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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

4

JOINT COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND

5

PUBLIC HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES

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Monday, February 13, 2006

8

10:30 a.m.

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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BILL NO. 051155 - Authorizing Public Safety
and Public Health and Human Services to hold
hearings regarding "Blueprint For A Safer
Philadelphia"

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BILL NO. 051182 - Authorizing Public Safety to
hold hearings regarding measures being
employed to reduce and prevent violence.

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PRESENT:

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MARIAN B. TASC0, Chair
DONNA REED MILLER, Vice-Chair
JUAN F. RAMOS
JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
MICHAEL A. NUTTER

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1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06

2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Good morning.

3 I would like to call the Committee on Public
4 Health and Public Safety to order.

5 At this point we have Councilwoman
6 Donna Reed Miller, who is Chair of the Public
7 Safety Committee. We will be joined by other
8 members of the two committees for this hearing
9 this morning. We are hampered by the snow,
10 I'm sure.

11 I have some opening remarks and
12 Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller will present
13 some opening remarks.

14 First let us have the clerk read the
15 resolution.

16 THE CLERK: Resolution No. 051155,
17 authorizing the Council Committees on Public
18 Safety and Public Health and Human Services to
19 hold hearings regarding the findings and
20 recommendations of the Blueprint For A Safer
21 Philadelphia; and further authorizing the
22 committees to seek advice and recommendations
23 on how Philadelphia can reduce and eliminate
24 crime affecting the city's youth.

25 Resolution No. 051182, authorizing

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 City Council's Committee on Public Safety to
3 hold hearings to identify and record what
4 comprehensive holistic measures are being
5 employed to reduce and prevent violence,
6 particularly gun-related violence, which
7 include, in addition to anti-gun violence
8 legislation, various educational, mental
9 health, social, economic, cultural programs
10 and strategies.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very
12 much. We are joined by Councilman Juan Ramos.

13 DeLores, Coretta, Rosa, these
14 recently departed heroes spent many years
15 fighting for civil rights.

16 Today we are gathered to fight for a
17 different right, the right to live; the right
18 to live without violence, the right to live in
19 a safer Philadelphia.

20 Through today's hearing, we will
21 have an opportunity to discuss the strategic
22 initiative to end violence in our city, the
23 Blueprint For A Safer Philadelphia.

24 This ten-year, ten-point initiative
25 provides us an opportunity to address violence

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 in our city in both a comprehensive and
3 systemic way.

4 I would like to thank State
5 Representative Dwight Evans, District Attorney
6 Lynne Abraham and all of the stakeholders who
7 participated in the blueprint.

8 I would also like to thank
9 Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller, Chair of the
10 Public Safety Committee, for joining me in
11 this hearing.

12 Finally, I would like to thank all
13 of you who are gathered here today in spite of
14 yesterday's winter storm. It is only through
15 your commitment and through that of others who
16 are devoted to this cause whereby we can
17 reduce violence in our city.

18 Through our collective efforts, we
19 can stop another 380 murders from occurring in
20 our city and provide the opportunity for the
21 next C. DeLores Tucker, Coretta Scott King, or
22 Rosa Parks to live and thrive in a safer
23 Philadelphia.

24 Again, thank you all for coming.
25 Councilwoman Miller.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

3 Good morning. And I too would like to thank
4 everyone for coming here today.

5 The chief problem in any community
6 cursed with crime is not the punishment of
7 criminals; it is the preventing of the young
8 from being drawn to and trained in criminal
9 behavior. WEB DuBois from his book The Souls
10 Of Black Folks, 1903.

11 Just like everyone else truly
12 concerned with this critical issue, I have
13 been reflecting on the recent rash of violence
14 in our city that has literally been astounding
15 and overwhelming us during the past year.

16 Violence in general is a symptom of
17 many societal problems. In violence,
18 perpetrators for whatever reasons forget and
19 lose it, lose what it means to be a human.

20 As a civilized and healthy society,
21 we have to take stock in how we are going to
22 approach this plight of a problem.

23 I am not going to speak of the
24 statistics. We all are pretty much aware that
25 the statistics are staggering. The numbers

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 associated with homicides, assaults, attempts
3 to do harm, gun-related violence, guns on the
4 streets leaves us breathless.

5 I want to address the primary
6 factors which are part of my motivation for
7 drafting Resolution No. 051182.

8 A large assortment of citizens,
9 educators, activists, community, law
10 enforcement, political leaders are truly
11 motivated to be involved with this issue.

12 They have convened meetings, forums,
13 commissions, coalitions, summits and seminars,
14 et cetera, to develop plans, programs, and
15 strategies to turn back the stem of violence,
16 the tides of violence in our community, to
17 identify and have real impact on the many
18 factors that have contributed to our current
19 situation.

20 As Resolution 051182 states, Council
21 must address public policy and budgetary
22 decisions to determine how best to deliver
23 support and direct resources to these programs
24 and strategies.

25 Additionally, we recognize and

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 understand the need to increase communication,
3 coordination, and cooperation between every
4 stakeholder involved in developing initiatives
5 to solve this very vast problem, to promote
6 more public awareness.

7 We believe these hearings can
8 provide a forum and an opportunity to advance
9 both causes.

10 We have to foster coordination and
11 cooperation between the branches of government
12 and all activists, institutions, and
13 organizations throughout the entire city.

14 As elected public servants, I see
15 this as our greatest challenge, particularly
16 when it comes to collaboration and mutual
17 support amongst all of us to do everything
18 that is within our power to cure this ungodly
19 ill.

20 Again, on behalf of the parents, on
21 behalf of the young people, on behalf of the
22 entire city I want to thank everyone that's
23 participating in this hearing this morning for
24 your attention and interest of this serious
25 issue. Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you,
3 Councilwoman Miller.

4 Any remarks from Councilman Ramos?

5 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: I just want to
6 support every word uttered by Councilwoman
7 Tasco and Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller.
8 This is such a very important issue.

9 And I have had the opportunity, in
10 the last couple of weeks in particular, to
11 travel throughout the City of Philadelphia.

12 I saw State Representative Dwight
13 Evans there on Saturday in West Philadelphia.
14 I think he was out of his turf for a little
15 bit, but goes to show how much he cares about
16 the people of Philadelphia and this issue of
17 violence and crime that's plaguing our city.

18 And, without a doubt, in all these
19 meetings people are coming out of their homes
20 letting us know that something needs to be
21 done.

22 So I thank you for holding these
23 hearings, Madam Chairperson, Donna Reed Miller
24 and Marian Tasco.

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very

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2 much.

3 We would just like to say, this is
4 the beginning of a series of public
5 discussions around the Blueprint.

6 We thought we would begin here in
7 City Council, and then move to the
8 neighborhoods so that we will have input from
9 citizens from around this city to have a sense
10 of what the Blueprint is all about, how it
11 came to be, and to elicit their support for
12 making the Blueprint a success.

13 This morning we are going to have
14 panels. Our first panel I see we have with us
15 our State Representative Dwight Evans;
16 District Attorney Lynne Abraham; Gar Kelley,
17 Public Private Ventures; and Alicia Jackson
18 from ME Productions.

19 Who is going first? Mr. Evans,
20 Representative Evans.

21 STATE REPRESENTATIVE DWIGHT EVANS:
22 Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

23 I would like to first publicly thank
24 both of you for convening this discussion,
25 Councilwoman Marian Tasco and Councilwoman

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 Donna Reed Miller. Because of your
3 leadership, I think this is a discussion that
4 is long overdue. And I would like to thank
5 the members of the panel, also, who are here
6 today.

7 As you just indicated with this
8 panel, I have sort of -- not to use this
9 phrase -- kind of like a partner in crime, the
10 District Attorney.

11 And this answer, this started, the
12 District Attorney, with a number of other law
13 enforcement people, we met on April the 21st,
14 2004, when the historical gathering of the
15 state legislature leaders, top law enforcement
16 officials from the federal, state, and local
17 level, and community leaders came together to
18 discuss strategies to discuss the violence
19 that had taken the lives of too many city
20 youth.

21 The result was the Blueprint For A
22 Safer Philadelphia, which details several
23 initiatives designed to immediately impact and
24 reduce the level of gun violence in
25 Philadelphia.

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2 Over the past two years I, working
3 along with members in the Philadelphia
4 delegation, Democrats and Republicans alike,
5 we have provided over \$16 million to support
6 the initiative; from the Speaker of the House,
7 to Dennis O'Brien, to Senator Fumo, to Senator
8 Williams, all of us working together. And \$16
9 million has been provided in the last year or
10 two.

11 We have funded dozens of community
12 groups who are in the trenches every day
13 fighting the growing tides of violence. We
14 have held focus groups and community meetings
15 throughout the city to hear what our citizens
16 are dealing with every day and getting their
17 thoughts on how we can make our community
18 safer.

19 We have laid the groundwork to
20 launch one of the most comprehensive social
21 marketing campaigns we have undertaken with
22 one simple goal, to change the mindset and
23 change the behavior.

24 First, we believe that violence is a
25 learned behavior. And if you can learn

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2 violence, then you can unlearn violence.

3 Secondly, we believe that it is our
4 obligation to do everything within our power
5 to prevent this violent behavior from
6 destroying our community.

7 Our goal is simple, as is essential.
8 We seek to eradicate youth homicides in
9 Philadelphia by the Year 2016. But we cannot
10 move forward as a community, as a city, and as
11 a region without combatting the growing tide
12 of violence in our streets.

13 To both Council people that's
14 Chairpersons, in the New York Times just
15 yesterday, there is a story about violence
16 crime rising to a sharp in some cities. I
17 want you to understand that this is a national
18 problem, it is not just unique to
19 Philadelphia.

20 As a matter of fact, Commissioner
21 Johnson, who you will hear from, my
22 understanding, on the next panel, is quoted in
23 that article. Cities like Milwaukee, Houston,
24 St. Louis, Charlotte also face this very same
25 issue.

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2 What do I think is different about
3 our approach? Well, one of the things I think
4 that's different about our particular approach
5 this time around is, we hired a consultant out
6 of Harvard by the name of Dr. Deborah Stith,
7 who will be here later, who will kind of give
8 you some sense of the mindset approach that we
9 attempted to move in this particular issue.

10 That, basically, we wanted to focus
11 on what you call primary, secondary, and
12 tertiary, and we wanted to have a different
13 approach.

14 After the District Attorney speaks,
15 you will hear Gar Kelley from the Public
16 Private Venture organization, where basically
17 the majority of those funds have gone to that
18 organization.

19 And then you will hear Alicia
20 Jackson, who will talk about something
21 different in terms of the social marketing
22 approach.

23 I stress to the Council members --
24 and I have said this consistently over and
25 over again -- that this particular initiative

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2 is not to exclude anyone else. The Mayor has
3 Operation Safe Streets. We believe that we
4 can work in conjunction with Operation Safe
5 Streets. We don't think it is one versus the
6 other, and I want to be very clear about it.
7 I have said that to everyone.

8 Secondly, two, we believe that the
9 police department and the D.A. by themselves
10 cannot address this issue. You will see an
11 awful lot of groups that are here that we
12 believe can be a part of this movement.

13 We just believe what we need to do
14 is start something that is sustainable over a
15 long period of time. When we talk about
16 "sustainable," we talk about a ten-year
17 period.

18 One example I would like to give
19 you. In 1999, the city's rate of homicides
20 was 299. 299 in 1999. As of last year, it
21 was 380. One of the things that I think that
22 we have been missing is the aspect of looking
23 at the trends and sustainability.

24 In all of the readings and things
25 you look at, the question is addressing the

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2 trends, and the question is having collective
3 leadership. And that's what I believe the
4 Blueprint For A Safer Philadelphia brings
5 together.

6 It basically brings the criminal
7 justice aspect and the public health aspect.
8 That, in my view, is something new.

9 We have an epidemic here. And this
10 is something that requires a mobilization like
11 we have never done before in the history of
12 this city.

13 And it will take City Council, it
14 will take Harrisburg, it will take the federal
15 government, but it also will take the
16 community.

17 The community is equally as
18 important as the law enforcement side of this
19 particular scenario.

20 So what I would like to do now is
21 turn it over to the District Attorney, who
22 also was a partner with us on that meeting
23 that we had on April 21. Lynne.

24 DISTRICT ATTORNEY LYNNE M. ABRAHAM:
25 Thank you, Representative Evans. Members of

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2 my panel and members of City Council, I am
3 thrilled to be here with Representative Evans,
4 with whom we have been working closely for the
5 past two years plus, and even before that on
6 criminal justice issues.

7 I echo the statements in the
8 introduction that Representative Evans gave.
9 And I want to give you ladies and gentlemen a
10 little bit of history that helps to expand on
11 the notion that it is totally appropriate that
12 these committees hear these issues and explore
13 ways in which we can combat some interpersonal
14 violence, since interpersonal violence and the
15 consequences of it are one of the greatest
16 public health issues facing this city.

17 In addition to the meetings that
18 Representative Evans and I have had, part of
19 the Blueprint about which I will speak at
20 length in a few moments, part of the Blueprint
21 calls for expanding the Youth Violence
22 Reduction Partnership.

23 This interesting collaborative came
24 into being as a result of a meeting we had in
25 Boston with Reverend Eugene Rivers, a former

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2 Philadelphian. And he has a very interesting
3 story to tell about his life, which I won't
4 burden the record with this morning.

5 But having moved to Boston, becoming
6 involved in youth violence in Boston, he
7 started an interesting program called the
8 10-Point Program to combat youth violence in
9 Boston.

10 As a result of some of the initial
11 successes that he had, along with his
12 collaborative partners, then Deputy Police
13 Commissioner, First Deputy Police Commissioner
14 Johnson, and others of my office and the
15 courts traveled to Boston for a few days to
16 see what it was they were doing in a
17 particular neighborhood called "Rocksbury" in
18 Massachusetts.

19 This was an interesting gang
20 initiative. And we decided that while
21 Philadelphia isn't Boston, we thought much of
22 what was beneficial was something that we
23 could do using that as a model.

24 And, so, what we did was, we came
25 back to Philadelphia and crafted our own Youth

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2 Violence Reduction Partnership.

3 This included my office, the
4 Philadelphia Police Department, adult and
5 juvenile probation, the Anti-Drug
6 Anti-Violence Network, Philadelphia Safe and
7 Sound, and other city agencies.

8 Youth Violence Reduction Partnership
9 offered intensive support and intensive
10 oversight and supervision to youngsters
11 between the ages of 14 to 24, the largest
12 group of people who are most likely victims of
13 interpersonal violence

14 Between 14 and 24 you'll see, if you
15 look at our homicide charts, is the beginning
16 of this huge gap between age and crime.

17 The largest number of people
18 involved in criminal conduct of killing and
19 being killed are anywhere between 14 and 24.

20 And we then took that model and
21 looked for those people in the 24th, 25th and
22 the 26th Districts whom we were capable of
23 supervising.

24 And, as a result of talking with
25 school people, with pastors, with neighbors,

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2 with youth groups, with the police, and
3 others, we selected about 125 people,
4 youngsters, with whom we thought we could make
5 a real difference.

6 And, as a result of our intercession
7 in the 24th, 25th, and the 12th Districts, we
8 began to see real results in those districts
9 in the drop in interpersonal violence amongst
10 that group.

11 Indeed, Public Private Ventures
12 wrote a booklet reviewing our efforts. And it
13 is called "Alive At 25," about which I'm sure
14 you'll hear later from Mr. Kelley.

15 With state funds through the
16 Blueprint, YVRP is now expanding into the 19th
17 District. And we believe we will become
18 active in the 22nd District this spring.

19 YVRP funding has been primarily
20 state grants through Representative Evans,
21 Representative Perzel, Representative Fumo,
22 and others, bipartisan, and some state grants.

23 The city has recently committed to
24 institutionalizing YVRP by creating a
25 coordinator, about whom you will hear more

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2 later and from whom, Denise Clayton of
3 Philadelphia Safe and Sound.

4 And she has many years of experience
5 in juvenile violence and the Department of
6 Human Services.

7 However, in order to be truly
8 successful, YVRP should be in every district
9 in the City of Philadelphia that needs it, and
10 the city should commit to stepping up to the
11 plate and fully funding this program.

12 The state and the federal government
13 have done yeomen effort, as you heard
14 Representative Evans say. \$16 million has
15 come forward; mostly from the state, some from
16 the federal funding, but very little from the
17 city.

18 The city has got to step up to the
19 plate and take ownership of this ten-point
20 Blueprint and especially of YVRP. In addition
21 to that, the full funding restored to the
22 District Attorney's Office will help us combat
23 crime.

24 Because YVRP as a public health
25 issue involves the arrest and prosecution and

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2 removal of those violent elements from the
3 street.

4 Part of the Blueprint's other main
5 features, about which I will speak briefly,
6 are the gun court, which opened in January of
7 last year and ensures that offenders who do
8 not use firearms, but who merely carry
9 firearms, are subjected to greater supervision
10 pretrial, as well as post-trial.

11 This is unusual because arrestees do
12 not usually have to respond to anybody
13 pretrial because of the presumption of
14 innocence.

15 However, the supervision in our gun
16 court is different in that the court can, as a
17 condition of bail, require that the person,
18 for example, give us any guns that that person
19 has in the house not the subject of the
20 arrest, attend anger management, and be
21 generally reviewed for suitability for
22 conditions of bail.

23 In addition to that, the court can
24 compel and does compel appropriate arrestees
25 to come to the probation department as a

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2 condition of continued bail to report to the
3 probation department as the court sees fit,
4 depending on that individual's needs and the
5 court's concern about that person.

6 And that is a way in which the
7 probation department and the courts can keep
8 track of this discrete people, this discrete
9 group of people, who are arrested for carrying
10 firearms illegally.

11 In addition to that, there is
12 enhanced supervision post-trial with discrete
13 members of the probation and parole department
14 working for the gun court.

15 However, the gun court funding runs
16 out this year in June. And if we are to make
17 an impact, having heard almost 580 cases so
18 far in the little more than a year and a half
19 that this program has been up and running,
20 this important court and this effort has to be
21 refunded.

22 This program is unique, and it needs
23 heightened attention because firearms are the
24 primary source of violence in this city.

25 In addition to that, part of the

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2 ten-point program, we have substantially
3 increased drug penalties for drug dealers who
4 carry firearms to facilitate drug dealing.

5 The five-year mandatory guns and
6 drugs prison sentence now mandated for anybody
7 convicted of possessing a firearm while
8 trafficking in drugs is an extremely important
9 measure.

10 And this was an important part of
11 the Blueprint helped by Representative Evans,
12 again, and Representative Williams, as well as
13 others.

14 In addition to that, in the
15 preventive side, our school district is now
16 phasing in the fourth element of the
17 Blueprint, the juvenile criminal justice
18 curriculum.

19 Many people come up to me and tell
20 me, is there any way they can get their record
21 expunged; they need it for a job, they need it
22 for the advancement of their career.

23 They said that they didn't know when
24 they were of a certain age that a conviction
25 meant anything; only to find out that, with

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2 checks done on everybody almost routinely now,
3 with waivers of confidentiality being required
4 of almost any important job candidate, prior
5 arrests and convictions are coming up and
6 dissuading employers from hiring people
7 because of their criminal past.

