops for foster parents through Department of Social Services. We are telling them about the training and resources available for parents, foster parents, grandparents, kinship providers.

I want to take a minute to thank Congressman Wolf. In one of your conferences that you had in Chantilly, VA last year, we got this parents' quick reference card, and we have given out several thousand of these quick reference cards to community groups, PTAs, civic associations to talk about the warning signs if their child is in a gang.

This has been a very effective tool for parents that did not know their children was involved in gangs. So I want to thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Butler follows:]

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Michael Butler
Executive Director
Office of Youth Strategies and Programs
4235 28th Avenue, Suite 223
Marlow Heights, MD 20748
Phone: 301-316-7822

Event: Government Reform Committee Field Hearing:
Location: Takoma Park City Council Chambers, 7500 Maple Ave., Takoma Park, MD
Date: Wednesday, September 6, 2006
Time: 12:30 pm

Good afternoon Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Michael Butler, and I am the Executive Director of the Office of Youth Strategies and Programs for Prince George's County.

The Office of Youth Strategies and Programs function is to manage and control youth violence and gang activity in Prince George's County through effective implementation of prevention and intervention strategies. Working under one umbrella, our goal is to implement a collaborative effort to better service the needs of the youth in Prince George's County.

We are doing this by mobilizing community neighborhoods, public and private businesses, inter-faith communities and representatives, to respond to issues of youth activities and to reduce and eliminate youth violence in neighborhoods and schools.

We are also identifying policies, programs and resources needed to implement prevention strategies and provide technical and program development assistance to prevent crime in Prince George's County. The Office of Youth Strategies and Programs allows us to better coordinate with numerous government agencies and community-based entities so that we can offer an effective one-stop information point of contact concerning youth events and activities.

Three locations in Prince George's County

- Office of Youth Strategies and Programs
4235 28th Avenue, Suite 223
Marlow Heights, MD 20748
Phone: 301-316-7822
Open on Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. by appointment

- Office of Youth Strategies and Programs
9314 Piscataway Road, Suite 243
Clinton, MD 20735
Phone: 301-856-9571
Open on Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. by appointment

- Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center (serves Prince George's/Montgomery Counties)
7676 New Hampshire Avenue, Suite 411
Langley Park, MD 20912
Phone: 301-422-1270
Open Monday – Friday 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Saturdays
11:00 a.m.3:00 p.m.
by walk-in and appointment

CROSSROADS YOUTH OPPORTUNITY CENTER

The CYOC provides services for approximately 200 youth and their families residing in the Takoma Park/Langley Park areas. Services provided by the CYOC include, but are not limited to: employment training and referral services; behavioral health assessments, counseling and referral services; English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes; case management services; income support; recreational and leisure activities; leadership and social skills development; and academic supports.

Prince George's and Montgomery Counties signed a Memorandum of Understanding to equally share costs associated with the rental of space, start-up cost, operating cost, other infrastructure expenses and programs/services associated with the Crossroads Center. Additionally, both counties jointly received **$364,596** grant for the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to help support joint county initiatives, including the community-based after-school programs and other services.

The mission of the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center is designed to serve as the centralized customer facility providing these services. The center will ensure that the citizens and residents of both counties receive a high degree of excellent critical referral services. The Langley/Takoma Crossroads site serves as the liaison between Prince George's and Montgomery Counties Health and Human services, Law Enforcement, Government, local agencies, businesses, inter-faith base organizations and non-profit organizations. This initiative will monitor and track services and programs.

The Center brings together wrap around services for our community's most vulnerable youth. It is a place where youth have the opportunity not only to make positive choices, but also to be supported as they work to carry out those choices.

Services:

Department of Social Services – Every Wednesday, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or on call as necessary. Services include intake/assessment and counseling of individual youth and their families. Referral services are based on the intake/assessment.

Health Department – Provides addiction, mental health and case management by individual appointment. When drug tests are necessary, the counseling session is provided at 1401 University Blvd in Hyattsville.

Workforce Services – Every Wednesday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Services include job readiness, training, and placement.

Legal Services – Provided by the Office of the Public Defender include representation on criminal, civil and education related cases, by referral from the intake worker. Scheduling is done directly by the OPD on a case-by-case basis.

Positive Youth Development Program – Developed by Identity, Inc. with 17 active participants. The program has covered the HIV module, including counseling, testing and referral, and ended with the facilitators working on substance abuse counseling and goals-setting.

Educational Support Services – Provided by the YMCA, tutoring, English classes, GED, and computer classes.

Job Training and Placement Services – YMCA conduct a weeklong employment training and youth are placed at various employment sites.

Mental Health Services – Provided by the YMCA therapist, the individual and family sessions are between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

In summary, more than one hundred youth (and some of their families) have been served at the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center in the different programs, with a mostly equal number of males and females, Hispanic and African-American, between the ages of 15 and 19. This number is expected to increase greatly now that the new school year has begun, and also because of the outreach efforts of Community Developers meeting with the PTAs, Homeowners and Civic Associations, community groups, websites and the media throughout the area.

