

**GANGS IN OUR COMMUNITIES: DRUGS, HUMAN
TRAFFICKING, AND VIOLENCE**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM,
HOMELAND SECURITY, AND INVESTIGATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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GANGS IN OUR COMMUNITIES: DRUGS, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, AND VIOLENCE

THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2017

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, HOMELAND SECURITY, AND
INVESTIGATIONS

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 2141, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. James F. Sensenbrenner, Jr. [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Sensenbrenner, Goodlatte, Chabot, Poe, Rutherford, Jackson Lee, Bass, and Lieu.

Staff Present: Margaret Barr, Counsel; Scott Johnson, Clerk; Joe Graupensperger, Minority Chief Counsel, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations; Monalisa Dugue, Minority Deputy Chief Counsel, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations; Veronica Eligan, Minority Professional Staff Member; Mauri Gray, Minority Crime Detailee; and Regina Milledge-Brown, Minority Crime Detailee.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. It is now 10 o'clock. The Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security will come to order. Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare recesses of the subcommittee at any time.

And let me say that we are to vote between 10:45 and 10:50. I will not make an opening statement, but put my opening statement into the record. I will ask every other member to allow us to hear the witnesses so that they all are able to get their testimony in before we have to leave to go and vote. So without objection, all opening statements will be placed into the record at this time.

We have a very distinguished panel this morning, and I will begin by swearing in our witnesses before introducing them.

Would you all please rise and raise your right hand?

Do you solemnly swear the testimony you are about to give to this committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Let the record show that all of the witnesses have answered in the affirmative.

I will give an abbreviated introduction for all of the witnesses so that we can hear them and get to as many questions as possible.

The first witness is Kenneth Blanco, who is the acting assistant attorney general for the Criminal Division in the Department of Justice. The second witness is Mr. Marc Vanek, who is a board advisory member for the Illinois Chapter of the Midwest Gang Investigators Association. The third witness is Captain Chris Marks from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. And our fourth witness is Dr. Gary Slutkin, who is the founder of Cure Violence, a nongovernment organization based in Chicago.

We will now proceed under the 5-minute rule.

And Mr. Blanco, you are first.

TESTIMONY OF MR. KENNETH BLANCO, ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE CRIMINAL DIVISION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE; MR. MARC VANEK, BOARD ADVISORY MEMBER, MIDWEST GANG INVESTIGATORS ASSOCIATION, ILLINOIS CHAPTER; CAPTAIN CHRIS MARKS, LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT; AND DR. GARY SLUTKIN, FOUNDER, CURE VIOLENCE

TESTIMONY OF KENNETH BLANCO

Mr. BLANCO. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Goodlatte, Chairman Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member Jackson Lee, and members of the subcommittee. It is a pleasure to appear before you this morning to discuss the Department of Justice's efforts to combat gang violence.

Violent crime is on the rise in many parts of America. Gang violence is increasingly in the headlines and news cycles every day in its frequency and its effect in the communities and its effect on innocent people who get caught in the crossfire.

There are approximately 1.4 million members of 33,000 gangs operating across the country, all of whom use violence to boost their illegal money-making activities, protect their territories, intimidate their rivals, and enhance their status and fulfill their missions.

Too many of our citizens live in fear of these violent criminals. All Americans deserve to be free from violence and safe in their homes, schools, jobs, and neighborhoods.

This is why it is a top priority of the Department of Justice, under the leadership of Attorney General Sessions, to reduce violent crime in America, including gang-related violence.

Reducing crime requires that we balance strong law enforcement with effective prevention measures. We must take the violent offenders off the street and thwart gangs' efforts to recruit vulnerable youth.

To achieve the first of these twin aims, the Department relies on the expertise of its Federal prosecutors and law enforcement agents, including the Criminal Division's Organized Crime and Gang Section, the Narcotic and Dangerous Drug section, the U.S. Attorneys' Offices, as well as its law enforcement agencies, like the ATF, FBI, DEA, and U.S. Marshals Service, and other law enforcement partners, such as the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, HSI, and State, local, and Tribal law enforcement partners.

Federal prosecutors and their law enforcement partners lead investigations and prosecutions of criminal gangs of regional, na-

tional, and international significance, such as the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, the Gangster Disciples, and the MS-13, to name just a few.

Prosecutors and investigators have prioritized violent crime and are working to identify the most violent offenders in their districts and to ensure that individuals are prosecuted fully and sentenced appropriately, including under applicable Federal, State guidelines and significant penalties under the law.

Many gangs distribute dangerous illegal drugs to generate income to support their criminal activities, and with drug distribution comes violence. Thus, when appropriate, Federal prosecutors also seek to charge gang members and the foreign kingpins who supply them with drug offenses.

None of these investigations and prosecutions, however, would be possible without the daily sacrifice of the dedicated law enforcement officers who investigate these criminals. Specialized task forces comprised of Federal, State, local, and Tribal law enforcement officers, such as the FBI's Safe Streets Task Forces, HSI's Operation Community Shield, and those funded by the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Forces Program are hard at work in the areas with the highest concentration of drug and gang violence.

Law enforcement efforts to arrest and incarcerate violent gang members have a significant impact on the quality of life in our communities. But enforcement alone will not end gang membership and gang violence. We must also support gang intervention and gang prevention programs.

Many such programs are funded by the Department's grant-making components, including the Office of Justice Programs, OJP, and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, COPS.

For example, OJP's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Bureau of Justice Assistance jointly fund the National Gang Center, which provides comprehensive resources, training, and strategic tools to those in the field of law enforcement and criminal justice, as well as to the community organizations to prevent gang violence, reduce gang involvement, and suppress gang-related crime.

These are just but a few examples of the Department's continued commitment to supporting our Federal, State, local, and Tribal enforcement partners and ending the scourge of gang violence in our communities.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The testimony of Mr. Blanco follows:]

INSERT 1-1

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Thanks very much, Mr. Blanco.