8 Now we have a juvenile justice
9 system whose record carries over to the adult
10 side as a result of an initiative of mine to
11 do exactly that.

12 Because it was my considered
13 judgment that nobody who has a violent past as
14 a juvenile should get a clean record when they
15 turn the magical age of 18.

16 So George Mosey, my Juvenile Deputy,
17 wrote the curriculum for the school district,
18 and the school district staff is going to
19 implement this. It is going to be taught to
20 all middle school students as part of a social
21 studies program.

22 It helps to educate children on the
23 results of good behavior, as well as the
24 life-long consequences of illegal behavior.

25 We believe and the school district

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2 believes, or the School Board believes, with
3 Paul Vallis as our partner and his good staff,
4 that this is an important thing, since most
5 kids don't have the judgment to know how
6 important proper behavior is as it relates to
7 the criminal justice system.

8 Finally, the Blueprint calls for
9 implementation of zone courts, something that
10 I have long espoused; that is, making our
11 court system more like councilmanic districts,
12 police districts, and others.

13 This whole city is broken down into
14 districts and divisions. And we believe, I
15 believe very strongly, that a zone court
16 system, where all cases that occur in a
17 particular geographic district are heard by
18 discrete courts that are designed just to hear
19 cases in that district, will have a
20 multi-layered effect.

21 Number one, it will help the judge
22 understand the problems of a unique geographic
23 area.

24 Number two, it will allow the
25 community to get to know how the court system

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2 work and who the judge is.

3 Number three, it will enhance
4 accountability because the judge will have a
5 known track record in a given community.

6 There will be fewer continuances,
7 since police officers won't have to be in 12
8 courtrooms for cases that arise in the same
9 police district.

10 All 8th, 1st, 2nd Police District
11 cases will be held in one courtroom. All 22nd
12 and 23rd District cases, for example, will be
13 held in another courtroom.

14 So there is a lot less backing and
15 forthing and a lot fewer frustrations by
16 civilians who have to go from courtroom to
17 courtroom, always having a different judge, in
18 a different courtroom, on a different date.

19 So we believe that these things are
20 all positive things.

21 As a result of our collective
22 efforts, seven of the ten points in this
23 ten-year program have been implemented in the
24 first two years of it. Zone courts has not
25 yet been implemented.

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2 The amendment to Title 18 of the
3 Criminal Code, creating additional mandatory
4 sentences for violence committed with
5 firearms, and the Armed Violent Career
6 Criminal statutes have not yet taken effect.

7 We have assurances that these bills
8 will pass the House, but they face an
9 uncertain future in the Senate.

10 With regard to the zone court, we
11 have met with the Supreme Court and the courts
12 of Common Pleas. We have additional meetings
13 to go to on that score.

14 But at least seven of the ten
15 programs in our ten-point plan have been
16 implemented, which is a very, very good start
17 for a long and difficult process.

18 We didn't get here in two years, and
19 we're not going to solve the problems in two
20 years.

21 And I thank the committee for having
22 us here this morning.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
24 much. We do have Councilwoman Blackwell with
25 us and Councilman Nutter, who are here in

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2 their seats.

3 GARVESTER KELLEY, JR.: Good
4 morning. Thank you, Co-Chairpersons Tasco and
5 Reed Miller, for taking your committees' time
6 to examine this important issue.

7 Thank you also Representative Evans
8 for your vision and leadership in working to
9 end violence in the City of Philadelphia.

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Would you state
11 your name, please.

12 MR. KELLEY: I am Garvester Kelley,
13 Senior Project Manager for Public Private
14 Ventures.

15 Headquartered in Philadelphia,
16 Public Private Ventures, or P/PV, is a
17 national nonprofit organization whose mission
18 is to improve the effectiveness of social
19 policies, programs, and community initiatives,
20 especially as they affect youth and young
21 adults.

22 In carrying out this mission, we
23 work with foundations, businesses, nonprofit
24 organizations, and the public sector.

25 PPV's work addresses a wide range of

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2 critical social issues and involves a varying
3 groups of sectors and institutions.

4 This diversity provides us with the
5 perspective and expertise to assist
6 policymakers, funders, and communities in
7 setting priorities and identifying realistic
8 opportunities for advancing effective policies
9 and practices.

10 We have been involved in several
11 local initiatives, including Youth Violence
12 Reduction Partnership, YVRP, that District
13 Attorney Abraham spoke about; the Ex-Offender
14 Reentry Initiative through the Search For
15 Common Ground, which is a national
16 demonstration which is the forerunner to the
17 prison reentry initiative now being
18 implemented by the Department of Labor; the
19 Youth Education For Tomorrow literacy
20 initiative; and the Amachi mentoring children
21 of children prisoners project.

22 Thus, it is very fitting that P/PV
23 participate in the Blueprint For A Safer
24 Philadelphia Project, joining a collaborative
25 effort that includes faith-based,

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 community-based, and justice organizations
3 working to reduce crime and increase positive
4 outcomes for the members of our community.

5 In November of 2005, P/PV assumed
6 responsibility for coordinating the Blueprint
7 For A Safer Philadelphia Project. We are
8 excited to bring our research program
9 development and program management expertise
10 to this important initiative.

11 In addition to the general
12 coordination of Blueprint activities, P/PV is
13 serving as the fiscal agent for the social
14 marketing campaign being implemented by MEE
15 Productions and the operator of the toll-free
16 hotline, which is CHOICE, Incorporated.

17 P/PV is also serving as the
18 intermediary for the distribution of grant
19 monies to the community-based organizations
20 that meet established criteria and are
21 subsequently -- or, they were selected for
22 participation in the Blueprint project.

23 The organizations selected to
24 participate in the first phase of this project
25 are After School Activities Partnership;

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2 Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Incorporated; Good
3 Shepherd Mediation Program; Keep Kids Safe
4 Summer Camp; Philadelphia Mural Arts Program;
5 the Sultan Jihad Ahmad Community Foundation;
6 Youth Outreach Adolescent Community Awareness
7 Program; and Youth Violence Intervention
8 Project.

9 P/PV's research staff will conduct a
10 review of the types of information readily
11 available to the public regarding
12 Philadelphia's social services. We will then
13 conduct an assessment of a subset of those
14 social services that target the neighborhoods
15 in Philadelphia with the most violent crime.

16 The Blueprint For A Safer
17 Philadelphia Project and its partners will use
18 this information to plan initiative activities
19 in subsequent years.

20 Since P/PV has joined the project in
21 November, our work has focused on several
22 critical tasks. On January 6, our staff
23 hosted an applicant's meeting for
24 community-based organizations identified as
25 potential providers of direct services for

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2 Phase 1 of the project.

3 We presented an overview of the
4 application process and the funding
5 guidelines.

6 We also discussed data collection at
7 the applicant's meeting, which will be
8 important for monitoring the organization's
9 effectiveness in serving youth from the
10 targeted communities.

11 As the Blueprint project gets
12 underway, P/PV will work with each site to
13 develop a monthly reporting system based on
14 the site's program as articulated in their
15 proposals. We will also develop a general
16 intake form for the sites to use.

17 P/PV has established and convened
18 the Blueprint Think Tank Advisory Council,
19 composed of a diverse body of experts in
20 public health, research, youth violence
21 programs, education, substance abuse, and
22 delinquency prevention to discuss the
23 project's current activities and provide
24 insight about its future direction.

25 And, lastly, as Blueprint is

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2 envisioned to be a citywide
3 violence-prevention and service-delivery
4 campaign, P/PV is cataloguing organizations
5 that provide children and youth services based
6 on established effective practices for
7 reducing youth violence and for addressing the
8 risk factors associated with it.

9 P/PV encourages and supports the
10 systematic roll-out of the Blueprint For A
11 Safer Philadelphia Project to ensure that the
12 project's activities are coordinated,
13 effective, and relevant to the stakeholders;
14 that is, the youth, parents, community members
15 and local community groups identified for the
16 social marketing campaign.

17 Additionally, it is our opinion that
18 the Blueprint For A Safer Philadelphia Project
19 will be strengthened through intentional
20 collaboration with other existing and/or
21 emerging anti-violence campaigns in the City
22 of Philadelphia.

23 Thank you again, co-persons Tasco
24 and Reed Miller for allowing Public Private
25 Ventures' testimony on behalf of the Blueprint

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 For A Safer Philadelphia. We look forward to
3 continuing to work with faith- and
4 community-based organizations, the business
5 sector, law enforcement, justice
6 organizations, policymakers, and
7 Philadelphia's citizenry to effect positive
8 and sustainable change in the quests to reduce
9 the violence that affect us all.

10 Thank you, again.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very
12 much.

13 MS. ALICIA JACKSON: Good morning,
14 Council persons Tasco, Miller, and Ramos, and
15 other elected officials.

16 My name is Alicia Jackson. I am
17 with MEE Productions, a national
18 research-based communications company located
19 here in Philadelphia.

20 MEE Productions was introduced to
21 this effort about nine months ago by
22 Representative Evans. As a member of this
23 extraordinary team, MEE is also committed to
24 eradicating violence.

25 The Blueprint For A Safer

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2 Philadelphia has developed into an
3 ever-changing, all-inclusive public health
4 prevention model to address youth violence in
5 Philadelphia.

6 As a viable component of the
7 Blueprint campaign, MEE Productions has
8 designed a comprehensive social marketing
9 effort that will target adults, parents, and
10 youth.

11 To lay the foundation for our
12 message-development process, MEE conducted
13 qualitative research with the audience to
14 better understand violence here in
15 Philadelphia.

16 We will show the documentary of
17 those focus groups conducted in various
18 communities across the city.

19 In March 2006, MEE will launch the
20 social marketing component of the Blueprint
21 For A Safer Philadelphia. We will lead with
22 radio ads, print materials, and transit ads
23 targeting adults.

24 Shortly thereafter we will follow
25 with very direct messages to parents to say

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2 there is assistance for your day-to-day issues
3 and assistance with raising your children.

4 Then we will follow up with messages
5 to young people offering alternatives to
6 violence; for example, stressing the
7 importance of education.

8 At the same time we are implementing
9 a very hard and aggressive media campaign, we
10 will also be in the community working with
11 community-based organizations and the audience
12 directly to deliver these messages, to have a
13 dialogue with the community about how we
14 change their mindset around violence.

15 We will be visible in the community
16 at major events and we will be working
17 directly with the audience to deliver this
18 message.

19 We expect to saturate the community
20 with the campaign and the primary message of
21 taking of control and taking a role, because
22 that is the Blueprint For A Safer
23 Philadelphia.

24 We will watch the documentary at
25 this time.

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2 While we are setting that up, let me
3 just explain that some of the people actually
4 received one of the promotional items that
5 will be distributed in the community, which is
6 a phone card which lists the toll-free number
7 which is very critical to this campaign.
8 1-888-570-BLUE.

9 Through that toll-free number
10 everyone will have access, direct access, to
11 the campaign. Hopefully you have that. Thank
12 you.

13 (Whereupon the documentary was
14 shown.)

15 STATE REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: The
16 person who has been working with us from the
17 very beginning, outside individual, who just
18 came in from Boston, she is with the School of
19 Public Health of Harvard University, Dr.
20 Deborah Stith.

21 And she, basically, has helped us go
22 through this entire Blueprint on the social
23 side. And, Dr. Stith.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you so
25 much for coming and taking the train to get

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2 here.

3 DR. DEBORAH PROTHROW-STITH:

4 Actually, I made it on the plane, but I could
5 have been on the train for as long as it took.
6 The weather crippled both our cities.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Would you speak
8 into the microphone and identify yourself.

9 DR. STITH: Good morning. I am
10 Deborah Prothrow-Stith, and I am Professor of
11 Practice and Associate Dean at the Harvard
12 School of Public Health. And it gives me
13 great pleasure to come before you this
14 morning.

15 I received a call from
16 Representative Evans in February of 2005
17 regarding assisting with the effort here in
18 Philadelphia to deal with youth violence, and
19 I was really impressed with that call. I get
20 calls regularly. But what impressed me was
21 the commitment to a long-term solution and a
22 commitment to what we call primary, secondary,
23 and tertiary prevention.

24 It is usual when I get the calls for
25 people to want a quick fix. They want the

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2 thing that will fix the problem now, the one
3 program or the magic solution.

4 And most often people want the
5 punitive, more criminal responses to the
6 problem. They are looking to be tougher on
7 the bad kids.

8 And I think the impression that I
9 got from our initial call and from working
10 with the staff and through the months of
11 meeting with people from Philadelphia was that
12 people wanted a real solution, and they
13 understood that it would take a long-term
14 commitment.

15 And what got renamed here in
16 Philadelphia -- in public health we call it
17 primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention --
18 here, it has been renamed and, actually, I am
19 using it across the country, "up front, in the
20 thick, and after the fact."

21 And often most of our public policy
22 deals with after the fact. And the Blueprint
23 really gives us an opportunity to look at the
24 ten-year time line and add in the primary and
25 secondary prevention.

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2 It has been a real pleasure. We
3 have met with hundreds of people. We have had
4 scores of meetings.

5 In August -- and I have to tell you
6 this story. Because I have been involved in a
7 few planning processes and community
8 organizing. And usually near the end the
9 attendance sort of wanes a bit.

10 And this was August. So it was the
11 end of the summer; you know, Meeting No. 15 or
12 16 in this process.

13 And when I flew in from Boston, I
14 figured the attendance would be pretty low.
15 And the first room where they took me could
16 only seat about 30 people. And we had been
17 meeting with hundreds, you know, 60, 80,
18 hundreds of people in the meetings prior to
19 that.

20 So I felt like I was right, you
21 know, that this was going to be a smaller
22 meeting.

23 And after a few people arrived,
24 maybe 20 or so, I got up to start the meeting.
25 And they said, "Well, we are going to meet in

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2 the other room."

3 And when I went in the other room,
4 there were 95 people in there, many of them
5 having been at three or four of the prior
6 meetings.

7 I have just been impressed over and
8 over again with the city's commitment. It has
9 a history of dealing with youth violence
10 prevention.

11 And I think what the Blueprint
12 does -- and the second round of legislation
13 took the money to 16 million -- focused on up
14 front and in the thick activities, brought
15 together some stellar community partners and
16 management partners like P/PV and MEE
17 Productions.

18 And think this is a real opportunity
19 for the city to declare zero homicides among
20 youth by 2016.

21 For my money, this is the right
22 stuff. It is really as exciting as it gets
23 when you look at this from a public health
24 perspective.

25 To deal with that zero youth

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2 homicide commitment, we really do have to
3 focus on the very young children now, the 8
4 year olds, for example. They will be 18 ten
5 years from now.

6 And if all of our money and efforts
7 go into punishing juvenile delinquents, we
8 will miss the opportunity to really take care
9 of the children.

10 And the Blueprint says very clearly,
11 children in Philadelphia will not have to hit
12 rock bottom before they get services. And
13 that's the kind of commitment that will make
14 this Blueprint a success.

15 So it was a pleasure, even though it
16 was hard to get here in your snowbound city
17 and my snowbound city, it is a pleasure to be
18 here before you today to demonstrate once
19 again my excitement about what is in front of
20 us. Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.

22 STATE REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: I would
23 like to say for both Chairpersons, because we
24 have other panels and it is very important to
25 get all the other panels, the law enforcement,

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2 the health panel, the grass-roots, the youth
3 panels, the community, business, because all
4 of them are part of the Blueprint.

5 What you have just heard here, I
6 don't think I have ever seen in the City of
7 Philadelphia where there is a partnership from
8 a public health perspective to the criminal
9 justice system. And we all understand that
10 this has to be long-term.

11 We know it has been long and
12 extensive. We appreciate, you know, your
13 allowing us to have this opportunity. But we
14 think it is important that you get the overall
15 comprehensive view of what we are attempting
16 to do.

17 So, Madam Chair, if there are any
18 questions. If there's not, we will move out
19 of the way and allow you to go to the next
20 panel.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I have a couple
22 of questions.

23 And, first, I would like to thank
24 you all for coming. And certainly, Dr. Stith,
25 thank you for coming. Thank you for your

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2 leadership and heading up the discussion
3 around the Blueprint.

4 I think it is because of your
5 leadership and your commitment and your
6 credentials that kept people focused and
7 involved in the process. And it has ended up
8 with a wonderful plan for the future for our
9 young people.

10 I just have a couple of questions.
11 One, I have a couple for the Representative
12 and for our District Attorney.

13 And I just want to ask State
14 Representative Evans, where do you see the
15 legislation going that State Senator LeAnna
16 Washington has introduced, One Hand Gun a
17 Month bill in Harrisburg? Do you see that
18 possibly -- and it is targeted just for
19 Philadelphia.

20 Do you think that is a worthwhile
21 effort, and do you think it is going to get
22 accepted in Harrisburg?

23 STATE REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: The
24 answer is, yes, I am optimistic about that
25 legislation. Senator LeAnna Washington,

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2 Representative John Myers in the House, both
3 have been leading the effort.

4 Senator Washington last week had a
5 meeting, which I attended along with Senator
6 Vince Fumo and Representative Ron Waters for
7 the first time.

8 I am not going to speak for Senator
9 Fumo; he can speak for himself. I think for
10 the first time he has admitted that he thinks
11 that this can play somewhat of a part in terms
12 of change gun policy.

13 So I think now you have Senator
14 Fumo, who is now joining with Senator
15 Washington, targeted specifically to the city
16 itself in terms of the One Gun a Month. So
17 Senator Fumo is joining with Senator
18 Washington. Representative Myers is moving
19 the effort in the House.

20 But I want to go a step further than
21 that, both Council people.

22 I have said consistently that I
23 think overall that Philadelphia should have
24 its own gun policy back. I know in 1995, that
25 it changed. I believe that the city should

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2 have its own policy.

3 We have been researching the
4 possibility. I spoke to Councilwoman Donna
5 Reed Miller.

6 I don't disagree that gun policy is
7 a part of a blueprint for a safer
8 Philadelphia.

9 So we want to be clear. We doesn't
10 want to be very naive. We believe that we are
11 working this on all fronts, primary,
12 secondary, tertiary. We are working it on all
13 fronts. So I think that's the difference.

14 I am going to say to you I am
15 optimistic. Obviously, things can change. It
16 is an election year, which, as I say, that's
17 why my optimism is there.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: District
19 Attorney Lynne Abraham, how is the gun court
20 funded? Is it federal state or local? And
21 you mentioned it in your testimony.

22 DISTRICT ATTORNEY ABRAHAM: We
23 received some funding from the Pennsylvania
24 Commission on Crime and Delinquency, which is
25 a pass-through through the state agency. So,

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2 that's all state funded.

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I guess, Dr.

4 Stith, for you, in the earlier testimony we
5 talked about intervention.

6 How early should we intervene with
7 young people? And where in the Blueprint is
8 that outlined?

9 To target, say, 4 to 6, beginning at
10 a very early age, is that part of the group?

11 DR. STITH: It is part of the
12 Blueprint. I would say there isn't an age
13 which is too early to intervene.

14 At some point you are talking about
15 very basic child development, nurturing,
16 parental example, community support. And
17 those have to be in place pretty much
18 throughout a child's life.

19 It is in the work with the community
20 agencies, whether it is YOACAP or the camps at
21 the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs.

