

VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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C O N T E N T S

SEPTEMBER 29, 2025

OPENING STATEMENTS

| | Page |
|--|------|
| The Honorable Jefferson Van Drew, Chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight from the State of New Jersey | 1 |
| The Honorable Deborah K. Ross, a Member of the Committee on the Judiciary from the State of North Carolina | 5 |
| The Honorable Jefferson Van Drew, Chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight from the State of New Jersey | 16 |

WITNESSES

| | |
|---|----|
| Mia Alderman, Grandmother of Crime Victim | |
| Oral Testimony | 7 |
| Prepared Testimony | 10 |
| Stephen Federico, Father of Crime Victim | |
| Oral Testimony | 12 |
| Justin Campbell, Officer, Charlotte–Mecklenburg Police Department | |
| Oral Testimony | 13 |
| Prepared Testimony | 15 |
| Michael Woody, Board of Directors, North Carolina Bail Agents Association | |
| Oral Testimony | 16 |
| Prepared Testimony | 18 |
| Dena J. King, Former U.S. District Attorney, Western District of North Carolina | |
| Oral Testimony | 25 |
| Prepared Testimony | 27 |
| Jeff Asher, Co-Founder, AH Datalytics | |
| Oral Testimony | 29 |
| Prepared Testimony | 31 |

LETTERS, STATEMENTS, ETC. SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING

| | |
|--|----|
| All materials submitted by the Subcommittee on Oversight, for the record | 66 |
| A weekly crime report for Charlotte–Mecklenburg week ending August 24, 2025, submitted by the Honorable Alma S. Adams, Ranking Member of Committee on Education and Workforce from the State of North Carolina, for the record | |
| Materials submitted by the Honorable Jefferson Van Drew, Chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight from the State of New Jersey, for the record | |
| A report entitled, “New Grassley Report Shows Biden DOJ Sent Taxpayer-Funded Grants to Soros-Backed, Soft-on-Crime NGOs,” Jun. 5, 2025, <i>U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Majority Press</i> | |
| An article, “Are FBI Crime Statistics Reliable?” Oct. 9 2024, <i>City Journal</i> | |
| Materials submitted by the Honorable Deborah K. Ross, a Member of the Committee on the Judiciary from the State of North Carolina, for the record | |
| An article entitled, “Two North Carolina cities rank among the safest in the country. Here’s why,” Sept. 15, 2025, <i>News Observer</i> | |
| An article entitled, “As Mecklenburg weighs budget priorities, court leaders barely getting by ask for help,” Feb. 19, 2025, <i>Charlotte Observer</i> | |

Materials submitted by the Honorable Deborah K. Ross, a Member of the Committee on the Judiciary from the State of North Carolina, for the record—Continued

- A memorandum entitled, “President Trump’s Pardons Cheat Victims out of an Astounding \$1.3 Billion in Restitution and Fines, Allowing Fraudsters, Tax Evaders, Drug Traffickers to Keep Ill-Gotten Gains,” Jun. 17, 2025, *Democratic Members of the Committee on the Judiciary*
- An article entitled, “The S.E.C. Drops Efforts to Recoup Funds From Trump Clemency Recipients,” Sept. 19, 2025, *The New York Times*
- An article entitled, “Trump Oversees All-Time Low in White Collar Crime Enforcement,” Aug. 10, 2020, *Bloomberg Law News Archive*
- An article entitled, “Exclusive: Federal drug prosecutions fall to lower level in decades as Trump shifts focus to deportations,” Sept. 30, 2025, *Reuters*
- An article entitled, “Charlotte light rail killing exposes gaps in NC’s mental health system,” Sept. 25, 2025, *North Carolina Health News*
- An article entitled, “21st Century Red State Murder Crisis,” Feb. 28, 2024, *Third Way*
- An article entitled, “The Highest Rates of Gun Homicides Are in Rural Counties,” Sept. 26, 2025, *Center for American Progress*
- An article entitled, “The Trump Administration’s Budget Will Undermine ATF’s Efforts To Prevent Violent Crime,” Jul. 9, 2025, *Center for American Progress*
- An article entitled, “What To Do About Crime’s Persistent Perception Problem?” Sept. 8, 2025, Jeff Asher, *Substack*
- An article entitled, “Trump Defunds Effective Crime-Prevention Policies,” Jul. 22, 2025, *The Brennan Center Justice*
- A report entitled, “CMPD Quarterly Statistical Report: Mid-Year Crime Stats Show Promising Decline Citywide,” Jul. 17, 2025, *City of Charlotte, North Carolina*

Materials submitted by the Honorable Russell Fry, a Member of the Committee on the Judiciary from the State of South Carolina, for the record

- An article entitled, “After 21 Years as a Defense Attorney, Byron Gipson Isn’t Much of a Prosecutor,” 2025, *National Police Association*
- A report entitled, “The Blue City Murder Problem,” Nov. 4, 2022, *The Heritage*, submitted by the Honorable Ben Cline, a Member of the Committee on the Judiciary from the State of Virginia, for the record

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR THE RECORD

Materials submitted by the Honorable Alma S. Adams, a Member of Committee on Education and Workforce from the State of North Carolina, for the record

- Questions for Jeff Asher, Co-Founder, AH Datalytics
- Questions for Dena J. King, Former U.S. District Attorney, Western District of North Carolina
- No responses received at the time of publication

VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME

Monday, September 29, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Washington, DC

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in Room 1303, 401 West Trade Street, Charlotte, North Carolina, the Hon. Jefferson Van Drew [Chair of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Van Drew and Schmidt.

Also present: Representatives Cline, Lee, Fry, Knott, Harris, Moore, Rouzer, Edwards, Norman, Harrigan, McDowell, Kiley, Ross, and Adams.

Mr. VAN DREW. The Subcommittee will come to order.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time. We welcome everybody to today's hearing. Thank you for being here.

A number of our colleagues on this Committee and from the region have joined us this morning.

Without objection, Mr. Cline, Ms. Lee, Mr. Fry, Mr. Knott, Mr. Harris, Mr. Harrigan, Mr. Moore, Mr. Norman, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Rouzer, Mr. McDowell, Mr. Kiley, Ms. Ross, and Ms. Adams, will be permitted to participate in today's hearing for the purpose of questioning the witnesses, and they each will receive five minutes for that purpose.

I now recognize the gentleman from North Carolina, Brad Knott, who will lead us in the pledge of allegiance. I will then ask afterward that we all remain standing for a moment of silence.

Mr. KNOTT. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

[Moment of silence.]

Mr. VAN DREW. Good morning, again. I want to welcome everyone once again to today's hearing. I want this to be a good and productive hearing. There are a number of us who are going to be very candid, including some of the witnesses, perhaps at sometimes blunt. I respect my colleagues on the other side greatly. However, I fundamentally disagree with a number of things that happened that have been highlighted by the stories we're going to hear today. I do wish that more Members from the other side of the aisle were here. I respect differences of opinion, but I think you have to be

there; you have to be in the game. You have to participate. I appreciate both of you for being here very much today. I know we're going to have a continuing dialog on that.

Today, we're here in Charlotte, North Carolina, but this Committee—and I've been honored—has also been to Philadelphia. We've also been to New York City. We've also worked each and every day in Washington, DC.

When we went to Philly, we saw a Progressive DA Larry Krasner allow more than 400 murders to happen that year. His office dismissed 70 percent—not 7 percent—70 percent of those crimes.

The Committee has been in New York City, and there we saw DA Alvin Bragg let crime surge while he focused on politicizing his office and on politics. He even tried to throw a bodega clerk in jail that was defending himself from violence.

Every time the Committee visits a new city when we do these field hearings, which is a good thing to do, the story's the same. The faces may be different. The accents may be different. The city may look different. The same story: We're mourning for innocent lives that have been lost, hearing from families who have been shattered, have been broken apart, and have been destroyed. There are no words we can say. We were talking about it on the bus ride here, a few of us. When something like this happens to a daughter, a son, a brother, a sister, a mother, or a father, there are no words. There are no words that I can say to some of the people on the panel today that ever make it right. I know that. I never say, "I know how you feel," because I don't know how you feel. I can never know how some of you feel. I pray to God that I don't know how you feel.

The latest name we speak of Iryna Zarutka, a young woman with her whole life ahead of her—one who fled an actual war zone to chase the American Dream. She wanted to be here so badly—I think some of you may know—that when she was murdered, her parents requested that she be actually buried here in America because she loved America so much. What's perverse about all this: It wasn't in the battlefields of Ukraine where she lost her life. It was right here on an American street in an American city.

It's unacceptable. We're tired of it. We're sick of it. It's sickening.

Ladies and gentlemen, we don't have to accept it. It doesn't have to be this way. Bad leaders let this happen. Weak leaders. It's not just crime policy. I'm going to just—the only time I think today—I am going to digress, but it's an odd time in American history where we have some really bad ideology, perverse and bizarre thoughts and ways of going about things. Whether it was the open borders where we allowed—folks will say, well, borders are always to some degrees were open, and we had some illegals in this country. We never had illegals who were also criminals, drug lords, drug dealers, murderers, and people who assaulted other individuals on the terror watch list.

Whether it's children in our schools, I'm trying to paint the picture of I don't understand what some of the thought process is and what we're doing in our country when we say that our children can work with politicians and administrators and others to change their gender, to change their name, and to change their pronouns. In foreign aid, when, around the world, we're spending your tax

dollars for transgender opera or drag queen shows or bizarre studies around the world of prostitutes. I'm not making this stuff up. That's the sad part. Men competing in women's sports. None of that has specifically to do with what is going on, what is happening here today. It does. Because we're doing things to ourselves as a Nation. That makes no sense to me. That makes no sense to most of the Americans that I meet when I'm in any town, any city, or in my home district. I just don't get it. It's just not natural.

I have to ask, why don't, when we come back to what happened here to these victims, why is it that some of these leaders don't show more compassion for—they do show more compassion for criminals but not the victims.

Somebody came up to me, I was talking with them about this very issue, regular constituent, and said, "Why do we abandon our victims but have heart and empathy for the criminals?" I didn't have an answer. What are we doing? I don't know. Why are judges, elected officials, leftist nonprofits, and activist groups doing all they can to make our streets more dangerous? I don't know how else to say it. It's purposeful. It's not accidental.

Let's talk about why we're here. A magistrate judge let this killer walk free, even after his own mother said he was dangerous and that he was a real problem, and she was concerned. His own mother. The magistrate judge said, "Well, this is the 14th time he committed a crime, but, you know, I think it will be his last because he signed a handwritten note that he's going to be good." Seriously? Are we serious about that? You're looking us straight in the face and saying that? You don't need a degree to know that it's absurd. You don't need to be an attorney or judge to know that it's wrong. You don't have to have a high-ranking title to know that it doesn't make sense. All you need is common sense and empathy and a heart and a desire to see this Nation to be the best Nation that it can possibly be.

He was allowed to walk our streets. Now, a young woman—and there's other stories; it's not the only story—but this young, beautiful woman with her entire future in front of her—working three jobs, living the American Dream, believing in America—she is gone. This hearing is not going to bring her back. Your testimony is not going to bring them back. The good people are here watching is not going to bring them back. There's nothing we can do except to make sure that her life has meaning. If it has meaning, it means we stop doing this, that we stop putting bad people back on the street.

It's something we can relate to because millions of Americans around the country use transit every day. Knowing Charlotte, there's a great group of people who are really working here to make the transit even better and safer and are doing wonderful things. We have to allow them to do that. We need the laws. We need the judges. We need the attorneys. We need the attorneys general. We need the prosecutors, the DAs to do the right thing, to do their damn job.

Iryna didn't even speak to this man. Have you ever seen the video on it? It's sickening. It's heartbreaking. A young girl kind of tired from just finishing an eight-hour shift. She slips into her seat and doesn't bother anybody. I don't want to say the word—this in-

dividual comes behind her and just thrusts a knife into her and takes the life from her. She didn't provoke him. She didn't hurt him. She didn't yell at him. She didn't look at him. She probably didn't even see him. She was murdered. It could be me, it could be you, and it could be any Member on this panel. It could be your brother, your sister, your mother, your father, your daughter, and your son. When you think about this issue, think about it that way. Think how you would feel if it was someone you knew and loved that was in your family. We can't live like this. We don't want to live like this, and here's the catch: There's absolutely no reason for us to live like this.

When we do this, what has happened in the past in this incident and many others, it tells Americans one thing, something they don't want to hear, that their safety and their values come last. We must be tough on crime. I'm not talking about minor victimless crime. What I'm talking about is cruel, harsh assaults, murder, beatings, and the things we know that are out there. Repetitive crimes over and over again. My friends and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle like to talk about gun laws—on legal people, legally owned guns. I'm not going to talk about that today. This individual had a problem with illegal guns. We all can agree on that and we should crack down on those who steal guns or use them illegally or who are criminals.

Violent criminals should be behind bars. We've got to keep them there. We've got to stop the cashless bail. We must put good law-abiding Americans first. You know what? I'm going to address something else. Because sometimes, when you say these things—and again, when I got up here and when I got here, it comes out of my mouth—you say these things, and somebody will say to you, "Well, that's racist" or "that's misogynist," or "that's Hitler-ian," or that's all the other terms. I can't even think of all the words that dictatorial—all these words that are used. It's not.

Because here's the deal: Whether you're an African American, whether you're White, whether you're Asian, whether you're Hispanic, whether you're gay, or whether you're straight, damn it, you want to be safe when you go out in your streets.

Somebody called my office because they were complaining about trying to crack down on crime in Washington, DC. There were those that will tell you, "Oh, there is no crime in Washington, DC." I've had two people on my team in Congress that have been assaulted. I know a friend of mine who is a Congressman whose intern was killed. I know that—murdered. I know that down within eyeshot of where my little apartment is in D.C., two Jewish—beautiful Jewish young couple that left the museum—were shot to death. I know that President Trump's intern had the living daylight beat out of him. Don't tell me there's not any crime in Washington. I've been supportive.

You should be able to walk the Nation's Capital day or night and be safe. This is America. You should be able to do that. Somebody—you know how people call the office. We all do, all the time, and you talking about the assault in my office. They said, "Well, that person from your office shouldn't have been out at night." (1) It wasn't evening; it was during the day. (2) You can; It's America and if you want to walk around at night at the Nation's Capital

in the evening, you damn well should be able to. It's got to change. We must return to common sense.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today. I know this is not easy. I can't even imagine. I can't even imagine. Your stories are heartrending. You're going to share with us what was terrible and, most importantly, what is preventable. By your work, your faith, and your focus in being here, you may save future lives, and we appreciate that.

Their testimony is not just what happened to them; it's a warning and a call to all of us to do the right thing.

With that, I will yield to the Ranking Member, Ms. Ross.

Ms. ROSS. OK. Thank you very much, Representative Van Drew.

Thank you to everyone for coming today to discuss these important issues. I especially want to thank the witnesses who have come to be with us today.

Thank you to our law enforcement officers—you are the selfless men and women in uniform, and you keep us safe every day.

I especially want to thank Officer Campbell for being here and what he's done for great city.

I also want to express my gratitude to those of our witnesses who have lost loved ones to crime or who were victims themselves. Your courage in telling your stories and having your voices heard is so important, and my heart goes out to you.

Before I get started, I also want to express my deepest, deepest condolences to the family of Iryna Zarutka. What happened to her is simply unimaginable and unconscionable. I hope that we will take to heart her family's request not to remember her by her last moments or politicize her death but, instead, to remember her as the vibrant and exceptionally kind American she was. I'm thrilled that we have a picture of her in that State right in front of us.

Finally, we're here in North Carolina, and we had a tragedy yesterday. I want to express my prayers and my absolute heartbreak to the victims of the Southport mass shooting yesterday. I know our Governor is there today, and I know our hearts go out to the victims and their families.

The Majority brought us here together, and I would say I went to the Philadelphia hearing. I've been on the Judiciary Committee since I was in Congress. To be honest and for our victims, this hearing is too little too late. We should have been doing more to prevent crime and address the lack of mental healthcare long before this hearing. Particularly—

Mr. FEDERICO. Excuse me, this is my daughter. This isn't Iryna.

Ms. ROSS. Oh, I'm sorry.

Mr. FEDERICO. This is my daughter.

Ms. ROSS. I am so sorry.

Mr. FEDERICO. OK? This is Logan Federico.

Ms. ROSS. Thank you so much for bringing that. Thank you. Thank you, sir. I am so sorry for you.

Mr. FEDERICO. She was before Iryna.

Ms. ROSS. I am so—

Mr. FEDERICO. Four months before.

Ms. ROSS. I'm so sorry for your loss, and my heart goes out to you. My heart goes out to you.

Mr. FEDERICO. How dare you not to know her.

Ms. ROSS. We should have been doing things to prevent Logan's death and Iryna's death. I am so sorry.