I forgot to ask this. I ask unanimous consent that all of the witnesses' written statements be placed in the record in full.

Mr. Vanek.

TESTIMONY OF MARC VANEK

Mr. VANEK. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the subcommittee, for inviting me today

to speak about gangs in our community. It is an honor and privilege to be here today.

I currently serve on the board for the Midwest Gang Investigators Association, Illinois Chapter. The Midwest Gang Investigators Association was formed in 1987 and is an organization with over 2,000 members representing 12 States throughout the Midwest. It is a collaborative association whose mission is to develop and recommend strategies to prevent and control gang crime, administer professional training, as well as assist criminal justice professionals, educators, probation/parole, and the public regarding gangs in their communities.

For the last 17 years, I have been employed as a full-time sworn law enforcement officer in the Midwest with extensive experience in investigating street gangs on both the State and Federal level.

Street gangs today are different than the gangs of 10, 20, even 30 years ago. Presently, street gangs are more violent, more technological-savvy, factionalized, and glorified. Street gangs have increased their prominence over juveniles and drug addicts in their day-to-day operations.

Social media, the internet, television, and the explosion of the gangster rap culture has glorified the gang lifestyle to juveniles. In African American gangs factionalization has become the norm in the street gang life with no longer a strict hierarchy.

Presently, gangs have factions that number into the hundreds. In Chicago, for example, one gang has over 200 factions operating in the city of Chicago and dozens more in the metropolitan area. In many suburban areas, every block has its own faction or what is being called a hybrid gang.

A hybrid gang, or gang faction, consists of a younger generation of gang members, gang members of different racial/ethnic groups, and gang members that were or are from different gangs. These hybrid gangs have unclear codes of conduct, no hierarchy, or no symbolic association with more than one gang.

The Hispanic gangs have largely remained under control of a strict hierarchy. The Hispanic gangs are still committed to their codes, colors, and territory and loyalty to their gang. The Hispanic gangs still abide by the People and Folks Nation alliances from the late 1970s.

Gang members prey on individuals that cannot help themselves by getting them addicted to a certain drug and then routinely provide them with that drug. Gang members have become the staple for supply of fentanyl and carfentanyl into the streets. Just a quarter of a milligram of fentanyl can kill you almost instantly. Carfentanyl is 10,000 times stronger than morphine and 100 times stronger than fentanyl.

The younger generation of gang members are more tech savvy than ever before. The internet and social media have made it enormously easier for gang members to reach a larger customer base than selling on the street corner. At any time, I can go onto the internet or social media and within seconds interact with a gang member to purchase any type of drug I wish. I have personally investigated these types of crimes, and it has become chilling to the extent of the amounts and variety of drugs that are available to be purchased as well as weapons.

The cause of gang violence stems from several factors, such as fighting over selling drugs, comments made on social media, rap song lyrics that each gang creates about their rivals, and in particular Hispanic gangs fighting over colors and territory.

Gang members have taken violence within their communities to a higher level than ever seen before. In today's gang world, juveniles and innocent bystanders are being shot and killed more than ever. Gang members today view targeting a rival gang's family as just a worthy target as targeting the individual gang member themselves.

In areas like the State of Illinois, County of Cook, when an individual is shot and either a victim or a witness makes a positive identification of that offender and the victim does not wish to prosecute, the offender is not charged with the offense. In fact, often the offender is not charged with any crime.

Another hindrance for law enforcement is getting overworked and resource-drained prosecutors to approve charges on gang cases based on the facts and merits of the case rather than what it is believed a judge or jury will view on.

The biggest obstacle for law enforcement is getting witnesses to cooperate in any type of gang-related investigation. Law enforcement does not have the immediate resources available to relocate or provide assistance to witnesses. Without any assistance or incentives, how can we expect witnesses to come forward and place their lives and families in harm's way?

There are technological advances that can help law enforcement on gang-related and shooting murder scenes. Ammunition, when fired from, leaves a unique fingerprint-type mark in semi- and fully-automatic firearms. Requiring samples from all semi-automatic or fully automatic firearms entered into the NIBIN system would provide law enforcement investigators with new immediate leads that would allow law enforcement to be able to stem the proliferation of gun straw purchasers to street gang members.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. Law enforcement cannot be the sole answer to reducing gang violence. Law enforcement is only part of the solution to reducing gang violence. Prosecutors and judges must be held accountable as well as law enforcement is with the rise in gang violence. Law enforcement, the judicial system, government, and social and economic programs and community involvement are all central to reducing gang violence. Not one entity can solve it alone or take credit. It must be a coordinated effort on all parties.

I look forward to answering your questions that you might have about gangs and look forward to working with members of the subcommittee to ensure success in reducing gang violence.

Thank you.

[The testimony of Mr. Vanek follows.]

INSERT 1-2

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Thank you, Mr. Vanek.
Captain Marks.

TESTIMONY OF CHRIS MARKS

Captain MARKS. Chairman Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member Jackson Lee, distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the Major County Sheriffs of America, Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell, and all the partners who comprise the Los Angeles Regional Human Trafficking Task Force, thank you for inviting me to testify this morning on street gang members and sex trafficking.

The Los Angeles Regional Human Trafficking Regional Task Force combines the resources of local, State, and Federal law enforcement with the prosecutorial authority of the Los Angeles district attorney and the U.S. Attorney's Office with a truly victim-centered approach.

The combination of resources, including the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Los Angeles County Probation Department, California Department of Corrections, and a nonprofit coalition against slavery and trafficking, are all co-located in the same office, literally sitting next to each other.

Our co-location model breaks down the previously established silos between agencies and brings together systems of discipline to address the victim's needs through a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach. The task force employs a regionalized strategy that crosses jurisdictional boundaries to identify and rescue victims of sex trafficking while aggressively pursuing traffickers and buyers.