22 And at one of our meetings we
23 actually broke the providers down by primary,
24 secondary, and tertiary. So at each table we
25 had a collection of providers who worked in

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2 that area.

3 And, so, the funding through the
4 Blueprint goes to some of the up front, as
5 well as in the thick.

6 My opinion is, you can't do too much
7 up front, because even those young people who
8 are part of the criminal justice system have
9 younger siblings who need extra. They are in
10 the thick, if you will.

11 And if we don't use even that
12 opportunity of family's involvement in the
13 criminal justice system to identify those
14 younger siblings, and then help them provide
15 that extra, the mentoring, a huge part of this
16 kind of activity, then we miss the
17 opportunity.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Where in the
19 funding would there are dollars for daycare
20 centers?

21 I was speaking to a friend who owns
22 a daycare center. And she talked about a
23 program that she has in her daycare center
24 reaching out to the very young children about
25 behavior.

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2 Are there funds available for
3 daycare providers, so that we can even go to
4 the very, very young ages?

5 MR. KELLEY: I would say, yes. And
6 for the next phase what we will do is open the
7 application process to organizations within
8 the city who could provide services in the
9 targeted areas.

10 And daycare would definitely be
11 considered, if they have a program that would
12 be applicable to our goals and objectives.

13 STATE REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Council
14 person, not that I would like to spend the
15 surplus that you all have, but since I get a
16 moment to comment.

17 I read in the paper you have like
18 \$146 million. I could only give my opinion.
19 I know you are all going through your budget
20 deliberations.

21 My advice -- and this is a perfect
22 timing for us to have this hearing. I think
23 you heard the District Attorney mention some
24 question of ownership. I will say the same
25 thing.

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2 Politically people need to
3 understand that the \$16 million that we pulled
4 off, this is the only county in the entire
5 Commonwealth that is receiving this particular
6 initiative.

7 I would caution the city to
8 understand that, although we have this
9 initiative, the city itself has to make some
10 priority decisions.

11 I mean, I understand the pressures
12 that you have on you as a city, and obviously
13 I respect though pressures. And as a person
14 who is the Chairman of the House Provision
15 Committee, I understand about the choices that
16 we have to make.

17 I am only stressing this to you
18 because it is very important that the city
19 itself, in your budgetary priorities, show
20 some type of ownership, if you believe in this
21 initiative. And that's why it is good to have
22 this hearing, to have this open discussion.

23 Because, you know, you have a budget
24 coming up. The D.A. made some comments
25 relating to something that she thinks. I also

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2 made some comments.

3 You know, I am prepared to do all I
4 can do, but we really need to have the city
5 itself make some kind of decisions in your
6 budget deliberations.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
8 much. We hear that message.

9 One last question to the District
10 Attorney. You talked about what you are doing
11 with young people, carrying their records to
12 adulthood. And there is concern for
13 expungement.

14 One of the problems we have, as you
15 talked about it, is the fact that once a young
16 person or anyone gets a record, it is very
17 difficult to get employment.

18 Now, what are we going to do to help
19 young people overcome that problem? Because
20 if they don't feel that it is worthwhile going
21 straight, why go straight; if in the end they
22 try to do well and try to get themselves
23 together, then this record keeps them from
24 moving forward?

25 DISTRICT ATTORNEY ABRAHAM: I think

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2 if I might, this is like the tail that wags
3 the dog. It is not that we have to do.

4 We have to impress on youngsters
5 before they get a record that the worst thing
6 they can do is get a record.

7 When you see as many kids as we do,
8 who don't feel as though there is any hope for
9 them at all, then they don't care about a
10 record when they are 14 or 15 or 16 or 17. It
11 is meaningless to them.

12 So I think what we need to do is to
13 make sure that, as we are trying to do with
14 youth aid panels, with Don't Fall Down in the
15 Hood which was featured in the film, these are
16 young men all of whom have been found in
17 possession of illegal firearms; and we're
18 trying to get them understand that a firearm
19 means that, if it is there, you are going to
20 take it out and use it.

21 And the wrong way to go is to carry
22 a gun in the first place. We are trying to
23 rescue these young men before.

24 It is bad enough to have a gun
25 arrest and conviction. It is worse to have a

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2 body or almost a body. It's no -- it's quite
3 the contrary of what the popular perception is
4 as you heard on the film. Hey, I've got two
5 bodies. Oh, he has two bodies, you have to
6 respect him

7 The whole idea is to make sure that
8 kids respect education; that they have to
9 understand that getting a job and working is
10 the right way to go.

11 And I agree with Dr. Stith that by
12 the time a child is 5 or 6, certainly no later
13 than 6, he or she's values are already set by
14 what they see around them in their home.

15 So if you are brought up in a
16 tumultuous background, with lack of parental
17 concern and intervention and love and a
18 affection, and if all they see around them are
19 arguments settled by violence, whether it is
20 in the home, out on the streets, in
21 television, or in the movies, and videos and
22 games that they watch, it is going to be very
23 hard for the criminal justice system to
24 intervene.

25 However, the importance for me is

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2 that you have to prevent these kids from
3 getting into violence in the first place. And
4 most of our kids are not engaging in violence;
5 but, those who are, are going to pay a
6 penalty.

7 And they really have to understand
8 that an arrest and conviction or an arrest and
9 adjudication is very serious business for
10 later on in life.

11 And somehow we have to get the
12 message that an arrest is not a badge of honor
13 or glory; it is a mark of disapprobation and a
14 mark of lacking in social controls, and there
15 is going to be a penalty for it.

16 DR. STITH: If I may make a comment.
17 I would like to just say that I think your
18 question is an extremely important question.
19 Because a lot of our kids actually learn the
20 hard way that violence is painful, doesn't
21 solve problems, and has lots of consequences.

22 James Garbarino, a colleague, calls
23 it the toxic environment. And, basically,
24 through movies and television and what I would
25 call a kind of gangster culture that's being

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2 adopted not just in entertainment media, but
3 even by adults, kids are learning that
4 violence is cool. It is hip, this whole thing
5 of the having a record or being mean or being
6 tough.

7 And, in many ways, it is only in the
8 criminal justice system that many are finding
9 out that it is not glamorous, it doesn't solve
10 problems, the consequences are really steep.

11 And, so, the question of how do we
12 help those young offenders who are first or
13 second offenders get back in society is a huge
14 and important question. And there are
15 programs and efforts to do that.

16 But that's an area that, as a
17 country, we really have to pay attention to.

18 Because there are many prime
19 examples of wonderful leaders who had terrible
20 young teen years and adult years, and were
21 able to put their lives back together. And,
22 so, we always want to do that.

23 While the up-front and the in the
24 thick, those two are really important, the
25 rehab of our young people is important, as

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2 well.

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
4 much.

5 Councilwoman Miller.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Yes. Good
7 afternoon. Good morning.

8 Just as a followup. I too was
9 concerned about the 18 year old. D.A.
10 Abraham, when you said that in the past, or
11 currently, children's records, juvenile
12 records, don't follow them past age 18, and
13 there was some effort that you were looking at
14 to see, what types of crime are we looking at?

15 DISTRICT ATTORNEY ABRAHAM: I think
16 I may not have made myself clear.

17 It used to be that, when you turned
18 18, if you had juvenile adjudication for a
19 crime, your record was expunged. In other
20 words, when you turned 18, you started off
21 with a clean record.

22 So you could walk into court and,
23 essentially, lie to the court and say, I have
24 no prior criminal record.

25 Now that is not the case any longer.

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2 The law was changed to reflect the juvenile
3 adjudications and records for crimes of
4 juveniles who carry their record with them at
5 age 18 when they are arrested for new crimes.
6 That is not only fair, but just.

7 First of all, it is a fraud on the
8 court for a juvenile to walk into court and
9 say, "I have never been arrested before,"
10 which is what they did regularly.

11 Second of all, the society demands
12 that a judge have a full picture of a juvenile
13 when the judge is attempting to fashion an
14 appropriate sentence for a young offender, who
15 at 18 is facing a substantial criminal
16 penalty.

17 So in order for the judge to
18 understand the full picture of a juvenile's
19 background, the judge now knows that this
20 child has been convicted or adjudicated
21 delinquent of armed robbery, rape, violent
22 assault, gun possession, drug and gun
23 possession, and the judge can fashion a more
24 appropriate sentence.

25 I think that is a more effective way

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2 of dealing with those offenders who have been
3 adjudicated delinquent of serious violent
4 felonies and gone to prison.

5 There is also the certification of
6 young people who are to be tried as adults for
7 those who are 15 years of age or older who
8 have violent crimes, carry firearms, and use
9 them to commit crimes.

10 So this is all because, if you look
11 at the figures, the people who are most likely
12 to commit crimes are age 13, 14, 15, usually
13 14, 15, to, like, 34. That's our biggest
14 homicide bunch or bundle, 13, 14, 15 to 34.

15 So, obviously, violent crimes are
16 generally committed by young people, and it is
17 all related to risk assessment and acting on
18 those risk values.

19 If we can, as I said before,
20 intervene in young people's lives with Don't
21 Fall Down in the Hood, the juvenile
22 justice/criminal justice curriculums in
23 schools, church outreach, involved parenthood,
24 and other many varied social programs, we
25 might be able to impress on kids, as Dr.

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2 Prothrow-Stith did say, that it is no big deal
3 to have a criminal record; it is the worst
4 thing that can happen to you in your life.

5 Don't go after it as a badge of
6 honor. Go after it as something you should
7 avoid at all possible costs.

8 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Well, I agree
9 with that.

10 And certainly we all talk about the
11 societal impact things that are happening in
12 society that helps our kids go into this
13 violent history and track record.

14 But I would hope that, if it is a
15 nonviolent crime, that that's not following a
16 young person from juvenile to adult.

17 You know, we have had discussions in
18 the past about direct file and all the other
19 things. And I won't take up time with that
20 today, because of time and so many other
21 people

22 DISTRICT ATTORNEY ABRAHAM: But
23 direct filing is only for, only for, those
24 very violent people who are committing
25 murders, aggravated assaults, assaults with

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2 intent to kill, rape. This is not for
3 somebody who has a couple of bags of drugs.

4 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I know that.
5 Thank you, for the record.

6 But I would also like to know -- I
7 have a couple of questions about the Youth
8 Violence Reduction Partnership. And I agree
9 that all the stations, all the police
10 districts that need that should have that.

11 What qualifies a district or an area
12 of the city to be able to take advantage of
13 the Youth Violence Reduction program?

14 DISTRICT ATTORNEY ABRAHAM: Since
15 the criteria is, where are the places where
16 the most homicides are happening, we looked at
17 those districts that appeared to have the most
18 violent crime.

19 No disrespect intended. But, for
20 example, up in the Northeast, the 2nd or the
21 8th Police District would not qualify. It
22 doesn't mean there isn't violence there. And
23 I don't mean to be disrespectful of that fact.
24 People in that neighborhood think that their
25 crime is out of control. And I am not

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2 disagreeing with that.

3 But what we are looking at is dead
4 bodies. Where are the shootings, where are
5 the killings, where are the horrible hospital
6 cases, where is the violent crime, who is
7 likely to kill or be killed.

8 So that's why we started in the
9 24th, 25th, a bit of the 26th, and the 12th,
10 because those areas are -- were extremely
11 challenging

12 It doesn't mean that we couldn't
13 have started in the 23rd, the 22nd, the 17th,
14 the 3rd, the 19th, the 18th, or any other
15 district. We had to pick an area. So we were
16 looking at youth and a discrete geographic
17 area, so we started there. So it is the dead
18 body count.

19 And if you look at the maps that the
20 Philadelphia Police Department uses to mark
21 where shootings are and where homicides are,
22 you see there are discrete clusters, areas,
23 neighborhoods, or parts of councilmanic or
24 police districts where those violent crimes
25 are the most.

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2 And that's what we are looking at;
3 dead bodies, where are people being killed,
4 and who are the most likely to kill or be
5 killed.

6 STATE REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: And,
7 Council person, I think also, in listening to
8 P/PV, there is an attempt to have a strategy
9 to align the organizations to supplement sort
10 of like the police and the criminal justice
11 policies.

12 If you heard earlier, the
13 organizations that were selected, which we can
14 speak, are organizations that try to be on the
15 front end, in the primary. So what we are
16 trying to do is to align a seamless type of
17 system together, which has not been there
18 before.

19 We are really trying to, from the
20 criminal justice, the public health, we are
21 trying to be on that front end. We are trying
22 to change the mindset. And the only other
23 thing we need to do is look at our budgetary
24 priorities.

25 For example, I spoke to the

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2 Secretary of Corrections. When went into that
3 particular position, there was 39,000 people
4 in prison. There are now 42, 43.

5 He did not want the number to grow
6 under his watch. But, unfortunately, what is
7 happening is, he is responding to the
8 situation.

9 So he recognizes from a prison
10 standpoint, and one of the things that he
11 wants to do, is invest more money in
12 rehabilitation, do things in prison, because
13 99 percent of those people eventually come
14 out.

15 So I have spoken to the Secretary of
16 Corrections. And we are trying to, from a
17 state perspective, to make certain kinds of
18 investments that would not continue just to
19 warehouse folks and then return and come back
20 into the community.

21 So it is a massive effort that we
22 are trying to do by really trying to put this
23 together.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.
25 Couple of other questions.

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2 D.A. Abraham, you labeled the
3 killings as "interpersonal violence." I think
4 that's the first time I have heard that.

5 Can you just tell us the little
6 difference between --

7 DISTRICT ATTORNEY ABRAHAM: Well,
8 first of all, most of the people who are
9 killing and being killed know each other.

10 It is not that there are no
11 homicides in any city where strangers kill
12 strangers. It does happen. We have had
13 notable examples in Philadelphia.

14 But, for the most part, our killings
15 are between people who know each other, have
16 some prior history together.

17 Most of them are arguments. Could
18 be over drug territory, it could be perceived
19 slight over respect. Somebody says something
20 about a relative of mine, a perceived slight
21 about me or the way I carry myself or what I
22 do.

23 So, therefore, I labeled it
24 "interpersonal" because it is -- well, it is
25 interpersonal, first of all. And, second of

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2 all, it's not from a distance; it is up close
3 and personal.

4 If somebody is killing somebody, it
5 is because they know that person, and that
6 person has stepped over the line of what the
7 killer thinks is beyond the social compact
8 that they have established.

9 Whether you have come into my drug
10 territory, made a remark about my family,
11 insulted me, or did something that I perceived
12 to be a slight, we have had an argument over
13 something.

14 A lot of it is youth directed, and a
15 lot of it is without much thought about the
16 consequences. And that's why we have to try
17 to get young people who carry a gun to think
18 about the consequences.

19 So it is interpersonal violence
20 amongst people who know each other in an
21 extremely young block of ages.

22 DR. STITH: If I could.

23 You would be interested in Fox
24 Butterfield's book, All God's Children. It
25 traces this notion of dissing or disrespect

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2 all the way back to rural America in 1800s,
3 and even back to Scotland and Ireland.

4 And the dueling, which was a
5 practice of early Americans -- Alexander
6 Hamilton being one -- really is, in many ways,
7 a kind of act of defending one's family
8 against disrespect. If the family was
9 dishonored, a duel was an appropriate way to
10 respond.

11 I offer that to say that, what's
12 pretty clear about this issue of violence --
13 because in that day homicide rates were high
14 among elite, white, rural, southern men, and
15 very high rates.

16 I say that to say that what's pretty
17 clear about this problem is that it's learned
18 behavior. And our children learn it from us
19 as adults, they learn it from the
20 entertainment media, they learn it from the
21 culture.

22 And if we are going to really have
23 zero homicides of young people in Philadelphia
24 in 2016, it will be that kind of comprehensive
25 set of strategies that we put on the table

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2 that will make that happen.

3 So this issue of disrespect is
4 something that's part of our culture. And we
5 really -- and, in fact, it's -- Fox
6 Butterfield puts forth the notion that the
7 slaves, at the point of freedom, learned this
8 whole issue of dishonor and disrespect in that
9 southern violent culture.

10 So that's an assumption that he
11 makes. I think it is pretty clear that we
12 learn it from almost every avenue possible.

13 So, addressing it really means
14 taking it out of our culture.

15 DISTRICT ATTORNEY ABRAHAM: There is
16 one significant difference, however. And I
17 have read that book, and it is marvelous.

18 But, obviously, just as -- if you
19 are watching Bleak House on PBS this past
20 couple of weeks, the whole idea of class and
21 the strata of class, the lower classes never
22 had the opportunity to kill each other over
23 honor because they were considered beneath
24 honor. It was the elite, the upper class
25 where honor was considered primary over

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2 everything.

3 And the interesting concept of
4 having duels to protect your family's honor
5 was extremely important. They didn't consider
6 the lower classes as worth anything, so it
7 wasn't manifested there.

8 When the migration came here and
9 people came here, the notion of your family's
10 honor became extremely important to us because
11 we were different than the British social
12 strata.

13 And this has filtered down to
14 today's kids where, it is not a matter of
15 honor over something that has perceived to be
16 major. It can be something that's so minor to
17 us that we can't comprehend it; but it is so
18 major and grand to the person hearing it or
19 watching it that they believe that their
20 reputation on the street will be irreparably
21 damaged if they don't respond in kind.

22 And the response is totally
23 inappropriate. It's not, let's have a
24 discussion about this, let's --

25 DR. STITH: Much like Alexander

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2 Hamilton being killed in a duel.

3 DISTRICT ATTORNEY ABRAHAM: You're
4 absolutely right.

5 But it doesn't happen just once or
6 twice. It happens in this area over a look, a
7 glance, a word, or something relatively minor.

8 That's the thing that we really need
9 to concentrate on. How do we get ourselves to
10 the point where we get away from shooting and
11 get to the point where we are talking and
12 reasoning.

13 STATE REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: And,
14 Councilwoman, to your point, New York Times
15 yesterday, "Here in Milwaukee, one woman
16 killed a friend after they argued over a brown
17 silk dress. A man killed a neighbor whose ten
18 year old son had mistakenly used his dish
19 soap. And two men argued over a cell phone,
20 pulling out their guns, and the police say
21 killed a 13 year old girl in the cross-fire."

22 So from what you said, to what Dr.
23 Stith said, to what District Attorney Lynne
24 Abraham said, that's kind of the crux of where
25 we are

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2 When we talk about this Blueprint
3 being comprehensive, we talked about primary
4 secondary, this is where we are. And this is
5 why, in my view, it has to be a sustainable
6 effort.

7 One of the things that the MEE
8 Productions people did, we were actually
9 listening to the folks. We were listening to
10 them. And then by listening, we did ten focus
11 groups. Unheard of. Unheard of in this
12 effort.

13 Normally, particularly those of us
14 in the public policy sector, we kind of think
15 we know. But, here, do we really know? And
16 here we listened to them.

17 So what we are trying to do -- which
18 is different, and that's why we relate it to a
19 campaign -- we are trying to adjust the
20 campaign to the needs of where we are.

21 We are trying to go to the targeted
22 areas, where we need to be. And then in the
23 ideal world, even in those areas where the
24 numbers may not be what they are in certain
25 police districts, other sections, that's where

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2 we get into trying to make early investment,
3 so they will never get to the point.