Joint Gang Prevention Partnership:

In September 2004, the Joint Task Force presented 20 recommendations, which were accepted by County Executives Doug M. Duncan and Jack B. Johnson. Among these recommendations, five priorities were targeted for implementation, including:

- Development and implementation of a joint county program in the Takoma Park/Langley Park community to address the needs of youth and young adults at risk for gang involvement.
- Enhancement and expanded availability of after-school and out-of-school programs and services.
- Development of a range of safe haven resources and opportunities.
- Increased availability of remedial and technical education programs, employment training and entry level employment opportunities.
- Increased collaboration and coordination of centralized policing functions related to gang crime and youth violence.

The Joint Task Force conducted literature reviews, site visits, six town hall meetings and numerous meetings with various stakeholder groups to review existing services, consider best practices and model programs, and finally to reach agreement on a core set of recommendations. In addition to the Joint Task Force's work, each County seated individual task forces to conduct

similar studies and focus groups, and to develop recommendations to address the unique characteristics present within their jurisdictions.

The Joint Gang Task Force has requested $2 million in appropriations from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, for the Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and Maryland Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force. In The Spring of 2005, leadership of the Joint Gang Prevention Partnership presented a series of recommendations to their Congressional Delegation, resulting in our anticipating an appropriation of $2 million dollars to fund the joint partnership under the Maryland Regional Gang Initiative (MRGI). The MRGI focuses on strategies in three key components: Prevention, Intervention and Suppression.

Thank you again for inviting me here today to this important hearing and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cardona, I understand you are going to introduce our next two witnesses.

Mr. CARDONA. Oh, yes. Good afternoon. Members of the committee, Congressman Davis, Congressman Wolf, Congressman Chris Van Hollen, the Honorable Congressman Elijah Cummings, I just want to take this opportunity to introduce key resources that we have here in Montgomery County.

In particular, Mr. Daniel Arretche who is the director of development and identity and a long time friend of mine, who I am very proud to have here at the table because most people that know me know that I have lost a lot of my friends to this craziness, and this is one of the brothers who have restyled it and said he wants to give back to the community. So I want to thank you for being here and standing by my side.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Arretche, thank you.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL ARRETCHE

Mr. ARRETCHE. Thank you.

I apologize for my English, and it is the first time that I use glasses. So I have to recognize my age here. [Laughter.]

Thank you for this invitation to participate in this hearing on gang activity in Montgomery and Prince George's County.

I am the program director of identity, a nonprofit organization that is the lead agency of the Crossroads Youth and Community Center in Takoma Park.

I would like to provide you with some information regarding the characteristics of the population we are serving at the center, as well as the summary of the work that has been realized up to date. Examples of actual incidents in the lives of our clients will hopefully illustrate for you the emotional and psychological situations confronted by many of these young people.

Imagine the pain that a young 13 year old girl must be feeling who decides to be initiated in a gang knowing full well that she will be used sexually by the male members of that gang. This young girl finds herself in an abandoned room engaging in sexual relations with 10, 15 boys or young men.

I always ask myself: what was the extent of her pain that led her to make this decision? Nothing justifies the actions of the perpetrators and they have to pay for their crime. However, my understanding what brings a young person to this point of that in his life, we will be able to effectively work in prevention or intervention.

A young boy was just 6 years old when his parents abandoned him in his country. They fled a country that had been devastated by civil war and had left them in an extreme poverty. His caretaker resulted to be an abusive alcoholic and violent uncle. During 2 years no one heard his cries, cries so similar to those of the young girl in the abandoned room that he is now raping. Therefore, when he was only 8 years old, he escaped from his house, and in the street he found himself a new family.

They told him over and over that they would protect him. He became part of the group of lost children with nothing, nothing, nothing to lose.

Seven years later, now 15 years old and tired of so much violence all around him, he finally decided to do something different with his life. He made the tremendous, difficult decision to leave the grand life by coming to the United States in search of a safe home. He found his family here, but it was a changed family. He hardly knew his parents, and they had little time for him. The community he found himself in seemed to know nothing of the harshness, suffering, poverty and violence from which he had come, and no one ever asked about it.

That same longing for a family that drove him into the street at the age of 8 drove him there again. Thirteen minutes of beating, punches, kicks, and once again, he was jumped into a street gang. Some time later he found himself in that abandoned room waiting his turn with a 13 year old girl and wondering what had happened to his dream of a new life.

The perpetrators of crimes can be seen as victims, depending on the point of which you begin to relate the history of their life. Histories such as this and many that are even more complex are right at the center every day.

The Youth Opportunity Center reflects the shining efforts of Montgomery county, Prince George's County, the Federal Government, and Infinity Center partners, the YMCA of Silver Spring, the Office of the Public Defender, Pride Youth Services, and the Montgomery County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The complexity of the cases that I have seen in the center can only be dealt with in this fashion. The center became operational in May of this year, and thus far it has served 119 clients, youth and their family members who are impacted by gang and gang violence. As of today, these clients have received 169 documented service that included case management, educational support, youth development and social skill building, mental health, legal services, job training and placement, and tutoring.

In addition, a youth advisory board and a community advisory board met very early.

We have also established an excellent working relationship with Warden Green and his established correctional facility. We are working together to provide youth who are to be released from that facility with early support to help them stay away from recidivism.