For generations, criminal street gangs have pursued and have succeeded in criminal enterprises. However, the street gangs historically operated their enterprises within an established territory. Their willingness to commit crimes out of their geographical areas was generally limited to violence against rival gangs and property crimes.

For the past several years, gangs have moved beyond their territorial boundaries and travel throughout the State in teams or as crews, as they're known, to commit residential burglaries and robberies.

Los Angeles gangs began utilizing the flocking tactic. In flocking, criminal street gang members from a single gang or multiple gangs, and sometimes even rival gangs, join together, travel throughout the southland, and commit residential burglaries by forcing entry into a house in overwhelming numbers and in less than a minute or 2 commit the crime.

Now criminal street gang members are proliferating in the illegal sex trafficking market. Gang members have realized the lucrative opportunity sex trafficking offers throughout Los Angeles County. In the majority of cases that we handle, the traffickers are a gang member or an affiliate of a gang.

The crime of trafficking commercially sexually exploited children presents a relatively low risk of arrest for the gang member engaged in sex trafficking. Previous illegal enterprises, such as illegal narcotics, weapons, and stolen property place the possessor in immediate threat of arrest due to the mere possession of such contraband. For sex traffickers, being in the presence of a commercially sexually exploited child is not a crime.

To add to the complexity of this issue, the commercially sexually exploited child victim commonly does not want to cooperate with law enforcement initially because of that strong trauma bond they have with their trafficker.

An additional motivating factor for gangs to pursue sex trafficking is the fact that narcotics, weapons, and property can only be sold once. And as we all know, sex trafficking victims can be sold multiple times a day every day of the weeks.

In Los Angeles County and throughout California, gang members operate sex trafficking victims both independently and for the benefit of the gang, and frequently the gang members will travel to any community to recruit sex trafficking victims. And they will also travel to any community to sell their trafficking victims either online, on the street, or in a motel, without fear of retaliation for violating another gang's territory.

However, in certain geographically claimed areas of Los Angeles, some gangs require the sex trafficking victims to pay a tax in order to work in that area. The practice of taxing is a common means of gaining money for the benefit of a gang and has historically been employed against small businesses. The tax for sex workers has not been uniformly adopted throughout Los Angeles or California.

Street gang members commonly possess unique abilities to identify vulnerable populations online, at schools, or in public places. These vulnerable people, typically young girls, have often suffered physical, sexual, or psychological abuse and/or neglect throughout their lives.

The predatory senses of a gang member engaged in trafficking easily identify this population, and their gang membership is used to glorify the lifestyle and the acts of prostitution as a powerful recruitment tool. The gang member then expertly manipulates the vulnerable child using his affiliation to demonstrate his willingness and ability as a criminal to be capable of committing violence to protect them. Once recruited, the gang member exerts control over the trafficking victim through physical, psychological abuse and an atmosphere of dependency.

I want to thank the subcommittee and its staff for affording me the opportunity to testify before you today.

[The testimony of Captain Marks follows:]

INSERT 1-3

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Thank you, Captain Marks.
Dr. Slutkin.

TESTIMONY OF GARY SLUTKIN

Dr. SLUTKIN. Chairman Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member Jackson Lee, distinguished members, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I'm Dr. Gary Slutkin. I'm a physician and the founder and executive director of Cure Violence. Cure Violence is an NGO rated 12th in the world among the top 500 NGOs and ranked first among organizations devoted to reducing violence.

I previously worked for the World Health Organization where I learned the tools of working on epidemics, epidemics of TB, AIDS, and cholera, mostly in Africa. I returned to the U.S. in 1995 and

began working on violence in this country. We discovered that new research shows that violence is not exactly what we thought. It's an epidemic problem like other health epidemics, but it isn't being managed that way.

We've also learned that there are new methods that work that can help that have a big impact. These methods are being greatly underutilized.

The main thing about violence is to see that the persons and groups doing this have a contagious process which can be reversed. We have to shake some of our old ideas. Dozens of studies show that violence is predictably acquired as a contagious problem through brain mechanisms and pathways that cause copying and following what peers do. The definitive evidence for this is in this Institute of Medicine Report of 2013.

This violence spreads among individuals and groups and families, even suicides, and extremist recruitment also happens in this way. The violence in the U.S. and Latin America is following very basic epidemic patterns, like all epidemic diseases.

We took advantage of this first in Chicago in the year 2000 when we tried standard epidemic control health methods in a pilot in West Garfield Park, which was the most violent community in the country at that time. We hired and trained epidemic control workers, who we called interrupters, behavior change agents, outreach workers. We got a 67 percent drop in shootings and killings in the first year, and it was almost immediate.

Funders said do it again. We had four more replications with 45 percent, on average, drops in shootings and killings. Since then, there have been several independent evaluations in the work, and it's spread to 25 cities in the U.S. as well as in Latin America.

These results are attained by health workers similar to those that are used for other epidemics. Health departments or other government agencies supervise this work. In New York City, Baltimore, and Kansas City, the health department runs it. In Honduras, it is a local pastor. In Mexico, a public-private partnership. In El Salvador, a partnership with Save the Children.

The results are usually 25 to 50 percent drops in shootings and killings, but 70 to 100 percent are seen when there are enough workers. Approximately 40 to 70 percent has been seen in Chicago alcoholic; 30 to 50 percent drops in Baltimore; 50 percent in Juarez, Mexico; and 88 percent in San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

It also can be fast, with results shown within the first month multiple times. Several communities have also gone to zero for a year to 2 years. Some of these communities include Cherry Hill in Baltimore and Yonkers in New York. This is what you aim for in epidemic control.