4 It has been a lot of neglect over a
5 lot of years that has led up to where we are.
6 That's really where we are. It has been a lot
7 of neglect.

8 And the reality of it is that we are
9 finding it difficult to deal with. That's
10 what the problem is. We can't come up with a
11 quick answer.

12 So we have the pressure of the
13 press, right, 380 homicides. They constantly
14 keep asking us what can we do. We keep
15 thinking we can just pass a piece of
16 legislation, whatever. That's not going to
17 happen.

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: No, that's not
19 going to happen. I think that's what's good
20 about the Blueprint, that it is a
21 comprehensive long-term strategy.

22 And we can do what we can do in the
23 short term; such as funding, you know, those
24 groups that are providing services. And
25 hopefully the school district will incorporate

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2 this in the curriculum in elementary school,
3 and not just in middle school.

4 And since you said they are going to
5 incorporate the criminal justice curriculum in
6 middle school, I hope it is during the early
7 grades and not the latter grades, like 8th
8 grade.

9 And we have to figure out ways to
10 reach out to those parents and provide some
11 parenting classes early on and start -- I have
12 a friend who teaches at an elementary school,
13 and she believes that we should be in those
14 classrooms in kindergarten. And just like
15 Tasco just talked about, funding daycares, you
16 know.

17 I remember when my daughter was in
18 the first grade, and she came home and gave me
19 a lesson on graffiti, anti-graffiti.

20 And I said, "Where did you get all
21 that from?"

22 "My principal."

23 So I know that if we talk to
24 children early on, then it helps, it will
25 work. And we do have to turn the tide around

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2 here in Philadelphia. There's too many
3 parents crying and too many of the
4 perpetrators' families also crying. They are
5 both victims.

6 STATE REPRESENTATIVE EVANS: Can I
7 say this from one legislator to the other two
8 legislators? Chief executives, with no
9 disrespect, have their priorities.
10 Legislators can have their priorities.

11 I suggest to you as two
12 legislators -- and I can say that any time --
13 you are going through that process. My advice
14 would be -- because, you know, His Honor
15 presented his budget in Harrisburg. You
16 didn't see the Blueprint listed. The
17 Blueprint came about in negotiations.

18 I want you to be clear. You all
19 have the same option that I have. Though His
20 Honor mentioned about the importance of
21 violence from a Harrisburg perspective -- and
22 I am not saying he is not supportive of the
23 things I do -- but I kind of got to go do that
24 leg work for my alliances with the Speaker and
25 Senator Fumo and do all I have to do to get

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2 him to understand, this is important.

3 And I'm not minimizing anything any
4 chief executive does. That's their
5 recommendations. But, you know, we have to
6 say to the public that we got just as much
7 responsibility to change the priorities.

8 We have to change the priorities and
9 do it on the front end. Because we cannot --
10 I am going to keep saying to you -- we cannot
11 afford to continue doing it on the back end.
12 We cannot afford it.

13 You will not be able to keep up.
14 You can't hire enough people, build enough
15 prisons to be able to do that.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you. We
18 heard you loud and clear. Thank you very
19 much. And, Dr. Stith, we hope you will be
20 able to stay around a little bit, if you can.

21 DR. STITH: I am here for the
22 afternoon.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: We have Police
24 Commissioner Sylvester Johnson, Denise
25 Clayton, Catherine McVey, Rob Eddis, Darryl

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2 Coates, and Joe Flores.

3 And we appreciate you coming before
4 us today, as you have always been accessible.
5 And, thank you for your testimony.

6 Thank you for being so patient, for
7 waiting. And we appreciate your coming before
8 us today, as you have always been accessible.
9 Thank you for your testimony.

10 COMMISSIONER SYLVESTER M. JOHNSON:

11 Do you want me to start?

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: Good morning,
14 ma'am Chair, Council members, and guests. I
15 am Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson.
16 Thank you for inviting me to speak about this
17 important issue.

18 Violence has already claimed too
19 many lives. Parents bury their children
20 prematurely when criminals use illegally
21 possessed firearms. To these violent
22 offenders perceive disrespect is worth more
23 than human life.

24 The facts are that our children are
25 suffering. We must strengthen our efforts to

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2 end the violence now. The Blueprint For A
3 Safer Philadelphia is a long-range,
4 anti-violence initiative that the Philadelphia
5 Police Department fully supports.

6 By working in conjunction with plans
7 that are already reducing violence, such as
8 Operation Safer Streets, the Youth Violence
9 Reduction Partnership, the new Adolescent
10 Violence Reduction Partnership, the Blueprint
11 will work as a catalyst to make Philadelphia
12 one of the safest cities in the country.

13 The cooperative component of the
14 Blueprint is one of its major strengths. It
15 is my belief that traditional policing alone
16 will not work. We must continue to forge
17 alliances for stakeholders such as the
18 community at-large, clergy, schools,
19 businesses, other law enforcement agencies,
20 community and town watch groups, elected
21 officials, and concerned citizens. Numerous
22 organizations, at all level of the public and
23 private sectors, recognize the benefits of
24 this long-term initiative.

25 Another benefit is that the

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 Blueprint is comprehensive in scope. It does
3 not attack one problem, but many simultaneous.
4 Four of the ten programs incorporated into the
5 Blueprint focus on social issues, education
6 and on preventing high-risk youths from losing
7 their lives to violence.

8 The expansion of the already
9 successful Youth Reduction Partnership and the
10 Safe Neighborhoods Initiative focus on
11 children and young adults, ages 30 and under,
12 who are at risk.

13 The Juvenile/Criminal Justice
14 Curriculum and the Community Education and
15 Involvement initiatives are broader efforts,
16 aimed at using education and information as
17 deterrents against violence.

18 In addition to the above, the
19 Blueprint focuses on court reform issues, such
20 as the creation of Zone Courts and Gun Courts
21 and supports federal and state projects that
22 are aimed at stemming gun violence.

23 The authors of the Blueprint support
24 increased funding for Federal Project Safe
25 Neighborhoods and State Alternative Program.

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2 Statutory reform is also necessary to diminish
3 the culture of violence.

4 A five-year mandatory sentence for
5 armed drug trafficking has already been
6 enacted. However, law enforcement needs more
7 tools in its arsenal to effectively deter
8 violent crime. I fully support the enactment
9 of the Armed Violent Career Criminal statute
10 and penalty increases for illegal firearms
11 possession.

12 There are also two other pieces of
13 legislation which would benefit the fight
14 against violence. The right to bear arms also
15 carries a heavy burden of responsibility,
16 which includes the duty to properly store
17 these weapons and to report lost or stolen
18 firearms. Such laws must be enacted.

19 Also important is the need to limit
20 the purchase of guns to one gun a month. This
21 would reduce the ability of straw purchasers
22 to transfer firearms illegally.

23 There is no weapon as powerful as
24 the courage of individuals and the strength of
25 a united community. The initiatives that are

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 included in the Blueprint for a safer
3 Philadelphia will only be effective through
4 the cooperative effort of law enforcement and
5 the public.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
8 much. We will have the presentations, and
9 then we will have questions.

10 COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Would you
12 identify yourself for the record, please.

13 MS. DENISE CLAYTON: Good morning,
14 Madam Chair and other Council members and
15 guests. I am Denise Clayton, recently
16 appointed Coordinator of the Youth Violence
17 Reduction Partnership within the Managing
18 Director's Office.

19 The Youth Violence Reduction
20 Partnership, also known as YVRP, was formed in
21 1999 with the goal of reducing the number of
22 homicides among young people ages 7 to 24.

23 At that time, while overall
24 homicides in Philadelphia were on a downward
25 trend, homicides of young people remained

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2 alarmingly high.

3 In 1998, 144 Philadelphians ages 7
4 to 24 had been murdered. In 2005, 149 were
5 murdered in the same age group.

6 The initial inspiration for YVRP
7 came from Boston's Operation Cease Fire, a
8 faith-based community government coalition
9 that helped reduce the city's murder rate
10 among young people significantly in the 1990s.

11 With the support of the William Penn
12 Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts,
13 Philadelphia law enforcement agencies,
14 including the police department, District
15 Attorney's Office, and adult and juvenile
16 probation, another agency serving youth,
17 representatives of the local court system,
18 Public Private Ventures, and Philadelphia Safe
19 and Sound came together to examine the
20 situation in Philadelphia and develop a
21 public/private partnership to tackle the youth
22 violence problem.

23 Most YVRP organization partners are
24 local government agencies, with the District
25 Attorney's Office, police department, and

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2 adult and juvenile probation playing leading
3 roles, along with Philadelphia Anti-Drug and
4 Anti-Crime Network (PAAN), which provides the
5 street-workers' component of the partnership.

6 These law enforcement agencies are
7 working together in new ways. Police and
8 probation officers are patrolling
9 neighborhoods together. Probation officers
10 are no longer desk-bound, but out on the
11 street.

12 This is changing the culture of how
13 law enforcement agencies work together, but
14 also improving the view the community has of
15 law enforcement.

16 There are five major components of
17 YVRP. The first is identification of those
18 most likely to kill or be killed.

19 This identification of youth
20 partners is based on an analysis of past
21 offenses, criminal activity, and community
22 intelligence gathered by police, probation,
23 and community-based street workers.

24 Intensive surveillance, the second
25 component, by probation officers and police to

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2 closely monitor youth partners in their homes,
3 schools, and neighborhoods.

4 This includes stepped-up random home
5 visits by probation officers at all hours,
6 regular identification of hot spots, with
7 targeted joint patrols by probation officers
8 and police, and frequent and random drug
9 testing.

10 The third is graduation of sanctions
11 in which violations such as drug test failures
12 or curfew violations provoke immediate
13 sanctions ranging from area and association
14 restrictions, curfews, and hourly reporting
15 requirements, to required treatment,
16 electronic monitoring, and confinement.

17 The fourth positive support, such as
18 drug treatment, job training, and placement
19 and education assistance, is coordinated
20 through a team of street workers that are
21 assigned to assist YVRP participants.

22 And the fifth is gun suppression, to
23 enforce gun laws against the targeted
24 offenders. Working with local, state, and
25 federal authorities, YVRP works to deter the

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 access and use of firearms by the youth
3 partners with a clear, no-tolerance policy for
4 any youth partner possessing a firearm.

5 A key factor in the effectiveness of
6 YVRP is the identification of which youth are
7 most likely to kill or be killed unless there
8 is some type of intervention.

9 To do this, the YVRP operation
10 committee reviews the criminal and delinquency
11 records of candidates, looking at both
12 convictions and arrests.

13 Candidates are initially identified
14 and referred to the operations committee for
15 consideration by the following: Either
16 through the police department, either through
17 general referrals of known high-risk offenders
18 or by examining the crime logs on a weekly
19 basis; also through adult and juvenile
20 probation units either by YVRP staff scanning
21 criminal records or by referrals from other
22 probation units or people who fit the general
23 criteria; and, thirdly, through the YVRP
24 street workers or by the general community who
25 may know of a high-risk offender in the

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 neighborhood that may not yet have the kind of
3 criminal record that would otherwise make them
4 a candidate.

5 Once offered for YVRP consideration,
6 the major factors considered in the final
7 selection for the program include any charges
8 for a gun-related offense, involvement in a
9 shooting incident either as a perpetrator or
10 victim, an arrest record for violent crimes or
11 offenses relating to the drug trade, failure
12 to adjust while under court supervision, or
13 community knowledge of an individual's
14 propensity for drug trafficking or violence
15 regardless of a lack of any of the previously
16 mentioned factors.

17 Since YVRP was initiated in the 24th
18 Police District in 1999, murders in that
19 district among youth ages 7 to 24 declined by
20 an average of 50 percent.

21 In the 25th Police District, since
22 implementation in 2000, murders in that
23 district among youth ages 7 to 24 declined by
24 an average of 48 percent.

25 Since 2003, the first full year of

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2 implementation in the 12th Police District,
3 murders in that district among youth ages 7 to
4 24 declined by an average of 19 percent.

5 In 2005 citywide, excluding YVRP
6 districts -- the 24th, the 25th, and the
7 12th -- homicides in ages 7 to 24 increased 98
8 percent from 2004. A number of 54 in 2004, to
9 107 in 2005.

10 Whereas, in YVRP districts -- that
11 is, the 24th, 25th, and 12th -- homicides in
12 the ages of 7 to 24 increased only by 62
13 percent from the number of 26 in 2004, to 42
14 in 2005.

15 YVRP currently operates in 4 of
16 Philadelphia's 25 police districts, with one
17 more district scheduled for operation in this
18 spring.

19 In 2005, there were eight police
20 districts that experienced eight or more youth
21 homicides in at least one of the last two
22 years. We expect to be fully operational in
23 five of these eight districts by Fiscal Year
24 2007.

25 It is with the funding from the

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 Blueprint For A Safer Philadelphia and a
3 federal earmark from Senator Specter that YVRP
4 has been able to not only continue operation
5 in three police districts, but also fully
6 expand them to another and begin the framework
7 for expansion into one more.

8 District expansion plans are based
9 on analysis of trend data over several years
10 so that patterns of violence can be considered
11 over time to avoid entering a district based
12 on a single or limited number of abhorrent
13 incidents that drive homicide numbers up for a
14 single year.

15 In the past, YVRP leadership has
16 been cautious and deliberate in its expansions
17 in an effort to ensure that the factors that
18 contributed to its prior successes could be
19 carried over to new districts.

20 We are confident that YVRP's success
21 can be replicated throughout these additional
22 high-risk districts because the condition of
23 success had been forged already; and that is
24 through strong and institutionalized
25 leadership at the strategic management and

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2 operational levels, a well thought-out and
3 tested concept, strong partnership with all
4 participating agencies committed to a common
5 vision, attention to detail in development and
6 delivery with operational protocols aimed at
7 maintaining consistency and accountability
8 throughout the initiative, strict
9 accountability for meeting performance
10 standards, and intense focus on a well-defined
11 discrete objective, which is reducing murders
12 among young people.

13 These conditions form a strong
14 foundation for successful expansion. In fact,
15 some of the elements of YVRP are being used
16 outside of YVRP.

17 For example, adult probation
18 high-risk units are being formed to provide
19 targeted joint patrols with police and more
20 intensive supervision for offenders ages 18 to
21 35 in other nonYVRP police districts.

22 In conclusion, youth violence in
23 America's cities remains a seemingly
24 intractable problem, yet there has been
25 considerable research in recent years on how

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2 to tackle it.

3 A 2001 Surgeon General's report on
4 youth violence noted that the key to
5 preventing a great deal of violence is
6 understanding where and when it occurs,
7 determining what causes it, and scientifically
8 documenting which of the many strategies for
9 prevention and intervention are truly
10 effective.

11 We believe that the reduced youth
12 homicide rates that YVRP has demonstrated
13 since its introduction is the best evidence of
14 its effectiveness.

15 Through YVRP, we are analyzing data
16 to identify what parts of the city are facing
17 the greatest difficulties and what young
18 people are at the greatest risk.

19 We are intensively targeting
20 resources to those young people using tested
21 strategies of supervision, sanction, and
22 support to prevent and intervene against
23 future violence.

24 We are closely monitoring the
25 results of the initiative, continually

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2 emphasizing accountability for performance,
3 and adjusting our approach as the data
4 demands. And we are keeping our eye on our
5 ultimate goal, which is saving lives.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.
7 Ms. McVey.

8 MS. CATHERINE McVEY: Madam Chair,
9 members of the committee, and my fellow panel
10 members. My name is Catherine McVey. I am
11 the Chairman of the Pennsylvania Board of
12 Probation and Parole.

13 I am here today because I would like
14 to discuss what we do in parole to work to
15 combat violence here in Philadelphia. I
16 appreciate the opportunity to discuss this.

17 Parole is involved in the selection
18 of offenders for release and their careful and
19 safe supervision.

20 We work to reduce recidivism, we
21 work to reduce violence, and most importantly
22 we work to reduce future victimization.

23 I wanted to be here today because
24 there is nothing at all more important than
25 saving human lives. The Pennsylvania Board of

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2 Probation/Parole is working with you in
3 Philadelphia to combat violence. We are here
4 today to support the Philadelphia Blueprint
5 For A Safer Philadelphia.

6 Our role in parole starts with the
7 selection of offenders, as I mentioned. We
8 work to select individuals based on their
9 level of risk and their readiness to return to
10 their communities.

11 We know that rehabilitation starts
12 when offenders are in our prison system, but
13 we also know that rehabilitation must be
14 finalized once they return to the community.

15 We know that our parolees are
16 tempted by their old associates, by drugs, by
17 violent activities.

18 I believe that parole must be an
19 integral member of our criminal justice system
20 here in Philadelphia. We are responsible to
21 effectively and safely manage our parole
22 population.

23 We have three primary needs for our
24 parolees: They need jobs, they need housing,
25 and they need treatment.

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2 While our goal is very simple, to
3 reduce recidivism, we know that the process of
4 reducing recidivism and successfully
5 re-integrating our parolees back into the
6 community is very complex, very, very
7 difficult.

8 The core of our work, as I
9 mentioned, is safe and solid parole
10 supervision. Our agents on the street are on
11 the street four out of five days a week. Our
12 agents are not office people.

13 We expect them to be out on the
14 streets. We expect them to not hold
15 traditional work hours. We want them out in
16 the communities late at night, early in the
17 morning, on the weekends. We have a 24/7
18 operation.

19 We want to be where our parolees
20 are. We want to observe them. We want to
21 ensure that they are following the conditions
22 of parole so that we can target the problems
23 that our offenders are having early on.

24 We also have a system of sanctioning
25 for parole. What this means is, as our

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2 parolees violate conditions of parole -- those
3 are conditions that have been placed by our
4 parole Board members, they are individually
5 crafted for each and every parolee to identify
6 that individual's criminogenic needs or his
7 vulnerabilities to reoffend.

8 When they violate conditions of
9 parole, we intercept that process very early
10 on and we impose sanctions. We want our
11 sanctions to be corrective in nature, not
12 merely punitive. We want them to correct the
13 violation behavior that they are doing.

14 For those offenders who then resume
15 their parole successfully, we are able to
16 complete parole.

17 Here in Philadelphia, we
18 successfully completed parole in about 1,500
19 offenders last year.

20 For those parolees, however, who are
21 determined to continue to violate parole and
22 for whom we cannot safely and effectively
23 continue to manage in the community, we then
24 revoke them.

25 We estimate that in Philadelphia

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2 last year, we revoked about 2,000 offenders.

3 Our conditions for our parolees are
4 very important in terms of how we contain
5 violence or the opportunity for them to be
6 involved in violent behavior.

7 One of the primary fundamental
8 conditions of parole is that our parolees may
9 not have firearms. Not only may they not have
10 firearms, but we individually do a home plan
11 investigation for each and every parolee. And
12 we make certain that, in that home, nobody is
13 possessing firearms.

14 We also have our agents routinely
15 make contact with our parolees at home. We
16 talk to the family members. We are there to
17 support the family members. We want the
18 family members to be an important part of
19 helping to reestablish that offender back in
20 the community.

21 We also have, as another condition
22 of parole, curfews. Typically -- and I
23 believe I read in one of the articles -- that
24 about 70 percent of the homicides are
25 occurring in the late hours of the night or

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2 early in the morning.