To my Republican friends, this is not Democrats' fault. This is the fault of Congress and our legislature to not do enough. They want you to believe that tough on crime and saying "law and order" is going to solve the problem. They want to believe that a slogan will make America safe again. If that is the case, why is the Congress cutting aid to local law enforcement by a hundred million dollars next year? Why are they proposing cuts to the Crime Victim's Fund? Why do they want to slash juvenile justice grants and hate crime grants? Why are they working to cut Federal support for survivors of domestic violence, who I hear from every single day by almost \$100 million? In short, why, if they care so much about law enforcement in North Carolina, are they trying to defund the police and the FBI behind closed doors in Washington, DC?

The reality is that these cuts undermine public safety, and they don't give law enforcement the tools they need to keep us safe. This isn't about an abstract budget line item. The programs on the chopping block equip and train local police, provide support to crime victims, and combat domestic violence. I've got many of these grants for my constituents in law enforcement in Wake County.

Shuttering and merging vital offices within the Department of Justice is not about fiscal responsibility; it's about letting our people down. It's about crippling the very institutions designed to combat the most severe crimes and the most dangerous criminals.

A weakened FBI has fewer resources to track and apprehend criminals. A defunded ATF won't be able to track the flow of illegal guns used to commit violent crimes.

When you hear these familiar slogans, like "Make America Safe Again," I urge you to look not at what my colleagues on the other side say but what they actually do. Cutting police resources and defunding Federal agencies are not the policies of a party committed to public safety. The consequence in this country is that we are less prepared, and we were less safe. We deserve better. Our police officers and prosecutors deserve better. Our communities deserve better. Most of all, the victims of crime and their families deserve better. If we want to honor them, we should seek real solutions to prevent these tragedies and not hide behind empty slogans.

Since we are in Charlotte, and we were in North Carolina, and you have a Representative from Charlotte and from North Carolina, I have a unanimous consent request. I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record an article written by Simone Jasper entitled, "Two North Carolina Cities Rank Among the Safest in the Country. Here is why."

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Ms. ROSS. It notes that Charlotte is the ninth safest city in the country, and Raleigh is the tenth safest city in the country. While I'm honored to have the Judiciary Committee here, I think that North Carolina, while we can always do better, has done better than many of the cities that we have failed to visit.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Ranking Member. I now recognize today's witnesses. We will start with Ms. Alderman, and then we'll go right down the line. Thank you.

Thank you all, again, for being here. Ms. Alderman.

STATEMENT OF MIA ALDERMAN

Ms. ALDERMAN. Mr. Chai and the Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is a Mia Alderman. I am the grandmother of Mary Collins. Mary Collins.

Mary was sadistically tortured. She was tortured. She was brutally murdered in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2020—this is 2025 and a half. Mary was only 20 years old when her life was taken in the most horrific way imaginable. She was bludgeoned in the head. She was stabbed over 130 times. Mary then bled out in a bathtub. All of Mary's blood went down into the Charlotte sewer system.

Mary was then wrapped in plastic and hidden inside a mattress while myself and my family and then members of the community tried to get to Mary. I myself was inside the apartment yelling Mary's name. To no avail. We—I'm sorry. This is very difficult.

Mr. VAN DREW. Take your time.

Ms. ALDERMAN. I have this written down, but as I sat here, I decided that I needed to go a little further.

Our families have now endured more than five years of waiting, and still her case has not gone to trial. Five years is not justice. Five years is torment. Every day of delay deepens the wound for our family and makes a mockery of accountability. What makes this even more unbearable is how the justice system has handled those accused of Mary's murder. Thank you.

Two of them were released on bond—as if their crimes were minor, as if they stole a candy bar or maybe broke in a car or something. One in particular, her name is America Ray Diehl. She remains free on bond today, despite repeated violations of her curfew and ankle monitor conditions. She has faced little to no consequence. We know she has broken curfew, left her home, pushed the boundaries of the very system meant to contain her. She basically thumbs her nose at it, which you can see for yourself on the photos that she posted on social media. They have now been taken down, but we have copies. Nothing's been done.

How can someone that is accused of such cruelty walk free while we, Mary's family, serve a life sentence of grief? The failures did not begin in the courtroom; they began when Mary was killed. For days, family, friends, and the community pleaded for help. Pleaded. I was pleading as Mary's—I don't know the right word—Mary had a disability, an invisible disability. If you're familiar with invisible disabilities, that means that you can't really look at her and tell. "Caregiver" would be the right word.

The police department and the detective would not comprehend what I was saying about Mary and how these people had her, and they were hurting her, and I needed to get to her. It was long, and it was torturous to even get him to go through that apartment door where she lay wrapped in plastic and concealed inside a mattress. It was eight days since Mary left home.

When they brought Mary out, it was finally the night of April 4th. She left the house on March 28th.

The next day was Mary's mother's birthday on, April 5th. That delay cost precious time, and it compounded the horror of what we

later learned had happened inside. I cannot say everything that happened to Mary because, if I try to say what happened to Mary, I will no longer be able to sit or stand. You're going to have to use your imagination on that part.

Justice delayed is justice denied, and time is stealing our justice with a backlogged court system for murder trials, and Mary is not the only victim.

We're here because Iryna Zarutka was also brutally stabbed and killed in Charlotte. She now brings us here today. The same system that failed Mary failed Iryna. Our hearts are broken for her family and her friends, and we grieve with them. We carry the heavy knowledge of the continued agony—agony that they now face. This is not just about two young women; it's about the justice system in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, that is failing the very people it's sworn to protect.

We need accountability. We need reform. We need to ensure that those accused of heinous crimes are swiftly prosecuted, that they're not allowed to be released on bond and just live their life. They get to go home and sleep in their own bed and party and have Christmas. I wondered, when they released America, did her mom get to smell her hair? Did she—did they wrap her in a warm blanket at night? I think about that sometimes. Mary being in the ground, in the ground, in the ground dead. She was so decomposed by the time they got her out of that apartment, that we never saw her again. We couldn't look at her. I couldn't smell her hair, touch her face, or hold her. I didn't know what to do. Was I supposed to wrap her in a blanket for her to be buried? Or her siblings, they wanted her to be buried in their favorite clothes. It was COVID. Only ten of us could go to a graveyard. We couldn't have a funeral. Mary had no funeral. No funeral. None.

Her murderers have not faced trial. They've been out free on bond. We had to go to a cemetery where there was a casket that they told us Mary was inside. Only ten of us could go.

They shouldn't be allowed to be released on bond conditions where they violate the conditions of their release again and again without consequence, which is what America Diehl has done.

The other one that was released on bond, James Salerno, has since been taken back to the Mecklenburg County Jail. Apparently, he was maybe too much for his mother to handle. I really don't know. He's back in the jail now, but he was free for two years.

America has only spent a year in jail. She's been free for 4½ years. She continues to violate. We've contacted the DA's office. We don't know if the judges know that she has violated. She should not be just free. She never should have gotten a bond in the first place.

Mary was my granddaughter. Mary was my granddaughter. I am sorry?

Ms. ROSS. No, I was just checking with the Chair about something.

Ms. ALDERMAN. OK. I'm almost finished. She was a daughter, sister, family member, and friend. She was vulnerable. She was also full of life and trust, especially trust that was betrayed. Her murderers exploited her trust. Our family has lived in anguish for more than half a decade.

While those responsible have still not faced a jury, I sit before you today for Mary and for every family who has lost someone to violence and then has been failed again and again and again and again by this system that should deliver justice.

I ask you to see Mary not as another case number but as a voice calling out for change. Thank you for listening to me and for recognizing the urgency of justice that has been denied for too long.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Alderman follows:]

Opening Statement to the Judiciary Committee

By Mia Alderman, the Grandmother of Mary Collins

Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Mia Alderman, and I am the grandmother of Mary Collins, who was sadistically tortured and brutally murdered in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2020.

Mary was only 20 years old when her life was taken in the most horrific way imaginable, including being stabbed over one hundred thirty times.

Our family has now endured more than five years of waiting, and still, her case has not gone to trial. Five years is not justice. Five years is torment.

Every day of delay deepens the wound for our family and makes a mockery of accountability.

What makes this even more unbearable is how the justice system has handled those accused of Mary's murder.

Two of them were released on bond, as if their crimes were minor. One in particular, America Ray Diehl, remains free on bond today. Despite repeated violations of her curfew and ankle monitor conditions, she has faced little to no consequence. We know she has broken curfew, left her home, and pushed the boundaries of the very system meant to contain her—and yet nothing is done. How can someone accused of such cruelty walk free, while we, Mary's family, serve a life sentence of grief?

The failures did not begin in the courtroom; they began when Mary was killed. For days, family, friends, and the community pleaded for help. We begged the detective to intervene, to check on her, to rescue her. It was long and torturous to get him to even go through that apartment door where she lay wrapped in plastic and concealed inside a mattress.

That delay cost precious time, and it compounded the horror of what we later learned had happened inside.

Justice delayed is justice denied. And time is stealing our justice with the backlogged court system for murder trials. Mary is not the only victim.

Iryna Zarutka, was also brutally stabbed and killed in Charlotte. And now brings us here today. It should not have happened this way. The same system that failed Mary, failed Iryna. Our hearts are broken for her family and her friends. We grieve with them, and we carry the heavy knowledge of the continued agony they now face.

This is not just about two young women. It is about a justice system in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina that is failing the very people it is sworn to protect.

We need accountability. We need reform. We need to ensure that those accused of heinous crimes are swiftly prosecuted. That they are not allowed to be released on bond where they violate conditions of their release again and again without consequence.

We need to ensure that families are not left waiting year after year, caught in a limbo of heartbreak and broken promises.

Mary was my granddaughter. She was a daughter, sister, family member and friend. She was vulnerable, but she was also full of life and trust. That trust was betrayed, and her murderers exploited it.

Our family has lived in anguish for more than half a decade, while those responsible still have not faced a jury.

I sit before you today for Mary and for every family who has lost someone to violence and then has been failed again by the system that should deliver justice.

I ask you to see Mary not just as another case number, but as a voice calling out for change.

Thank you for hearing me, and for recognizing the urgency of justice that has been denied for far too long.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Ms. Alderman. Your testimony—I don't even have the words—was riveting.

We went over. In order that everybody can hear everybody—we have a lot of witnesses, and we have a lot of Members today. We have a five-minute rule. I am going to stick with that from now on. That's not to be—that's not because of a lack of concern or that we don't feel for what you're trying to say. You can't do it in five minutes. I get it. I understand. Just so that we can get the whole hearing done. We're only here until I think it's 12:30 p.m.? At 12:30 p.m., they're going to kick us out. For that reason. It's not me being mean-spirited. OK. Thank you.

Next, Mr. Federico.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN FEDERICO

Mr. FEDERICO. First, I want to make sure you all know my daughter. My daughter was Logan Federico. OK. Logan Federico. She was in 2022, visiting friends at the University of South Carolina.

How many of y'all have kids? I'm just curious. Here is what I need you to do. When I tell you this story, think about your kids. Think about your child coming home from a night out with their friends, laying down, going to sleep, feeling somebody come in the room and wake them and drag her out of bed, naked, forced on her knees, with her hands over her head, begging for her life, begging for her hero, her father, me, that couldn't be there. She was 5'3" and she weighed 115 pounds. Gone. Dead. Gone. Why? Because Alexander Devonte Dickey, who was arrested 39 goddamn times—25 felonies—was on the street.

How about that? How good are we doing for your family? How good are you doing for your kids?

He should have been in jail for over 140 years for all the crimes he committed. You know how much time he spent in prison? A little over 600 days in 10 years. He's only 30 years old. He has committed 2.65 crimes a year since he was 15 years old. Nobody could figure out that he couldn't be rehabilitated. Well, you have to put him in prison to see if he can be rehabilitated. Isn't that the idea of prison?

No, my daughter wanted to be a teacher. She finally figured it out two weeks before she was executed.

I haven't heard a damn word from Byron Gipson in South Carolina. Not one word. Four months, no communication. His biggest concern was that he was pissed about my interview and how I made him look on *Fox News* channel with Trey Gowdy.

How pathetic is that, that we're letting our 22-year-old kid—visiting friends—all she ever wanted to do was visit friends. She literally was executed while on her knees, begging for her life. Her name's Logan Federico—not Iryna. You will not forget her. I promise you. You will be sick and tired of my face and my voice until this gets fixed. I will fight until my last breath for my daughter.

You need to fight for the rest of our children, the rest of the innocents, and stop protecting the people that keep taking them from us. Please, you have the power. We put you in the power to do what you have to do. We're asking you, we're begging you all to stop this. Thirty-nine crimes in 10 years—25 felonies. Can anybody

here explain to me well how he could possibly be on the street? Possibly be on the street? How is it possible?

I could sit down in a room, and I can explain the whole process of how it failed; how South Carolina failed Logan, OK; how lack of communication. What y'all did: You woke up a beast, and you pissed off the wrong daddy. Because I'm going to put it out there. I'm not going to be quiet until somebody helps.

Logan deserves to be heard. Everyone on this panel deserves to be heard. We will. Trust me. My daughter laid on the floor for seven hours before somebody in that house recognized that something was wrong. That career criminal, an hour later, went on a spending spree with her debit card. When they saw his face on a video, they didn't have to do a check. He was arrested so many times, they knew who he was. They knew exactly where to go get him.

Pathetic. Absolutely pathetic that I am here today. Thank you for your time.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. Officer Campbell.

STATEMENT OF JUSTIN CAMPBELL

Mr. CAMPBELL. Good morning. First, I want to say, for the record, that I am not here to represent the Charlotte–Mecklenburg Police Department. I am here to represent myself and so you can get a clear view of what a violent criminal does when he's back on the streets.

On April 29, 2024, the Marshals Service was serving a warrant for a convicted felon for possession of a firearm again. While serving that warrant, four members of that—or three members of that task force and one member of the Charlotte–Mecklenburg Police Department were gunned down and murdered that day, along with five others, including myself that were injured.

Now, that day was chaos. Responding to that call, multiple officers, not only dead but injured, were taking gunfire from an elevated position by a known convicted felon. During the process of extracting the officers, I ended up breaking my foot, which resulted in me being diagnosed with regional complex pain syndrome. It's a miserable diagnosis, which led to the amputation of my right foot. I will no longer ever be where I was prior to that day.

Now, in my hand, I will gladly submit this for your records is his entire arrest report. In this report, it starts in 2009, where he burglarized a residence with a stolen firearm. After he was taken to jail, he was released where he can break in—where he committed multiple other offenses prior to him going to prison. He was released from prison and again continuously committed violent crimes with firearms.

Now, I ask you, why is it that we take people who commit these heinous crimes, and we do not hold them accountable for their actions? We sit there, and we try to give it a reason as a mental health issue or some other type of issues that realistically doesn't take blame.

Now, the judicial system here in Mecklenburg County, I can speak firsthand, is trash. I'll say it again over and over again. I will take the repercussions of what comes next after me saying that. The magistrate system here has no idea of what they are

doing. This cashless bail system is a joke. I believe in my heart that, if you commit a crime against another person, violently, that you should not have a bond—that you should just sit in jail until your time comes.

Now, there's a lot more than I can say angrily, but I'm trying to swallow my emotions because I've seen multiple committees such as this one, and words are exchanged, but action never comes to it. I'm going to ask you guys, all of you, to at some point look at us and look at the future victims—because there will be more—and say, “At what point do we hold them accountable for their actions and stop playing this political circus game?” I will yield back the rest of my time. Give it to someone else.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Campbell follows:]

Testimony of Justin Campbell

My name is Justin Campbell, and I am 38 years old. On April 29, 2024, an event unfolded that none of us could have anticipated. What began as a routine workday quickly changed the moment the call came over the radio: an officer was down. In that moment, there was no time to think—only to act.

I waited for the address and immediately responded to help my brother in blue. When I arrived, I knew the situation was far worse than I had imagined. Shots were still being fired, but I ran toward the sound without hesitation, determined to reach my CMPD family in need. I entered through the back yard of the neighboring house. After receiving information about the location of the wounded officers, I ran to their location. I took cover behind the tree, and directed nearby officers to return fire so that we could evacuate the injured. I was able to pull one wounded officer by his vest to safety. The uneven terrain caused me to fall, and as I did, the injured officer landed on my foot, twisting it badly. Despite the pain, I continued to pull him until I reached other officers who could help. Tragically, he did not survive his injuries.

What began as a normal shift quickly turned into devastation. Adrenaline carried me through that day, but by nightfall, I realized the extent of my own injury. My foot had been broken, and though the bones eventually healed, the nerve damage did not. I was later diagnosed with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS). Despite therapy, injections, and multiple treatments, the pain worsened and spread up my right leg, leaving no clear path to recovery. On July 24, 2025, I underwent a below-the-knee amputation.