When I was working on a cholera epidemic in Somalia, we were not aiming for 40 to 70 percent drops. We were aiming to get rid of it, like for Ebola. There are many accomplishments in public health with these measures in which many diseases and problems are no longer with us.

A few last things. Chicago has gone up and down in relation to the public health work. There is a 20-page report on this on our website. The ups and downs in Chicago have mostly been related

to the ups and downs in the State of Illinois budget, which, as you know, was without a budget for the last 2 years.

When Cure Violence lost 13 or 14 sites in March of 2015, it was exactly the turning point in Chicago when the violence began to go up. This one site that remained has continued to go down.

Last, the stream of unoccupied children and others from Latin America are fleeing violence. We are getting big reductions in Latin America with this method and can help a lot there as well as in our cities. This solution, public health methods, is an entirely non-political and free of prior controversy solution which has been underutilized by prior administrations. I suggest we change this.

Understanding violence as a contagious epidemic and reversible health problem solves a lot of our problems and could save tens of billions of dollars. Law enforcement now is being asked to do way too much. It is also being blamed too much. And we can help.

Thank you.

[The testimony of Dr. Slutkin follows:]

INSERT 1-4

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Thank you very much, Dr. Slutkin.

The chair will revert to what he did during his previous chairmanship, and that is recognize members under the 5-minute rule in the order in which they appeared alternately between the majority and the minority parties. I would ask members to keep their questioning to 5 minutes. And in case the bell rings early, I will withhold my questions to see if we have time after all the other members ask questions.

So the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Poe, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. I thank the chairman.

Thank all you all for being here.

In my other life, I was a prosecutor and a criminal court judge for 22 years, so I want to address my questions to specifically the scourge of human trafficking that, Captain Marks, you mentioned, and, Mr. Vanek, you mentioned as well.

The average age, I understand, for a trafficking victim is 13. It's a female. Is that correct, Captain Marks?

Captain MARKS. That's published in many articles and studies. However, what we see at the Los Angeles task force, generally the age that we encounter them is 15, 16, and 17.

Mr. POE. Okay. And as you said, trafficking, sex human trafficking and sex victims, is lucrative because the victims, unfortunately, are abused and used multiple times a day, some cases 20, 25 times a day, the risk of apprehension is less and, until recently, the punishment has been less for capturing the traffickers.

The new legislation that Congress has passed now not only goes after the trafficker, but goes after the buyer, who ought to be in jail, the consumer, and helps rescue victims of crime and restores them back to some dignity.

Explain to me so that it's very clear, anyone, but start with Captain Marks, how prevalent is human sex trafficking in the gang culture?

Captain MARKS. Well, in preparation for today's testimony, yesterday I asked one of my crime analysts to scour through different

social media sites and pull up recent ads that I could use as talking points. One of the ads she pulled up was a gang member as a pimp who is looking for girls to recruit.

Within an hour of conversation with an undercover deputy sheriff, we had made an arrangement, posing as an underage girl, to meet him and to go to work for him, and we had arrested him a couple hours after meeting with him.

So it's frighteningly prevalent. Literally, the more we look, the more we find. Every time we go online and advertise either as an underage girl, we get all kinds of reactions and interactions from people wanting to be sex traffickers for those girls.

Mr. POE. Mr. Vanek, do you want to comment on that?

Mr. VANEK. I couldn't agree more. With the use of social media and the internet, it's become increasingly easier for these gang members to reach out and connect with anyone, any female that could be from the suburbs or even in their own neighborhood. It's just as simple as going on your cell phone, which everybody has now, and placing an ad.

Mr. POE. To your knowledge, have you seen ads placed on Backpage that had been used to further the criminal conduct of human sex trafficking?

Mr. VANEK. Yes. Backpage, Facebook, Craigslist, all of those are utilized.

Mr. POE. And my question really is, help me understand how prevalent this problem is. I've heard anecdotally, it's easy to recruit and get these girls into sex slavery. But how prevalent is it?

Mr. VANEK. It's basically an everyday occurrence. You'll have a younger female that has no means, no ways about providing for themselves. It's an everyday occurrence in these high-crime gang areas. And they look for options. And a lot of times, the option is getting into the sex trafficking and their connection to the gang member.

Mr. POE. Foreign gangs, in my opinion, operate in the United States. MS-13 is a perfect example. In the immigrant community, how prevalent is this sex trafficking of immigrants that have come into the United States?

Captain Marks.

Captain MARKS. Yes, sir.

So the commercial sexual exploitation of children is basically a domestic problem for us with the gang members. The girls that they're recruiting, that they're putting to work as commercial sex workers are homegrown. They're American citizens. Where we see foreign victims is generally when we get into illicit massage businesses.

But to answer your question, it's a homegrown problem, and we have a huge vulnerable population. The road that these victims take once they become a commercially sexually exploited victim is usually a lifetime of abuse. So they're a very vulnerable population.

Mr. POE. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. The gentleman's time has expired.

The gentlewoman from Texas, Ms. Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank Mr. Conyers and Mr. Goodlatte for their commitment to this work that I have generated over the

past period that I've had the privilege of serving as the ranking member of this committee. Let me thank Mr. Sensenbrenner for his years of commitment and dedication to these issues and look forward to driving solutions.

My level of frustration is high because it is long overdue for holistic criminal justice reform, Captain, in helping you and all of the witnesses here. And let me thank all the witnesses.

Mr. Blanco, very quickly, we are seeking to reauthorize the juvenile block grant, which, as you well know, is a tool that the DOJ has working with juveniles, which we are trying to emphasize best practices. Would that be helpful to you, reauthorization, new ideas, best practices, and using that block grant reauthorization?

Mr. BLANCO. Madam Congressperson, unfortunately, I'm not familiar exactly with that block grant. But I can tell you that I know that the Attorney General is interested in using all kinds of ideas in order to better the community and save our streets and protect our citizens and our victims. But I can't specifically answer that.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. No problem. We'll take that as a yes. Thank you very much.