But while we see these 119 clients as an example of early success, there remains much more to be done. In closing I want to thank everybody, and particularly to Congressman Chris Van Hollen, Kate Garvey, Luis Cardona, Mike Butler, Carolyn Colvin, Robert Green, and the staff and the team of the Youth Opportunity Center. I want to thank them because their unconditional support make the Youth Opportunity Center possible.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Arretche follows:]

TESTIMONY OF

DANIEL ARRETCHE
PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF IDENTITY, INC.

BEFORE THE

GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE
FIELD HEARING ON GANG ACTIVITY
IN MONTGOMERY AND PRINCE GEORGE'S
COUNTIES

SEPTEMBER 6, 2006

TAKOMA PARK CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Thank you for this invitation to participate in this field hearing on gang activity in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. I am the Program Director of Identity, a nonprofit organization that is the lead agency at the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center in Takoma Park. I also want to thank those of you who are here who have worked to make the Center a reality for a generation of young people who are deserving of opportunities in their lives.

I would like to provide you with some information regarding the characteristics of the population we are serving at the Center as well as a summary of the work that has been realized to date.

Examples from actual incidents in the lives of our clients will hopefully illustrate for you the emotional and psychological situations confronted by many of these young people.

Imagine the pain that a young 13 year old girl must be feeling who decides to get "jumped into" a gang, knowing full well that she will be used sexually by the male members of that gang. This young girl finds herself in an abandoned room, engaging in sexual relations with between 10 and 15 boys or young men, each waiting his turn to release his own painful memories or experiences within her

body. What does this young girl feel? - Desperation, guilt, humiliation, defenseless, wishing for death, fear. I always ask myself, "What was the extent of her pain before this to have led her to make this decision?"

I have no doubt that upon hearing what was done to her, most of us here, and myself included, feel the impulse to hunt down the perverse animals that would commit such a terrible act to this young girl. Nothing justifies their actions and they should pay for their crime. But our challenge as service providers and policy makers is to control our anger and our rush to punish, and to try to look beyond the act to the history and experiences of those boys and young men. Only by understanding what brings a young person to this point in his life will we be able to effectively work in prevention or intervention.

One young boy was just six years old when his parents abandoned him in his home country. They fled a country that had been torn apart by civil war and had left them in abject poverty. His caretakers were his grandmother, who nurtured him and showed him love and an abusive, alcoholic and violent uncle who only showed him the end of his braided cow whip regularly as he struck the young boy across his back and legs. The grandmother could do very little to protect her grandson.

During those two years no one heard his cries, cries so similar to those of the young girl in the abandoned room that he is now violating. So at eight years of age he escaped from that house and in the streets he found himself a new family. They provided shelter, food, clothing, and, most importantly, they told him over and over that they would protect him. He became part of that group of "lost children with nothing to lose." He was initiated into a criminal street gang and he was protected..

Seven years later, now 15 years old and tired of so much violence all around him, he finally decided to do something different with his life. He made the courageous decision to leave the gang life the only way he could – by coming to the United States in search of his family and a refuge.

He found his family here, but it was a changed family. He hardly knew his parents and they had little time for him. Their multiple jobs kept them busy and away from the home. His step-siblings had taken his place in the family and they barely spoke Spanish and resented his arrival. The community he found himself in seemed to know nothing of the hardship, suffering, poverty and violence from which he had come. And no one ever asked about it.

That same longing for a family that drove him into the streets at the age of eight, drove him there again. Within a year of his arrival, his dream of starting a new life came to an end. Thirteen minutes of a beating – punches, kicks - and once again he was jumped into a street gang. Some time later he found himself in that abandoned room, waiting his turn with the 13 year old girl and wondering what had happened to his dream of a new life.

The perpetrators of crimes can be seen as victims, depending on the point at which you begin to relate the history of their lives. Young people with histories such as these, and many that are even more complex, arrive at the Center each day. They reflect diverse racial and ethnic groups. They are both the perpetrators of crimes and the victims of crimes, depending on the point in their personal stories that they are sharing with you.

The Youth Opportunity Center reflects the joint efforts of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, the federal government and Identity's Center partners – The YMCA of Silver Spring, the Office of the Public Defender, Pride Youth Services and the Montgomery County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The complexity of the cases that are seen in the Center and the issue of gang violence in general, can only be dealt with in this fashion, setting aside the jurisdictional

differences that only serve as a distraction from the work that needs to be done and pooling multiple resources and expertise to address the myriad issues that arise in each case.

The Center only became operational in May of this year. It is open six days per week. Weekdays it is operational from noon until 9:00pm. During these first four months, the Center served 119 clients, youth and their family members who are impacted by gangs and gang violence. These clients received 169 documented services that included case management, educational support, youth development and social skills-building, mental health, legal services, job training and placement and tattoo removal. A Youth Advisory Board and a Community Advisory Board meet regularly.

We have also established an excellent working relationship with Warden Green and his staff at the Clarksburg Correctional Facility. We are working together to provide youth who are to be released from that facility with early support, to help keep them from returning to a criminal or gang lifestyle and to make the Center a place they will be drawn to upon their release.

But while we see these 119 clients as an example of early success, there remains much more to be done. During the same four month period, we received more than 80 additional calls from parents, youth, teachers and others, wanting to refer young people for services. Despite repeated follow-up calls, those youth have still not accessed the Center's services. Those calls are evidence that our community already sees the Center as a valuable resource. But those are the young people we still need to reach.