- Hughes had a lengthy criminal history spanning roughly 20 years. ([The Independent](#))
- His arrests and charges included (but were not limited to): drug charges (marijuana possession, manufacturing, drug paraphernalia) ([WFMY News 2](#)), fleeing to elude arrest ([WCNC](#)), breaking and entering ([Charlotte Observer](#)), firearm possession (as a felon) ([The Independent](#)), aggravated assault ([The Independent](#)), and other weapon/offense violations. ([The Independent](#))
- Some more recent charges had been **dismissed** or languished in court pending years. For example:
 - A 2021 Mecklenburg County fleeing/eluding arrest charge was “dismissed with leave,” though it remained pending under certain conditions. (<https://www.wbtv.com>)
 - A 2021 marijuana-related case was dropped by the Mecklenburg DA amid administrative changes and backlog pressures. (<https://www.wbtv.com>)
 - A 2020 driving with revoked license charge was dismissed due to COVID-19 court closures. (<https://www.wbtv.com>)
- He had served time in prison, including sentences around 2011 and 2013. ([Charlotte Observer](#))
- Earlier in his criminal history, in 2001, he was charged with communicating threats (against his father) among the first recorded incidents. ([The Independent](#))
- At the time of the fatal 2024 shootout, he was wanted on active felony warrants for (1) possession of a firearm by a felon, and (2) felony flee-to-elude (from Lincoln County) ([WFAE](#))

Thus, his record was broad and involved multiple jurisdictions (Mecklenburg, Person, Alamance, Rowan, etc.). ([The Independent](#))

Mr. VAN DREW. I'm going to thank you very much. I'm going to take a second just to say, I really do believe—and I do; I wouldn't be here—that we do want to do something. This makes me sick to my stomach. I'm angry about it. I haven't lost a loved one. I can't imagine. The system the way that it's set up makes it so damn difficult to straighten things out. That's what each and every one of you are feeling. Because, by the time you change magistrates and change Superior Court justices and change prosecutors and change attorneys general—and I can go on through the list—it doesn't happen in 1 day. I believe, by the constant relentless pounding that we're going to give—and we will support you shoulder to shoulder; I'll stand anywhere—and I know this Committee, at least most of us will—anywhere shoulder to shoulder with you and make sure you get the support you need.

It's not a political show. It's not just to get on television, or whatever the hell it is. It's because I want it to stop. Because I mean this. It could be my kid. It could be my family, my wife, my—anybody, all of us. Everybody who's here knows that intuitively. It could be any of us.

It's not only you. You are not alone. We're sick and tired and disgusted, and we're going to keep pushing on this and keep speaking out. We think political correctness is bull. It's time to do the right thing. Thank you.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Absolutely.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. Mr. Woody

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL WOODY

Mr. WOODY. Good morning. Chair Van Drew, the Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this critical hearing in Charlotte. I'm Michael Woody, North Carolina Chair of the National Association for Bail Agents. I come before you today not only as an expert on secure bail but as a lifelong North Carolina resident, a father, a grandfather, a former law enforcement professional who has witnessed firsthand how the no-cash bail policies have devastated our communities and our families. It's a shame that we had to wait until August 22, 2025, just five short weeks ago, that Iryna Zarutka, the 23-year-old Ukrainian refugee who survived a war zone and fled to safety in America, was brutally murdered on the light rail system in Charlotte.

Her killer was Decarlos Brown. He was a repeat offender with 14 prior arrests and released, unsecured bail, cashless bail on his own recognizance, earlier this year at that. Despite concerns about his mental stability and his chronic diagnosis of schizophrenia, he was still released with cashless bail.

The Department of Justice filed a Federal complaint on September 9th, charging Brown with causing death on a mass transportation system. They have elevated his charges to the Federal level.

Iryna fled the horrors of war only to lose her life to an offender who should have been held accountable through secured bail. This wasn't random violence. It was a preventable tragedy and enabled by the reckless policies that prioritize offender convenience over public safety.

Here in Mecklenburg County, courts have embraced what they call “reform”: Unsecured bonds and taxpayer-funded pretrial release programs. While studies show mixed results on appearance rate, the fundamental problem remains: Unsecured release removes the accountability that comes when families and communities have financial stakes in ensuring compliance. Meanwhile, stakeholders report ongoing cycles of missed court appearances and rearrests. When offenders fail to appear in court, the courts must continue their cases in their absence and even sentence them in absentia, costing taxpayers enormous resources while denying victims their right to provide impact statements, such as you’ve heard today. Offenders with serious mental health issues, such as Brown, are released without the evaluation and treatment that could prevent these tragedies.

These policies aren’t just dangerous; they’re expensive. Mecklenburg County alone has spent \$345,000 on local taxpayer funds for new pretrial staff. They’ve wasted over \$1.6 million in Federal grants and at least \$3.3 million in private foundation money the county now reports \$3.87 million total they spent to put these offenders back on the street with no accountability. That’s over \$5 million to operate a system parallel to secure bail, which worked effectively and cost taxpayers nothing and provided more security for families.

This is the definition of government waste. Multiple bureaucracies and millions of expenses to avoid using the system that required no taxpayer investment. Every missed court date delays justice for victims. Every repeat offense creates new victims who should have been protected. Unlike States with mandatory victim notification, North Carolina can leave victims in the dark unless they go in themselves and sign up for the North Carolina SAVAN Program, which is a victim notification program. The victim has to do that themselves. That should be done automatic by your local prosecutors or your local courts.

Contrast this with secure bail where family and communities are cosigners to create layers of accountability and communication. When someone has financial skin in the game, they ensure compliance. When release is free, accountability and safety disappear.

The evidence is clear: Secure bail enlists families in ensuring court appearances while protecting community and families, all without any taxpayer costs.

Members of the Committee, North Carolina’s experience proves that compassionate policies that ignore accountability are neither compassionate nor effective. You’ve heard that from three prior witnesses today.

Federal funding should strengthen systems that protect victims and ensure court appearances, not subsidized failed experiments to endanger innocent people like Iryna and these lovely ladies here.

I urge this Committee to stop rewarding failure with Federal dollars, support North Carolina’s bipartisan Iryna’s Law that targets these dangerous policies, restores accountability, protects victims, and ensures justice and fairness. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Woody follows:]

**Before the House Judiciary Committee
Field Hearing: Victims of Violent Crime
Charlotte, North Carolina
September 29, 2025**

Submitted by:
Michael Woody
North Carolina Chairman, National Association of Bail Agents
Board of Directors, North Carolina Bail Agents Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chairman Jordan, and distinguished members of the House Judiciary Committee, I submit this testimony to provide comprehensive evidence of how "no cash bail" policies—implemented through unsecured bonds and pretrial release programs—have failed North Carolina communities, endangered public safety, and imposed substantial costs on taxpayers while undermining justice for victims.

The tragic murder of Iryna Zarutka, a 23-year-old Ukrainian refugee seeking safety in America, exemplifies the deadly consequences of these misguided policies. Her killer, Decarlos Brown Jr., was a repeat offender who had been released without bond despite his lengthy criminal history and mental health concerns. This preventable tragedy occurred in Charlotte's light rail system on August 22, 2025, and has galvanized North Carolina lawmakers to introduce "Iryna's Law"—legislation specifically targeting the cashless bail policies that enabled this horrific crime.

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

I appear before this Committee not only as North Carolina Chairman of the National Association of Bail Agents, but as a lifelong North Carolina resident, father, grandfather, and integral voice in the accountable success of our state's criminal justice system. My professional background includes service with the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, where I specialized in gangs, sex offenses, criminal drug court, treatment programs, and fugitive apprehension as part of a task force partnering with the U.S. Marshals Service. I hold a degree in Sociology and bring extensive experience in public safety, treatment initiatives, and offender accountability.

THE PROBLEM: UNSECURED BONDS/"PROMISES TO APPEAR"

North Carolina has not formally abolished secured bail statewide, but courts across our state—particularly in Mecklenburg County (Charlotte)—have embraced unsecured criminal offender

release policies ("promises to appear") and taxpayer-funded pretrial release programs as their preferred alternative to secured bail. These policies are marketed as "reform" and "fairness," but they represent a fundamental abandonment of accountability that has resulted in measurable harm to our communities.

No-cash bail policies have had a direct impact on every community in North Carolina and nationally. In our state, "unsecured bail release policies" without familial connection and financial risk have become the "new normal," creating a system where offenders face no meaningful consequences for failing to appear in court or comply with release conditions.

The Accountability Gap

When there is no accountability in criminal offender release, court appearance rates fall. When offenders are released without secured bail conditions, public safety is jeopardized. When taxpayer dollars are poured into supervising individuals who should have been held accountable through secured bail, North Carolina communities bear both the financial burden and the safety risks.

Additionally, when offenders fail to appear, court cases must continue in their absence. Offenders are often sentenced in absentia, which costs the state, municipalities, and counties significant resources. This process also denies victims their fundamental right to provide victim impact statements, leaving them without closure or voice in the justice process that should serve them.

Mental Health and Public Safety

North Carolina law already provides judges with the authority to address mental health concerns in pretrial decisions. Under existing statutes including Chapter 122C, courts can order mental health evaluations and, when appropriate, involuntary commitment proceedings for individuals who may lack the capacity to understand legal proceedings or present a danger to themselves or others.

The current system, however, often fails to utilize these existing legal tools. Judges should mandate evaluation and appropriate treatment before release when credible mental-health concerns are present, and authorize preventive detention where legally justified under existing statutory authority. Without proper assessment, medication, and treatment, offenders with serious psychological issues may reoffend, potentially lacking the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong. Rather than creating new laws, North Carolina courts should consistently apply the mental health evaluation and commitment authority already enshrined in state statute.

System Integration and Data Quality Concerns

Stakeholders have flagged intermittent warrant data-quality and process issues (including eWarrants workflow errors), which can impede cross-jurisdiction awareness if not promptly corrected. A formal audit of NCIC entry rates for failure-to-appear warrants would help quantify

the scope of any systematic issues in ensuring law enforcement across state lines can access current warrant information that keeps our communities safe.

DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE FROM NORTH CAROLINA

1. Failure to Appear Rates

In Mecklenburg County, after unsecured bonds became more common, stakeholders including judges, prosecutors, and victims report concerns about court compliance and the cycle of missed appearances, warrant issuances, and re-arrests that stretch law enforcement resources.

Public studies of Mecklenburg's reforms (2019) found higher release rates without a statistically significant increase in FTAs or new pretrial criminal activity during the study period. More recent statewide analysis estimates overall non-appearance rates around 17-18%, with county-level variation and data limitations for Mecklenburg. Media sampling in 2024 reported approximately 20% of felony defendants with at least one failure to appear that year.

However, the fundamental policy concern remains: unsecured release removes third-party accountability and financial incentives that secured bail provides through family and community co-signers who have genuine stakes in ensuring compliance.

2. Violent Crime and Repeat Offenses

Charlotte has experienced multiple violent incidents involving offenders who were released on unsecured bonds. The most tragic and preventable example is the murder of Iryna Zarutskya on August 22, 2025.

Ms. Zarutskya was a 23-year-old Ukrainian refugee who had fled the war in her homeland to find safety in America. She was fatally stabbed in an unprovoked attack on Charlotte's LYNX light rail system on August 22, 2025, by Decarlos Brown Jr., a repeat offender with a lengthy criminal history who had been released without bond earlier in 2025 despite concerns about his mental stability. The Department of Justice filed a federal complaint on September 9, 2025, charging Brown with causing a death on a mass-transportation system.

This case exemplifies everything wrong with unsecured release policies:

- **Repeat offender with documented history:** Brown had multiple prior arrests and releases on unsecured bonds
- **Mental health concerns ignored:** Despite known psychological issues, he was released without evaluation or treatment requirements
- **Preventable tragedy:** Proper risk assessment and secured bail could have prevented this murder
- **Vulnerable victim:** A refugee seeking safety became a victim of the very policies that were supposed to create a more "compassionate" system

Other documented cases include armed robbery offenders released on unsecured bonds who committed additional violent crimes within weeks of their release, creating an endless cycle of victimization that secured bail would have prevented.

3. Comprehensive Financial Analysis: The True Cost of "Free" Bail

The financial burden of North Carolina's unsecured release policies extends far beyond what most taxpayers realize. Our analysis reveals multiple funding streams now supporting what secured bail accomplished at no cost to the public:

Local Taxpayer Burden:

- Mecklenburg County allocated at least \$345,000 in FY2025 alone for new pretrial staff positions and clinical support to manage pretrial caseloads and supervision
- These positions exist solely to supervise offenders who would have been held accountable through secured bail at zero cost to taxpayers

Federal Taxpayer Investment:

- \$1,000,000 in NIJ/Byrne Discretionary grants for Mecklenburg's justice system and pretrial data upgrades
- \$672,395 in FY2023 local Byrne-JAG allocation for Charlotte/Mecklenburg, budgeted primarily for law-enforcement purposes (CMPD with a required County share)
- These federal funds represent taxpayers nationwide subsidizing systems that operate parallel to secured bail

Philanthropic Foundation Funding:

- At least \$3.3 million in MacArthur Foundation Safety + Justice Challenge grants to Mecklenburg County (the County now reports \$3.87 million cumulative through 2024)
- These private foundation investments have significantly expanded pretrial infrastructure beyond what secured bail required

Total Financial Impact: Combined funding sources represent over \$5 million in taxpayer and external funding to operate systems that secured bail accomplished without any public cost. This represents inefficient government: multiple layers of bureaucracy and expense operating parallel to a system that worked effectively and required no taxpayer investment.

Meanwhile, secured bail requires the offender—not the taxpayer—to shoulder financial responsibility while ensuring accountability through family and community co-signers who have genuine incentives to ensure compliance.

4. Victim Impact and Notification Gaps

Every missed court date delays justice for victims. Every re-arrest means another person is harmed who should have been protected. North Carolina operates NC SAVAN, an automated

notification system; however, opt-in requirements and process handoffs can leave victims unaware of pretrial status changes outside custody. Standardized opt-in at first contact and mandatory pretrial-release notifications would reduce these gaps.

This stands in stark contrast to secured bail, where release is tied to family or community co-signers—creating layers of accountability and communication that better protect victims. Unlike states such as New York, which have mandatory notification systems for victims when offenders are released, North Carolina's current system leaves gaps in victim protection during the pretrial phase.

The result is that victims learn of an offender's release not through official channels, but often when that offender commits another crime—as tragically occurred with Iryna Zarutka.

NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

What is happening in North Carolina mirrors documented failures in Illinois, New York, California, and other jurisdictions that have embraced "no-cash bail" policies. However, North Carolina serves as a particularly instructive cautionary tale because it demonstrates how piecemeal adoption of no-cash bail principles—through unsecured bonds and pretrial programs—can replicate the same systemic failures without a single comprehensive statewide law.

The lessons from North Carolina are clear and transferable:

1. **Appearance rates decline when accountability is removed** - This outcome is consistent across jurisdictions
2. **Public safety suffers when violent offenders are released without cost or consequence** - Predictable and preventable tragedies occur
3. **Taxpayers subsidize expensive programs that shift responsibility away from offenders** - Financial burden increases while effectiveness decreases
4. **Victim protection deteriorates** - Those harmed by crime face additional trauma through system failures

These outcomes are not aberrations—they are predictable, preventable, and proven results of policies that prioritize ideological goals over public safety and fiscal responsibility.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Federal Action

Congress can help address these failures by ensuring that federal funding does not incentivize or subsidize policies that undermine public safety and accountability:

1. **Reform Grant Requirements:** Federal grants such as Byrne-JAG should not be used to subsidize "no-cash bail" programs that demonstrably increase failure-to-appear rates and recidivism
2. **Accountability Metrics:** Federal funding should require jurisdictions to demonstrate improved public safety outcomes, not just process changes
3. **Victim Protection Standards:** Federal grants should mandate robust victim notification systems for all pretrial releases
4. **Data Transparency:** Require standardized reporting on failure-to-appear rates, recidivism, and costs by release type

State and Local Reforms

North Carolina and similarly affected states should implement immediate reforms:

1. **Re-center Secured Bail:** Establish secured bail as the standard for all but the most minor offenses, with particular emphasis on repeat and violent offenders
2. **Mental Health Evaluation:** Mandate psychiatric evaluation and appropriate treatment for emotionally disturbed repeat offenders before any release consideration
3. **Judicial Discretion with Guidelines:** Preserve judicial discretion while establishing clear guidelines that prioritize public safety and court appearance
4. **System Integration:** Ensure all failure-to-appear warrants are entered into NCIC and other appropriate databases
5. **Victim Notification:** Implement mandatory notification systems for all pretrial releases

Accountability Mechanisms

Both federal and state reforms should include:

1. **Performance Measurement:** Regular assessment of failure-to-appear rates, recidivism, and public safety outcomes by release type
2. **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Transparent reporting on taxpayer costs versus secured bail alternatives
3. **Victim Input:** Formal mechanisms for victim impact in pretrial release decisions
4. **Legislative Oversight:** Regular review of pretrial policies and their outcomes

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSE: IRYNA'S LAW

The tragic murder of Iryna Zarutka has prompted North Carolina legislators to introduce "Iryna's Law"—comprehensive legislation specifically targeting the cashless bail policies that enabled her killer's release. This bipartisan response demonstrates that even progressive lawmakers recognize the failures of current policies when confronted with their deadly consequences.

Iryna's Law represents exactly the kind of evidence-based policy reform this Committee should support and encourage in other jurisdictions facing similar challenges.

CONCLUSION: RESTORING BALANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Members of the Committee, this testimony is not about punishing offenders—it is about balancing rights with responsibility and results with rhetoric. "No cash bail" policies may sound compassionate, but in North Carolina and elsewhere, they have proven reckless and deadly.