Let me ask the good doctor. Thank you so very much. And for the other witnesses, I'm going to allow my colleagues to pointedly ask you question, but I'm going to thank you.

Doctor, I'm frustrated. You have given me an opportunity to focus in on several questions.

First, I'd like to lay the groundwork. Mr. Blanco said that juveniles are used, are being used as pawns to carry out the bad deeds of gang leaders. There is the crux. I think in your statement you indicated violence goes from brain to brain, from 12-year-old brain to 13-year-old brain, 13-year-old brain back to 14, and on.

Focus on the reality of us using your program and the potential of it having major impact. My first point is, have you ever been embraced by the Department of Justice as a tool that could be used across the country?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Is your mike on?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yes, we have been funded by the Department of Justice. We have been regularly highlighted by the Department of Justice.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Are you now funded?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yes, through a partnership for and the Victims of Crime Act.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. And where are you using that funding?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Multiple cities. I think it's about 20 cities. And we have also just been asked to present at their next forum.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So would you be kind enough to provide us—I'm not sure if it's in your testimony—the list of cities and results of those cities?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yes. Samples of it are in the written testimony, and more can be provided.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. And if we were to expand your opportunities through funding, you could expand to other cities and you could present results?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yeah. Absolutely. And we would be reporting to the committee as well as whatever funders there would be.

I just want to add that this is additive to law enforcement. There is nothing except synergy here. And this is why we've been able to get this good result.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let's give me an example. Why don't you articulate, even though it's in your statement, what you did in Chicago. Because Chicago's image is there is nothing good happening in Chicago. Help me with Cure Violence and how it cures and how it helps. Give me the A, B, C.

Dr. SLUTKIN. Well, I mean, the way that it works is primarily by hiring interrupters and outreach workers. These are new categories of workers. These are people who have credibility and access and trust with the population. The population that is about to do a shooting tonight or today, we have access to them and can cool them down. These workers are very highly selected and super-trained, hundreds of hours of training. They know how to cool someone down, buy some time, and then shift their thinking, so they feel socially okay to not do a shooting.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Give me an example of a worker. Don't give their name, but age, race.

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yeah. The workers are a little bit older than those who are doing the shooting, as it turns out. And frequently they come from the same lifestyle and the same background, so that's why they have the credibility and trust.

And this is the way we work in public health. We use sex workers to reach—former sex workers to reach sex workers and moms to reach moms, et cetera. So they're people who have this kind of access and trust and, therefore, they're not at risk themselves.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Now, are they African American? Are they Hispanic?

Dr. SLUTKIN. If they're in an African American community, they're African American.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So you use the indigenous, if I might use the terminology, people.

Mr. SLUTKIN. One hundred percent. All epidemics are managed from the inside out, not from the outside in.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. And you've seen the results of statistics of crime going down?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Violence.

Mr. SLUTKIN. Yes. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you very much.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. The time of the gentlewoman has expired. The gentleman from Florida, Mr. Rutherford.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, panel, for being here this morning to discuss issues that are certainly affecting every major city in the United States.

And, Mr. Blanco, I'd like to start with you and Mr. Vanek. I want to kind of shift to prosecution. Can you discuss a little bit the challenges that we're facing in the typical gang prosecution under RICO.

Mr. BLANCO. Certainly, sir. As you know, that's one of our most important tools on the Federal level to attack these gangs, both international and domestic.

Some of the challenges are the challenges that were just mentioned earlier, and that is the safety of these victims and the safety of witnesses and putting those individuals in places where we can utilize them and that they feel safe.

That's probably the majority of what our challenges are, I think that using the RICO statute as well as the VICAR and other statutes. And let's not forget our narcotic statutes as well. As was mentioned earlier, in many situations, if we don't have a witness or a victim that can come forward, we'll use other crimes for which we know that we can prosecute them and get them for those crimes.

So those really, at least as far as I can see, and maybe my law enforcement colleagues can say differently, are really our challenges. But it is a very effective tool on the Federal level to attack these gangs.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you.

Captain MARKS—or Mr. Vanek, first, if you would—I'm particularly interested in the difficulties that may be created by, you know, now the gangs have moved into this music nexus. Does that impact on proving the criminal enterprise?

Mr. VANEK. It certainly helps. It is not the nail in the coffin, per se, but it definitely helps with listening to their lyrics, how they're talking. There are usually lots of tips and clues that are involved in those songs. And then those basically we kind of expand out from that and investigate those types of crimes and see if we can connect them to what would be a RICO statute.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Captain Marks, anything you'd like to add on RICO prosecutions?

Captain MARKS. Yes. So one of our partners on our grants is the U.S. Attorney's Office. And we have a very good relationship. The U.S. Attorney sits on our task force.

The challenge that we have with sex trafficking, RICO statutes are phenomenal tools against gangs, but a lot of times those are long, drawn-out investigations.

Generally, sex trafficking investigations start out very small—one victim, one pimp—and then only after time it turns into 11, 13 victims. And we can't allow that conduct to continue, we're compelled to make an arrest right away to get that dangerous criminal off the street, which really prohibits us from pursuing a RICO Act where we need that investigation to grow over a longer period of time.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Okay.

And, Mr. Vanek, the challenge that we have with flipping, can you talk a little more about that and how that may be impacting RICO prosecutions as well?

Mr. VANEK. Sure. Thank you.

When you are trying to get someone to cooperate in a murder investigation or a RICO investigation where they're going to be putting themselves, basically, out there for you, it is difficult to put your—you have to put yourselves in their shoes. They're still living in that area. They still have friends. Their whole world will be eventually turned upside down.