In closing, I want to thank Congressman Chris Van Hollen for his leadership in the area of gang prevention and intervention, and his support for the creation of the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Excellent job. Thank you very much.

Mr. Brown, thanks.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD BROWN

Mr. BROWN. I would first like to give an honor to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ that makes all things possible in my life.

Good afternoon, Congressman—I am sorry——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Congressman is fine. You get us all that way.

Mr. BROWN [continuing]. Congressman Van Hollen and Chairman Tom Davis and the committee. I want to send a warm, heart felt thanks to all of you for allowing me to speak to you today. I am not only a concerned citizen of Montgomery County. I am also a reformed gangster, gang member, however you want to call it.

I have lived the life that we are trying to prevent others from getting to or have already been in. I think the only way to reach these youth is to actually go inside or think like them, talk like them, you know, be able to reach them. You know, you have a lot of us out here. There are a lot of reformed gang members, a lot of reformed drug dealers, a lot of reformed people that are trying to give back to the community.

Mr. Cummings, you talked about drugs. It exists. It is part of the gangs. I mean, this is reality. In order for them to thrive, in order for them to, you know, continue to go on, they use drugs. They sell drugs. That actually funds their organization.

You know, I am a living proof of that. You know, I have done that. I have been there. I know how to go and talk to them and I know how to understand them. There are a lot of us out here that we have made mistakes in our lives. We have paid for our mistakes. We are trying to give back to make sure that our kids do not do what we have done.

I mean, I have two beautiful, handsome sons. I just adopted, I took custody of a little girl because we did not want her to go into foster care. So I do not want my kids into any gangs, into being passed on as tokens for initiation, as far as my daughter is concerned, you know, being raped or anything like that.

This society, the society that I live in right now, I live in Montgomery County. I moved into the suburbs because I said, oh, it is safer here to raise a family.

No, it is not safe anywhere. The MS–13, the Crips, the Bloods, all of these gangs exist. They are here. They are going to continue to thrive. They are going to continue to plague our city. They are going to continue to plague America if we do not do anything about it.

I feel that, you know, there are a lot of people out here that are trying to help out and give back to the community. Lou—that is who I call him—you know, he called me up and he said, "Look, man. I heard you were trying to help out. I heard you were trying to do this."

I have been shunned. I started an organization in the Montgomery County Rec Center. I had a youth program that I tried to get the kids to come in if they had any problems. You know, there was no response because I did not have the resources.

You know, basketball, little boys love to play basketball. Football, they love to play football. You know, in our organizations out here it costs money. A lot of these kids do not have the money. You know, a lot of these kids do not have the opportunity to do any sports activities, any extra curricular activities. I really feel that they do need resources in order to stay away from the gang activity. They need choices, and I would love to participate.

I am going to grab hold of Lou's coattail, and hopefully he can drag me along and use me the best way that he possibly can. I really want to give back to my community. I do not want to see what happened to me happen to my kids. I do not want to live in an environment where I have to fear coming out of the door.

That is where I grew up, because I did not have any choices. I come from Washington, DC. I was born and raised in the inner city. We did not have any choices. I come from a broken home. It is in my statement. I am not reading from my statement. I am reading from my heart right now.

I am a concerned parent. I am a concerned citizen, and I am a reformed gang member, and I really, really want to give back.

I am going to keep it real brief. I really, really thank you for allowing me to speak today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Brown follows:]

Richard A. Brown
Montgomery County
Resident

Testimony

I would first like to give an honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that makes all things possible in my life. Good afternoon Chairman Tom Davis, Congressman Van Hollen and to the members of the Committee on Government Reform. I would like to extend my heart felt Thanks to you all for allowing me to speak to you on this day. My name is Richard A. Brown and I am a reformed gangster and concerned Montgomery County Citizen.

I was born and raised in Washington D.C. were I became a product of my environment, I was forced in a life style of selling drugs, fighting and being part of gangs (what we called a Crew). Growing up in the District (Washington D.C.) was rough. I would like all of you to remember what you did when you were 12, 13, 14 and 15, now let me tell you what I did at that age. I first ran away from home to live with my father, I thought that was going to be fun because coming from a broken home, when my father came around he had gifts, but it was not the same living with him. I was abused as a child, but that went on in a lot of homes in my neighborhood, we just didn't talk about it until we got older. I was all ways trying to find a way to make money, whether it was cutting grass going to the store for neighbors or shoveling snow, I just had that hustle in me. One day a friend saw me counting my earnings and told me that he could show me how to make a lot more money. My friend introduced me to a well known crew member of the Gangster Chronicles. I was never a follower so at first I could not relate to becoming a member of there crew. The crew member allowed me to purchase large amounts of marijuana. My purchases got so large that I was forced to join there crew. As I said never was a follower so I did not stay in that crew for long, I just started my own crew. In order to fit in you had to be in.

My wake up call was when I took a trip to Florida to set up a deal to purchase drugs to be shipped to Washington D.C. on a weekly schedule. My purpose was to supply all of my crew members with enough drugs to make my crew better than the rival crews. In the District there are small crews that become bigger based on members, money and gun power. While in Florida everything did not go the way that I wanted it to go. I was arrested and place in jail were I had time to reflect on my life and things that I had done. I was given a bible by an inmate that arrived while we slept. He walked up to me and said do you want to go home and I said yes so he sat me down and said this the way, thru Jesus Christ. After six and a half months I was released from jail to start to repay and give back to my community and to the people that I had hurt in the past.