3 When we impose curfews, which is a
4 very common condition to impose on the
5 offenders, we are regulating their times on
6 the street.

7 We also frequently will impose a
8 period of electronic monitoring, particularly
9 when they are first released from prison,
10 because we want to be sure that they are going
11 where they need to be and are at home, really,
12 when they are supposed to be.

13 We frequently will search the
14 offenders' homes. We respond very quickly
15 when we have intelligence that indicates that
16 an offender, for example, has a firearm or is
17 involved in some other illegal activity.

18 As parole agents, we have the
19 authorization to go into that home to work
20 with that family and to discover if our
21 parolee is violating any of the conditions of
22 parole and, of course, most very importantly,
23 if they are bearing firearms.

24 We routinely work with law
25 enforcement as needed in most all of our

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2 communities.

3 I am glad to report that we have a
4 good relationship with our Philadelphia Police
5 Department and, in fact, are getting ready to
6 embark on a series of meetings to determine
7 how we could further collaborate with our
8 fellow members of our criminal justice system
9 here in Philadelphia.

10 We work with Philadelphia in a
11 number of ways already. For example, in 2002,
12 we established what is called our FAST Unit.
13 The FAST Unit, which stands for Fugitive
14 Apprehension Search Team, works hand in hand
15 with our U.S. Marshals and with the local law
16 enforcement, the Violent Crimes Fugitive Task
17 Force, in tracking down absconders.

18 Our absconder population here in
19 Philadelphia -- first of all, statewide our
20 absconder population is about 6.2 percent of
21 our entire parole population in the
22 Commonwealth, which is right under 29,000.

23 In Philadelphia, we have 8,800
24 parolees. And out of that number, we have
25 currently about 792 absconders.

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2 And while we are certainly
3 significantly below the national average, we
4 are not happy at 6.2 percent for or
5 absconders. So we have our dedicated FAST
6 Unit, which is comprised of five staff
7 members, who work exclusively to search out
8 the absconders.

9 I am glad to report that, even
10 though the parolee population here in
11 Philadelphia has increased by 12 percent over
12 the last three or four years, our absconders,
13 the number of absconders, the flat rate, has
14 remained pretty much the same. So our
15 absconder rate is not increasing with the
16 increase in our parole population.

17 We are also participating in the
18 Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Project,
19 which is an effort to decrease violence among
20 and against juveniles.

21 We work with the Project Reconnect,
22 which is through the Department of Labor and
23 Industry. In Philadelphia I believe you have
24 seven career links which are wonderful centers
25 to help direct our parolees to find gainful

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2 employment.

3 We know that there is a direct
4 relationship to employment and crime; it is an
5 inverse relationship. We know that
6 individuals who have gainful employment are
7 less likely to be involved in crime.

8 So one of the very primary targets
9 of our reintroducing the offender back into
10 the community, not only to find the home that
11 we just talked about, a solid home plan, but
12 is also to very quickly get them engaged in a
13 steady and legal form of employment.

14 The third piece of our work deals
15 with the Forensic Task Force. The
16 Philadelphia Forensic Task Force, that we have
17 had a long-standing relationship with, works
18 to identify with us those offenders who, when
19 released, need a continuing support,
20 particularly in the area of mental healthcare
21 and services.

22 In our prisons, about 15 percent of
23 our population have mental health issues. So,
24 naturally, about 15 percent of individuals who
25 are paroled have continuing mental health

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2 problems.

3 It is very important that we have a
4 steady continuity of care and continued
5 medications so that they don't decompensate.

6 We also work with the Behavioral
7 Health System Initiative in Philadelphia,
8 which addresses not only mental health, but
9 also helps us link our offenders with very
10 important continuing drug and alcohol
11 treatment.

12 We know that offenders, then, who
13 are gainfully employed, have a safe and
14 protective supportive home, and are continuing
15 to receive the necessary treatment are
16 offenders who are most likely going to be
17 successful when they get out.

18 We know that research shows that
19 during the first six months on into the first
20 year, that the most significant number of
21 offenders who are going to violate parole do
22 indeed violate parole.

23 In Pennsylvania, we have a
24 recidivism rate over a three-year period of
25 about 46 percent, but we know during that

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2 first year is the highest rate of recidivism.

3 So we at the Parole Board are
4 working very hard to dedicate particular
5 resources and focus of attention over the
6 coming year to offenders as they get out.

7 We also use a risk assessment. One
8 of the other panelists talked about risk
9 assessment. We use a nationally recognized
10 risk assessment called the Level of Service
11 Inventory. The acronym is LSIR.

12 And that assessment allows us to
13 scientifically identify those factors of
14 parolees that identify them as particularly
15 high risk.

16 In using our parole resources -- and
17 we have about 118 agents, is our complement
18 here in Philadelphia -- we want to use those
19 agents and resources wisely.

20 And "wisely" means that those
21 offenders who score the highest risk on the
22 assessment have the most intense level of
23 supervision.

24 We have more frequent contacts with
25 them, both at work and home; and we have

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2 probably more elongated periods of electronic
3 monitoring, imposition of curfew, and so
4 forth.

5 Those offenders who are lower risk,
6 of course, while we still continue to see them
7 and provide the necessary support, they do not
8 require the same level of contact and
9 supervision.

10 Philadelphia has 31 percent of our
11 total parolee population. We have used a
12 workload analysis to determine the number of
13 agents that we need across the Commonwealth.

14 The workload analysis is a
15 state-of-the-art workload analysis. We ensure
16 that we have an adequate number of agents to
17 supervise our population. And we do an
18 excellent job.

19 I think that Pennsylvania can be
20 proud -- and I do say this, I have worked in
21 another state, in another state's parole
22 system, and am familiar with a number of
23 state's parole systems -- Pennsylvania agents
24 provide very safe and very sound day-to-day
25 contact and supervision of our parole

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2 population. And, for that, we should be very
3 grateful and very proud.

4 I will say that, as I talk about
5 parole here in Philadelphia, I am from
6 Harrisburg. And, so, I represent the state
7 level.

8 What I want you to know here -- and
9 with me in the audience are several key
10 members of our parole staff. We have our
11 Board member, Mike Green, who is a resident of
12 the Philadelphia area and has been very active
13 in working with his church and with the
14 community to address issues of local community
15 violence.

16 So not only is he professionally
17 responsible for parole, he is personally
18 engaged as a citizen of Philadelphia.

19 I also have with me Tom Costa, who
20 is our regional director, and our district
21 director, Ed Jones, also are residents of
22 Philadelphia.

23 John Tuttle and I are both from
24 Harrisburg. And while we work very closely
25 with Philadelphia, our key staff are from this

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2 location and have a very large personal
3 investment in keeping Philadelphia safe.

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
6 much. Very informative testimony.

7 Is someone here from the Fraternal
8 Order of Police?

9 Mr. Flores, University of
10 Pennsylvania? I mean, University of
11 Pennsylvania, Department of Public Safety.

12 MR. MARK DORSEY: Good afternoon,
13 Councilwoman. My name is Mark Dorsey, I am
14 the Chief of Police at the University of
15 Pennsylvania. And I would like to thank you
16 very much for inviting us to participate in
17 this very important session.

18 I would like to acknowledge, first
19 of all, our support for the Blueprint For A
20 Safer Philadelphia and to acknowledge publicly
21 our partnership with Police Commissioner
22 Johnson and our belief in our shared mission
23 in making a major impact within our
24 neighborhoods and our communities.

25 Unfortunately, the University City

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2 area also has experienced an up-tick in
3 violence in the past year. And it carried
4 over to the early beginning of this year, with
5 a shooting of one of our students from a stray
6 bullet that was from an altercation in the
7 immediate vicinity.

8 The University immediately responded
9 and has always been a strong supporter of the
10 Division of Public Safety. But it came back
11 to us in the division and said, look, we have
12 to make a more concentrated effort not only
13 within the University environment but, very
14 importantly, within our West Philadelphia
15 community.

16 We have a strong community outreach;
17 but our mandate was to increase it, to look
18 for ways that we can address some of the
19 neighborhood situations and some of the ways
20 we at the University of Pennsylvania can
21 contribute.

22 So we strengthened our partnership
23 with PAL, with the Police Athletic League, of
24 which we are a very strong advocate, and have
25 assigned police officers at a particular PAL

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2 on Woodland Avenue to get the students more
3 actively involved in teaching and educating.

4 We believe very much in the sports
5 and athletics, but we wanted to be able to
6 show and experience with many of the kids some
7 of the values of arts and culture and music.

8 We also have been mandated to
9 increase our security and police presence.
10 And for that I am thankful to the University
11 for giving me a financial contribution to be
12 able to increase the impact that we have here.

13 But a very strong part of that
14 mandate was exactly what the Blueprint is for
15 the safer Philadelphia; is a community
16 outreach, making an impact in our
17 neighborhoods. And that's what we are doing
18 with our police officers.

19 Our officers now are strengthening
20 our bonds with the community. We have reached
21 well into the neighborhoods. Our boundary
22 lines for patrol runs from the river to 43rd
23 Street, from Market to Baltimore, and up
24 around Presbyterian Hospital.

25 So I have assigned specific officers

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2 that have a regular beat in those areas to get
3 to know all of the commercial establishments,
4 to get to know our children, the kids that
5 congregate in our area, to participate in
6 various athletic institutions to be able to
7 show ways that the University of Pennsylvania
8 can help them in their goals and desires that
9 they have in life.

10 So I would like to once again thank
11 you for inviting the University of
12 Pennsylvania and to thank especially the
13 Police Commissioner, because very much it is a
14 true partnership.

15 And I believe by working together
16 that we are not only going to address these
17 issues, but we are going to conquer the
18 problem that's plaguing not only our area, but
19 the entire city.

20 Thank you, ma'am.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
22 much. Good afternoon.

23 MS. KAREM LEWIS: Good morning. My
24 name is Kareem Lewis. I am Director of
25 Community and Government Affairs for the

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2 Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network.

3 On behalf of our Executive Director,
4 Darryl Coates -- please excuse him, he could
5 not be here today -- I have come here to speak
6 on his behalf.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you for
8 coming.

9 MS. LEWIS: We support the Mayor's
10 Blueprint For A Safer Philadelphia.
11 Recognizing the epidemic of senseless gun
12 violence has made almost every neighborhood in
13 the City of Philadelphia a battlefield, PAAN
14 is about to launch a new and provocative
15 project targeting police districts in which
16 crime rates reflect the highest levels of
17 crime, violent crime. The program is being
18 called the Community Engagement and
19 Organization Program.

20 The program targets high-crime
21 neighborhoods to intensively concentrate on
22 violence-reduction strategies that harness the
23 collective energies of residents, communities,
24 and faith-based agencies and institutions,
25 elected and public officials, business owners,

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2 schools, police, et cetera, for concerted and
3 sustained efforts that are prevention tools
4 and do not diminish after a crisis incident.

5 Too often in our communities we
6 react after a violence, but there is no
7 organizing strategies to sustain that
8 community.

9 The first stage of this CEO Program
10 will begin next month with neighborhood town
11 meetings. The meetings will introduce PAAN's
12 partnership with the neighborhood that will
13 bring ongoing information and resources.

14 The initial meeting will focus on
15 the following: Neighborhood crime data,
16 neighborhood assess to reduce violence,
17 solutions, solicitation to suggestions to stop
18 the violence, PAAN's role to help communities.

19 PAAN has street workers servicing
20 the 12th, 19th, 24th, and 25th Police
21 Districts as part of the city's Youth Violence
22 Reduction Partnership, YVRP.

23 The YVRP provides intense monitoring
24 and referral of youth and young adults 14 to
25 24 years old on probation in target police

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2 districts.

3 Since the advent of this program in
4 1999 in the 24th Police District, PAAN has
5 been involved in the case management of over
6 1,500 high-risk youth.

7 The project's successful managing of
8 troubled youth has led to the expansion to
9 four additional police districts. Conversely,
10 there is no organized community prevention
11 efforts in these same areas.

12 As part of the Mayor's new
13 anti-violence program, Operation SAFER
14 Streets, the Adolescence Violence Reduction
15 Partnership, AVRP, has been formed. This
16 program is geared for troubled adolescents 10
17 to 16 years of age.

18 PAAN will employ street outreach
19 workers in the 12th Police District. So we
20 look forward to continuing to have engagements
21 in the community, for them to become more
22 active and participate more heartily in
23 solving the issues of violence in their
24 communities.

25 And we, as we have always, look

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2 forward to working and just being part of a
3 partnership with all those stakeholders in
4 those communities.

5 We would like to thank you for this
6 opportunity to speak in front of you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
8 much. We appreciate all the work that the
9 groups are doing.

10 And I am glad to see that you are
11 working with the Youth Violence Reduction
12 Partnership in those districts. And PAAN has
13 a history of being involved in the community.
14 And we miss you up in the Northwest, too.

15 MS. LEWIS: We would certainly like
16 to be there in the Northwest. And we continue
17 to do some things in the Northwest. In every
18 area of the city we are doing some things.

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
20 much.

21 To Ms. McVey, I enjoyed your
22 testimony. Our next panel is going to be our
23 Health Commissioner from the state, as well as
24 the Deputy Commissioner from the city, and our
25 Director of Community Behavioral Health, when

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2 you talked about the mental issues that are
3 experienced by some of the parolees. So I
4 hope you can listen to their testimony.

5 I have many questions. But the time
6 is moving on, and these people have been here
7 a long day. And we may have to call you back
8 again to have further discussion about what
9 you are doing. We certainly appreciate all of
10 you coming out to testify.

11 Thank you all very much for coming.
12 Commissioner, we appreciate your help. And to
13 the Commissioner, I do support what you say
14 all the time. You know, crime is a police
15 issue, but it is a societal issue.

16 We have problems of a social nature
17 that have to be dealt with, and you can't do
18 it all. But we appreciate all that you do and
19 you being out in the community. And it is
20 just wonderful to see all the collaboration
21 here.

22 I think the Blueprint is serving to
23 be the blueprint for all of us to get involved
24 to have a long-term solution to this issue, at
25 least to address part of it. So, we want to

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2 thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: Thank you
4 very much.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: The next panel
6 we will have, Dr. Calvin Johnson,
7 Commissioner, Department of Public Health,
8 State of Pennsylvania; Dr. Lawrence Robinson
9 of the city's Health Department; and Dr.
10 Arthur Evans of Department of Behavioral
11 Health.

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Good
13 afternoon. We are going to start with Calvin
14 Johnson, Dr. Calvin Johnson, Dr. Arthur Evans,
15 and Dr. Lawrence Robinson. And just pull the
16 mike up, identify yourself, and proceed with
17 your testimony. Thank you.

18 DR. CALVIN B. JOHNSON: Good
19 afternoon. I am Dr. Calvin Johnson, Secretary
20 of Health for the Commonwealth of
21 Pennsylvania.

22 I want to thank Chairwoman Tasco and
23 you, Chairwoman Reed Miller, and the Committee
24 of Public Health and Human Services and Public
25 Safety for pulling this hearing together.

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2 I think what we have seen already
3 today is a little bit about what I am going to
4 talk about, in terms of the public health
5 focus of this issue of violence, and
6 particularly gun violence and interpersonal
7 violence.

8 And "public health" is a term that's
9 been used throughout the morning. And I think
10 that indicates very clearly that we have come
11 a long way from where we were not that long
12 ago, when interpersonal violence and firearm
13 violence was looked at exclusively as a
14 criminal justice issue.

15 Which is, truthfully, an unfair
16 burden to put on our colleagues in criminal
17 justice and the criminal justice system.

18 The focus of my comments today are
19 going to be briefly on three areas. One is to
20 talk about briefly the need to actively and
21 intentionally apply public health strategies
22 as adjuncts and as additions to the current
23 and existing violence-reduction efforts; also,
24 to talk a little bit about how that is
25 actually beginning in Pennsylvania, and here

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2 in Philadelphia in specific; and, thirdly, to
3 talk briefly about what is needed in the
4 future, talking about long-term, in order to
5 decrease violence, and, again, gun violence in
6 particular.

7 You may have heard me use the term
8 "epidemic" before in describing gun violence.
9 And I used that term for two reasons.

10 One, to help focus and bring
11 attention on an issue that, in many ways and
12 in many times, moves to the back burner when
13 we are talking about priorities and policies
14 because it disproportionately appears to
15 affect those who traditionally don't have an
16 active voice, the young, the poor, and some
17 racial and ethnic minorities.

18 But I also use that term to point us
19 towards a strategy, a real strategy, that has
20 proven effectiveness in fixing public health
21 and health problems, and that is the public
22 health approach.

23 And the public health approach,
24 essentially, is the kind of approach that you
25 use when we talk about any kind of disease or

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2 disease outbreak that exists. And that's when
3 I talk about proven effectiveness in
4 containing disease, in stopping the spread,
5 and preventing future disease. The approach
6 is very much applicable to this issue of
7 violence.

8 And it involves the gathering of
9 information, understanding all the conditions
10 and the circumstances around violence and the
11 perpetration of violence so that we understand
12 exactly what the environment is and the
13 circumstances are that have led to what is
14 ultimately a significantly injurious act or a
15 fatal act. And, that is, the firing of a gun
16 at another person.

17 We also talk about in the public
18 health approach interrupting, interrupting the
19 cycle. And, again, if it is an infectious
20 disease, we stop the spread of the disease.
21 No different when we need to talk about
22 violence and stopping the immediate spread.

23 When we see that there are regular
24 reports of youth dying in Pennsylvania and in
25 Philadelphia from violence, we need to put

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2 forward immediate approaches. But we also
3 need to think about the long-term spread and
4 stopping the recurrence.

5 Both are done through specific
6 targeted interventions and targeted policies
7 that are based on the information that we
8 gather and understand about violence.

9 And, quite frankly, injury and gun
10 violence are things that we really don't have
11 a very good understanding about.

12 We understand a lot more about
13 homicides from gun violence, but we don't
14 understand as much about injury from gun
15 violence.

16 And it is the injury from gun
17 violence that sometimes is a setup for a
18 further progression of violence, whether it is
19 retaliatory violence or continuation or
20 expanding of that initial violent strike.

21 But at the foundation and the core
22 of all of this is prevention. And you heard
23 Dr. Prothrow-Stith talk about prevention, and
24 you have heard through MEE Productions'
25 efforts how prevention, the primary,

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2 secondary, and tertiary prevention have been
3 recharacterized of sorts by the young people
4 who are out there experiencing this every day.

5 And, so, it is the foundation of the
6 public health approach is the concept of
7 prevention. And that is the fact that youth
8 violence, that violence in general, most forms
9 of violence, and gun violence in many
10 instances, is 100 percent preventable.

11 And that gets at the issue of
12 dealing with the root causes. It is more than
13 just going on the surface and responding to
14 the incident itself, the infraction that it
15 causes, the breaking of the law that it
16 causes.

17 But it gets to the root causes.
18 What are the circumstances, the underlying
19 circumstances, that have led, again, to that
20 final act.

21 If we talk about the public health
22 approach, it may be helpful to use the words
23 of David Hemenway, who is a noted researcher
24 and Professor at Harvard and head of their
25 Injury Control Center in the Harvard Youth

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 Violence Prevention Center, and a colleague of
3 Dr. Prothrow-Stith's.