The documented results speak for themselves:

- Higher failure-to-appear rates that undermine court operations
- Increased violent crime by repeat offenders who should have been held accountable
- Massive taxpayer expenses to fund ineffective bureaucratic alternatives
- Shattered confidence in the justice system among victims and communities
- Preventable tragedies like the murder of Iryna Zarutskya

Secured bail works because it enlists family, friends, and the offender in ensuring compliance with court orders. It protects victims and communities while allowing courts to function effectively. Most importantly, it accomplishes these goals without any cost to taxpayers while maintaining appropriate accountability for those accused of crimes.

The evidence from North Carolina provides this Committee with clear documentation of a broader national problem. Rather than rewarding failure with continued federal funding, Congress should restore accountability, protect victims, and ensure that justice means both fairness and safety.

I urge this Committee to:

1. Reform federal grant requirements to prioritize public safety over ideological preferences
2. Support state efforts like Iryna's Law that restore accountability to pretrial release
3. Demand transparency and measurable outcomes from jurisdictions receiving federal funds
4. Recognize that compassionate policy must include compassion for victims and communities, not just offenders

The choice is clear: we can continue subsidizing failed policies that endanger innocent people like Iryna Zarutskya, or we can restore proven systems that balance individual rights with community safety. I respectfully urge you to choose accountability, effectiveness, and genuine justice.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I welcome your questions and stand ready to provide any additional information that would assist this Committee in addressing these urgent public safety challenges.

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Submitted: September 28, 2025

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. Ms. KING.

STATEMENT OF DENA J. KING

Ms. KING. Good morning, Chair Van Drew, and the distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing on "Victims of Violent Crime."

This testimony provided to you today is through my personal capacity as a private citizen and native of this community and based on my professional experience. My name is Dena King, and I am an attorney. I have always known I wanted to be an attorney because I wanted to help my community, serve justice, and uphold the law.

I spent 19 years, nearly two decades, as a prosecutor, serving both as a State and a Federal prosecutor. I started my legal career as a State prosecutor here in Mecklenburg County, where, in addition to prosecuting crimes, I also worked in our mental health and drug courts. It was within that role that I saw firsthand the intersection between mental health and substance abuse issues within our criminal justice system. These specialized treatment courts demonstrated exactly what long-term studies have shown that these courts significantly reduced recidivism.

As a Federal prosecutor, I was a member and leader of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force, formally referred to as OCDETF, whereby, through prosecutions, I identified, disrupted, and dismantled major organized crime, violent, and drug-trafficking organizations. It was through this initiative that I was able to prosecute some of our State's most violent offenders, including members of a gang that were responsible for committing several murders in North Carolina.

What I soon learned, after those defendants were convicted of racketeering murder charges and sentenced to consecutive life sentences, is that victims of crime, the family members of those murdered still need resources to help them long after defendants are imprisoned. We need more support and funding for survivors and victims.

What I've learned as an attorney prosecuting cases across this State, from the mountains to the sea, is that crime occurs in every community. Crime of any kind is unacceptable. I implore Congress to work with State and local government and provide funding to community-based organizations to develop real solutions to address these problems, solutions that address the specific needs of each community, as a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

Specifically, here in Mecklenburg County, funding is needed to assist in increasing our prosecutor staffing levels, which continue to lag significantly behind similar size jurisdictions. The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys suggests that, for a jurisdiction the size of Mecklenburg, we should have at least 144 State prosecutors. Instead, we have 62 State-allocated positions and 22 additionally funded positions through Mecklenburg County in the city, bringing that total to 84.

The high case load of the prosecutors here results in prosecutor turnover. The District Attorney's Office cannot continue to do more with less. They cannot make more prosecutions with less staff. They need more resources, more funding, and more staff.

During the last four years in my role as a Federal prosecutor, it was, in fact, my priority to reduce violent crime, to remove illegal firearms from our streets, and to keep the people of the Western District of North Carolina safe.

However, I recognize that my crime-reduction efforts need to extend beyond prosecutions. We cannot arrest or prosecute our way out of violent crime. That's why we need to be intentional about also incorporating violence prevention programs and intervention strategies, providing resources to community organizations and stakeholders to work with law enforcement and prosecutors in a shared commitment to making communities safer.

The fight against violent crime isn't a fight that any one of us in this room can win alone. We must join forces—elected officials, law enforcement, prosecutors, community organizations, advocates, mental health, and substance abuse professionals to support each other's work.

Our joint forces are critical to our shared goal, which is to prevent tragedies and loss of life, to provide mental health and substance abuse resources to those in need, to hold offenders accountable, and to provide victims and survivors with the security and resources they need to rebuild their lives.

To be clear, addressing and developing solutions for violent crime is a nonpartisan issue because everyone in this community deserves the right to live safely. In fact, everyone in this community deserves the right to live. Thank you for holding this hearing, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. King follows:]

The Written Testimony of Dena J. King, Former Prosecutor
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Oversight
“Victims of Violent Crime”

September 29, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Van Drew and the distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today’s hearing on “Victims of Violent Crime.”

This written testimony is provided to you through my personal capacity as a private citizen of this great community and based upon my professional experience.

My name is Dena King and I am an attorney. I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer because I wanted to help my community, serve justice and uphold the law. I spent 19 years, nearly two decades, as a prosecutor, serving as both a state and federal prosecutor. I started my legal career as a state prosecutor here in Mecklenburg County, where in addition to prosecuting crimes, I also worked in our Mental Health and Drug Courts. Within that role, I saw first-hand the intersection of mental health and substance abuse issues within our criminal justice system. These specialized treatment courts demonstrated exactly what long-term studies have shown, that these courts significantly reduce recidivism.

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What I have learned as an attorney prosecuting cases across this state, from the mountains to the sea, is that crime occurs in every community. Crime of any kind is unacceptable. I implore Congress to work with state and local governments and provide funding to community based organizations to develop real solutions to address these problems. Solutions that address the specific needs of our communities as a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

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During the last four years in my role as a federal prosecutor, it was my priority to reduce violent crime, remove illegal firearms from our streets and keep the people of the Western District of North Carolina safe. However, I recognized that my crime reduction efforts needed to extend beyond prosecutions. We cannot arrest or prosecute our way out of violent crime. That is why we need to be intentional about also incorporating violence prevention programs and intervention strategies, providing resources to community organizations and stakeholders to work with law enforcement and prosecutors in a shared commitment to making communities safer.

The fight against violent crime isn't a fight that any one of us in this room can win alone. We must join forces, elected officials, law enforcement, prosecutors, community organizations, advocates, mental health and substance abuse professionals, to support each other's work. Our joint forces are critical to our shared goal: to prevent tragedies and loss of life, to provide mental health and substance abuse resources to those in need, to hold offenders accountable, and to provide victims and survivors with the security and resources they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

To be clear, addressing and developing solutions for violent crime is a nonpartisan issue because everyone in this community deserves the right to live safely. In fact, everyone in this community deserves the right to live.

Thank you for holding this hearing. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Ms. King. Mr. Asher.

STATEMENT OF JEFF ASHER

Mr. ASHER. Chair Van Drew, Ranking Member Ross, and other the Members of the House, I am honored for the opportunity to talk with you today about our Nation's crime trends and how we can potentially drive them lower.

My name is Jeff Asher, and I'm a crime data expert. I have worked as an analyst over the last 18 years for the Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, New Orleans Police Department, and your Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office.

In my role as the cofounder of AH Datalytics, I have created a project called the Real-Time Crime Index, or RTCI, which gathers crime data for more than 500 agencies nationwide to estimate national crime trends as they occur.

I'm here today to discuss the data which shows a sharp decline in murder and violent crime in America over the last few years. Acknowledging this fact does not deny the seriousness of these problems nor does it imply that they are solved. Even the lowest U.S. murder rate ever recorded means there were still 14,000 or so tragedies, like the awful murders that brought you all to North Carolina today.

Here is what the data unequivocally tells us about our Nation's crime trends. Murder in the United States fell at the fastest rate ever record by the FBI in both 2023 and 2024 on the heels of by far the largest one-year increase ever recorded in 2020.

For 2025, the RTCI sample of 562 agencies, covering 116 million people, showed murders down 20 percent nationally through July, setting up the third straight year with a record decline.

Many cities are seeing historic lows in terms of murder this year. Baltimore and Detroit had the fewest murders through August since 1965; Philadelphia since 1966; and New Orleans, my hometown, since 1970, despite the horrific terrorist attack on January 1st there.

Chicago and New York City had the fewest shooting victims through August this year that either city has recorded in the few decades they had been tracking shootings.

Los Angeles had the fewest murders through June since 1966, and San Francisco had the fewest murders through August since at least before 1960.

The FBI has been estimating national crime rate since 1960. Tallying it all up with this year's decline points to the strong likelihood that the FBI will report the lowest murder rate it has ever recorded in the United States this year. That works out to roughly 8,000 fewer people murdered nationally this year than in both 2020 and 2021.

It's not just murder that is falling. Overall reported violent and property crime are both down double-digit percentage points in the RTCI.

The United States reported violent crime rate in 2025 will likely be the lowest reported by the FBI since 1968, and the Nation's reported property crime rate will likely be the lowest on record.

Violent crime, in general, and murder specifically, rose in North Carolina in 2020, like in much of the Nation, peaked in 2021, and

have been declining ever since. North Carolina was one of 44 States in 2024 to report a drop in murder relative to 2023, according to the FBI.

Charlotte's trends are closely conforming to both national and statewide trends, having seen murder increased from roughly 68 per year on average between 2015–2018 to 117 in 2020. Murder's down eight percent statewide per the RTCI and down 25 percent in Charlotte this year, as the city has had the fewest murders year to date since 2018.

Violent crime in North Carolina is down 15 percent statewide and down 21 percent in Charlotte through July, per the RTCI. Despite falling in the last few years, statewide violent crime and murder remain elevated relative to the mid-2010 lows. In North Carolina, they're well below where they stood in the mid-1990s.

Ultimately, the data is very clear about the direction of crime in the United States right now. Explaining why crime is falling is both quite challenging and essential to ensuring future reductions.

Any explanation must account for at least six factors in my opinion:

(1) The declines are occurring nearly everywhere in the United States with drops in every category of crime—all seven categories that the FBI measures in and all 11 population groups they measure in 2024.

(2) The declines began in 2023 and have accelerated in the two-years, suggesting the main causes—or at least the initial causes are rooted in investments begun in the 2021–2022 timeframe.

(3) Most medium and large cities have fewer police officers today than they had when murder began spiking.

(4) We have not fixed the supposed root causes of crime, such as poverty and lack of educational opportunities.

(5) The Nation has more guns in circulation now than ever before.

(6) Clearance rates for most crimes remain low by historical standards.

Acknowledging what is borne out in the data, a drop in murder and other reported crimes, presents a golden opportunity to better understand why this is happening. The critical task now, in my opinion, is to understand what is driving our crime trends down so that policymakers at the local, State, and national levels can have the tools to better bring about falling crime everywhere. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I apologize, but I'm going to have to leave at noon to catch a flight back home.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Asher follows:]

Testimony of Jeff Asher

Chairman Van Drew, Ranking Member Crockett, and other members of the House: I am honored for the opportunity to talk with you today about our nation's crime trends and how we can potentially drive them lower.

My name is Jeff Asher, and I am a crime data expert. I have worked as an analyst over the last 18 years for the Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, New Orleans Police Department, and Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office. In my role as the co-founder of AH Datalytics, I have created a project called the Real-Time Crime Index (or RTCI) which gathers crime data from more than five hundred agencies nationwide to estimate national crime trends as they occur.

I am here today to discuss the data which shows a sharp decline in murder and violent crime in America over the last few years. Acknowledging this fact does not deny the seriousness of these problems nor does it imply that they are solved. Even the lowest US murder rate ever recorded means there were still 14,000 or so tragedies like the awful murder that brought you all to North Carolina today.

Here is what the data unequivocally tells us about our nation's crime trends:

Murder in the United States fell at the fastest rate ever recorded by the FBI in both 2023 and 2024 on the heels of by far the largest one-year increase ever recorded in 2020. For 2025, the RTCI sample of 562 agencies covering 116 million people shows murder is down 20 percent nationally through July, setting up the third straight year with a record decline.

Many cities are seeing historic lows in terms of murder.

Baltimore and Detroit had the fewest murders through August since 1965, Philadelphia since 1966, and New Orleans since 1970 despite the horrific terrorist attack on January 1st.

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The FBI has been estimating national crime rates since 1960 and, tallying it all up with this year's decline, points to the strong likelihood that the FBI will report the lowest murder rate it has ever recorded in the United States. That works out to roughly 8,000 fewer people murdered nationally this year than in both 2020 and 2021, a remarkable decline.

And it is not just murder that is falling.

Overall, reported violent and property crime are both down double-digit percentage points in the RTCI. The United States reported violent crime rate in 2025 will likely be the lowest

reported by the FBI since 1968 and the nation's reported property crime rate will likely be the lowest on record.

Violent crime in general and murder specifically rose in North Carolina in 2020, peaked in 2021 and have been declining ever since. North Carolina was one of 44 states in 2024 to report a drop in murder, according to the FBI.

Charlotte's trends are closely conforming to both national and statewide trends having seen murder increase from 68 per year on average between 2015 and 2018 to 117 in 2020. Murder is down 8% statewide per the RTCI and down 25% in Charlotte this year as the city has had the fewest murders year-to-date since 2018. Violent crime in North Carolina is down 15% statewide and down 21% in Charlotte through July per the RTCI. Despite falling in the last few years, statewide violent crime and murder remain elevated relative to the mid-2010 lows, though well below where they stood in the mid-1990s.

Ultimately, the data is very clear about the direction of crime in the United States right now, but explaining why it is falling is both quite challenging and essential to ensuring future reduction. Any explanation must account for at least six factors:

- 1) The declines are occurring nearly everywhere in the United States with drops in every category of crime in all 11 population groups measured by the FBI in 2024.
- 2) The declines began in 2023 and have accelerated in the last two years, suggesting the main causes are rooted in investments begun in the 2021 and 2022 timeframe.
- 3) Most medium and large cities have fewer police officers today than they had when murder began spiking.
- 4) We have not fixed the supposed root causes of crime such as poverty and lack of educational opportunities.
- 5) The nation has more guns now than ever before.
- 6) Clearance rates for most crimes remain low by historical standards.

Acknowledging what is borne out in the data – a historic drop in murder and other reported crime – presents a golden opportunity to better understand why this is happening. The critical task now is to understand what is driving our crime trends down so that policymakers at the local, state, and national levels can have the tools to better bring about falling crime everywhere and sustain these historic lows into the future.

Thank you.

As to why murder may be falling so dramatically, murder rose at the fastest rate ever recorded in 2020 in the United States and largely stayed at that elevated level in 2021 and 2022. Since then, however, murder has been falling at the fastest rate ever recorded.

It fell 12 percent in 2023 according to data from the FBI and it likely fell even faster in 2024 according to a variety of sources. Murder was down 14.6 percent in a sample of more than 400 cities and counties in the Real-Time Crime Index (RTCI), shootings fell 13 percent in the Gun Violence Archive, and homicides were down around 12 percent through last October according to preliminary data from the Center for Disease Control's WONDER database.

The early data for 2025 is even more encouraging.

Data from the RTCI points to a double-digit percentage point drop in every category of crime through March 2025 including a 20+ percent decline in murder, and shootings are down 17 percent in the Gun Violence Archive through May. All told, murder is falling a lot in 26 of the country's 30 most murderous cities so far in 2025. Detroit, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Baltimore each reported fewer murders through May than any year since the 1960s, and New York City reported the fewest murders ever reported through May 2025.

There are undoubtedly many factors contributing to the multi-year decline in crime we are experiencing, and it will be a while before the impact of these factors in reducing crime is truly understood. The complexity of these factors means that the ideas I'm espousing here may only explain a small portion of the decline and I wouldn't discount other factors — like the ones Charles Lehman recently laid out — as contributing as well. I'm a smart enough analyst to know that my preferred explanation is not the only explanation.

Nobody knows for sure exactly why murder is falling so fast right now, a fact that is important to remember when reading this analysis as well as any other on the topic. Any explanation of why murder is falling at a historic clip must contend with several known facts:

The decline began in 2023 and has been remarkably steady, so the roots of the decline are probably things that happened in 2021, 2022 and 2023 rather than things that started in 2024 or 2025.

There are fewer police officers in most big and medium-sized cities now than there were 2 or 3 years ago (and way fewer compared to pre-COVID).

There are still substantially more guns in the United States now than at any point in our nation's history.

The decline in murder is national in scale. Most (but not all) cities are moving in the same direction, so it's probably not caused by that one unique local program your city launched last year or by a poorly defined idea like 'hard work'.

Clearance rates have improved since 2020 but are still really low by historical standards. The national murder clearance rate in 2023 (57.8 percent) was the third lowest ever recorded (behind 2020 and 2022) and the violent crime clearance rate in cities was essentially unchanged in 2023 compared to 2020 (39.9 percent vs 39.5 percent respectively).

And, finally, the big, structural root causes of gun violence are largely unchanged.

It is also helpful to acknowledge that the factors driving murder down now are almost certainly not the same factors that drove murder up in 2020.