I would go into the neighborhoods were I had corrupted and try to talk to other crew members, but no one listen. A lot of my old friends told me that given time I would be back out in the streets doing what they were doing, so they did not want to here what I

was preaching. I had to show them, so after 10 years of being free from any illegal activities, I can say that thru my examples a lot of my former crew members are giving back to the community and trying to make a difference. It has been really hard trying to help to reach out to the young people. I tried to start a youth program at the Middle Brook Community Center in Germantown Maryland. We would meet once a week to discuss any problems that the youth member was going thru, whether it be peer pressure, trouble at home or just someone to talk to. That program did not last long because we did not have the right resources to reach out to all of the youth in the community. Our young people need activities to get there attention. I stand here before you today one body with a lot of experience, because I have been on the other side and I want to help stop the gang activities that plague our community.

In the last ten years I have started my own Office Cleaning Service, Moving Company and Disc jockey (DJ) Service and I employee reformed gang members and perform for youth groups and organizations that are trying to help reach the young.

In closing I feel that in order to reach our young people we must be able to communicate with them. I have been were a lot of our young people have been or are headed and there are others out here that are like me, we have reformed and we want to give back and stop these gangs from corrupting our communities. We need the resources and the right people to give our young people another choice other than the gangs. When I was young my only choice was the gangs, so I thought I was making the right choice. I learned later that it was the wrong choice. Give our youth something else to do other than the gangs.

I again Thank You for allowing me to speak and be heard. I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

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Chairman TOM DAVIS. Well, thank you all very much for some very moving testimony. Mr. Wolf, I will start with you.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I apologize. I have to leave. I have a meeting downtown at the State Department, but I want to thank all of the panel, and I think the testimony demonstrates that there is a lot of hope. There is a lot of opportunity, and a lot of hope; a lot of problems, but a lot of hope, and I want to thank them.

And I would just ask you, Warden Green if you could be in touch with Brooke from our subcommittee here with Mr. Davis. I would like to put you in touch with John Marshall, the director of the prison system in the State of Virginia to make sure. Based on what you said, I was very impressed because we have a major problem in the prisons in Virginia to make sure that everything that you are doing is being done in our prison.

So if Brooke could arrange and Chairman Davis and I could do a letter then to make sure that everything you know our people know, to make sure that we are doing it, if we could do that.

Mr. GREEN. I would be happy to do that, sir.

Mr. WOLF. Good. Thank you.

And, again, Chairman Davis, thanks for the hearing, and Mr. Van Hollen, thank you for inviting me.

And with that I will just excuse myself. thank you very much.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Van Hollen.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me also thank as he leaves Congressman Wolf, again, for all of his support and leadership on this issue and the chairman of the committee and my colleague, Elijah Cummings, has been a great friend, and we worked together on a lot of issues involving the State of Maryland and the country.

Let me also thank all of the panelists. I mean, I thought your testimony was right on point from a lot of different perspectives, and as Congressman Wolf said, I do think it was inspirational and provides hope. It also outlined the challenges we have.

And I want to thank Carolyn Colvin for being on the Joint Task Force from the start and your leadership there, and Warden Green, thank you as well, and to your director, Art Wollenstein, who has testified before the Congress as well, I want to thank you, and I am going to come back to you for a question as well.

But thank you as well, Mr. Butler, for your efforts. Luis, I know you testified before our committee when we were on the Virginia side, and again, thank you for what you're doing to help so many young people in our community. You are also somebody who has taken through the pain of their personal experience and helped turn other people around, and I just want to thank you for your good work.

And Mr. Arretche, you spoke beautifully, and you also really, I think, crystallized for us the kind of challenges with the personal stories you related, and it is those kind of really tragic but very real human situations that ultimately we are dealing with on a one-to-one basis. So thank you for what you and Identity are doing.

Mr. Brown, thank you again for your testimony and your personal story of transformation because it does, I think, leave us all

on a note that we can rally around together and address these important issues.

We have talked a lot today about prevention, and I still think that has obviously got to be the front line. Every person you can prevent from getting into a gang is one person that we have saved and will have a productive life and escape many of the sorrows and sadness that comes with participating in a gang.

We have talked about suppression as well, but let me talk about intervention a second because it has come up here. People who have been in gangs, we have all heard it before. He is here to get into a gang, then get out of the gang.

So let me just talk to you, you know, ask you, Warden Green, and maybe you, Mr. Arretche. You have been dealing with people who have been involved in gang life, and Mr. Brown has a personal story. The number of people, Warden who are going into your correctional facility, going through this program, do you track them when they come out? To what extent can we really know whether or not we are being successful in terms of the intervention that we are providing these people in the facility?

Mr. GREEN. As noted in my testimony, there were some studies of the program in 2000 and none since then. Quite frankly, Congressman we take our successes as they come, one at a time. We look at the transition and transformations taking place with these young people inside the walls. We are with them 24–7. Counselors are there with them. We are doing family groups, allowing the family to come in. It is the only group that has contact visits in our system.