To provide them with the safety and understanding and the guarantee that we will take care of them throughout the process, because RICO statutes, RICO investigations, they take a long time,

that with protecting them and their families will give them a sense of ease and will eventually make more people want to come forward.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. But are these flipping cases not more where individuals—I understand the safety piece that Mr. Blanco mentioned earlier. That’s a huge issue that has to be addressed. But there are those who are flipping—they’re being bought off, basically, by rival gangs, or whoever they may be testifying against. What about that issue?

Mr. VANEK. That happens a lot.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Can we prosecute for that? Do we need additional legislation to help fight that somehow or identify that?

Mr. VANEK. I would say yes, any additional legislation on that to help that cause would be greatly appreciated. Those are investigated. But at times, again, you need witnesses, you would need some sort of probably audio-video evidence of actual threats being assailed where that person is actually—it’s usually a one-on-one type of thing. But now more and more with social media those, they’re being documented.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you very much. My time has run out.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. The time of the gentleman has expired.

The gentlewoman from California, Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much Mr. Chair and the Ranking Member for holding this hearing today.

I was very excited to hear about this hearing because to me it signaled what I hope is an indication that we actually will look back at history over the last couple of decades and consider doing something differently. Because what we have done over the last 30 years is we have come up with so many laws, gang enhancements, to incarcerate a lot of people, and I don’t think that we’ve necessarily spent much time looking at the root causes as to why people get involved in gangs. And maybe that’s a hearing that we could do in the future.

I come from Los Angeles. I’m very proud of our city and our county. I’m very glad that Captain Marks is here today. I think that there were—I’m going to ask you a couple of questions, because I want you to highlight the involvement that the sheriff’s department has with the communities.

And each of you mentioned that it can’t be solved alone by law enforcement, and we’ve relied too much on law enforcement. We lock people up. They come home. And what we don’t realize is that then we have communities that have an overconcentration of people who go in and out of prison, which actually kind continues the cycle of violence.

And also, if we want to save money, that’s not exactly the way to do it.

And so I am hoping that this is an indication that we will actually look back at the last 20 or 30 years, see what we’ve learned, and try to do something different.

I also want to put you on notice, Captain Marks, and you can tell the sheriff this, that I have invited my colleague over there on the other side of the aisle, Steve Chabot, I’ve invited him to Los Ange-

les because I want him to see how we have gone about the work in L.A. differently.

Now, someone mentioned gang intervention workers. I think you mentioned that, Mr. Slutkin. And that's something that we have used in Los Angeles. And I know the captain knows that can play both ways. I mean, we know that there's great examples of that, but it's not a panacea, because sometimes the folks are still involved in the life. But we've definitely been able to make a difference.

So I spent 14 years working in the middle of South Central at the height of the crack cocaine Crip and Blood crisis, and we were able to make a difference there. The situation has improved. We still have our problems. It's morphed now into sex trafficking. It wasn't something we were dealing with 25 or 26 years ago.

But, Captain Marks, I do want you to mention the whole campaign that was done in Los Angeles at the county, that no child is considered a prostitute, that you guys are not arresting, you guys are detaining and referring to services in terms, you know, of the victim. So I wanted you to speak a bit about that. And then I want to talk to Dr. Slutkin.

Captain MARKS. Thank you, ma'am.

Yes, that is correct. Sheriff Jim McDonnell and the County Board of Supervisors adopted a No Such Thing as a Child Prostitute campaign where we don't refer to them or arrest them as suspects. We treat them as the victims that they are.

Furthermore, that the county, the Board of Supervisors has been very supportive. We've developed a countywide first responder protocol which provides direction for law enforcement when they identify sexually exploited children, that all county departments come together and provide essential services for those crucial first 72 hours to try to break that bond with the sex trafficker and get them the help they need and back on the right track.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much.

You know, the program that I mentioned that I started in South Central at the height of the crisis was actually funded by the Federal Government. The government gave us a 5-year grant. Now, the organization is now 26 years old, because we developed other resources and moved on. But it was completely based on the model, Dr. Slutkin, that you mentioned.

Sometimes we think that these communities are hopeless, and we kind of throw in the towel, and then we just arrest everybody. And then we let them out and the cycle continues.

So you were talking about Chicago. And Chicago is one of those areas that I think we've checked the box as being hopeless. And I wanted to know if you could talk just a little bit more about what you think we can do in Congress to expand the model you're talking about and make improvements.

We had a thousand homicides in L.A. at the height of the crisis, and we are nowhere near that now.

Dr. SLUTKIN. Thank you, Congresswoman.

First, I think the number one thing to do is to add to whatever it is that you're doing funds for intervention. It can be into the Justice budget. They've been able to work with us and our partners.

And it's also in health budgets. And a very small amount would multiply itself many, many times in terms of lives saved.

I want to add that the chief of L.A. co-presented with me at the Major Chiefs meeting and said that this was the thing that caused the reduction, despite many other law enforcement interventions not making a change over multiple years in L.A.

And I want to add that I understand this need, this desire for the prosecutions and the punishment. It is not actually affecting the people who are doing it. The people who are doing it do not think that they're going to be prosecuted. They do not think they're going to get caught. They need to be talked to by intervention workers who will then help them shift their thinking. They're being led by their peers, and we could put peers in there in order to reduce the problem itself.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

The gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Chabot.

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

And first I wanted to apologize for not being here earlier in the hearing. I'm chairman of the House Small Business Committee, and one of my subcommittees had a hearing going on. And it's tough to be in two places at once, although we all struggle with that on a routine basis around here.

And I want to thank Ms. Bass for that invitation to visit her district. And we have discussed this. And I absolutely intend to do that. And perhaps back in my district, I represent most of the city of Cincinnati, and we have our issues there as well, and we'd like to learn from some of the successes that you've had. And perhaps we can take those back to my district. So I'm looking forward to that. It's just a matter of coordinating the time.

Ms. BASS. Exactly.