With all of those caveats in mind, when I think about the main factors behind declining murder, a strong investment in communities from private and public sources after the shock of the pandemic stands out as a major cause. There is a wide array of types of support that I would put into the "community investment" basket, including jobs, infrastructure, and programming, but it could be summed up as "we spent a lot of money everywhere on stuff."

Overall, this is the explanation that I find most satisfying in light of the preconditions discussed above. And I'm not alone in this line of thinking.

John Roman has argued that local government returning to normal was essential for enabling government services to assist citizens. Roman also points to research showing a clear causal effect between nonprofit organizations working in communities and decreasing crime.

The government's inability to support communities like normal in 2020 and 2021 may have deepened and prolonged the surge in violence that began in mid-2020 for completely different reasons. By contrast, increased government support could have helped interrupt those cycles of violence, created jobs, and even potentially enabled more efficient policing despite less staffing at agencies.

All of this support was disrupted due to the pandemic when we needed it and it all came roaring back (and then some) in the last few years during the Great Murder Decline.

It's difficult to measure the exact role that increased levels of community investment may have had in reducing violence in the United States. It's easier to conceptualize how it could be a major factor though. I couldn't help but think about the potential role these

investments may have played while reading Jens Ludwig's excellent new book. Ludwig writes (emphasis mine):

“For starters, we have RCTs (Randomized Controlled Trials) of policies that try to strengthen social control in communities. These policies try to get more eyes on the streets by cleaning up vacant lots, fixing up abandoned buildings, improving street lighting, opening more stores, or even hiring private unarmed security guards. Conventional wisdom predicts these policies shouldn't really matter much for gun violence; few of them have anything to do with increasing the chances (or severity) of punishment, and none of them is about ending big, structural root causes like poverty or segregation or social isolation. Yet these different aspects of social control are all still situational factors in their own right as well — they're just easier to change than things like poverty and segregation. While conventional wisdom claims these policies shouldn't matter, the RCTs show that each of these policies can help prevent violence from happening in the first place.”

It is very easy to see evidence for increased investment in communities in a host of data sources. Employment in local and state government plunged during COVID, but employment picked up considerable steam between 2022 and 2024.

Local and state government tax receipts also increased 33 percent between the end of 2019 and the end of 2024 highlighting that communities had more funding available to do stuff with. And retail sales grew at a much faster rate after the shock of COVID compared to before.

Communities didn't just hire more people and have more money to spend, they put those things together to fix roads and build new facilities aimed at supporting their populations and increasing public safety. Local and state government construction on streets and highways increased by nearly 40 percent between 2019 and 2024, by 88 percent on police and sheriffs, by nearly 70 percent on lighting, and by more than 110 percent on neighborhood centers according to data from the Department of Transportation.

Finally, the Department of Justice's main grant making arm – the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) increased grant funds allocated from 3.26 billion dollars in FY 2021 to 4.5 billion dollars in FY 2023. These were targeted programs aimed specifically at reducing violence, increasing analytic capacity, and improving public safety overall.

The historic decline in murder should be expected to flatten out eventually, so seeing steps back from the community investments that potentially helped fuel murder's drop is worrisome.

The future of government spending is uncertain to say the least and government employment at the state and federal level is either flatlining or falling. Construction

spending on public safety and highways began to plateau in 2024 after huge increases since 2022. And a decline in OJP grantmaking in 2024 was followed by DOJ canceling around \$500 million dollars from more than 370 grants – primarily from OJP — per an excellent analysis from the Council on Criminal Justice.

These grants covered community violence interruption programs, technical assistance to law enforcement through Project Safe Neighborhoods, a program designed to reduce rural violent crime and support rural law enforcement called the Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative, and much more across 37 states.

The decline that began in 2023 will end at some point. Nobody can say whether that will be in 6 months or 6 years, but the decline will most likely either level off or reverse at some point down the line just as it always does.

Crime trends tend to change slowly for complex reasons, so declining government spending and support is unlikely to be singularly responsible for crime suddenly rising nationwide. The factors that caused the Great Murder Decline will probably not be the same factors that cause things to go up when they inevitably do. But crime is dropping at an enormously fast rate, and if/when those trends start to turn around though then many of the tools that likely helped arrest and then reverse the increase last time may not be available.

Mr. VAN DREW. Understood. Thank you for being here.

We are now going to ask you all to rise. We're going to swear you in. You're good. You rose to the occasion already.

Do you swear or affirm, under penalty of perjury, the testimony you have just given and are about to give is true and correct to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief, so help you God?

OK. Let the record reflect that the witnesses have answered—you may sit down—have answered in the affirmative.

Please know that your written testimony will be entered into the record in its entirety. If you weren't able to say everything you wanted to today, you'll have additional opportunity. Accordingly, we ask that if you do have written testimony, obviously, to please submit it.

With that, we're going to begin with the questions from the Members of Congress, and I will start with Ms. Cline. Is that good for you? I'm sorry. Mr. Cline. You will be second, Ms. Ross.

Ms. ROSS. Yes. Perfect.

Mr. VAN DREW. Mr. Cline, we're going to start with you. Is that OK?

Mr. CLINE. All right. That's great. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you holding this hearing.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here. This is very difficult, and you are helping us to craft policies that will hopefully help victims because, ultimately, that's what we have to keep in the forefront of our minds are the victims.

We can get lost in the numbers a lot of times, but what we have to do is remember that each crime has a victim and each victim has to be remembered and have us stand up for them.

To the city of Charlotte, you have a problem. You have a problem here. You have a criminal justice system that is broken. I'm not just picking on Charlotte because we've been in Philadelphia in a field hearing, we've been in New York City. Any other large city across this country is going to have a similar problem.

I'm from the Commonwealth of Virginia, just to the North. You could go to Richmond, you could go to Norfolk, you could go to Fairfax, you're going to see similar problems. They all have a broken justice system.

You have to have three parts of your system working together for there to be accountability. You have to have law enforcement, who do fantastic jobs arresting and charging; you have to have prosecutors, who do amazing jobs—I was a line prosecutor at the county level right out of law school—who, by and large, do amazing jobs trying to prosecute these cases; and you have to have judges who are willing to convict and to sentence these criminals. Without all three working together aggressively, you're going to have a broken criminal justice system.

Serving as a local prosecutor, like many on this Committee right now, we have seen—we've gone in for bond hearings in the morning and had these criminals come in. You look at three factors. You look at their criminal history, you look at whether they're going to be a danger to the community if they are given a bond, and you look at whether they're going to abscond and flee.

If any of those are a possibility, you argue against bond. If a judge thinks that any of those are a likelihood, you deny bond, and you hold them.

We also had 287(g) agreements where, if this offender was an illegal immigrant, they were held until their case was finished and then ICE could pick them up. We need, as Federal officials, to put in place mandatory 287(g) agreements so that every jail has to hold on to these illegal aliens until they can be picked up by ICE and deported.

We've got a broken system because not all of these parts are functioning together. In Virginia, we had laws on the books that were presumptions against bond. If you came in and you were charged with a certain offense, it was presumed you didn't get a bond, and it was up to the defense attorney to actually argue to overcome that presumption and get you a bond. More offenders were kept in jail pending their trial and, after conviction, were held for sentencing and then were sentenced aggressively.

Then we had a legislature that flipped, and we had a Democrat legislature and a Democrat Governor get rid of the presumptions and reinstate parole. We had the lowest recidivism rate in the country in Virginia, and that's gone.

Now we have cities, we have counties, like in Fairfax, where we have a prosecutor, Soros-backed prosecutor, who is actually treating illegal immigrants better than Americans, defendants. We have a problem right in our own Commonwealth.

Yes, there are solutions that have to happen on the local level; yes, there are solutions that have to happen on the State level. At the Federal level, I believe about 50 of the local prosecutors here in Charlotte are federally funded.

Well, let me say this. As a Member of the Appropriations Committee, we need to start tying the money for these prosecutors to the laws that are on your books and making sure that you actually impose some accountability here in Charlotte, make sure that you have the policies in place to make sure that justice is done, and that these policies are not ignored by the judges, ignored by the prosecutors, but are actually taken seriously.

As an appropriator, I'm going to take that back. I'm going to take your stories back to Washington, and I'm going to fight for the victims that suffered so tragically as a result of these crimes.

I want to thank you all for your time, and I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Mr. Cline. Ms. Ross, the gentlelady from North Carolina.

Ms. ROSS. Thank you, Chair Van Drew. As a former member of the general assembly and also a former transit attorney, I have been an advocate for additional resources for safe transit, for mental health, for victims, and for law enforcement for decades. In fact, the district attorney here, Spencer Merriweather, has also been sounding the alarm for years about the chronic lack of funding his office has received from our State legislature.

As we heard from Ms. King, he currently has 84 full-time assistant district attorneys in his office, many of them locally funded. For a city the size of Charlotte, the standard says that he should have at least 144 prosecutors to handle the caseload.

This chronic underfunding by the State legislature leads to incredibly high caseloads for ADAs in his office, which, in turn, leads to high turnover and not moving cases quickly enough. The State allocation for the Mecklenburg DA's office has only increased by a single prosecutor since 2010 despite a 20 percent growth in Charlotte's population since then. Between 2010 and 2020, the legislature only added 31 more prosecutors.

We're glad that the State legislature just decided to include additional funding for ten more, but clearly Mecklenburg County needs more than that. I would also say Wake County while I'm here advocating for them.

Ms. King, given the lack of resources the State legislature has provided to the Mecklenburg DA's office, we're left hoping that the Federal Government will help pick up some of the slack—Mr. Cline—and yet, the Trump Administration has clawed back or sought to cut hundreds of millions in funding for Federal law enforcement assistance, substance abuse treatment, crisis intervention, domestic violence, crime victim assistance, and more.

Can you speak about how ripping away these essential resources for State and local governments is not just an abstract budget item, but has a real-world effect on this community?

Ms. KING. When we talk about resources, less does not equate to more. In fact, many of us in our own general lives, we say, put your money where your mouth is. Show me where you're spending your money, I'll show you what priorities are important to you.

These offices, whether we're talking about law enforcement, whether we're talking about prosecutor offices, or whether we're talking about community organizations, they are doing the work and will continue to do the work. However, they're already strapped with trying to prioritize what initiatives do they put up first. Is it training? Is it personnel? Is it equipment?

When the funding is either reduced or cut back or diminished, that adds additional strains on these organizations to truly figure out how to best serve. To be clear, these offices have the goal of public safety in mind. However, being able to have sufficient resources to do that great work is vital to the boots on the ground, which are the local communities that are doing that work.

Ms. ROSS. As a followup to that you have a group of concerned Congresspeople here, including many from North Carolina. Can you tell us what—because you've been both a State prosecutor and a Federal prosecutor, what we in North Carolina should be advocating for our communities?

Ms. KING. More funding. More funding to law enforcement, more funding for prosecutor offices.

One example that I'll give you is any time a prosecutor's office, for example, is strapped with resources, they are having to decide whether or not to maybe fill vacant positions. We're talking about unfunded positions, filling vacant positions.

If those vacant positions remain vacant, that's more work that has to then be shared among the prosecutors that are in the office. That leads to prosecutor turnover, it leads to prosecutor burnout.

What I would ask Members of Congress to do is to really look at providing more resources, more funding, in particular, to our law enforcement agencies, to our prosecutor offices, and also to our

community organizations that provide supplemental support for those.

Ms. ROSS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I have a unanimous consent request. I ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record an article titled, "As Mecklenburg Weighs Budget Priorities, Court Leaders Barely Getting By Ask For Help," dated February 18, 2025.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Ms. ROSS. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. I'm going to claim my time. I just have a few thoughts here, so bear with me.

Some words were mentioned about the Crime Victims Fund and cuts and so forth. Let me just point out that this fund was down, actually, during the Biden Administration because they failed to collect so many fines against criminals. Good to know.

Some grant money was pulled from certain NGOs, not-profits, and I'm going to tell you why. Because they were spending money—it's important to realize here, money matters. Ms. King, you're right. Money matters. If you're spending the money on the wrong stuff over and over again and continuing bad policies over and over again, the money doesn't matter. In fact, maybe the money hurts because you're pushing these philosophies and these standards and what's happening in our country down everybody's throat, and you got the money to do it. That's not always a good thing.

More money to really enforce the law? Absolutely. I know Mr. Cline well, and I know that he will fight for that. We have to do the right thing.

Some of these we're funding to groups and NGOs that were pushing the exact opposite what the Majority of you want and the vast Majority of Americans want. Just a few questions here that I had.

Mr. Federico, I'm sorry. I don't have the words. I'm not going to pretend to have the words. A simple answer is what I need because I want to make sure that we crystallize this.

Should your daughter's murderer have been released so many times?

Mr. FEDERICO. Absolutely not.

Mr. VAN DREW. Crystal clear, right?

Mr. FEDERICO. Crystal clear. Couldn't be any clearer.

Mr. VAN DREW. Yes, exactly. If we had more money, she still would have been released if we had the same policies. That's the point. It's not the money.

Mr. FEDERICO. It's bad decisions.

Mr. VAN DREW. Yes. Mr. Campbell, where are you? There you are.

The assaults and the murders, what happened to you, what happened to your colleagues, what happened to those that are trying to keep us safe, and what's happening to much of the American public are bad judges, bad magistrates, bad prosecutors, bad laws, bad attorneys general, letting people out too early, is that the root cause of the problem?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Mr. Campbell. I appreciate it.

Mr. Woody, bail, could we, in your estimation, have saved lives if we had gotten rid of cashless bail and used secure bail, a bail that was secured?

Mr. WOODY. Absolutely.

Mr. VAN DREW. Again, crystal clear, right?

Mr. WOODY. Crystal clear. Secured bail—interacts with the families of the defendants.

Mr. VAN DREW. Nothing really complicated. Thank you.

Mr. Asher, you indicated that the crime rates drop, lowest levels, nothing has happened to anybody. I say this respectfully. I'm not picking on you. I appreciate you being here.

Man, talk to these people. You want to come to my district; I'll introduce you to a whole lot of folks that don't feel that way. Walk the streets of some of these cities. D.C.—I told you the stories before—I've got an office there, and two—not one, but two of my people in my office have been victimized; a Member of Congress' intern was murdered. People have been killed and beaten and hurt.

It depends on how statistics are compiled. Statistics don't always tell the story. Quite frankly, statistics always aren't accurate. Are we indicting everybody we should? Are we convicting everybody we should? Are we releasing more people than we should? That all affects those statistics. I just wanted to say that to you.

There's concern—and I'm a Second Amendment guy, but I don't want to get into guns here. We're going after people legally who have guns and think that's going to cure the problem.

How about the bad people who have committed felonies over and over that are released again, and some of those felonies involve guns? Shouldn't they be incarcerated? That's clear. You should agree with that whatever side of the aisle, whether you're liberal, conservative, or whatever.

It's kind of the same theme. It's the same story. I just wanted to touch base on those few issues.

Ms. Alderman, with you, do we need more accountability—just give me a yes or a no or maybe a few words—in our system? Do we need more accountability?

Ms. ALDERMAN. We don't have any accountability, so any little bit more would be great, thank you, yes.

Mr. VAN DREW. Do you believe that criminals should be released unsecured—with unsecured bond or no bond at all?

Ms. ALDERMAN. Of course not. They shouldn't be released with bond if they are charged with first-degree murder.

Mr. VAN DREW. Absolutely. I agree with you. Imagine, we're releasing folks with no bond or unsecured bond, even worse. I agree with you.

Ms. ALDERMAN. Sir, I do not have to imagine. I live here in Charlotte.

Mr. VAN DREW. I know. Thank you. Let me just ask you a question because you're a very outspoken lady, and then I will be done.

You heard Mr. Asher say that everything is pretty good, crime rate is down, the record lows, no problems, and everybody is happy. Is that your—you live in Charlotte. Is that your perception?

Ms. ALDERMAN. Absolutely not. I've lived in Charlotte back and forth during my life since I was six years old, and I'm 64. I have a very good chronological memory of Charlotte and of the crime.

Just since Mary was murdered five years ago in 2020—and she was one of those highest statistics in 2020—the crime, it’s just—it’s outrageous. Every single morning when you wake up, someone has been murdered, shot and killed or murdered in some other way. Other crimes that involve knives, axes, and these types of things.

It depends on your perspective. If you want to look at figures all day long, then you’re going to have—I’m not a mathematician or that type of analytical person. I’m telling you I don’t feel safe.

Mr. VAN DREW. I know that you aren’t. I know that you are. The last thing I would say—and, again, respectfully, Mr. Asher—I have a rule when people are talking about what people are thinking in politics, public policy, and government, to come walk the streets, walk the streets with me. You should walk the streets with these people and talk about what’s going on out there.

I don’t know what your numbers are, but I think a lot of us know what’s going on.

With that, I want to recognize—who do we have here? Ms. Adams from North Carolina.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me, first, thank you to the Committee for having me be here today. I don’t sit on this Committee, but I am a resident of Charlotte, and I represent this district.

Before I begin, though, I would like to just take a moment to thank all the witnesses for being here and to say that my heart and compassion goes out to each of you on the loss of your granddaughter, your daughter, and for your colleagues at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, and thank you for your service there.

