PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

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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.