4 And he talks about, for most of the
5 20th Century, how gun assaults have been seen
6 almost exclusively as a criminal justice
7 problem.

8 But since the mid 1980s, it has
9 increasingly become recognized -- public
10 health approach, that it is -- as the most
11 promising approach to reducing firearms is to
12 emphasize prevention; focusing on community,
13 using a broad array of policies, and bringing
14 together diverse interest groups to have a
15 very proactive rather than a reactive
16 involvement in this.

17 And I think that's demonstrated very
18 clearly here today by the multitude of groups
19 and disciplines that you have brought together
20 who are focused on reducing youth violence.

21 I want to talk to you just briefly
22 about how some of that, some of those efforts,
23 are coming to fruition here in Pennsylvania,
24 and here in Philadelphia in particular.

25 And it is through the Blueprint For

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2 A Safer Philadelphia, some of the Governor's
3 direct efforts.

4 When I have been in this room
5 before, I have talked about the Pennsylvania
6 Injury Reporting and Intervention System,
7 known as PIRIS. This is something that is a
8 part of the Blueprint For A Safer
9 Philadelphia.

10 And what it is, a demonstration of
11 that public health approach in action in
12 addressing violence.

13 What this system is, this Injury
14 Reporting and Intervention System is, is a
15 hospital-based system, a
16 hospital-emergency-department-based system,
17 that uses as a sentinel event a triggering
18 event, if you will, the appearance of a
19 gunshot-wound victim and the admission of a
20 gunshot-wound victim into a hospital emergency
21 department.

22 From that, a system is triggered
23 that will gather information about that
24 individual and the circumstances of that
25 incident.

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2 And we will also then be able to add
3 to that, again, lack of understanding we have
4 about some of the detailed circumstances that
5 surround these gun-violence incidents, because
6 the story is not always the same.

7 What's significant about this is the
8 intervention component. So this is more than
9 just an information-gathering system for the
10 sake of gathering information. But what it
11 does is, use that information to specifically
12 identify and target real interventions to
13 break that cycle.

14 Some of the other speakers have
15 talked about the opportunity that presents
16 itself when someone is a victim of a
17 gunshot-wound injury; an opportunity to
18 perhaps intervene and change the course and
19 direction so that retaliation is not a part of
20 the plan going forward.

21 So that an expansion or escalating
22 of violence and injury is not a part of the
23 plan going forward, but identifying what the
24 needs may be.

25 And, again, the needs may be varied.

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2 There may be mental health needs that are
3 involved there. There may be drug and alcohol
4 use and abuse issues that are at hand and play
5 a role in the violence.

6 There may be the opportunity or lack
7 of opportunities that come from an ability to
8 get jobs or lack of educational opportunities
9 that may have played some role in leading to
10 the point where that individual is a
11 gunshot-wound victim in one of our hospital
12 emergency departments.

13 And, so, this system is designed to
14 identify that individual, identify the needs,
15 and be able to target those kinds of specific
16 interventions to that individual and to those
17 who are connected to that individual.

18 For example, the siblings of that
19 individual, younger siblings who may not have
20 had any encounter whatsoever with the criminal
21 justice system at this point, but here is an
22 opportunity to institute that primary
23 prevention, intervening before an incident
24 ever happens.

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Could you just

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2 say who does that? I hate to interrupt your
3 testimony, but I am interested and curious who
4 does the follow-through? What system is in
5 place, and who operates that system?

6 DR. JOHNSON: Sure. This system
7 actually is in its pilot stages. And it is
8 being piloted here in Philadelphia at three
9 institutions; at Hospital of the University of
10 Pennsylvania, Temple University Hospital, and
11 at Albert Einstein Hospital.

12 These three institutions were chosen
13 because 38 percent, 38 almost 39 percent, of
14 the state's firearm injuries come through
15 these hospitals' emergency departments and
16 their trauma systems.

17 And, so, we have an opportunity,
18 through these hospitals, starting with these
19 three hospitals, to capture a significant
20 portion of the gunshot-wound injuries in
21 Philadelphia and, quite frankly, in the state,
22 as well.

23 And there are a number of other
24 partners who are a part of this, including the
25 Firearm and Injury Center at Penn, and

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2 Philadelphia Health Management Corporation, as
3 partners helping to manage the collection of
4 data and the identification and the provision
5 of services.

6 Also very much involved is the
7 Philadelphia Department of Public Health and
8 other Philadelphia agencies, including the
9 Department of Human Services.

10 So this is, again, an opportunity
11 and an example of a multi-disciplinary effort
12 and group coming together to focus on real
13 proven activities and efforts to reduce youth
14 violence.

15 The type of interventions that will
16 come with this are interventions that are in
17 the category of best practices or evidence
18 based, those that have been used in other
19 settings and scientifically proven to have a
20 positive effect.

21 There also will be a real evaluation
22 component so that we are tracking this as we
23 go along and looking at what kind of
24 difference, in fact, we're making. So that we
25 can even institute and attempt new and varied

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2 methods of intervening here in Philadelphia,
3 so that we are not stifling creativity that
4 can come out of the expertise that exists here
5 in Philadelphia, and in Pennsylvania in the
6 larger context.

7 There have also been a number of
8 other efforts that are funded now in this
9 year, coming out of the Governor's Commission
10 on Gun Violence.

11 And they include an Illegal Gun Task
12 Force that is working within the Philadelphia
13 Police Department and is funded through the
14 Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and
15 Delinquency, a state agency.

16 It also includes the expansion of
17 Pennsylvania State Police Operation Trigger
18 Lock, so focusing on the safe handling of
19 firearms and understanding how best to use and
20 store firearms.

21 It includes funding of the School
22 District's Parent Involvement Program.
23 Because, as was mentioned earlier, that the
24 parental involvement is a significant
25 component and role in this. This doesn't

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2 begin and end with just the individual.

3 And, as I mentioned earlier, the
4 public health approach takes into account the
5 community aspect of it. And that community is
6 not just neighborhoods or cities, but is the
7 family community and the extended family and
8 friend community, as well.

9 There has also been funding
10 specifically for planning, grants to cities
11 with higher homicide rates, as well. And, so,
12 there have been a number of efforts going
13 forward.

14 And included in this year's budget
15 proposal are the addition of 90 State Troopers
16 to increase the ranks of Pennsylvania State
17 Police to its highest numbers ever.

18 And, so, there again are examples of
19 multi-disciplinary efforts to focus around
20 this issue.

21 Lastly, I just want to say a word
22 briefly about the idea of what it takes in
23 this longer term vision of reducing gun
24 violence and violence injury.

25 And, as you know the Blueprint is a

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2 ten-year plan, a ten-year strategy, which is
3 something that means that there is thought,
4 there is planning, and there is vision that
5 goes into that.

6 This is something that must be taken
7 up for the long haul. And, so, it is
8 commitment that's needed and really it is
9 maintenance that's needed.

10 And what I mean by that is, one,
11 that sustained attention to this issue is
12 needed.

13 The issue of violence and youth
14 violence and gun violence cannot be allowed to
15 slip off the radar screen onto the back
16 burner. And it takes people in positions like
17 you in City Council and other leadership
18 positions to keep this issue at the forefront
19 of people's minds.

20 And, so, I am very happy to have
21 this opportunity to be here today to
22 contribute to that.

23 It also means that support is needed
24 for this. Support is needed in terms of
25 making sure that those who are stepping out

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2 there, both at the -- at every level, the
3 community level, the local government level,
4 the state and federal government level, have
5 that kind of understanding and support that
6 surrounds it. Vocal support and other support
7 are absolutely crucial.

8 And, thirdly, resources are
9 absolutely essential, as well. And certainly
10 fiscal resources, financial resources, are
11 incredibly important. But we can't think of
12 limiting it to that just, as well.

13 Resources that include ability to
14 tap on partners who can provide the type of
15 information, factual information, that is
16 necessary; the proven studies that have
17 intervened in other places across this
18 successful interventions in other places
19 across this country that can be imported here
20 to apply to Philadelphia. So, a knowledge of
21 what is taking place out there.

22 Those kinds of resources, in
23 addition to the financial resources, are
24 absolutely essential in being able to truly
25 make a difference in youth violence, violent

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2 injury, and gun violence in Pennsylvania and
3 here in Philadelphia.

4 I think we are off to much more than
5 a good start. I think we are well on our way.
6 But, again, it takes the continued attention,
7 support, and resources to do that.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very
10 much.

11 And we do need to look at the
12 priorities in our budget in order to sustain
13 the programs that -- not only this, but other
14 offerings that have come forth.

15 Councilwoman Blackwell and
16 Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller had hearings
17 last Thursday in Council on the whole issue of
18 gun violence.

19 There are many organizations. We
20 have Mothers in Charge, and some of the other
21 groups, that are going to talk this afternoon
22 about what they're doing. But it is all part
23 of a total overall collaborative to make sure
24 that we stop the violence.

25 But we do need the resources. And

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2 those of us who have to look at how we spend
3 our city dollars have to look at those
4 priorities, what is a priority in terms of
5 what we spend our money for.

6 So we thank you for coming down,
7 Commissioner. We are real proud of you. We
8 know that you are one of the few
9 African-American Health Commissioners in this
10 country. You are doing a fine job.

11 And we will be looking to you to
12 also help us as we move forward in trying to
13 address the whole issue of violence in
14 Philadelphia.

15 And I am just so proud of all of the
16 elected officials who are taking some action
17 in their district, in their area, whatever
18 form. There is never enough. Too few people
19 to speak out and speak up on what needs to be
20 done.

21 And we just have to come together to
22 figure out how we get the money to make it all
23 happen.

24 But, thank you for coming down. We
25 appreciate it.

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2 Commissioner, could I ask Dr. Evans
3 to go next. Thank you. This is Dr. Arthur
4 Evans. Would you like to introduce yourself.

5 DR. ARTHUR C. EVANS: Sure. Good
6 morning, Councilwoman Tasco, Councilwoman
7 Blackwell. I am Dr. Arthur Evans, Director of
8 the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral
9 Health and Mental Retardation Services. And I
10 am pleased to present testimony on the
11 Blueprint For A Safer Philadelphia.

12 Given the hour and the lateness of
13 the hour, I am going to keep my comments very
14 brief. You have my complete testimony

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Which will be
16 entered into the record. So any summaries is
17 fine, but we will submit the complete
18 testimonies for the record.

19 DR. EVANS: Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: And we also
21 want to say, let me interrupt, that we are
22 being broadcast by WRD, Cody Anderson and
23 Kenny Gamble.

24 They are so much into this issue
25 that they called and asked could they

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2 broadcast this hearing. And we thank them for
3 opening up their airways so that the public
4 could hear your discussion and the discussion
5 of all the panelists who have participated.

6 And I do believe that we are being
7 televised on our local station, Channel 64.

8 DR. EVANS: Thank you.

9 While I am going to focus on three
10 areas in my brief comments, I want to
11 emphasize something that's been alluded to in
12 all of the comments before.

13 Whenever I have gone out and been in
14 community forums that have talked about
15 violence, it is probably within two to three
16 minutes that the issue of behavioral health
17 will come up.

18 And, so, in the public's mind there
19 is a connection between substance abuse and
20 violence. There is a connection between
21 mental health problems and violence.

22 And, so, we understand that the
23 variety of services that we provide really go
24 to help reduce the likelihood of violence, it
25 goes to reduce the impact violence has had on

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2 people in our community.

3 We will serve this year over 100,000
4 people, and probably about 30,000 of those are
5 children in this community.

6 And the point I want to make is that
7 we see our services being very helpful both in
8 terms of those who are perpetrators, those who
9 might perpetrate violence, but also in terms
10 of those people who are victims.

11 We know that one of the major issues
12 that we face in our community is the issue of
13 trauma and the impact that that trauma has,
14 particularly when it goes untreated.

15 And, so, one of the major initiatives
16 that we have underway is looking at how do we
17 do what we call "trauma-informed treatment."

18 Because we know that if we can get
19 to that trauma early on, particularly in
20 children, that it can prevent a lot of other
21 kinds of issues that people might experience.

22 I want to focus on three other
23 things specifically related to the Blueprint.
24 One of them is the Youth Violence Reduction
25 Partnership and the relationship that we have

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2 with that.

3 That's a relationship that we have
4 had since its inception. And you heard in
5 previous testimony that one of the things that
6 happens in that program is that people are
7 identified in terms of their substance-abuse
8 needs.

9 We have a Intensive Forensic
10 Recovery Clinical Evaluation Unit that does
11 assessments both in the community, at the
12 Youth Child Study Center, at the Youth Study
13 Center, and at the Philadelphia Prison System,
14 to evaluate people and to connect them to the
15 appropriate kind of treatment and to make sure
16 that those services are paid for. It is a
17 very important service that is linked to that
18 initiative.

19 Another major initiative that we are
20 undertaking is working with the city's faith
21 community.

22 One of the things that we have
23 recognized in our field is that we can't treat
24 people in isolation. So we can't treat people
25 and then return them to a community that can't

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2 support them in your long-term recovery,
3 whether it is mental illness or whether it is
4 recovery from addiction.

5 And, so, we are working very
6 actively with the city's faith community to
7 form a partnership that is mutually
8 beneficial.

9 It is beneficial to us because
10 people are going back into communities where,
11 first of all, people understand the issues
12 that they are dealing with.

13 It is beneficial to members of the
14 faith community because we often hear them say
15 to us, "We would like to help people, but we
16 don't always know how to connect people when
17 we have questions. We don't know what
18 resources are there." And they understand the
19 limits that they have in terms of being able
20 to respond to behavioral health issues.

21 And, so, we have gotten a tremendous
22 response from the city's faith community, who
23 want to partner with us around these issues.

24 And we are doing a number of things,
25 including having community forums. And we

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2 are -- I should mention that we are
3 ecumenical. We have been to a Synagogue, we
4 have been to a Mosque, and we have been to a
5 Church.

6 And, so, all of those communities
7 have opened their arms and said that this is a
8 partnership that we need to have.

9 In addition to that, we are doing
10 some focus groups who asked specifically, what
11 are the issues and what are the resources that
12 we can bring to bear to help you in
13 ministering to your congregations and the
14 people in your community.

15 And then, finally, we are
16 establishing a task force that will begin to
17 take those suggestions, those recommendations,
18 and begin to implement them. And that's a
19 task force that will be combined with both our
20 staff and members of the faith community.

21 One of the outgrowths of the
22 conversations that we have had already is that
23 we are going to have a major conference in May
24 of this year, May 9, where we are going to
25 have members of the behavioral health

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2 community and the faith community come
3 together, provide information that will be
4 mutually beneficial.

5 The last thing that I will mention
6 is the establishment of a Blue Ribbon
7 commission on children's behavioral health
8 that was done by Mayor Street. And the first
9 meeting, the first official meeting, will be
10 next week, February 24. This is a very
11 seminal event in the life of the city.

12 The Mayor appointed just an
13 outstanding group of citizens that include,
14 actually, Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds
15 Brown, we have academics, we have family
16 members, we have providers, we have one judge,
17 we have the school district; a wide variety of
18 people who understand that children's mental
19 health, their needs around substance abuse
20 have reached a critical proportion in our city
21 and that we have to come together to figure
22 out a community strategy that we all have
23 bought into. And, so, the amount of energy
24 and excitement around this is quite
25 heartening.

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2 We had a conference last week in
3 which we brought experts from around the
4 country. And those folks, along with the
5 commission and other local experts, have begun
6 to forge the agenda over the next six months
7 that the commission will use to evaluate and
8 explore this issue.

9 The commission will come back with a
10 report at the end of six months, towards the
11 end of the year, that will lay out both a
12 framework for how we organize the children's
13 behavioral health system, and also a set of
14 priorities that, again, we -- the goal is to
15 have consensus around.

16 And, so, I think that will put
17 Philadelphia really on the cutting edge and on
18 the forefront of attending to children's
19 needs, their mental-health needs.

20 And, so, obviously that is very much
21 connected to this issue of violence, the
22 impact that it has on our children, and it
23 also contributes to how we can begin to
24 intervene early so that children don't get
25 into violent behavior.

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2 So, those are my comments. We stand
3 ready to help and support this initiative and
4 any other initiatives that Council has in
5 terms of addressing this issue.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very
8 much, and thank you for your outreach. I know
9 you are doing a great job to be more proactive
10 if your field, and we appreciate your
11 leadership.

12 Dr. Robinson.

13 DR. LAWRENCE ROBINSON: Good
14 afternoon, Councilwoman Tasco, Councilwoman
15 Blackwell, Councilwoman Miller.

16 I am Dr. Lawrence Robinson, Deputy
17 Health Commissioner. I am speaking on behalf
18 of the Acting Commissioner, Dr. Joanne Godley.

19 Thank you for the opportunity to
20 offer testimony on the public health aspects
21 of youth violence in Philadelphia.

22 The same factors associated with
23 violence are also associated with other
24 diseases. Where you see high rates of
25 homicides, you also find high rates of HIV,

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2 AIDS, cancer, infant mortality, heart disease,
3 diabetes, substance abuse, and lower
4 socio-economic indicators.

5 The same strategies that impact
6 disease and reduce them can also be used to
7 reduce depravalence and incidents of violence
8 in our communities.

9 You have heard about the
10 three-pronged approach, and we believe in that
11 also; prevention, intervention, and
12 suppression.

13 Many of us in the public health
14 field believe that the approach to effectively
15 reducing youth violence is one that considers
16 multiple concurrently applied strategies and
17 target a variety of risk factors observed in
18 individuals and families and their schools and
19 communities

20 The public health approach is
21 comprised of several key components that
22 include identification of the nature of the
23 specific problem through workable surveillance
24 systems from morbidity and mortality
25 associated with interpersonal violence,

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2 identification of those persons or entities
3 that are at risk for violence-related events,
4 application of case-control methods to the
5 exploration of modified risk factors for
6 victims and perpetrators, and institution of
7 ongoing evaluation of the control methods that
8 have been established. The main component of
9 this is prevention.

10 The model is, obviously, not a quick
11 fix that any one entity can expect to
12 successfully put into place; but, rather, it
13 is an approach that must be supported by the
14 government, by community leaders, by social
15 service agencies, teachers, parents, extended
16 family members, peers, behavioral and medical
17 health providers, and the business community.

18 It is also documented that the risk
19 factors for violence are varied, there is many
20 different ones.

21 But one thing is very clear, that
22 youth who are victims of weapon-related
23 injuries are at high risk for repeat injury
24 and/or death or from becoming perpetrators of
25 violent acts themselves.

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2 You know, it is interesting, when I
3 did some additional research on this, that the
4 problem is actually much larger than we look
5 at here. Because we were only looking at
6 homicides.

7 But when I looked at the statistics
8 in terms of gun-related deaths, I found that
9 there were 1,794 gunshot injuries in
10 Philadelphia in 2005.

11 194 of them were between 12 and 17
12 years of age, and 700 were between 18 and 24.
13 So you can see between 14 and 24 is where most
14 of these injuries are taking place.

15 Now, the really remarkable thing
16 about what's happening here in Philadelphia is
17 that there really are not more homicides, and
18 the reason why is because we have such a good
19 medical system.