I’d also like to extend my condolences to the family and the friends of Iryna Zarutka on this tragic murder. It was senseless, and certainly, we’re continuing to hold all you in your prayers.

No one should feel unsafe in their community or in their home. Senseless acts of violence have no place in our society, and they must be met with a commitment to creating safer communities for everyone. All perpetrators of violent crimes must be held accountable, and they must pay their debt to society to ensure that justice is served and to protect our communities.

I’m a little disappointed, Mr. Chair, that my colleagues here are politicizing the pain under the guise of seeking justice when, really, I think there’s an eye on this open sea. That’s the real prize. I’m going to just be honest, that’s how I am.

This is why we’re here even though we should be in Washington trying to make sure the government stays open. The hearing for me is not really about public safety; it’s about my colleagues trying to paint Democrats as soft on crime—and we’re not—and engaging in political theater, probably to score some headlines.

Now, we don’t need to try to distract the American people to cover up our own failure that we have not had the real solutions and while we’ve refused to equip local government with the funding and the resources that they need to keep communities safe. We’ve heard that here. Public safety transcends politics.

That’s why Congress in 2022 passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, signed into law by President Biden. It was the first

major Federal gun safety legislation passed in 30 years. I'm hoping that we can continue to do some bipartisan things that will really help our communities and the victims that are here and their families to solve some of the problems because there's still a lot to be done.

It was a promising first step. However, President Trump is now defunding the programs that that bill created, cutting off resources for school safety, for community violence intervention and crisis response, for mental health services. These are proven community-driven strategies that save lives. Gutting them doesn't make us safer; it puts more of us at greater risk of violence.

Over the past several years, local officials in Charlotte have been committed to making the city a safer place, and I commend the council and those who have been working to do that. This year, the Charlotte–Mecklenburg Police Department's midyear public safety statistics show violent crime is down 25 percent, including a 29 percent reduction in homicides.

The city council and the Metropolitan Transit Commission here in Charlotte have doubled the number of Charlotte area transit system security personnel. Since 2022, they have more than tripled their security budget from \$5.8–\$18 million a year.

Now, I want to say I served 20 years in the North Carolina House with the Congresswoman here, and I understand the budgetary concerns that they have as well. In the last several weeks, responding to the first homicide, the first homicide—any homicide is bad, but the first one on the Blue Line in its entire 18 years of running, local officials have taken additional steps to enhance security in Charlotte's Blue Line.

Governor Stein's budget also has called for more funding to address law enforcement vacancies and to ensure that we're hiring more well-trained police officers to keep our communities safe.

As we are joining this hearing today, I hope that we will take a comprehensive approach to our conversation around public safety. That includes talking also about mental health.

A report released by the Department of Justice's bureau found that nearly two in five people who are incarcerated have a history of mental illness. The 7.5 people will lose Medicaid coverage under this next decade if this big ugly bill, that's called the beautiful bill, it's going to hurt a lot of beautiful people if it stays.

Medicaid is the single largest payer for mental health in the U.S., and we've got to make sure that people's health is cared for.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me just say public health is public safety. I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank the gentlelady. I will now recognize Mr. Kiley of the great State of California.

Mr. KILEY. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to our witnesses for the incredible courage that you've shown in sharing with America the heartbreak and horror that you've endured.

Please continue to advocate. Yours are the most powerful voices in trying to prevent other parents and grandparents from experiencing the horror and heartbreak that you have. We will never be able to fully eradicate crime from our communities, but we can reduce those crimes that result from failed politics, from radical ideologies, from insane policies.

The reality is that far too many tragedies of the kind that we've heard about today are preventable if we just had a little more common sense when it comes to public safety.

In jurisdictions like this one and far too many places across this country, the sense that crime is just a fact of life has become far too entrenched; that this is just the way it has to be. A sense of political complacency has sunk in, to the point that, according to the latest State of Safety survey from the organization SafeWise, half of Americans do not feel safe in their own communities.

This is true—more true nowhere else than in my own State of California where, according to the same survey, 64 percent of Californians feel a high daily level of concern for their safety, which is the highest of any State in the Nation. Seventy-two percent of Californians say they are highly concerned about violent crime happening to them, also the highest of any State in the country.

This is not just an abstract issue. These are the vast Majority of people saying that they've heard about the sort of horrors that we've heard about today, and they fear that it could happen to them or to someone they love.

This sense of lawlessness is seen in the ordinary conditions of life for people as well. In Los Angeles, the police chief has advised people, do not wear your jewelry when you go outside. People have to walk through homeless encampments on their way to work with all manners of drug use and other unlawful activity.

You walk into a CVS or a basic store, and your shampoo and conditioner are under lock and key because theft is so rampant. We see that in Washington, DC, as well. You will probably see it here in Charlotte.

In fact, in my own State of California, we just had an incident two weeks ago where, in apparently an act of politically motivated violence, an individual fired three shots into a local news organization, and he was at large for some time, and then we all breathed a sigh of relief when he was apprehended.

Thankfully, no one was hurt. The shots didn't hit anyone. Then, he was immediately released, a man who just fired three shots into a news studio. Fortunately, there was a Federal nexus, the FBI apprehended him soon after that.

This is the core of the problem. It's criminology 101, that the best deterrent against crime is the certainty of punishment. The way that many of these jurisdictions are set up is there's various dimensions to the criminal justice system that undermine the certainty of punishment.

If you're a criminal committing even a very serious crime, you probably think there's not a very good chance you're going to get caught because the police departments are understaffed, and they've been defunded. Then, even if you do get caught, there's a good chance you won't be prosecuted because you have these rogue district attorneys who don't prosecute crime.

Then, even if you do get prosecuted, there's a pretty good chance you'll be let out on pretrial release on bail or even maybe on unsupervised release without bail. Even if you are convicted, then the punishments are so weak that it really won't be much of a punishment at all.

The good news is public opinion has turned sharply against these sorts of radical policies that have gotten us to this point. Even in California last year, Californians passed a proposition to make a crime illegal again by restoring appropriate consequences that passed with almost 70 percent of the vote despite opposition from the Governor and the political establishment.

We also saw some of these reckless district attorneys in our State removed from office. Because of that, we've actually seen a modest improvement in crime that is starting to be felt in our State.

Mr. Chair, this is precisely the time when we can say—and we've seen it in Washington, DC, by the way, where we have a controlled experiment going on where you can at least turn a couple of the levers to increase the certainty of punishment, and what do you know, crime goes down.

That we need to use that as an example for how we can bring public safety to communities across this country, and that starts, by the way, first and foremost, with supporting our law enforcement. Thank you to all the law enforcement with us here today.

I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Mr. Kiley.

Ms. ROSS. Mr. Chair, I have three unanimous consent requests.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a memo from the Democratic staff of the House Judiciary Committee titled, "President Trump's pardons cheat victims out of an astounding \$1.3 billion in restitution, fines allowing fraudsters, tax evaders, drug traffickers to keep ill-gotten gain."

An article entitled, "SEC Drops Efforts to Recoup Funds from the Trump Clemency Recipients," dated September 19, 2025, from *The New York Times*.

An article titled, "Trump Oversees All-Time Low in White Collar Crime Enforcement," dated August 10, 2020, from *Bloomberg*.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chair, I object. I fail to see the relevance of any of those documents to this hearing and the life of Iryna Zarutska.

Mr. VAN DREW. I do thank the gentleman, but it has been the past practice and policy on both sides of the aisle as far as entering something into the record, and I understand. When you speak—and you're going to have your opportunity—you'll be able to voice that objection and why. Thank you.

Mr. EDWARDS. OK.

Ms. ROSS. Just a point of clarification. All that money would go into the Crime Victims Fund. That money would go directly to victims of Federal crimes. By not recouping that money—

Mr. EDWARDS. Chair, is Ms. Ross recognized?

Mr. VAN DREW. No. I'm being lenient here. I got this problem, I always like to be a nice guy, but there's a point where for us to move on—and, again, you'll have your chance to speak—you'd have to withdraw that objection or else we'll have to vote on it.

Mr. EDWARDS. I'll withdraw it.

Mr. VAN DREW. I thank the gentleman. Thank you. OK. With that, I will ask—I will recognize Ms. Lee from the great State of Florida.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Like a number of my colleagues here today, I too am a former prosecutor. I also am a former judge. I know that when a judge considers the question of pretrial release, there is no more important consideration than safety to the community and risk to the innocent people who live there.

When judges fail to consider a violent criminal history or when they're required to look away from a violent criminal history, we see absolutely tragic consequences.

Our Committee has been traveling the country to try to tell the stories of the real people and the real families who have been forever and permanently affected by crimes of violence, and crimes of violence that could have and should have been prevented with good criminal justice policies.

These hearings are an effort to show that these tragedies are not numbers, they are not statistics, and they are certainly not political theater. They are real stories of families, sons, daughters, whose lives are lost or permanently changed.

As a mother, I thank you for being here and for being willing to share with us the stories of your families. There is nothing that could give better perspective on how vital and critical it is for us to stop soft-on-crime policies that lead to these kinds of tragic results.

Officer Campbell, I'd like to start with you. You mentioned that you and your colleagues, the day that you were injured and several of them killed, were responding to a call that involved a violent recidivist. Is that correct?

Mr. CAMPBELL. That would be correct.

Ms. LEE. Is that something that was unusual in your experience, or is that something that happens to you and your colleagues regularly?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I would say that was an unusual circumstance.

Ms. LEE. Now, in your experience, is there a broader challenge related to violent recidivists being out on release before trial?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes.

Ms. LEE. What effect does that have on your ability to do your job safely?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Speaking as a police officer, I would say we spend a lot of our time chasing our tail and rearresting the same people that we arrested the week prior while the violent crime continues.

A lot of crime is stopped just by our mere presence. Our presence is pulled because, again, we continue to arrest and deal with the same people day in and day out.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Woody, one thing that you mentioned was the concept of an unsecured bond or releasing someone on their own recognizance. Tell us, if you would, your perspective on the significance of, instead, having a secure bond or detaining someone pending trial.

Mr. WOODY. A secured bail bond, a co-signer is required, and indemnitor, per se. That indemnitor is going to be a family member, a close friend, a relative, or someone who has substantial collateral and something to lose if this defendant reoffends, if this defendant absconds, or if this defendant goes out and just thumbs his nose, per se, as the word was used earlier, to the court.

Ms. LEE. Ms. Alderman, you mentioned something in your earlier testimony that I think is a really important point for everyone here to understand. That is that it's been five years and you're—

Ms. ALDERMAN. Five and a half.

Ms. LEE. —and you're still waiting on a trial for the offenders in your granddaughter's case.

Ms. ALDERMAN. That, Ms. Lee, is not uncommon in Mecklenburg County. We are not the only ones.

The murder docket or whatever—I don't know the legal terms—but murder trials are between five and seven, sometimes more, years behind. That is outrageous. What the district attorney's office will tell the victims—they did tell me, and they have told others that I've spoken to—time does not—is not a friend to your case. Time only hurts your case.

When you have a heinous crime, for example—because I'm here for Mary—what they did to Mary, they had the evidence, they had the people, they had a witness in marry herself, because they had wanted to burn Mary's body in that mattress. Something that horrific is just put in line, just when they get to it.

They're just finishing up 2019. Mary was murdered in 2020. That personally, to me, makes no sense. Every single person who was murdered, there should be a swift prosecution, and they should be prosecuted, and it should be taken care of.

In addition to that, in my opinion, something as heinous as what they did to Mary and others in Mecklenburg County should be dealt with more swiftly.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Ms. Alderman. Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. I recognize the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Fry.

Mr. FRY. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to be here. You and I have traveled quite extensively into multiple jurisdictions to see the results of soft-on-crime policies within counties and within cities. Unfortunately, Charlotte is no stranger to that, too.

To Officer Campbell, thank you for your bravery, thank you for your commitment to law enforcement, and thank you for speaking up. I had the opportunity yesterday on the way up here to talk to several members, officers that serve this area who were fearful that if they spoke out or that if I attributed things to their name, that they would somehow be penalized for that.

What they have said and what they've said on the phone with me was really in line with what you've said, which is that these soft-on-crime policies, letting people out, letting people back out, and letting reoffenders back out routinely is a problem for what you do every day. That they don't feel the support from the city council; they don't feel the support from the judges on things that they do.

Even your own handbook really ties the hands of law enforcement and the things that you're able to do, and I think that's certainly a concern.

To Mr. Woody, thank you for speaking up about bail. There's a 2023 study in California—Mr. Kiley's State—of the Yolo County District Attorney's Office where California found that 70 percent of defendants released on no-cash bail went on to reoffend—70 percent.

The study found that defendants released on no-cash bail were twice as likely to be rearrested for felonies and three times as likely to be rearrested for violent crimes compared to those who actually posted bail. That's in line with what you said earlier.

Mr. Federico, you and I have had the opportunity to speak. It's just heart-wrenching to hear and to hear your testimony about Logan and what she faced. A lot of my questions today are going to be in line with you because I really want to dive into this because this is not unique to Charlotte, New York, or California. This happened in my home State of South Carolina and Columbia. I don't represent Columbia, but I want to dive into that.

She was a beautiful young lady pursuing a degree in education. She wanted to be a teacher. That is the most altruistic and good profession that is out there, and her life was cut short. Let's dive into that.

Mr. Federico, your daughter's killer had 39 prior crimes. Is that correct?

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes, and 25 of them were felonies.

Mr. FRY. Twenty-five were felonies. Did he serve any time in prison?

Mr. FEDERICO. He served a little over 600 days.

Mr. FRY. If you took all 25 felonies and you took all 39 crimes and he had actually served jail for those, what were his sentences supposed to be, if you took them all together and you added them up?

Mr. FEDERICO. Over 140-some-plus years.

Mr. FRY. One hundred and forty years, but he served 600 days.

Mr. FEDERICO. Right.

Mr. FRY. In 2014, he was charged with first-degree burglary and grand larceny, and if he was convicted, he would have faced 20 years. Is that your understanding?

Mr. FEDERICO. That is correct.

Mr. FRY. Did he serve 20 years for the 2014 felonies?

Mr. FEDERICO. No.

Mr. FRY. How much time did he serve, do you know?

Mr. FEDERICO. I think 411 days, and then he was out.

Mr. FRY. In 2023, he was charged again with third-degree burglary and unlawful carrying of a pistol. The court's comment on the public index of South Carolina says that the sentence would have been five years. Is that correct?

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes.

Mr. FRY. From 2023–2028.

Mr. FEDERICO. Would have never met Logan.

Mr. FRY. He would never have met Logan.

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes.

Mr. FRY. He would have still been incarcerated. What happened in that sentencing, do you remember?

Mr. FEDERICO. He was paroled for compliance.

Mr. FRY. He served time served, right?

Mr. FEDERICO. Time served.

Mr. FRY. The 114 days pending his trial. Time served?

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes.

Mr. FRY. With a maximum sentence of five years for third-degree burglary.

Mr. FEDERICO. That's with a felon with a gun.

Mr. FRY. Two years on probation, too, right?

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes.

Mr. FRY. During that probation, while he was out, he reoffended again. Isn't that right?

Mr. FEDERICO. That's absolutely correct.

Mr. FRY. In 2024?

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes.

Mr. FRY. What was that charge, do you remember?

Mr. FEDERICO. I believe burglary.

Mr. FRY. It was identity fraud.

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes, identity—burglary and identity fraud, I believe.

Mr. FRY. I know you're not a lawyer or a prosecutor or public defender, but to your understanding, is identity fraud a misdemeanor or a felony?

Mr. FEDERICO. Felony.

Mr. FRY. It's a felony.

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes.

Mr. FRY. That's right. How much time do you think he would have served if he had been convicted of that felony?

Mr. FEDERICO. Probably 15–25 years.

Mr. FRY. That's right. Ten years, actually. Ten years in 2024, he would have never met Logan.

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes.

Mr. FRY. He served 600 days. Why was Mr. Dickey not in jail?

Mr. FEDERICO. You know what, couple different reasons. There were a couple fingerprint issues. From what I understand, Mr. Dickey wasn't in prison because most of his plea deals.

Mr. FRY. Plea deals?

Mr. FEDERICO. Yes.

Mr. FRY. They say fingerprints. Don't you think that the judges and the solicitor would have had access to other records?

Mr. FEDERICO. Well, listen, if the person who found out about the fingerprints issue found out about it in 10 minutes, they sure as hell could have found out about it.

Mr. FRY. Now, if the judge—have you talked to the prosecutor, by the way, on the current case?

Mr. FEDERICO. Just once in four months.

Mr. FRY. Who is his name?

Mr. FEDERICO. Byron Gipson.

Mr. FRY. You have not talked to him once in four months?

Mr. FEDERICO. Once in four months.

Mr. FRY. After the tragic murder of your daughter, you have not talked to the solicitor? We call them solicitors in South Carolina.

Mr. FEDERICO. That's correct.

Mr. FRY. If the last judge prior to this murder were in front of you, what would you say to that judge? Then after that—I'll yield after your answer.