Mr. CHABOT. And we have traveled to Iraq together before. And so, Ms. Bass, I consider her a good friend as well as a colleague on this committee.

Just a couple quick questions. First of all, it's my understanding that incarcerated gang members are using contraband cell phones in prisons, various prisons, to conduct all sorts of illicit gang activities outside the prison walls—and it's not just gang members, I mean, adult criminals are doing this as well—including drug trafficking, murder, witness intimidation, and on and on.

And there have been some cutting-edge technological improvements that we have now. Continuous wave beacon technology is my understanding of one of those technologies.

And I would just—I'm not sure—I'll just open up, whoever would like to take that. Could you discuss that? And if somebody else has already asked this question, I apologize. But anybody want to take that on?

Mr. BLANCO. Happy to, Congressman.

Yes. Contraband cell phones, all kinds of items being smuggled into prisons and to jails enables and emboldens these not only in-jail gangs, but also the gangs that they deal with outside of the jail. It's not only dangerous to the people on the street, but it's also dangerous to the guards that are inside the prisons as well.

It is a problem that we are working with. We're working with our State and local partners to make sure that we have the ability to

reduce that. On many of the wiretaps that I read, at least federally, when we see that there is a cell phone that's being used in a prison or in an area where there are inmates, we make sure that we notify our State and local authorities, and we work with it that way.

But it is a significant problem that we're working on.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

I was involved and actually introduced a bill called the Girls Count Act. Marco Rubio introduced it over in the Senate. It became law. What this did is on a worldwide basis there were 50 or so million, especially young girls, that never got birth certificates. And so they couldn't get government papers, and they were targeted because they really couldn't identify who these girls were. They were sold off by families. A whole range of pretty horrific stuff. And I know that the gangs here in the United States have been involved in sex trafficking, and especially young girls.

Do you know if gangs are—are they targeting any—is this occurring where women are brought into the country, targeted, because of their lack of birth certificates or government documentation? Does anybody know if that—is that something that's occurring?

Captain Marks.

Captain MARKS. Yes, sir. So the criminal street gangs in the United States are targeting homegrown girls. So we have a huge vulnerable population out there that have been victims of abuse or neglect their entire lives. They're experts at smelling out and finding those girls and targeting those girls. So all of the victims that they are exploiting are domestic females.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Thank you.

My final question. I have like 1 minute here.

I was in Guatemala and Honduras last year. And we had a real problem on our southern border where unaccompanied young people were coming and flowing over our borders. And what I was told down there is one of the principal problems are these young people were fleeing the gangs back in their communities, and the parents were sending them to try to get them away from this.

And I've heard, you know, a number of news articles where there are certain cities where we have seen gangs targeting kids very aggressively to try to bring them in and intimidating them if they don't get into the gangs. Would somebody like to comment on that?

I see Mr. Blanco, you nodding, so—

Mr. BLANCO. That, as you've mentioned, Congressman, that nails it on the head. You'll see many of these international gangs, for example, MS-13, targeting their very own people because they're vulnerable. Not only are they vulnerable in their countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, but when they are here they are vulnerable because they have family members back in those countries. So they not only intimidate the young women here, but they intimidate the family members back there.

It is a vicious cycle. We are working very hard with our foreign counterparts and our local and domestic law enforcement to see what kind of measures we can take to help them.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. The gentleman's time has expired.

The gentleman from—well, Mr. Lieu is not here.

The chair yields himself 5 minutes.

Mr. Blanco, as you may know, I'm the principal House author of the CARA Act, which was designed to have a comprehensive response to opioids, which passed last year and was signed by President Obama. Fentanyl has been a mushrooming problem, and it's deadly.

Are you seeing street gangs distributing fentanyl? And where are they getting it from?

Mr. BLANCO. Mr. Chairman, yes. And they're getting it from many different sources. Sometimes these gang members are getting it from rival gangs, because it is about making money. Sometimes they are associated with the gang members overseas, so they have a distribution network that they receive those—the fentanyl from, too.

But they also, Chairman, I think you'll notice this, the other day, too, we did a healthcare takedown where we went after healthcare professionals and pill clinics. They get them from there, too.

So it's across the board. It is a moneymaker. And as you mentioned earlier, it's deadly. And it's killing so many of our young people. And not only young people, parents. It's across the board.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Vanek, you have mentioned the practice of flipping, which is extortion pure and simple, where it is very difficult to get people to testify for the—I was going to say prostitution, but I will say prosecution.

Now, is there a way to lock in their testimony through a grand jury, which makes it less likely to be flipped? And have prosecutors been able to prove that flipping has occurred, which a form of obstruction of justice?

Mr. VANEK. On the Federal level I would say that it's a lot easier and they take their grand jury very seriously. On the State level, I can assure that even with locking them into a grand jury statement, even locking them into a video statement, when it comes to trial and they get on the stand, they flip. And they then do not benefit, either the prosecution side, but there's other ulterior motives, like I have stated before.

Why? Perjury charges on the State level are few and far between for that. I know as investigators we would love to see that happen. It's something that happens routinely on the State level.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Okay. I have a number of questions for Dr. Slutkin.

You give a very interesting scenario and very comforting success ratios for what you have been doing. I guess the problem that we have is, is that there's been an erosion of personal responsibility in our society. And if you treat gang violence as a public health problem—now, murdering someone to me seems a lot different than vomiting uncontrollably when you have the flu.

So stopping the murders has got to require, you know, increased realization of personal responsibility and what a murder actually consists of, and that's ending a human life and having untold grief with loved ones and family members.

Does your program, you know, emphasize personal responsibility as well as all of the other things you have testified to?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yes, Mr. Chairman. And this is part of the conversation with the individuals that intervention workers have. And

there is no objection to what is required if a violent act has occurred, what law enforcement needs to do.

