



*Hundreds of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement
Leaders, and Violence Survivors
Preventing Crime and Violence*

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Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Committee on Children and Youth

Public Hearing on the Importance of Afterschool Programs

August 5, 2008

Testimony by:

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on behalf of

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *PENNSYLVANIA*

Chairman Bishop, Chairman Rubley and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Michael J. Carroll. For nineteen years, I have served as the Chief of Police for West Goshen Township in Chester County. I am currently the 2nd Vice President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and am a former President of the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association. I am also a member of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS—an organization of over 4,000 police chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs and violence survivors dedicated to examining the research on what works to keep kids from becoming criminals.

When violence occurs, punishment is important and necessary. But we must also invest in proven approaches that keep at-risk kids from committing crimes in the first place. The research, and my experience in law enforcement, show that quality afterschool programs do just that.

When the school bell rings, millions of children and teens head to the street with neither constructive activities nor supervision by caring, responsible adults—and violent juvenile crime soars. Research from across the country consistently shows that on school days, the hours from 3 to 6 pm are also the peak hours when

children are most likely to become victims of crime, be in an automobile accident, smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs.

Fortunately, quality afterschool programs can cut crime and transform the “prime time for juvenile crime” into hours of academic enrichment, constructive recreation and community service. For example, in a study conducted in several U.S. cities, five housing projects without Boys & Girls Clubs were compared to five receiving new clubs. At the beginning, drug activity and vandalism were the same. But by the time the study ended, the projects without the programs had 50 percent more vandalism and scored 37 percent worse on drug activity. An evaluation of an anti-gang Boys & Girls Club approach found that the high-risk children and teens in these clubs showed decreases in several gang and delinquent behaviors. These youth also exhibited positive changes in their engagement or achievement in school.

A study of San Francisco’s Bayview Safe Haven afterschool program found that, among kids with prior histories of arrest, those who did not participate in the program were twice as likely to be arrested during the six-month initial intervention period as program participants. Among kids with no prior histories of

arrest, those who did not participate were three times more likely than participants to be arrested during the same intervention period.

When we invest in what works it has a big pay-off. Professor Mark A. Cohen, of Vanderbilt University, estimates that for each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime, the country saves up to \$7 million.

Despite the clear evidence that quality afterschool programs can prevent crime and improve other youth outcomes, there remains a dramatic shortage of afterschool programs in Pennsylvania. According to the Afterschool Alliance, while 26%, or about 570,000 of Pennsylvania's school-age children are unsupervised afterschool, only 9%, or about 197,000 of K-12 youth are able to participate in afterschool programs.

The primary source in Pennsylvania of funding dedicated to supporting afterschool programs is the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Unfortunately, Congress is considering a proposal to cut federal money for afterschool programs by \$300 million – a 27% cut. That's one out of every four kids now served who would be out on the streets after school. The proposed cut in funding for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program would

result in 300,000 fewer kids nationwide served by the program. Pennsylvania would have to absorb its share of these cuts.

These cuts would be particularly difficult given the fact that Pennsylvania invests virtually no money of its own in quality afterschool programs and does not have a coordinated statewide plan to make them available to more youth. Continuing to not fund afterschool opportunities for at-risk youth makes our communities and all our citizens more vulnerable to crime—with all of crime's financial and human costs.

Government's most fundamental responsibility at all levels is to protect the public safety. I commend this Committee for drawing attention to the importance of afterschool programs in Pennsylvania, and I urge the General Assembly to begin funding quality afterschool programs that offer kids constructive activities during the peak hours of juvenile crime.

Thank you for including me in today's hearing. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.