Mr. FEDERICO. I'm not so sure I would say anything to him. I'm not so sure he would be in front of me. Take a look at my daughter.

I don't have anything to say to him. What could I say? How he disappointed me. How he failed Logan. How he failed everybody in

this community. How many Alexander Dickey's do you think are out in South Carolina right now?

Mr. FRY. A lot.

Mr. FEDERICO. How many in Mecklenburg? Heck, there were four murders in Charlotte last week. I mean, come on. This isn't working. It's not working for anyone.

Mr. FRY. Thank you for your bravery coming here today. I know it's not easy for any of the witnesses.

With that Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. I recognize Mr. Knott from the State of North Carolina.

Mr. KNOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the witnesses here, thank you for your time, thank you for your testimony. Ms. King, it's always good to see you again.

Mr. Asher, I want to start with you. You talked about the decline in the homicide rates over the last time period. What time period specifically are you referring to?

Mr. ASHER. In general, murder rose 30 percent nationally in 2020; had stayed generally at that level between 2020–2022, and fell about 10 percent in 2023. Last year, the FBI had it at 14–15 percent. Then, so far the best estimate is roughly a 20 percent decline this year.

Mr. KNOTT. In terms of the homicides that you're referring to, what are the overall numbers per year on average?

Mr. ASHER. The year 2014 is previously the lowest murder rate ever recorded in the U.S. was about 14,500. In 2020, it hit about 22,000.

Mr. KNOTT. Are you referring to convictions, charges?

Mr. ASHER. No. This is just from police reporting. This has nothing to do with the prosecution angle.

Mr. KNOTT. The only reason why I'm asking is, you're aware that it is a homicide to sell a lethal dose of drugs, correct?

Mr. ASHER. In this case, it's the difference between a homicide and a murder. From the prosecution side, that can be homicide. From the way that the FBI is counting it would be a nonmurder homicide.

Mr. KNOTT. Interesting. Sure. A nonmurder homicide. OK.

Mr. ASHER. Yes.

Mr. KNOTT. Well, a homicide result—a criminal activity results in the death of the victim, correct?

Mr. ASHER. Yes.

Mr. KNOTT. Isn't it true that since 2000, there have been roughly 1.5 million victims who have lost their lives because of overdose?

Mr. ASHER. I don't have that number, but I don't doubt that.

Mr. KNOTT. That's not as rosy as crime is going away, crime is decreasing, correct? That's a 1.5 million, 1.5 million Americans over the last 20 years who were not captured in this batch of stats. It's astounding. It's astounding.

You're also aware that there was a leader in the Capitol Police Department, Mr. Michael Pulliam, who was suspended for manipulating crime data to make it appear that his community was safer than it actually was. Are you aware of that?

Mr. ASHER. Are you talking about Washington, DC?

Mr. KNOTT. Yes.

Mr. ASHER. I'm familiar with the allegation. I believe it's under investigation.

Mr. KNOTT. Yes. It is potentially feasible that the conclusions that you're deriving taken from police departments are not the full picture.

Mr. ASHER. I believe that it is the full picture. I think that—

Mr. KNOTT. I know you do. it's possible. I'm just asking if it's possible.

Mr. ASHER. Crime data is very flawed.

Mr. KNOTT. You just disregarded 1.5 million dead Americans—

Mr. ASHER. Well, I'm not disregarding anything, sir.

Mr. KNOTT. —to try to paint a picture that we are in a safer community.

Mr. ASHER. Even overdoses are falling this year. I think that I can appreciate it—

Mr. KNOTT. Well, that's because they've been so elevated. They're falling because we have protected the American citizens by securing the border.

Mr. ASHER. One can appreciate a trend that we are seeing currently, a downward trend in both overdoses, we're seeing downward trend in murder, we're seeing a downward trend in violent crime. While also not saying that these trends are acceptable, that the problem is solved—

Mr. KNOTT. When you sit here and look and talk to the people on the ground in Charlotte, sir, I would submit that your conclusions are not tethered to reality.

Now, Officer Campbell, I want to talk to you just briefly about various initiatives. There's been a lot of discussion about partisanship and how the Democratic party is not soft on crime. There are some Democrats who are not soft on crime.

In terms of defunding the police, a clarion call for the Democratic party, does that make us more or less safe?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I would say that makes us less safe.

Mr. KNOTT. What about working feverishly against long-term incarceration, is that more or less safe?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Less safe.

Mr. KNOTT. Mr. Woody, what about cashless bail—again, that's a uniquely partisan initiative funded by Democrats nationally, locally, and State level—does that make us more or less safe?

Mr. WOODY. Cashless bail makes us less safe.

Mr. KNOTT. Mr. Campbell, in regard to the complete disregard of our borders and our immigration laws, does that make us more or less safe?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Less safe.

Mr. KNOTT. What about decriminalizing all drugs—that's a partisan initiative in some parts of the country—more or less safe?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Less safe.

Mr. KNOTT. What about funding NGOs, tens of billions—we're talking about funding, we talk about mental health, we talk about victims funding—tens of billions of dollars over the last four years that was handed directly to people who were here illegally. Does that make us more or less safe?

Mr. CAMPBELL. It would be less safe.

Mr. KNOTT. It seems to me that we have an ideology problem, not a funding problem.

Would you say it's a coincidence that the top ten most dangerous cities in the country are led locally by Democrats? Is that a coincidence?

Mr. CAMPBELL. No.

Mr. KNOTT. Now, Mr. Federico, I want to ask you, there's been a lot of discussion about you cannot incarcerate your way to public safety. Do you agree with that?

Mr. FEDERICO. Well, how can we find out? We don't do it.

Mr. KNOTT. Right.

Mr. FEDERICO. There's percentages out there that after three years—after three years of release, 68 percent of them are re-arrested.

Mr. KNOTT. Right.

Mr. FEDERICO. We've got to figure it out first. Put them there first, then let's do the math.

Mr. KNOTT. Right. If someone has 39 arrests, 25 felonies, do you think they've earned the right to be in a jail cell?

Mr. FEDERICO. He has probably one of the best resumes of a criminal.

Mr. KNOTT. You think he deserves mental health, or does he deserve to be in jail?

Mr. FEDERICO. I think he deserves to be dead.

Mr. KNOTT. Ms. Alderman, in regard to your tragedy—again, thank you for being here—did your—did the criminal who affected you—does he deserve mental health, or does he deserve to be in jail?

Ms. ALDERMAN. The criminal—

Mr. VAN DREW. Time has expired, but I'll let you finish that question.

Ms. ALDERMAN. The criminals who killed Mary are not mentally ill, so it's not a valid concern of mine.

Mr. KNOTT. Thank you.

Ms. ROSS. Mr. Chair, I have a unanimous consent request. Just one this time.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record an article from *Reuters* dated September 29, 2025, entitled, "Exclusive Federal Drug Prosecutions Fall to Lowest Level in Decades As Trump Shifts Focus to Deportations."

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection. I recognize the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Harris.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to all my colleagues for coming to be a part of this. I want to thank you for holding this hearing here in the city of Charlotte.

I moved to Charlotte 20 years ago. Brought my family here to become the pastor of First Baptist Church here in downtown Charlotte. I can tell you that in 20 years, the Charlotte that we have discussed here today, there's a lot of issues that I think all of us have recognized. Quite frankly, I'm very thankful to have an opportunity for us to converse on how we can make it safer for its residents and its visitors.

All of us here in this room and across the country have seen the video of the tragic murder of Iryna Zarutka. We've heard the

harrowing stories that all you have shared today. Again, I add my heartfelt condolences to you, but my incredible admiration for your strength, resolve, and courage to continue to tell the stories. You cannot quit telling them. I'm very grateful for your willingness to step up.

In the case of Iryna Zarutka, Decarlos Brown, Jr., we know, had a long criminal history. Despite this, in his last encounter with the law prior to murdering Iryna, Magistrate Teresa Stokes released him back into the community with only a simple—and I quote—“written promise” to appear for his trial.

Now, sadly, it's all too common for a criminal to be let off easy by a judge only to have him turn around and commit even worse crime. You know and I know this is unacceptable.

Officer Campbell, I want to turn to you quickly. Have you encountered situations where individuals with a history of violent crime were released and you saw later reoffended?

Mr. CAMPBELL. That would be the Majority of the people I arrested.

Mr. HARRIS. The Majority. Thank you, sir.

In your view, how do lenient bail policies impact crime in Charlotte?

Mr. CAMPBELL. It would increase it because they know they're not going to be held accountable.

Mr. HARRIS. How do you, as a police officer, feel when these criminals are arrested and are shortly released immediately back into the public?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I feel the Majority of the work that I have done was pointless because they'll be out on the streets while I'm still writing the report.

Mr. HARRIS. Well, in my view, lenient bail policies are not working in the city of Charlotte or cities across this Nation. Criminals need to know that when they get arrested, they will not be immediately released on just an unsecured bond or written promise to appear.

In fact, I'm going to share a story that former Union County DA John Snyder shared with me years back. A man was arrested just over the Charlotte border in Union County that I represent. Being a repeat offender in Charlotte, he suddenly noticed that the police car was headed in the opposite direction of Mecklenburg County Jail.

After raising this concern with the police officer, he was informed he had been arrested in Union County, not Mecklenburg. On hearing this, the man began sobbing because he knew he was going to jail that night and would spend the night in jail.

Jurisdictions across the State should strive to send a similar message wherever you are. Many of those issues need to be dealt with by the North Carolina General Assembly, as we've heard today. I'm glad to see that they're already doing so with the passage of Iryna's Law, and I'm certainly praying and I hope all you are urging Governor Stein to find the courage to sign it into law.

Mr. Woody, turning to you, could you please describe for all of us the changes that Iryna's Law would make to North Carolina's system for bail?

Mr. WOODY. In accompanying with the Pretrial Integrity Act, an offender who reoffends is automatically held 48 hours or until they see a judge in front of a first appearance.

In addition to that, it would recuse the people from having an unsecured bail. They would be required to post a cash bail, secured bail through a bail bondsman or a family member with property or assets through an accommodation.

Mr. HARRIS. Well, thank you for sharing that. I believe Congress has got to take action as well. We cannot sit by and allow these mismanaged cities to put Americans in danger.

In fact, I'm going to be introducing two bills in the next week, one for accountability and the other for transparency. As one of them is going to ensure jurisdictions that get Federal grants for public safety do not defund their police or implement cashless bail, lest they lose any of those government funds, and one to require the Department of Justice to publicly identify every jurisdiction in this country that implements these cashless bail policies.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee to deal with these important matters.

In just my last few seconds, let me say, Mr. Federico, how has Logan's tragic death shaped your view of the criminal justice system?

Mr. FEDERICO. Very disappointing. When criminals have more rights and are respected more than an innocent young woman at age 22, it should send a shockwave to everyone, to everyone.

Mr. HARRIS. Absolutely. Well, again, let me just say thank you to all of you for sharing your stories. Please keep sharing your story.

With that, Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. I now recognize Mr. Moore from the great State of North Carolina.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Committee for being here today. I am proud to represent Charlotte and Congress, part of Charlotte, and while I'm glad that the Committee is here, I certainly hate the circumstances under which that the Committee has to be here.

To our witnesses here, I have no words. Some of you I have talked to before, some this is the first time. The tragic deaths that you all have discussed, that you are living through, Officer Campbell, your injuries, are things that should never ever have happened.

I do want to push back on some of the arguments that this is a money issue. This is not a money issue. This is a policy issue. This is a choice that is made often by magistrates, and I can give you some examples, one as recent as just a couple weeks ago.

Two of the district attorneys in two of the neighboring counties I represent, Travis Page from Gaston County, Mike Miller from Cleveland County, are here. I can tell you a story that I think is very telling. This happened just September 3rd, so this is very recent.

A guy by the name of John Alexander was accused of breaking into a Belmont Abbey College dorm room and sexually assaulting a student. That happened in Gaston County. However, he was initially arrested here in Mecklenburg County. Guess what his bond

was, Mr. Chair? Here the bond was set at \$50,000. He made bond. Once the case got transferred over to Gaston County, the district attorney and the judge there raised the bond to \$500,000 so that this person will be incarcerated.

That's an example from just a few weeks ago right here showing the difference. The fact that you have this pattern happening right here, and the two counties that I hear about the most—the complaints about are Mecklenburg County and Durham County. Those are the two that I hear about most often when I talk to law enforcement officials all around the State.

That it's just—it all tends to come down to—frankly, here in Mecklenburg the criticism has not been with the district attorney. It's been more with the magistrates and the judges. Just let these criminals come in and go right out the door.

Officer Campbell, you just testified there are times when you're still doing the paperwork and the criminal is walking back out on the street. Is that correct?

Mr. CAMPBELL. That would be correct.

Mr. MOORE. Just curious, is that more often than not, or is that just kind of a rare thing?

Mr. CAMPBELL. No. It happens quite frequently.

Mr. MOORE. That should shock everyone. That should drive the point home that this is not about money or programs or whatever else and some of these feel-good programs that get kicked around out there to try to divert people from jail. There are people who are dangerous, and they need to be incarcerated.

I'll tell you the other problem that we have, and that is the lawsuit a couple decades ago, I think the ACLU filed, wanted to get folks—deinstitutionalize folks with serious mental issues. Well, guess what you have now? You have people out on the streets and your homeless problem has gone through the roof. You can't go anywhere without seeing homeless encampments. Even in my small town of Kings Mountain where this is happening, it's happening all over the country.

It's because of these Leftist policies of trying to get people deinstitutionalized who have mental issues. Some people need to be in the community. Guess what? There are dangerous people who should not have been in the community.

I point to the situation with Iryna Zarutka. Not only should this guy not have been out on bond from previous things, but why didn't somebody involuntarily commit this guy, right? This guy—whatever you want to say, this guy should not have been on the streets.

These policies have to change. Guess what? It's a question of what's happened when it comes to judicial officials around because you don't hear this as much in some of the other counties. You've got a data pool that you can look at.

For those who are here in the public, you've got two neighboring district attorneys sitting out in the audience today. Talk to them after the hearing. Get them to talk to you about what the stats look like in their counties.

I want these victims' families to know that you were not done properly. Your loved ones were not provided justice. That has to change.

To the family of Iryna Zarutka, I have had the opportunity to speak with her uncle—absolutely tragic. Leaving a war-torn country, coming here, starting over, only to be murdered by some animal who should have been behind bars on this light rail. Just unspeakable.

I just want these family members to know, I want her family members to know—Officer Campbell who now lives with a disability because I want you to know—that these stories are in vain and that change has to come.

I appreciate your courage in being here today. I appreciate the message that's being set forth. Mr. Chair, I appreciate this Committee going around the country. Because the American people are sick and tired of this. It has to change, and it's going to change. With that I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. The gentleman yields, and I thank the gentleman. I recognize the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Rouzer.

Mr. ROUZER. I thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank you for allowing those of us who are not on the Judiciary Committee to join you here today. My primary Committee assignments are transportation and infrastructure and agriculture and science and technology. First, I want to tell each of you my heart, boy, my heart really goes out to you. It is unbelievable what you have had to endure. I can tell you that all of us here have been working very, very hard to make sure that justice is achieved. It may take a little bit, but we're going to work hard.

I also want to acknowledge that my mind and heart are with my friends in our community of Southport, which is in my district. It strikes me that we have a real issue of a moral—of what I'll call a moral and spiritual crisis in this country that needs to be addressed as part of the big picture as well.

Given my role on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where I'm the Chair of Highways and Transit, we're in the process of writing a highway bill, for lack of a better way to put it, and that's going to include an opportunity to make modifications to our transit programs. One of the things that I've observed through my research that is really interesting to me and quite appalling is fare avoidance. Folks get on these light rails, and they're not paying any fare whatsoever. That was the case with the murder here in Charlotte a few weeks ago.

Mr. Campbell, if I can ask you, is that something that you personally witnessed a good little bit? Is it lack of resources or lack of commitment to police these light rail cars and make sure people are paying their fares?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Well, the light rail system is controlled by CATS, and they employ their own security.

Mr. ROUZER. Right.

Mr. CAMPBELL. More cops to me would not be the answer. I mean CATS can control their own fares. There's never been a system that checks to see if they paid their fare or not in the first place.

Mr. ROUZER. Yes. Well, one of the fundamental principles is you get more of whatever you're going to incentivize. If people do bad and they're not reprimanded—if there's no consequence—they're

going to continue to avoid paying any fare. That's definitely an issue that we'll look at in the context of our highway bill.

I know we have some great and fine citizens of this community, David Longo, and many other business leaders who are working to enhance the community here for the future and are working on those specific issues. I appreciate them for their commitment and dedication to it.

When you have public transportation systems that the average person does not want to ride, that makes it very, very difficult to keep them financially viable and sound, and of course, as you know, really a problem for the community as a whole. Because, after all taxpayers are paying for them.

Let me ask you, Mr. Woody, switching gears a little bit. I am just curious about your thoughts on this. Do you think magistrate judges are under political or institutional pressure to release offenders with minimal bail even in violent cases?

Mr. WOODY. Magistrate officials are given a bail schedule. Whether they adhere to that bail schedule or not, that can be under their own accord.