We are seeing it happen. We do not track beyond the walls. That is something that we need to do. It is a work in progress, but the transformation we are seeing inside of the walls, if we want to look right here, quite frankly, it is working very well because violence is down. Crime is down. The jail that was built in 2003 looks like it did the day it was built. It is not full of graffiti.

I agree we need to go beyond the walls, and that is a difficult thing to do. We are engaging Parole and Probation, Health and Human Services, Luis and many others with this collaborative approach. Every other Wednesday at our facility we have anywhere from 40 to 50 case managers representing pretty much everyone in this room that sits around a table and talks about reentry and going home.

That is going to be our finger in keeping tabs on them going into our communities. So that is the work in progress that we need to go forward with.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. And I guess if you find them back in your facilities——

Mr. GREEN. Of course. Obviously the recidivism comes back.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Have you seen much recidivism in this?

Mr. GREEN. The recidivism rate when we were tracking coming into that particular program was below 20 percent, which is well below the national norm. I believe it falls around 67 percent.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Right. Mr. Arretche.

Mr. ARRETCHE. Maybe we can divide the gang members into two groups. The first is those gang members who are not going to leave

the gang activity, and the other group is performed by those who want to leave these kind of activities.

It is really hard to work with the first group, but at the same time, we made a lot of effort trying to help the second group because they need a lot of resources. They need a lot of support, and sometimes they need a safety plan, and it is really hard to create a safety plan for these people.

This is maybe the main challenge, to create a safety plan, and this safety plan means to find a job for these people, to train for this job to these people and sometimes to relocate them or their families. That may be the next step or the main thing that we need to do in order to help these young guys.

With regard to the first group, the first step is to treat them as human beings. Sometimes people ask to Identity, and the people who are working with Identity, which is our key for our success, and maybe the unit key is to treat them as human beings.

They have been treating us as beings for years, and when they find someone who treat them as humans, and when they find someone that tried to help, really help them, they start thinking that maybe there is an option. It is really hard, but it is not impossible. It is not impossible.

But after showing them an option, we have to have an option, a real option for them, and a real option, again, means support, educational support, housing sometimes, and a social support.

When we work with the youth at the correctional, some of them are afraid of the environment. They say that when they will come back to their homes, they fear the environment. So we need to change this environment.

Sometimes our success is limited in the area of identity of the Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center, but we need to replicate the success outside of the Youth Opportunity Center, but for replicating the success, we need to work in the environment. We need to change the environment in order to provide them with a real opportunity.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cummings.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Chairman, again, I want to thank you, Mr. Van Hollen, for the hearing. I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here.

I want to just go to you very quickly, Mr. Brown. By the way, all of your testimony has been wonderful. What is it that you—I think you talked about choices, people needing choices. You know, I think that a lot of times when people in the city think about Montgomery County, they think that you have a lot of people who have a lot of money and they have a lot of choices, and that is an image that I think comes from the fact that people do well here.

On the other hand, you have a lot of people in the city who are not doing so well financially, and with resources people assume that there are choices, in other words, that there are opportunities for the Little League, you know, and all of those types of things.

I mean, something as simple as joining the Cub Scouts in the city can be difficult because the kid can't afford a uniform. So I was

just thinking. I was listening to your testimony. You heard the earlier testimony. Are those the kind of choices you were talking about, the panel before this panel?

Mr. BROWN. Well, actually, when I was coming up in the streets and the police were coming around, we knew when they were coming, and when they came around, they harassed us. They were not friends or anything like that. It is like if the police had come and it was Officer Friendly, like when I was really young, there was such a thing called Officer Friendly. There are no more Officer Friendlies anymore. You know, they came around and said, "Hey, how are you doing? What is your name?" got to know everyone in the neighborhood, and then when he came around, instead of us running, we can sit and talk to him. Do you know what I am saying?

So we are all sitting out front, and this is at the wee hours of the night. When I say choices, I meant that we are all sitting out on the corner block. Things are going to happen, not good things, but bad things. So when the officers come around, they are looking for the bad things instead of trying to create good things, you know.

"OK. What are you guys doing? Hey, man, let's talk," you know, instead of the kids getting together and saying, "Hey, man, there is nothing to do. Let me go rob this guy. Let me go—oh, she looks good. Let me go see if I can do something to her."

You know, the police, it is almost like us against them, and it should be a combined, joined effort.

Mr. CUMMINGS. You know, it is interesting. Your statement and the last statement of Mr. Arretche kind of overlap. You talk about people being treated as human beings, being respected. I mean, there is an overlap there. I guess you may notice that.

Mr. BROWN. Yes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. And directly connected to that, I will go to you, Warden. One of the most brilliant things I have ever heard and ever saw was the picture in here where you have these men holding the babies. That is absolutely incredibly brilliant. I do not know where you got that from or where that idea came from.

Mr. GREEN. I did not invent it. I stole it from someone else.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Well, let me tell you something. One of the biggest problems is that we have seen, and I am sure all of you know it. Some of you all, you testified to it. We see generations upon generations.

You know, I had an incident not very long ago that a young man was trying to get transferred from one prison to another. I mean, every time he could get a telephone call he called my office, and we finally figured out why he wanted to be transferred. He said he wanted to be near his father in another prison.

And so this generational stuff, I mean, a lot of parents do not know how to parent, and so just the idea of somebody holding a baby, understanding that is a precious life, and as I say to folks, a lot of times we look at our little children and we forget they do grow up.