20 We have got very good tertiary-care
21 units and hospitals and ambulances that
22 transport people very rapidly. And it is
23 because of this that that number has been kept
24 down to 380.

25 And I would venture to say that, if

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2 we were in some other area, this number of
3 homicides would be much greater than the 380
4 that we see. So you can see, we are really
5 looking at the tip of the iceberg.

6 The identification of youth who are
7 at risk for violence and the application of
8 early-intervention techniques are two
9 functions that fall within the public health
10 model of addressing violence.

11 You have heard the Secretary of
12 Health talk about the PIRIS program. And this
13 is a program that we are working in
14 conjunction with the State Health Department.
15 A very important thing, because this will give
16 us the surveillance information that we need
17 in order to make appropriate decisions.

18 I always say, you have to have good
19 information in order to make good decisions.

20 Currently the Pennsylvania Injury
21 Reporting and Intervention System, PIRIS, is
22 being put into place to report information on
23 weapons, injuries from three trauma centers in
24 Philadelphia. And you heard them mentioned;
25 the University of Pennsylvania, Einstein, and

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2 Temple.

3 This approach focuses on eliminating
4 the problems before more negative consequences
5 can take place.

6 It has a strong surveillance and
7 intervention component, which was a question
8 you asked, with emphasis on population-based
9 activities to increase awareness of the
10 effects of firearm-related injuries among the
11 target population.

12 Youth who require social service
13 intervention will be referred through this
14 program to the Youth Violence Reduction
15 Program and the Adolescent Violence Reduction
16 Program.

17 The Department of Health and Human
18 Services will assist in the coordination of
19 social service referrals, and the ongoing
20 surveillance will provide an opportunity to
21 evaluate the success of the social service
22 interventions.

23 I believe this pilot and eventual
24 expansion of this program to include other
25 participating trauma centers and emergency

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2 departments will be of significant value to
3 those city agencies involved in
4 violence-reduction efforts and the overall
5 strategy to break the cycle of interpersonal
6 violence in Philadelphia.

7 Thank you for the opportunity.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
9 much. You always provide us some good
10 information, and we appreciate it.

11 Thank you all very much for coming
12 and for your informative testimony. We will
13 be in touch with you, because we are going to
14 take this show on the road. Thank you.

15 Our next panel will be Men United
16 For a Better Philadelphia, Mothers in Charge,
17 Mothers United Through Tragedy, Mantua Against
18 Drugs, Michael Gibbs, Guardian Angels of
19 Philadelphia.

20 Good afternoon, Mr. Aziz. How are
21 you?

22 MR. AZIZ: Good.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you for
24 coming out. Thank all of you for coming out.

25 MS. SHERRI RYAN: Good afternoon.

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2 My name is Sherri Ryan, Outreach Coordinator
3 for Mothers in Charge.

4 Mothers in Charge, as you know, is a
5 group of mothers, grandmothers, and aunts who
6 have lost their children to the senseless
7 killings in the City of Philadelphia and
8 vicinity.

9 We are here today to ask for the
10 support of the Blueprint For A Safer
11 Philadelphia. We feel that this is a very
12 important initiative to help save the lives of
13 the children of Philadelphia.

14 We feel that early intervention is
15 very important. I worked in the school,
16 Kinsey School, and I worked with first and
17 second graders.

18 And it is a devastating experience
19 to see that the young people have thoughts of
20 violence at that very early age. So, early
21 intervention is very important concerning that.

22 Dr. Johnson and Dr. Robinson said
23 some very profound statements concerning the
24 wounds of guns, because most of the mothers'
25 sons have been killed by guns. My son was

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2 killed by a Tech-9, so I was devastated when
3 he made that statement. But I already know
4 that firsthand, that situation.

5 Finally, we, the Mothers in Charge,
6 live every day with the pain of losing our
7 children. We feel that this Blueprint is a
8 help. And anything that you all can do in the
9 Council to bring this to a close, we
10 appreciate it.

11 Ten years is a long time, but we
12 feel that it would be a healthy start. And
13 work it out, and we feel it would be a help to
14 us.

15 We believe that the Blueprint For A
16 Better Philadelphia is major in saving the
17 lives of our future, and the future of our
18 children.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
21 much.

22 You know, as someone said earlier,
23 there is no quick fix. And we are all looking
24 for the magic fix, but it does take time. But
25 because so many people are so involved and

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 committed to erasing violence, it will take
3 time.

4 And we appreciate all of the groups
5 and organizations that are out there working
6 to make this Blueprint successful.

7 MS. RYAN: I appreciate that. I
8 don't have anything but time, because my son
9 was killed in 1990. So I have been on this
10 battle for a long time.

11 So I will continue to stay on this
12 battlefield until, hopefully, we will get the
13 numbers down to zero.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you. And
15 I agree with you, it does begin at a very
16 early age.

17 Yes. Next.

18 MR. MARK HARRELL: Good afternoon,
19 co-Chairwoman Tasco, and good afternoon,
20 Councilwoman Blackwell.

21 My name is Mark Harrell, I am
22 Director of Men United For a Better
23 Philadelphia, speaking on behalf of the
24 organization along with my co-chair here.

25 And we are fortunate, in that we

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 have had an opportunity to work with the
3 Blueprint in the North Philadelphia area, as
4 was stated, in partnership with Mothers in
5 Charge and the Mt. Airy Church of God and
6 Christ, in providing safety services and
7 intervention and prevention services for youth
8 between the grades of K through 5, and Kinsey
9 and Dick Elementary schools and the Mt. Airy
10 Church of God and Christ after-school
11 programs.

12 And as was stated earlier, it is
13 appalling to see young people with the
14 knowledge of violence that they have, and the
15 violence that they have witnessed at such an
16 early age at life.

17 The Blueprint is set up in ways
18 where we will be able to provide services to
19 help curtail some of those incidents and help
20 reduce, hopefully, the amount of the impact
21 that violence has on younger children
22 throughout the City of Philadelphia.

23 We are also fortunate in that the
24 Men United For a Better Philadelphia will be
25 serving as the AVRP, Adolescent Violence

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 Reduction Program partner, in the 25th
3 District, providing services to boys who have
4 been identified at risk between the ages of 10
5 and 15.

6 So in addition to our constant
7 vigilance on the streets of Philadelphia
8 trying to turn the lives around of young men
9 and young woman, whoever they may be who we
10 engage on these streets, we are going to be
11 able to expand our services in terms of
12 helping to reduce violence and homicides in
13 the City of Philadelphia.

14 We think that the Blueprint is,
15 again, is a start. And by engaging
16 community-based elements in terms of this
17 prevention, Men United For a Better
18 Philadelphia is fortunate that we are able to
19 go out onto the streets.

20 And we are there constantly
21 throughout the City of Philadelphia, but even
22 more so as a part of an organized effort, such
23 as the Blueprint, we think that this
24 partnership will enable us and the other
25 partners to really become more effective in

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 realizing our mission, which is simply to help
3 reduce violence and homicides in the City of
4 Philadelphia.

5 So through our participation in the
6 Blueprint, which is the YVRP, Youth Violence
7 Intervention Project, and the AVRP, we think
8 that collectively and over the span of the
9 project we will see a difference in the
10 numbers.

11 As Dr. Robinson mentioned earlier,
12 you know, we focus on the fact that, for
13 example, last year there were 380 homicides,
14 as compared to 1,749 shootings.

15 We have averaged 16 to 17 hundred
16 shootings over the past five years in the City
17 of Philadelphia. The proliferation of guns on
18 the streets of Philadelphia is a key issue.

19 And any legislation that supports
20 that, like Blueprint or any of the legislation
21 that our current legislators have pending, we
22 will support.

23 And the fact that the majority of
24 the people in the City of Philadelphia voted
25 for a referendum to have Philadelphia's City

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 Council and Philadelphia representatives
3 legislate its own gun laws right here in the
4 City of Philadelphia.

5 So we stand behind anything that's
6 going to help get the guns off the street of
7 Philadelphia and anything that's going to work
8 towards getting young people to understand
9 that they can make a difference, no matter how
10 young they are.

11 And if we have to start K through 5,
12 then we will start K through 5. But at no
13 age, since violence is a learned behavior, can
14 you say that you can't be unlearned.

15 And Men United will be there
16 throughout the process to make sure that we
17 are part of the solution, as opposed to the
18 part of the problem.

19 Thank you for having our testimony
20 before you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you very
22 much.

23 Malik.

24 MR. MALIK AZIZ: Good afternoon,
25 Councilwoman Blackwell.

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2 I don't have no prepared statement
3 today. I guess I am here more so -- I am
4 going to tell you the truth. I really wasn't
5 going to come out in the snow today.

6 Because when I looked outside and I
7 saw that my vehicle was completely covered, I
8 said -- but, you know, since I know this is
9 important, and the mission that we are all on
10 is important.

11 I am disturbed. Last night I had
12 the opportunity to watch National Geographic,
13 and they were talking about a street gang
14 called MS-13. MS-13 has written up on walls
15 in Philadelphia.

16 What concerns me is that a lot -- I
17 mean, we have been here before about violence.
18 Because I remember in the early '70s, when I
19 was part of a gang and I was part of the
20 problem, the violence in the City of
21 Philadelphia, there was a lot of people that
22 worked with us to try to stem the tide to get
23 us out of the violence. And these were people
24 that were credible people in our community.

25 And we made our transitions on to

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2 whatever we was doing, and now to see this
3 come back around.

4 And Dr. Robinson, what he said about
5 the hospitals, I just can't imagine a gang
6 situation in Philadelphia starting back up
7 again, with the availability of guns, weapons,
8 this day.

9 And that threat is upon us, if we
10 don't be in a preventive mood. Because of the
11 changing demographics, of different cultures
12 moving into our city, we are starting to see
13 it on a larger scale.

14 Not just in the neighborhood, but in
15 the schools; on the east of Broad, also down
16 in Southwest Philly and other neighborhoods.

17 Now, you know, I used to -- a lot of
18 times people would say that somebody that
19 worked with gangs, they need to -- they have
20 to have a gang war to work with gangs. It is
21 the same thing with violence.

22 I mean, I have been listening to WRD
23 all the time. And I guess I am biased,
24 because I am on the WRD station. But it
25 seemed like to me a lot of people really don't

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2 understand what's going on in these streets.

3 They really don't understand the
4 magnitude and the level of violence that's in
5 these streets. And to really turn something
6 around, we got to have a plan of action.
7 Like, ten years is a long time. I mean, we
8 got lives going to be lost before ten years.

9 But I know that the response I get
10 from people coming out of prison, repeat
11 offenders, so to say, they are still courting
12 the cycle of crime. That, not given an
13 alternative, where are they going to go but
14 back to where they left?

15 And I know that the honesty that a
16 lot of these people have coming out, just
17 recently the last three months, a lot of older
18 guys that been in jail, been in there for 20
19 years and stuff, a lot of them have came back
20 into the City of Philadelphia, and they want
21 to do something about the violence.

22 I mean, I think that -- and looking
23 across the country, even in Chicago, where
24 they have the former gang members going back
25 into the gang neighborhoods, trying to bring

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2 peace and understanding and change of mindset
3 to young people about how they can make their
4 neighborhood a better place to live and that
5 the violence is senseless because they are
6 killing each other.

7 And that the only way that you are
8 going to change something is that you have to
9 first stop the violence, put the guns down and
10 start dialoguing and communicating.

11 I think that any efforts that's
12 made, you have to really take a serious look
13 at the people that really want to help, that
14 really can relate back into the neighborhoods
15 to these young people; because the
16 neighborhood is where they came from, and they
17 want to come back.

18 They can either come back positive
19 or they can come back in the community
20 negative. And either way, they are going to
21 impact them young people. And we want them to
22 impact them on the positive note.

23 So there are things that can be set
24 up that we are more than willing to try to
25 help with. I don't have no problem with going

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2 back in the neighborhood where I came from and
3 going up on the corner.

4 That was the whole concept of Men
5 United For a Better Philadelphia when it was
6 formed; that, to go back to the corner to
7 offer the young people that standing around
8 doing anything, to give something and give
9 them alternatives. And, of course, that takes
10 resources.

11 So I definitely welcome the
12 Blueprint and the vision of State
13 Representative Dwight Evans, and, of course,
14 yourself, Councilwoman and Councilwoman
15 Blackwell and Miller. Because we need to make
16 some drastic changes. And we need to do them
17 now.

18 So any ideas, of course, that we
19 have, we will be willing to share them. But I
20 would hope that everybody would take our ideas
21 serious.

22 When I say that I want to take
23 somebody that did 25 years for a murder, and
24 he is out on parole, and I want to take him
25 out with me back in the neighborhood to talk

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2 to his young boys about changing their
3 mindset, and that that's a feasible and a
4 doable idea, and it is not nothing to be joked
5 at and laughed at. This is serious.

6 We are in a war in this City of
7 Philadelphia, as well as across the country.
8 And only way, we are going to have to think
9 out of the box on how to change this.

10 Because in the box it is just the
11 same thing over and over again. So if we go
12 out the box, we can make some changes.

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very
14 much for your comments.

15 We know that you have been out there
16 on the street for a long time working with
17 young people, and we appreciate your efforts.

18 We just built, we call it, the Taj
19 Mahal of recreation facilities up in Northwest
20 at Pickering and Gowen.

21 One of the problems we have is, we
22 do not have enough males to help run programs
23 for the young people up there. I mean, we
24 need adults.

25 We can find women, but we need men

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2 to serve as role models to work with the young
3 people in that facility. There is space.

4 So, you know, I think that your idea
5 is doable, and we should talk about how you
6 incorporate those throughout the city.

7 MR. AZIZ: Just have one more
8 comment. The legislator in Harrisburg, I
9 mean, they are trying to pass a bill to take
10 the vote from people that's on probation and
11 parole.

12 When people come out of prison,
13 anything they can do that can enhance their
14 civil -- their citizenship, so to say, and
15 trying to make a change in their lives, and to
16 tell them that they can't participate in an
17 election process, that's just telling them
18 that they are not a citizen.

19 That's telling them that they are
20 still being punished after the fact of them
21 coming out of prison.

22 So I think that, you know, I know
23 this City Council here is not in favor of
24 that. But -- and I know some of the other
25 legislators in Harrisburg, too, are not in

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2 favor this.

3 But this is an attempt to cause us
4 more problems on the public safety issue here
5 in the City of Philadelphia by not granting a
6 person an opportunity for a second chance,
7 even at the polls.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: One of the
9 things that, you see, the purpose behind that
10 is because the majority of the young men,
11 women, in prison are African-Americans. The
12 majority of those people who would register to
13 vote would be Democrats.

14 So it is a political issue to cut
15 down on the number of people who are voting
16 and to control the elections.

17 I think it is terrible. I think the
18 whole issue of trying to have photo ID to
19 register to vote is another way to discourage
20 people and dissuade them from participating in
21 the political process.

22 What we have to do -- and some of us
23 have already done it -- is, let our voices be
24 heard. There is nothing wrong with you all
25 protesting to the members of the legislature.

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2 And you have to tie it in. Tie it
3 in with what they do to people to demoralize
4 them. You know, what are the unintended
5 consequences.

6 First, I think it is a violation of
7 their civil rights to do that. But the other
8 thing is, people act in a vacuum; and they
9 don't understand that their actions and
10 behavior will have ripple effect on a person
11 in other ways.

12 And if you see that, and you know
13 that, you need to let them know. I write them
14 all the time. I always have a letter going to
15 the legislature about something, even though I
16 am a Council person.

17 They may not listen to me, but at
18 least know how I feel about it and give them
19 some -- another perspective. Because they are
20 not here. They are mostly in the outlying
21 communities of Pennsylvania. They have some
22 of the same problems, but they are not to the
23 magnitude that we have them here.

24 So it is very important that not
25 only do you talk to us, but that you talk to

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2 the other 203 people in the House, and there
3 are 50 in the Senate, that you talk to them
4 and write.

5 We don't write. We need to write.
6 We need to gather letters, Mothers in Charge,
7 your group, and let your voice be known that
8 it is not right to do that.

9 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: And I would
10 like to add that you need to write a letter to
11 the Governor asking him to veto the bill.

12 Because it just goes further and
13 further -- in fact, what I have heard from one
14 of the state webs is that each polling place
15 will have a list of felons. And that, when
16 people come to vote, their names have to be
17 checked against that list.

18 And, you know, there is no privacy.
19 I mean, there is all kinds of issues related
20 to that whole process.

21 So I know that some of the state
22 webs have written to the Governor; and that's
23 what you need to do, also. It is important to
24 do that.

25 MR. AZIZ: We already have an

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2 organized effort going on right now.

3 I mean, that's what they did in
4 Florida in 2000. They had the same list at
5 the polls of ex-offenders who weren't supposed
6 to be -- I mean, it is something that was done
7 before. And we are prepared.

8 We already know that we might to go
9 to the court again. We had to go to the court
10 before to get the right to vote back, anyway.
11 So we might have to go through the courts
12 again, and we are prepared to do that.

13 But we have done the necessary
14 things that we had to do as far as sending the
15 letters. We have been up there twice to lobby
16 all the legislature about this 1318 bill that,
17 from what I understand, is being voted on
18 today in Harrisburg in the committee.

19 And it might be voted on tonight for
20 the Senate, for the full Senate.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So that's why
22 it is important to write the Governor, also.
23 Because if it passes -- which the likelihood
24 of it passing is probably great -- then the
25 next step is the Governor's desk.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you all
3 very much. We appreciate it.

4 Versovia Fernandez from the Congreso
5 de Latinos Unidos. Is Bruce Crawley in the
6 house?

7 We will note that Mr. Anthony
8 Fullard was here earlier from the
9 African-American Chamber, and he does plan to
10 return.

11 Good afternoon. Would you state
12 your name for the record.

13 MS. SIBIL DAMAS: My name is Sibil
14 Damas. I am from Congreso de Latinos Unidos.
15 It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon.
16 And we are just going to give you some
17 testimony from Congreso.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: You have to
19 speak real slow so my old years can hear you,
20 and you are going to speak into the mike. I
21 can't hear that fast.

22 I tell you like I tell my
23 granddaughters. They talk real fast. I say,
24 I can't hear that fast. So you have to talk
25 slow for me and Councilwoman Miller.

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2 MS. DAMAS: Congreso de Latinos
3 Unidos has had the honor to work with the
4 Blueprint For a Safer Philadelphia initiative
5 for over a year.

6 Under this program, Congreso has
7 been able to share and contribute its
8 knowledge and expertise with stakeholders of
9 this initiative to help create programs that
10 work against Philadelphia youth violence.

11 Congreso, for over 15 years, has
12 been providing services to victims and
13 perpetrators of crime. In many cases we have
14 successfully reformed youth and adults into
15 becoming healthy and responsible citizens.

16 We have also helped thousands of
17 individuals heal and recover from the trauma
18 and fear caused by violence in our community.

19 Nevertheless, violence and crime
20 operate on a cycle that has passed from
21 generation to generation.

22 Congreso has acknowledged that, in
23 order to break this cycle of violence and
24 crime, we must not only provide the healing
25 and treatment to those victims and

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2 perpetrators, but we also must dedicate many
3 of our efforts to prevent this violence and
4 crime.