What we're saying is that these workers can talk to someone when they're thinking about possibly doing something. And that talking to them then allows them the time to cool down, to feel validated, whatever they need to just cool down. Because they're usually upset actually not about some of the things that are being discussed here. They're really being—they're really doing murders about a girlfriend or about money owed to them or about disrespect or something like that.

We are able to cool them down and say, "Listen, this doesn't make sense," and the event doesn't happen. And retaliations don't happen. And the communities get safer.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Okay. In the time I have left I have two, you know, quick questions.

Do you have public-private partnerships or do you rely exclusively on money you get from the Justice Department?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Oh, no. The funds per city or per country are variable. I mean, in New York City the funds are supplied by the city and the State. Baltimore, it's Federal Government and also foundations. Chicago, it's been the State. And the Inter-American Development Bank, USAID, the World Bank, others, have funded the international work. So it's been foundations and—the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has funded this. Justice Department. I should say also the Justice Department funded the independent evaluation of Chicago's work.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Okay. One last question. Is your program in Milwaukee? Because we got a big crime problem there.

Dr. SLUTKIN. We're not working in Milwaukee at this moment as far as I know, but we're in discussions with them. We have been asked to work with them.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Who in Milwaukee are you talking to?

Dr. SLUTKIN. My staff know better. I believe it's the health department and also the trauma hospital centers.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Okay. Let me know about that.

Dr. SLUTKIN. I certainly will, sir.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. I will, you know, ask the gentlewoman from Texas if she wishes a second round. If so, she's recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, I would be delighted. Thank you for your courtesies.

Let me follow the chairman's line of questioning and ask specifically about Houston. Are you in Houston?

Dr. SLUTKIN. No.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So let me publicly extend an invitation for Cure Violence to visit and to have us pursue the opportunity.

Dr. SLUTKIN. I'd be happy to.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank you very much.

Let me first of all thank our colleagues that were here, the chairman and Ms. Bass. We thank Mr. Lieu, who had to step out for another hearing, for his presence here.

I want to pursue the line of questioning, and if I might make a comment.

Mr. Blanco, I thank you for your commitment to the Juvenile Block Grant Accountability Act. This goes through a series of dollars that law enforcement can use in their work, and it's been very effective. So I'm not sure your area familiar, but make yourself familiar with it, because we have modified it, Captain, to include cyberbullying, intervention, and issues dealing with best practices.

So, Captain, let me ask you, Juvenile Block Grant, any resources to help you in your work with juveniles, would that be helpful to you from the Federal Government?

Captain MARKS. It absolutely would. We're in desperate need to reach out to that population, the young kids, and get on social media with messaging about the dangers that operate on the internet and how kids are being exploited.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Well, I want to work very hard to get those resources with your Member, because I believe your work should be both promoted and celebrated.

Dr. Slutkin, let me ask you a technical question. Please explain the contagion effect as it pertains to behavioral transfer from brain to brain. And how do we reverse the adverse impact, i.e., trauma, anxiety, PTSD, and depression, that has already occurred in those subjected to rigorous violence?

And then, if I can add, as you intervene and you stop the dear brother mostly from going after X, Y, Z, does that dear brother cool off in front of you, circle around, and catch X, Y, Z the next day?

Dr. SLUTKIN. Yes, thank you. So the first part of this is how the contagion occurs. There are cortical neurons in our brain that pick up what we see other people do. This is true for all of us. And violence is especially picked up because it's so salient.

Secondly, dopamine pathways and pain pathways allow us to unconsciously copy and want to do what others are doing. Moms do what other moms are doing. No one in this room is smoking, whereas we used to smoke. A third of us were smoking when I was in medical school watching angiograms.

But the norms get changed. The norms have changed. And now we can get to a person who is about to do—use a gun and say, “Wait a second, what are you thinking?” and give him a different expectation.

So added onto these processes, which are described in this book, are the effects of trauma that you have mentioned. The trauma causes people to be hyper-reactive and thinking everything is against them.

All of these things are reversible. In the short term we cool someone down. They're on hot. Their amygdala is hot. We cool them down. We let them go down to where they can listen to someone. We validate their concerns. And then we reframe this so that they feel that they're still positive to be able to do this.

And your last question, we now then will stay with that person for 6 months to 2 years, so he will not circle back. Our staff called this “babysitting” or “shadowing.” So that the long-term effect on that person is a stick, so that he does not relapse. He and his friends are managed so that they will no longer do this.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. You made a very important point earlier in your testimony saying people don't think about I'm going to court, I'm going to trial, I'm going to be incarcerated.

Dr. SLUTKIN. Furthest thing from their minds.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So do you think the leadership that we now have at the Justice Department—let me just be generic. Leadership that would want to emphasize mandatory minimums, taking away prosecutorial discretion so that a judge, a prosecutor may say this is juvenile, it may be obviously a very unfortunate crime, but the prosecutor may see another option.

Do you think that kind of intervention is important? Because then you have the opportunity to deal with some of these healing factors that you're talking about. And a lot of it is brain to brain or emulating something else. Do you think that discretion is important? And do you think there's any value in mandatory minimums?

Dr. SLUTKIN. So just to reemphasize, we are completely apolitical, we are health people. I think that the punishment has really been overemphasized and it scientifically is not really what is driving the causing of behavior or the changing of behavior.

So we have to really reeducate ourselves as to how behaviors are actually formed and how they are actually changed. So any discretion that allows alternatives where people who know how to do behavior change and that can help that person not do it.

We see a rap sheet actually as a set of untreated moments that should have been managed in a different way to prevent these additional courses. And there is plenty of data now that shows that people—even the highest risk people—can be changed.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the chairman for his indulgence, and I thank the witness for his testimony.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. The gentlewoman's time has expired.

This concludes today's hearing, and we are about ready to vote. Without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days to submit additional written questions for the witnesses and additional materials for the record.

And without objection, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:01 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]