And so I just think that is a great idea. I mean, are the men open to it?

Mr. GREEN. Oh, yes, sir. They wait in line for it. They are mechanical, about $1,000 a piece. They have different keys you have to put into it. They simulate crying, trauma. They flunk the program if they do not protect the head and it snaps back.

It, quite frankly, came from my own experience, Congressman, as a 38 year old first time father and someone handed me this child, and I am like, "Whoa." You know, seriously, I do not want to break this. How do I do this?

I did not know at 38. How do they know at 21 and 17?

Mr. CUMMINGS. Well, again, as my time runs out, I want to thank you all very much. This has been very informative. I was saying to my assistant, we want to be in contact with you all because there are a number of things that we want to bring up to Baltimore and we will be calling on you.

But thank you all so much, and continue to do what you do. I know sometimes you may get a little bit discouraged, and you may wonder whether you are making a difference, but you are. You are. It may be one person at a time, but the fact is that not only are you affecting that person, but you are affecting their children, and guess what. Their children's children.

And when we are up in heaven, hopefully, you will still be affecting generations yet unborn.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Let me just add. Warden Green, I just wanted to ask. The language barriers, how do you address the language barriers and how do you educate kids and get them GEDs if they are illiterate in their native language?

Mr. GREEN. We look at the whole myriad of issues that we have to face. We are very fortunate in Montgomery County that 42 bilingual staff that we pay to be bilingual and are available to translate, and using translation lines and whatever we need or hiring a translator to come in to deal with that issue.

Uniquely what we are doing now with our Spanish speaking population, we do not immediately pigeonhole them into an ESOL Program, but we are finding, again, through our association with Identity that if we begin to work on literacy in their first language, it helps us to work within the second language that we are trying to teach them.

The program that we have, again, I have 108 programs operating within the facility. That is not an exaggeration, from faith based to education, formal education, special education, ESOL, NA, AA. We have substance abuse treatment inside the facility, certified treatment, all of those in one place.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I mean, if someone is discharged and they are illiterate, their chances of coming back are just almost automatic, aren't they?

Mr. GREEN. Oh, absolutely, sir, and we are connecting them. Again, that whole idea of not reinventing the wheel. Whatever we are doing in the jail, we are creating what is already in the community, not our own program. So we are bringing the community in, and when they walk out the door, that program is there waiting on them.

And I think that is just vitally important.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me just say to all of you thank you very much. Mr. Arretche, you have recorded yourself well in your first testimony up here.

Mr. ARRETCHE. OK.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. And, Mr. Brown, we very much appreciate hearing your story, and good luck in your businesses as you move forward, and hopefully you can be a role model and mentor others as we move ahead.

Ms. Colvin, thank you for all you do in Montgomery County, and the same to you, Mr. Butler.

Thank you all very much. This has been very helpful. As I said, your entire statements are in the record, but I think the discussion has been very useful as we move forward.

Mr. Van Hollen, thank you very much for hosting this for us, and hopefully we can continue and enhance our regional cooperation.

Thank you very much. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:04 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

[Additional information submitted for the hearing record follows:]

Governor's Office of
CRIME CONTROL
&PREVENTION
300 E. Joppa Road, Suite 1105 - Baltimore, Maryland 21286-3016
410-821-2828 TOLL FREE: 1-877-687-9004 FAX 410-321-3116
E-Mail Address: INFO@GOCCP-STATE-MD.ORG

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor

Michael S. Steele
Lt. Governor

Alan C. Woods, III
Director

TO: House Government Reform Committee

FROM: Alan Woods, Director
Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention

DATE: September 6, 2006

SUBJECT: Statement on Gangs In Maryland
House Government Reform Committee Hearing
MS13 Gang Activity in Montgomery & Prince George's Counties

Introduction

On behalf of Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. and Lt. Governor Michael Steele, the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention (GOCCP) is pleased to submit this ***statement for the record to the Committee on Government Reform in regard to the Field Hearing on "MS-13 and Counting: Gang Activity in Montgomery And Prince George's Counties" held by the Committee on September 6, 2006 at the Takoma Park, Maryland City Council Chambers.***

We appreciate the opportunity on behalf of Governor Ehrlich and Lt. Governor Steele to report on gang prevention and enforcement efforts across the State of Maryland, including Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties. While this hearing is focused on the gang activities and efforts in Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties, it seems appropriate that you should be aware of what is being done in other parts of Maryland.

Background

In October 2005 Governor Ehrlich and Lt. Governor Steele convened a meeting of state level agencies to conduct a preliminary evaluation of criminal gangs in Maryland. As a result of that initial meeting and several subsequent meetings, it became apparent that gangs are active on some level throughout Maryland. It also became apparent that while gangs are indeed active and growing in our state, gangs are not as firmly entrenched here in Maryland as they are in other parts of the country. We still have a window of opportunity to develop a coordinated strategy for dealing with this serious, and ever-growing, problem.

At the direction of the Governor and Lt. Governor, GOCCP formed a Statewide Gang Planning Workgroup comprised of experienced professionals including police officers, prosecutors, correctional administrators, educators, juvenile services case managers, researchers, and community leaders. This Workgroup was asked to develop comprehensive and coordinated strategies for dealing with the emerging gang problem that would encompass not only law

enforcement and suppression initiatives, but also prevention and intervention strategies aimed at dissuading young people from getting involved in criminal gangs. Finally, the Workgroup also studied how technological enhancements could facilitate information sharing between and among various law enforcement and public safety entities to more effectively gather, share, and analyze data.