5 To do so, we must go to the source
6 of violence and crime at the community level
7 in order to provide healing and treatment
8 before an act is committed.

9 Over the past year, through
10 participation in the Blueprint For A Safer
11 Philadelphia, Congreso has worked with members
12 of community-based organizations, elected and
13 appointed government officials, Philadelphia
14 Police Department, District Attorney, and U.S.
15 Attorney's Office, along with Latino and
16 African-American youth and parents, in an
17 attempt to better define strategies to address
18 and tackle the source of violence in our
19 community.

20 During this time, Congreso has held
21 workshops with members of the Latino and
22 African-American community in Eastern North
23 Philadelphia by providing a forum for
24 constituents to talk about what plagues them
25 in their neighborhoods.

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2 Through discussions about their
3 concerns, Congreso has learned details of
4 violence.

5 For example, a woman confided how
6 unfair it is to have her enter into her own
7 home with the threat from drug dealers saying
8 that they would hurt her children if she
9 called the police.

10 She also told us about how her
11 children hear the drug dealings and violence
12 in their rooms at night, and also that her
13 fear that's imposed on her fails her to follow
14 through with any action.

15 Additionally, through Congreso's
16 multiple youth-development programs, the issue
17 of violence is on the minds of our youth when
18 they consistently ask, why is there violence
19 in my neighborhood and what can you do about
20 it.

21 This desperate cry from the citizens
22 of Philadelphia must be addressed one person
23 at a time through education, awareness, and
24 civic engagement, support that the Blueprint
25 offers.

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2 Our strategy and commitment is to
3 fight crime and violence by identifying the
4 source, providing healing and intervention
5 services to these individuals, and ensuring
6 that there is sufficient positive alternatives
7 for youth.

8 We applaud the vision and efforts
9 behind the Blueprint For A Safer Philadelphia
10 and welcome the opportunity to reduce and
11 eventually eliminate crime and violence
12 through attacking its source.

13 I thank you for giving us the
14 opportunity to speak to you today. Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you. You
16 are doing a wonderful job.

17 Our next panel will be, we had Mr.
18 Wali smith from the NAACP Act-So was here
19 earlier.

20 But we will call Cheryl Mulrain,
21 Happy Hollow Playground Advisory.

22 We have Officer Bryan Coyle with the
23 Police Explorers. Would you like to come
24 forward.

25 And we have Ms. Bonita Cummings,

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 from the Strawberry Mansion Community Concern.

3 We thank you all for your patience.
4 Thank you for staying. When we have hearings
5 like this on a subject of this nature, they
6 tend to go most of the day.

7 So we try to warn those individuals
8 who want to testify that it is a day-long
9 process because the discussion is extensive,
10 and certainly people have a great interest in
11 it.

12 Ms. Mulrain.

13 MS. CHERYL MULRAIN: Good afternoon.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Would you speak
15 into the microphone, please. Pull it forward.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. MULRAIN: Good afternoon. And I
18 would like to thank Councilwoman Donna Reed
19 Miller and Councilwoman Marian Tasco for
20 having this hearing and allowing us to come in
21 and speak today.

22 My name is Cheryl Mulrain. I am the
23 Vice-President of Happy Hollow Advisory
24 Council, and I am also involved in several
25 organizations in my community.

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2 I am here today to testify that the
3 violence in not just in our community, in our
4 city, is indeed out of control. And in the
5 past couple of weeks we have had several
6 shootings in our immediate area along Wayne
7 Avenue. We have had a murder, several
8 shootings.

9 And I am here today in support of
10 the Blueprint hearing, in support of this
11 effort to bring all of these organizations
12 together for some type of resolve on the issue
13 of violence.

14 In working with the children at the
15 recreation center, I see that we are raising a
16 lot of our children, you know, in the streets.
17 We are literally raising them when they come
18 to the center.

19 We have been successful in putting
20 together programs to keep the children off the
21 street. On Thursday and Friday nights we have
22 games. That seems to work temporarily, until
23 the games are over.

24 We have homework help and things
25 like that that we offer also in the evenings,

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2 again to keep the children off the streets and
3 have them in some type of structured activity.
4 We do need support.

5 Our young men have sports and other
6 activities. We lack activities for our young
7 girls in life skills, in mentoring, and other
8 programs that would help them to develop a
9 strong quality of life and special values.

10 I do believe it takes a village to
11 raise a child. And this effort, I believe, is
12 on the right path to bringing everyone
13 together so that we can save our children
14 together.

15 Again, I would like to thank you for
16 having us here to speak today. And I will
17 make this brief. That's all I have to say.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.
19 Thank you very much. Officer Bryan Coyle,
20 police Explorers.

21 Thank you for coming and bringing
22 some of the Explorers. We appreciate your
23 coming early and staying. I hope the
24 testimony has been beneficial.

25 OFFICER BRYAN COYLE: Thank you, and

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2 good afternoon to everyone. Again, my name is
3 Officer Bryan Coyle. I have been on the job
4 for 14 years. I wanted to give you a little
5 brief history on my background.

6 I had three months in the Tactical
7 Response Team. I had four years in the 35th
8 Police District. I had eight years in the
9 Elite Highway Patrol Unit, and patrolling the
10 high-crime areas. And I have over two years
11 in the Traffic Expressway Truck Enforcement
12 Unit.

13 I worked in every part of the city
14 and talked to the young adults in those
15 neighborhoods. They need help, support, and
16 guidance.

17 Through the years, there has been
18 many arrests, but crime still goes on. I know
19 there is a better way. The Blueprint is the
20 first step to make Philadelphia a safer place.

21 I run a program called "Philadelphia
22 Explorers" at the Police Academy. It is for
23 ages 14 to 20. It is a para-military
24 organization. I have been involved with this
25 program for 20 years. I was an Explorer

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2 myself in high school.

3 When I graduated the Police Academy,
4 I took over the Academy's program. The first
5 thing I did, I increased the days, hours, the
6 discipline and the training, and membership
7 grew.

8 The Blueprint came into our lives.
9 The number grew to 85 last year. We were able
10 buy equipment and go on educational tours,
11 trips, and run more training.

12 It was hard for the Blueprint. I
13 used to spend my own time and money onto the
14 program.

15 I am seeing an increase of Explorers
16 coming from single-parent families and from
17 foster families. They are lacking structure,
18 mentors, and love.

19 The teenagers are looking for a
20 place to go, to be accepted, to belong, and
21 perhaps a second family. This is one reason
22 why we have gangs in our neighborhoods.

23 The majority of the Explorers after
24 high school go on to college, law enforcement
25 careers, or into the military.

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2 Right now we are presently working
3 with the school district. They want me to
4 start an after-school program during the year.

5 I received calls from parents asking
6 where can they take their kids, their
7 youngsters, if they could join. If they are
8 too young, I can't accept them. So I try to
9 find them places where they could take their
10 young ones.

11 The Blueprint plan is going to help.
12 It is going to get everybody together, unite
13 them.

14 I could now easily say, you call
15 this number, or you could go on the website,
16 and every Philadelphian is going be to be able
17 to know where to go for help.

18 The program I run is at the Academy
19 every Saturday. And we are increasing the
20 hours, and hopefully this afternoon program is
21 going to take off very soon.

22 They receive training, just like a
23 police recruit would. They are taught
24 discipline. And it furthers their career,
25 their lives, and they find that second family

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2 that they are looking for. And it is not a
3 gang out on the streets. Just want to be
4 accepted.

5 I have some brochures I would like
6 to pass out. If one of the Explorers could
7 take the floor.

8 At this time, if you have any
9 questions, I will be happy to answer any of
10 them.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.

12 Is there a woman Explorer's group,
13 too, girls?

14 OFFICER COYLE: Girls are in it. I
15 would say our membership is 50/50. We have
16 just as many girls as boys.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Right. Well,
18 let the record note that there are four young
19 men who have accompanied Officer Coyle.

20 And we thank you for coming out, and
21 thank you for your testimony.

22 OFFICER COYLE: Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I would like
24 to add that I have actually used the police
25 Explorers and Officer Bryan at some of our

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 community events. And, you know, they are
3 well trained, they are very helpful.

4 And I just want to publicly thank
5 you and the Explorers for helping me. Thank
6 you.

7 OFFICER COYLE: Thank you.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you. Now
9 that I know that, I will use them, too. Thank
10 you so much.

11 Next young lady, Ms. Cummings.

12 MS. BONITA CUMMINGS: Good
13 afternoon, Council members, Councilwoman
14 Blackwell, Tasco, Miller.

15 My name is Bonita Cummings, Director
16 of Strawberry Mansion Community Concern,
17 elected committee woman, 28th Ward, 13th
18 Division, and community activist.

19 Many of us are just learning about
20 the Blueprint. From the documents that I
21 received and studied, it did start in 2004.
22 So, we are primarily just learning of this
23 plan.

24 I just wanted to say that we were
25 fortunate today to hear two women, one being

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 the Professor from Harvard and the District
3 Attorney. And there are two women with
4 different views, it appears, as to how we are
5 going to get there on the ten points in that
6 Blueprint.

7 One, the Professor, seeming to have
8 the humane aspect of our youth and what is
9 happening to them and what is required; and
10 the other arm being a prosecutorial arm.

11 I think we need to keep in mind and
12 have some caution to remember to keep the
13 balance, that humane balance, in how we deal
14 with our children so that we are not just
15 locking with them, with no real program or
16 plan to reenter into our society.

17 Resolution No. 051155 states, "and
18 further authorizing the Committee on Public
19 Safety and Health and Human Services to seek
20 advice and recommendations on how Philadelphia
21 can reduce and eliminate crime affecting the
22 city's youth."

23 I am here today on vacation. As a
24 committee person, I am often approached by
25 families asking me about violence and their

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 children. So I am very glad to be here today
3 to learn that there is some alternatives for
4 those families and those children; and that we
5 try and be more inclusive of the groups and/or
6 communities who to date have not heard about
7 this plan.

8 The Blueprint For A Safer
9 Philadelphia, I have read what documents were
10 made available. The executive summary states
11 that, in 2004, a call was answered and a
12 historic meeting of state legislative leaders,
13 top law enforcement officials from federal,
14 state, and local levels, and community leaders
15 was convened resulting in \$4.2 million in 2004
16 and doubling to \$12.45 million in FY '05 being
17 spent.

18 All of this happened without the
19 larger community, the people of these war-torn
20 communities. Therefore, another opportunity,
21 maybe because of the problems that we have and
22 how severe they are, was lost in 2004 for a
23 true and full comprehensive plan and dialogue
24 to reduce and eliminate crime affecting the
25 city's youth.

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2 Example, successful parents who have
3 navigated their sons and daughters through the
4 battles of Philadelphia and won the war were
5 not brought into the discussion.

6 Time allotted does not allow us to
7 say everything that needs to be said; however,
8 a few points come to mind.

9 One, what have we done as a society
10 that a little innocent baby turns into a
11 gun-toting criminal before he or she is even
12 through his or her puberty years.

13 Two, why have the same agencies
14 mentioned in the Blueprint for a safer
15 Philadelphia -- Alcohol Tobacco Firearms,
16 District Attorney's Office -- not heard the
17 call of the community, when concrete evidence
18 is presented to them about gun sales, loose
19 cigarette sales, and drug sales which come
20 from the cartels on our street corners called
21 retail variety grocery, hot/cold food stores,
22 or, better yet, violent attractive nuisance
23 businesses up and down our so-called
24 commercial corridors. See reports by Bilal
25 Qyuaam.

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2 Three, why have our conscientious
3 African-American professionals, the ones who
4 have the degrees, possess the power and
5 knowledge to nurture our boys and girls back
6 to their right states of mind, not been
7 consulted by the D.A.'s Office, DHS, or the
8 Philadelphia District Attorney; like Dr. Naim
9 Akbar, Dr. Claude Anderson, Ali Salideen of
10 20/20 group, Maulana Karenga, et cetera.

11 Until this respect is given, our
12 babies are going to continue to die on the
13 street of all the major first-class cities
14 because the people they truly need are not a
15 part of the process or dialogue.

16 Why is there no mention in the
17 Blueprint report about gun runners, illegal
18 purchases from gun manufacturers? See the
19 movie Lord of War with Nicholas Cage.

20 Why is there no mention of just how
21 across the borders of Mexico guns, drugs, and
22 now even tunnels are making its way to the
23 United States? See Nightline, January 5,
24 2006.

25 Why is there no mention of just how

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2 these youth are getting weapons, like AK 47s,
3 and then being seduced into these acts of
4 violence?

5 Why in the written report is there
6 no mention of Hollywood and its glamorizing of
7 the gangster rap and gun violence and Clear
8 Channel and its excessive negative billboard
9 advertisement of alcohol and tobacco?

10 The report is not completely
11 comprehensive; in fact, it is lopsided.

12 We would ask the D.A. that some of
13 the dollars go into the homes of these
14 families; that they can rehabilitate the
15 parents, as much of the blame has been placed
16 on the family or the household.

17 So we would like to ask that, as
18 they move forward, that they do put money into
19 the actual households of these violent youth.

20 However, one good thing in the
21 report is the mention of a program in Detroit,
22 Hand Gun Intervention Program, which offers
23 services, such as drug and alcohol counseling
24 and job training and placement, as a
25 prerequisite to bail.

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2 The rich get rich from the
3 unsuspecting and the poor. To truly
4 effectuate change, to truly effectuate change,
5 everyone has to take responsibility.

6 Maybe, just maybe, we as a society
7 have gone too far. Now how do we get back to
8 sanity and save our children, black and white
9 alike, who are the future?

10 Lastly, as we are in the budget
11 hearing process, we should be looking very
12 closely at the effectiveness as it relates to
13 youth violence and enforcement at DHS, D.A.'s
14 Office, L & I, Health Department, but
15 especially the School District of Philadelphia
16 who will be testifying about why we should
17 fund them.

18 I contend that City Council should
19 know that, if we do not put phonics back into
20 the school system, we are continuing to
21 perpetuate illiteracy.

22 Phonics works. And presently the
23 only way for our children to get it is to pay
24 hundreds of dollars, and it is called Hooked
25 On Phonics.

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2 A child that can't read is more
3 likely to get confused, pick up a gun, and
4 commit a murder.

5 We also should be looking at
6 community groups. Just maybe the activity
7 grants dollars and the taxpayer dollars that
8 some of them receive can put a 45-minute dance
9 class, arts, or anger-management class back
10 into the school district curriculum on school
11 premises.

12 Youth engage in positive and
13 interesting classes during school hours are
14 less likely to pick up a gun and shoot
15 someone. These measures are proactive.

16 And I do thank you for the
17 opportunity. And I would appreciate that, as
18 they move forward, that the families,
19 neighborhoods, and residents who have not been
20 made aware of this plan, the ten-point
21 Blueprint, that we can find a way to get
22 inclusive so that we all can have the advice
23 and have a voice so that nothing is left out,
24 no stones are unturned.

25 The violence is -- it just fills me

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2 up. Like, my heart is just totally broken.

3 And for every mother who loses a son, we all
4 lose sons.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you so
7 much for your testimony.

8 Let me say that when the meeting was
9 called about the Blueprint, as far as I know,
10 they tried to be as inclusive as possible with
11 all the community organizations who were
12 involved in dealing with children and
13 families.

14 This is not a plan that is, this is
15 the plan. This is a Blueprint for us to
16 develop the plans.

17 So today we are having this hearing
18 in City Council as a beginning, so that we
19 could have people come in and offer their
20 recommendations as to what needs to be done.
21 Because it is an evolving and ongoing process.

22 So we are not saying this is the
23 Blueprint, and this is what's going to happen.
24 These are ideas that came from a number of
25 people who met for months -- as you heard Dr.

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06

2 Stith say, they met in August -- who all had
3 different thoughts about different things.
4 And, of course, I guess they had to come down
5 with something.

6 But it is a Blueprint. It isn't the
7 final report, and this is what we are going to
8 do. This is a way to segue into dealing with
9 the issue of violence.

10 We do plan to go into the various
11 communities and neighborhoods, to have input
12 from people who live in those communities,
13 because one community's problems may not be
14 the same as another community's.

15 Then, when we come back, how do we
16 address those issues we have heard in the
17 community.

18 You raise some very worthwhile
19 issues. Some of them maybe we could deal with
20 on a local level, some of them are national
21 issues.

22 But certainly you have given serious
23 thought to this, and I appreciate it. I read
24 your commentaries. You are a very thoughtful
25 woman and certainly have some thoughtful

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 questions and arguments, and some reasonable
3 solutions.

4 So certainly you will be notified
5 when we do the work in the neighborhoods. And
6 I do believe it is going to be done on
7 legislative districts. I'm not sure about
8 that. I am not in charge of the Blueprint.

9 I just thought we needed to have a
10 discussion about it here, beginning in City
11 Council, because we haven't had the real
12 public discussion about it.

13 But you will be involved, and
14 certainly I appreciate your comments. And
15 your comments will be a part of the record,
16 which we will share with those individuals who
17 have been working on the Blueprint.

18 MS. CUMMINGS: Thank you. We do
19 appreciate it, and we look forward to
20 participating.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: And I would
22 like to add, too, that it is my understanding
23 that people were invited from all over across
24 the city. And it is hard to get the name or
25 number of every group. But your name is on

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06

2 record now.

3 MS. CUMMINGS: I am a committee
4 person. So if that's a part of the structure
5 of mailing --

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I don't think
7 they were actually mailed out to individual
8 committee people. I don't think that.

9 MS. CUMMINGS: Okay.

10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: But if you
11 make sure to Tim Spritzer, right there, if Tim
12 has your information, then he will make sure
13 that you are a part, your group will be
14 notified when there are meetings and et
15 cetera.

16 I personally want to thank you,
17 Bonita and Cheryl and Officer Bryan, for
18 coming in today.

19 I think the Blueprint is, you know,
20 going to really help make a difference here in
21 Philadelphia. And the more people that can
22 get involved, the better it will be.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASCIO: And I
24 appreciate Tim is sitting here. And what we
25 ought to do, and probably will do -- again, I

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 am not a part of that structure to organize
3 it -- but to notify all of the committee
4 people and block captains, because they are
5 the connectors to the community, as well as
6 the community organizations in the
7 neighborhood, that they be put on the mailing
8 list.

9 And that's how we have the crime
10 bill, is to let people know through that
11 process.

12 MS. CUMMINGS: I appreciate it.
13 Because we are often asked by community
14 residents about groups and resources, so this
15 helps us to know.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Sure. Thank
17 you.

18 Thank you so much for coming in,
19 Officer Bryan, we appreciate it.

20 Is there anyone else here to testify
21 on this resolution?

22 There being no other individuals to
23 testify, this committee will stand in recess
24 until the call of the Chairs.

25 Thank you very much. We thank

1 BILLS NO. 051155 and 051182 - 2/13/06
2 everybody for participating. We thank WRD for
3 broadcasting this program today to the public,
4 and thank the President for allowing it to be
5 on television.

6 Thank you all very much.

7 (Hearing adjourned at 2:15 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
foregoing proceedings of the Council of the
City of Philadelphia of Monday, February 13,
2006, were reported fully and accurately by
me, and that this is a correct transcript of
same.

RE: COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DEBRA A. WHITEHEAD