

**Testimony of  
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**Government Reform Committee  
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human  
Resources**

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**Honorable Mark E. Souder, Chairperson**

The Merlin Foundation, a public supported charity was formed in 1993 to provide services to victims of Child Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence in rural Northwest Arkansas. As these services were provided it became abundantly clear that without the proper public policy and attached funding in place there would never be an end to the demands for money and the long lines of victims needing services.

In 1999, the Foundation's Board of Directors chartered the Center for Children and Public Policy. It's mission is to provide research, education and technical assistance to policy makers starting at the local and state level and, when fortunate opportunities such this come along, the National level with the goal of reducing and the dream of ending this constant flow of victims.

It is with that goal and dream I wish to present to this body today information to assist in the decision making process of your Subcommittee.

The other professionals on this panel have and told you of the many problems this destructive substance has caused to people and society from many perspectives. I wish to present to you a somewhat different look.

As a Policy Center we are often called Advocates for children, which I suppose is somewhat true, however, we prefer to think of ourselves differently. Since Congressman Boozman is here I'll use a sports example. True advocates are like members of a football team. They work together for the coach to win the game. That is their goal. Our position in this game is not for the coach, we are more like referees. We only want the playing field level so everyone has a chance to win. Our clients cannot vote, they are not seriously listened to by most people, and they don't pay taxes. They are, however the exact people who are suffering now and will suffer even more as they face the mounting federal deficit and a future of an even greater health care tragedy created by this drug. They are our children.

Before I proceed further I might mention the results of a couple of polls taken recently. In a Washington State poll last month, a survey of voters said that children's issues are the second most important issue facing the state, just behind the economy and significantly ahead of crime, taxes and homeland security. A full 45% of voters chose the health, education and protection of children as either their most or second most issue of importance.

In the same poll 56% feel Congress is not doing enough to address the needs of working families with children and 54% not doing enough for Kids. Additionally, 68% think more should be spent on health care for children and 62% think more federal funding should be spent on child abuse prevention. Lastly 85% of the voters say that it is important for candidates seeking office to talk about plans for making children a priority.

Our own polling in February, here in Arkansas, pointed out that 93% of the voters felt that child abuse, neglect and family violence should be on the campaign agenda. Sadly, 88% said Congress is not doing enough for women, children and Families.

I commend you, Chairman Souder and Congressman Boozman for this opportunity to address these issues and send a signal to the people that you do care and are listening.

Before I begin, I would like to make reference to my previous testimony before the Subcommittee on Crime, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives of the 106<sup>th</sup>. Congress Second Session, February 25<sup>th</sup>. 2000. In that testimony I made several observations and statements regarding the impact of this drug on our children and families. That information is just as relevant today as it was in 2000. I request that be included in my remarks here today.

Addressing the specific issue here today we see three classes of child victims. We see their immediate needs and the long term needs they and their peers will face as they take the helm of our Country.

The three classes of child victims are: Adolescent and teen users of this drug; children who are exposed to the drug and it's precursor chemicals in clandestine labs; and babies born drug addicted and suffering from their Meth addicted mothers.

As has been stated here while a small percentage of drug use in America is Methamphetamine, the damage both in related criminal activity and immediate and future health care costs exceed any other drug on the streets today.

It is well established that users suffer significant health and psychological problems caused by this drug. What needs to be factored in almost every case is that the typical user has to rely on Medicaid or charity for treatment. Further, it is unlikely they will ever become productive citizens of our society.

A child exposed to the end product and precursors in many cases will suffer physical, mental and potential learning difficulties for life. Again, usually under six years of age, this child is typically on Medicaid and often ends up in the foster care system. Highly unlikely to become a productive citizen.

Lastly, but by no means the least are those born of Methamphetamine Mothers. These children usually begin their lives in intensive care and if they are fortunate enough to live through the ordeal, at best, most likely will be in need of taxpayer supported systems for life.

Our point is, Mr. Chairman and members of this Committee, this horrendous drug while representing a small percentage of total illegal drug use is creating thousands who could spend their entire life living on Medicaid and into Medicare. With the admitted healthcare crisis facing our great country today we feel, if we don't devote maximum resources to stop this viciously destructive drug, provide research to deal with it's effects and

comprehensive care and prevention programs, our children who are fortunate enough to never be directly impacted by “Meth” will be severely impacted by the long-term burden.

While I have addressed the impact on the public of this drug I by no means want any of us or any member of this Committee to neglect the pain and suffering these defenseless victims will experience because our generation didn’t do enough to protect them.

This drug is not unique in its methodology. For those who make and traffic it, it is all about money and profits. For those who use it, it is about escaping the pain of daily life. It is a societal issue not just an illegal drug issue and needs to be addressed from a wholistic approach. Of course we must strike at the core of production with every means available to include the laundering of the massive profits, trafficking and manufacturing. We must also address the needs of the American people particularly the rural poor who have the least chances of realizing the American dream.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, this is not just about an insidious drug. This is about the future of America, the future of our children and what we do today in the public policy and appropriations arena will shape the outcome. We strongly recommend to Congress to re-evaluate the amount and specifically the redistribution of funding to rural methamphetamine law enforcement, treatment, healthcare and prevention. Lastly, we ask you and the Committee to level the playing field for the next generation.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for allowing me to be here today to speak for my country and our children.