Current Accomplishments

Thanks to the efforts of the Statewide Gang Planning Workgroup described above, several preliminary steps have been taken to combat the emerging gang problem in Maryland. Those accomplishments are summarized below.

Training

Gang awareness and recognition must be part of any comprehensive plan for dealing with criminal street gangs. Therefore, at the request of the Governor and Lt. Governor, the Maryland State Police and the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commissions have held a series of regional gang training seminars throughout the state. Police officers, correctional officers, Department of Parole & Probation agents, Department of Juvenile Services case managers, teachers, school counselors, educational administrators, and community leaders have all received this valuable training. ***This training provides attendees with information about gang recognition and awareness, data collection, safety procedures and appropriate responses.*** As of this writing, 5 training seminars have been held and 475 people have been trained. Four (4) additional seminars will be held before the end of the 2006, and another 200 people are expected to attend training.

Because gang activity is very dynamic and stretches across jurisdictional boundaries, these trainings will be ongoing. Moreover, GOCCP and the Maryland State Police are working with the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commissions to develop minimum standards for gang training to help people involved in anti-gang efforts recognize, document, and respond to gang activity.

Gang Intelligence Database

Information is the lifeblood of effective police work. Therefore, we are in the process of developing and implementing a gang intelligence database to be used and shared by law enforcement agencies, correctional officers, and other public safety professionals throughout the state.

In early June 2006 the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (hereafter referred to as HIDTA) approved the purchase of software especially designed to store and analyze gang intelligence information. The main file servers for the gang intelligence database will be housed at HIDTA, and the software will be made available to law enforcement and public safety entities throughout Maryland and the contiguous areas of Virginia and Washington, DC. A Memorandum of Understanding is being drafted to govern various aspects of this information sharing arrangement.

The implementation of a regional gang intelligence database will be an important first step in the development of an effective gang strategy. Based on current projections, we expect to have participating agencies sign the Memorandum of Understanding by December 31, 2006 and start training in January 2007. We hope to have the database fully operational in early 2007.

Public Website

GOCCP commissioned the University of Maryland to create and maintain a publicly accessible website dedicated to providing resources and information to the citizens of Maryland. That website, *gangs.umd.edu*, is a place where parents, educators, community leaders, religious leaders, and others can visit to learn more about combating gangs. Through a better understanding of gangs, the public can become a valuable resource in helping youth avoid gang involvement.

Assessment & Evaluation

Gang activity, like crime in general, is situational and varies greatly from one area to another. Therefore, before the various jurisdictions throughout Maryland can develop appropriate risk-driven strategies for combating gang problems, the nature and extent of localized gang activity must be assessed.

To help local jurisdictions assess and evaluate gang activity, GOCCP made grant funding available through a series of Gang Planning Grants. Thirteen jurisdictions in Maryland took advantage of this opportunity and are in the process of conducting gang assessments. These assessments are due to be completed in November 2005. Based on the assessment results, jurisdictions throughout Maryland will have an opportunity to draft appropriate strategies for dealing with their localized gang problems and seek further grant funding from the United States Attorney's Office with help from GOCCP.

Additional Gang Funding

Funding will be an integral part of our long-term success in combating criminal gangs. Therefore, GOCCP, acting unilaterally and in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office, has made other funding available for gang initiatives.

A total of 7 gang grants totaling $502,472.95 were awarded in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office under the federally funded Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative. PSN is a program intended to help local communities combat gun violence, and anti-gang initiatives have now become a component of that program.

A total of 13 gang grants totaling $211,661.00 ***in State Funds*** were awarded by ***GOCCP*** under the Collaborative Supervision and Focused Enforcement (CSAFE) program. This program, originally designed to provided enhanced supervision for parolees and probationers and improves community crime prevention, has now been expanded to encompass anti-gang initiatives.

Other gang related grants have been awarded using federal and state ***grant funds administered by GOCCP. In all,*** 102 gang related grants ***have been awarded during FY 2007*** totaling $6,357,918.00 in combined federal and state funds. ***These funds are being used to***

support enforcement, intervention, and treatment/prevention initiatives. Furthermore, another $1,000,000.00 in funding will be made available by the United States Attorney's Office in November 2006.

Future Plans

Cross-Border Initiatives

Criminal gangs do not observe jurisdictional boundaries. In fact, gangs often use state and county boundary lines to intentionally confound the efforts of law enforcement. Keeping that in mind, efforts are underway to help agencies in Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and Washington, DC establish frameworks for sharing information on a systematic basis.

Local Jails & Detention Centers

Approximately 115,000 people are incarcerated in local correctional facilities in any given year. About 90% of those individuals are returning to our communities after relatively brief periods of local incarceration, and the remaining 10% move on to serve longer terms in the Division of Correction.

Over the upcoming year, efforts will be made to establish formal information sharing protocols between and among local jails and detention centers and the Division of Correction. The Department of Parole and Probation must also be included in this information-sharing network as a significant percentage of offenders released from jails and prisons are under some type of community-based supervision.