Mr. ROUZER. Let me also—Mr. Campbell, back to you. Based on your experience in law enforcement, have you observed a correlation between the implementation or more lenient criminal justice policies and an increase in violent crime in the Charlotte region?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes.

Mr. ROUZER. Unequivocally yes.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes.

Mr. ROUZER. Thank you, Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. ROSS. Mr. Chair, I have a unanimous consent request. I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record an article written by Rachel Crumpler and Taylor Knopf, titled, "Charlotte Light Rail Killing Exposes Gaps in NC's Mental Health System," published by the *NC Health News* on September 25, 2025.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

I also have a couple of UCs. One is this new Senate Judiciary Report, the Grassley report, which shows "Biden DOJ Sent Taxpayer-Funded Grants to Soros-backed, Soft-On-Crime NGOs." That money, your tax money actually went there.

I also have another unanimous consent, from the *City Journal*, "Are Crime Statistics Reliable?" The "Agency's"—from that article—"Process is shrouded in mystery, and its numbers are often inconsistent and inaccurate."

With that, I will recognize the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Edwards.

Mr. EDWARDS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to be waived on to this Committee to visit Charlotte and to hear from this fine panel of witnesses.

To each of you, thank you for being here. Thank you for your courage. I want to apologize to you, first. I find it interesting that we've heard, in many situations from the folks that have talked today, efforts to distract us from what the actual issues are. Efforts to create diversions from the horrible stories that we've heard from our witnesses here today.

We've heard this issue politicized with documents that have been entered that have absolutely nothing to do with the relevance of your stories. I apologize to you for that. Frankly, I'm embarrassed that way too many times this is the way Congress operates. I can promise you that, while this behavior might be taking place up here with this panel, your stories have resonated with every Member that's up here. We will remember these when we get back to Washington, DC.

I apologize that we're hearing from folks that just say, "Give me more money, and I'll fix the problem." That's typically what we hear with about any problem that I face in Washington, DC—"Give me more money, and then I'll fix it." If there's anybody here that believes that simply reaching deeper into their pockets will fix this problem, please leave a collection over here in front of Ms. Ross before you leave today. We've heard that less guns on the streets by law-abiding citizens would fix this problem.

Ms. Alderman, let me ask you, would less guns on the streets by law-abiding citizens, would that have saved Mary's life?

Ms. ALDERMAN. No, not in Mary's case. Absolutely not.

Mr. EDWARDS. It wouldn't.

I ask you, Mr. Woody, while, no, I don't think anybody here is an expert on Iryna Zarutka, do you believe that less guns on the streets by law-abiding citizens would have saved her life?

Mr. WOODY. Absolutely not.

Mr. EDWARDS. Yet, we're turning our conversations toward those types of things. We've heard up here that Charlotte has the eighth safest crime rate—an eighth best crime rate in the country.

Ms. Alderman, do you take solace in knowing that somebody wrote an article that Charlotte has the eighth best in the country? Does that help you?

Ms. ALDERMAN. I don't care.

Mr. EDWARDS. Exactly. That has nothing to do with us saving Mary's life.

Ms. ALDERMAN. It's completely irrelevant

We heard here that—I think it was Ms. Adams that mentioned there's been a 25-percent reduction in violent crime. I think we heard something similar from Mr. Asher.

Mr. Woody—well, I'll ask Mr. Federico. A reduction of 25 percent, does that give you any solace?

Mr. FEDERICO. I'd like to see where it was. It certainly wasn't in our daughter's case; I can tell that you right now.

Mr. EDWARDS. We heard up here that we should feel comfortable that, in 2022, Biden signed the Bipartisan Communities Act.

Mr. Federico, do you take any solace in that? Does that give you any comfort at all?

Mr. FEDERICO. No. There's only one thing that would have kept my daughter alive, and that would have been keeping a career criminal in prison.

Mr. EDWARDS. Exactly. I apologize to you. There's been so many distractions to what the conversation really should be up here.

We've heard a number of times that there's a failure of policy. I can buy that in some cases. Definitely, we need to eliminate cashless bail. That's a policy that we should go after. I would suggest, more than policy and more policy. We need transparency, and

we need accountability to the people that are charged with implementing those policies.

Mr. WOODY, I'm about to run out of time. I know you're probably not an expert on the court system—by the way, thank you for your service in law enforcement, most of which I understand is in my district. Thank you.

Mr. WOODY. Thank you.

Mr. EDWARDS. How are magistrates selected in North Carolina?

Mr. WOODY. Magistrates are appointed.

Mr. EDWARDS. They're appointed by?

Mr. WOODY. The chief superior court judge.

Mr. EDWARDS. Which are selected?

Mr. WOODY. They're elected. Superior court judges are elected.

Mr. EDWARDS. What I hear you saying is that we as citizens, communities, can elect folks to implement those policies. It may be that we need more policies or more reporting to make accountability a bit more transparent.

I'm out of time. I can go on with this forever. Thank you all. I appreciate you being here.

Mr. VAN DREW. The gentleman yields. I thank the gentleman.

I recognize Mr. Harrigan from North Carolina.

Mr. HARRIGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses today. I generally appreciate your heartfelt testimony. It is something, as Mr. Edwards has said, that will resonate with all of us forever. You have that commitment from us.

I find it personally disgusting that Members of this Committee have suggested that this is political theater for the purpose of negotiating an open seat while distracting from the fact that violent repeat offenders are continually let free from our judicial system. That is the problem that we have. That is only the problem that we have, period.

We talked a lot about money today. I will actually give DA Merriweather some credit. He got together with local business leaders and local government officials to decide, OK, hey, what is the minimum amount that we actually really need to get the job done? Because from his words he said, "I don't want to throw money at this problem because the problem really isn't money." Out of the ten additional DAs that he needs with five additional staff assistants, that's exactly what the State legislature has authorized. It's just waiting on Governor Stein's signature to be put into law. That's happening.

We've got to understand that the lack of ten DAs in a system that has 84 DAs already is not problem. It's mutually exclusive from the problem of judicial posture with respect to judges and magistrates simply allowing violent repeat criminals back on our streets, as well as trial delays, which, as we all know, over the course of time, we lose witnesses; we lose accuracy of testimony. It degrades the system of justice that we have. We cannot allow this to continue to stand.

What I find absolutely indefensible is politicizing this Committee, testimony here today, in front of these victims and the families of these victims, saying that this is for political purposes.

Mr. Asher talked about statistics today. The statistics that he entered into his testimony today about declining crime are only through June 2025. It does not talk about July, August, or September. You know what's happened in July, August, and September? The murder rate has skyrocketed in Charlotte. We are picking and choosing what type of statistics we want to share to forge a narrative that is detached from reality. That narrative does not line up to the experience of Officer Campbell, Mr. Federico, and Ms. Alderman. Let us not forget that.

One of my Democratic colleagues said, "Don't judge us by what we say but what we do," with respect to money.

Let me be very clear, the sole force behind defunding the police has been the Democratic Party, period. They have created unrest. They have created a desire within our population to not step up and serve in law enforcement.

I had a long meeting with Johnny Jennings, the former Chief of Police and CMPD, and I asked for a meeting. I said, "What's working; what's not working? I want to go through everything so that I might be able to help you." At the end of what was supposed to be a 45-minute meeting that actually lasted 3½ hours, he said, "Mr. Harrigan, I just want to thank you." I said, "Why, Chief?" He said, "Because not one time in my entire career, 30 years, has an elected official asked to talk to me about what's working, what's not working, and to let me know that they had my back." Not one member of the Charlotte City Council, not one member of the Mecklenburg County Commission, not the mayor, not a single Congressperson had ever come before him and asked, "How can we help?" as opposed to just absolutely running him through the mud when things didn't go their way in traditional media.

Guys, we have a problem here. We have a very real problem that we need to work together to solve. We have to understand what is the root of this problem. It is, as Mr. Moore said, "it is not money, it is poor policy built on poor principle that is leading us down the road to failed outcomes." We have failed leaders who are leading us down the road to failed outcomes. It's their kids that pay the price. That's got to stop.

I've got a daughter, two daughters, Raegan and McKinley, they're six and eight. God forbid, if something like that ever happened to them, I could not be a civil citizen. Mr. Federico, I thank you for your restraint today. God bless you. I yield back.

Mr. FEDERICO. Thank you.

Mr. VAN DREW. The gentleman yields. I recognize Mr. Schmidt from the great State of Kansas.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank all our witnesses, but particularly the family members who are the victims themselves in the case of Officer Campbell.

I have not met any of you personally prior to today, but I feel like I know you. I've spent 12 years as attorney general in our State. I've spent a lot of time with families who have lost everything. I always made a point to sit down with families before we make charging decisions or plea decisions or management decisions on a case, because I thought that it was important to understand as we were acting on behalf of the State of Kansas within the boundaries of the law and the evidence that was in front of us.

I want to thank you for stepping forward and expressing my unbelievable sorrow with you, even though we have not met before today.

I don't know how it is here in North Carolina. I'm learning how it is in Washington, DC, when we debate criminal justice policy. I'll tell you how it was in Kansas for a lot of years when I served in public policy roles.

Our legislature would say all the right things, including me, when I was serving there. Then, it would come crunch time, and it was time to make numbers fit, and it was budget time. We always ended up in a public safety context in a conversation about dead space in our prisons and the cost-managing inmates or offenders on the back end. Then we had very smart people—and I say this genuinely—Mr. Asher and I have not met before. I've heard his presentation to a lot of smart folks who sit and crunch numbers who tell us how to back into public safety decisions. Then, we would make those decisions, and I would often vote against them because it ended up with the decision being that you had decided how many people you were willing to pay to correct. You were deciding who went to the top of the list to be correct. Everybody else wound up on early release. They wound up on work release. Perhaps they wound up with a cashless bail option. We didn't have that in Kansas. We repelled that.

I always thought that was backward. I always thought you ought to sit down with individuals who had lost a loved one or who were themselves victims of crime, you ought to make policy decisions based on what you thought justice was in an individual case. Then you ought to make resource decisions based on what your policy decisions were on what justice demanded. I thought that was correct, even as a fiscally conservative guy, because I think public safety is a core function of State and local government and the Federal Government within our boundaries.

I guess I would just ask—I am going to start with Ms. King because she's worked the system as a prosecutor. Do you share that general philosophy that we ought to decide who we need off the streets first, and then figure out what it costs as opposed to deciding how much we're willing to spend, and then figure out who we can get off the streets with the resources available?

Ms. KING. The criminal justice system is—depending on who commits the crime. Who commits the crime is who the resources, whether that's investigation or prosecutorial, that's how those resources are allocated, working cases against the individuals that commit the crime.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Officer Campbell, how about you? You've seen both sides of the system now.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I don't know. Because I don't know where you want me to begin.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Wherever you think is appropriate.

Mr. CAMPBELL. We sit here and reallocate funds, time, and equipment to arresting one person. Go through the system, they're already back out. They commit another crime before they have their court case. Now, you have two court cases. It just keeps piling up. That would be my experience in this whole thing.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Mr. Woody, you deal with a particular slice of the offender population at a particular moment in time. Any thoughts on that general approach?

Mr. WOODY. The general approach would be that there has to be some sort of accountability for the offender. We start with the accountability of the date of arrest, and the accountability follows him throughout the duration of the charge, so the snowball effect doesn't begin.

Cashless bail has no accountability for the offender. They're released 1–3 days with no consequences versus secured bail. If they go through a secured bail process, they have family, someone for collateral, someone with skin in the game to verify the takeover to the court system.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Mr. Federico.

Mr. FEDERICO. The safety of the community has to come first. If that is putting somebody in prison right away and not letting them go until it's ready as far as their hearing—you have to think of the community first. Nobody thought of the community first—39 arrests, 25 felonies. Come on. Seriously. Who can possibly explain that to me? No.

It has to be—you put them in there; we'll worry about it later. We'll figure it out. Simple as that.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Amen, sir. I believe I'm out of time. I would ask Ms. Alderman, but I'll leave it to the Chair on that.

Mr. VAN DREW. I thank the gentleman, both of you actually. I mean, getting my place here.

Yes, Mr. McDowell. I recognize Mr. McDowell, the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. MCDOWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to each of the witnesses for being here today. I want to first address something that one of my colleagues said to begin this hearing, which was that apparently all the folks on the Republican side are here to talk about catchy slogans, and that's what we care about. I take offense to that and it's wrong. It needs to be called out because, nine months ago, I was sworn in to serve as a Member of Congress. The only reason that I ran for Congress was because my little brother is one of those statistics that Mr. Asher failed to mention. He was killed by fentanyl poisoning. This is not a statistic for me. This is not a catchy slogan. What this is, is a way for me to get up and do something about it. I wouldn't be in Congress were it not for failed policies of Democrat politicians that left our border wide open. I take offense to what my colleagues said at the beginning of this meeting that all we care about is catchy slogans. Because it's wrong.

I know firsthand, Mr. Federico, what it's like to see that picture, a picture of a lost loved one that drives you and that motivates you. In my office, I keep a picture of my brother that I have to see every single day before I go to vote, so I remember why I'm here. Every day, when I see him, I will see Logan. Because that's why I'm here. I am here to do something about it. We're all here to do something about it because we cannot let these beautiful people that are murdered by dangerous criminals, who have been in and out of custody but never actually put in a box where they belong. We can't do nothing.

There's been a lot of conversation today about funding and mental health. My wife is a therapist. As good as she is, I don't think an hour a week with my wife would have saved Iryna. Because I don't think that would have saved Decarlos Brown's mental health. No. He's an animal. He's a criminal, and that is obvious from the horrific video that we saw. He belongs in a jail cell. It is a failure—I won't even call them leaders because they're not leaders. Because leaders would have made sure that he was in prison. They're elected officials that didn't do their job, and they need to be called out for it.

I hate that Mr. Asher is not here to talk about the rosy statistics that he offered us today, but I don't think that those rosy statistics really do anything for victims' families.

Mr. Federico, I have a question for you. Did the statistics that Mr. Asher shared with us today, do they do anything to ease your pain?

Mr. FEDERICO. I think they're crap.

Mr. McDOWELL. I concur. Unfortunately, for the narrative that my friends on the other side of the aisle are trying to paint, I'm going to yield the rest of my time to Representative Knott to continue his questioning.

Mr. KNOTT. Thank you, Representative McDowell. It's alarming that we've been told it's a funding issue; it's a mental health issue: "You can't incarcerate your way or law enforcement your way out of crime." Stats tell you, Charlotte, that you're safe, so sit down and be quiet.

It's outrageous. It's outrageous. Their statistician said disregard 1.5 million dead Americans. The law enforcement data that he utilized is inherently flawed. Sit down and be quiet because you're safe.

Again, I find it outrageous. We do not have a spending problem; we have an ideological problem. When we start to look at behavior as some sort of collective trend or some sort of disparate impact if we actually police, rather than what one person does—does he or she deserve to be charged and prosecuted—we're going to be way off course. That's it.

Justice is blind. If you commit a crime, you deserve to be prosecuted. I hate to say this, but I've been very convicted up here; if any of us on this row right here had something stolen from us, if we were slapped, punched, shoved to the ground, do you think that we would be crying at mental health? I find it laughable. I find it laughable.

I'm astounded that we look at the brutal murder of Iryna—how anybody could conclude this is a mental health crisis is astounding.

I am short on crime—I mean on time. Ms. King, let me just ask you, one tool that I think is underutilized is the task force officer model. Can you briefly summarize how we can implement that around the country to force multiply for good?

Ms. KING. Absolutely. The task force model, which was best utilized through the Organized Crime Drug Task Force, combines resources at both the Federal and the State level, law enforcement, and even prosecutors. The benefit of that is because, oftentimes, local law enforcement, they know the drivers of violent crime on

the street. They're in the community every day. They know those repeat offenders.

However, the Federal law enforcement oftentimes does, in fact, have more resources—whether that be money to throw at investigations and or manpower.

Mr. KNOTT. Right.

Ms. KING. Combining those tools really does make a bigger and better impact. They're able to make bigger and better cases. They're able to focus their attention on specific problems, such as violence crime.

In my experience as a prosecutor, the most violent people I was ever able to prosecute were, in fact, the result of a task force model.

Mr. KNOTT. Right.

Ms. KING. I would echo that—I know the OCEDETF program has been dismantled. I would echo that bringing back programs such as that are, in fact, tremendously instrumental in our communities.

Mr. KNOTT. Thank you.

Mr. VAN DREW. The gentleman yields. The gentleman yields.

Last but not least, we have the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Norman.

Mr. NORMAN. I have sat here for, what, 2½ hours and heard Members that serve in Congress quote statistics. Quote statistics. Crimes statistics down in Charlotte? How does that help the victims that are up here?

What if, Ms. King, it was your daughter or your granddaughter?

Or, Congresswoman Ross and Adams, you used your time to quote how crime is down, what about calling your mayor out, Mayor Lyles who failed to report the stabbing.

Bring that picture up here.

[Photo shown.]

Mr. NORMAN. It happened on August 22nd. Where is your voice for that? Where is your voice for the children who were, as my colleague mentioned, were let across the border to two on 20 million people by your President, who opened the door—we finally had a President that stopped it—and you criticize Trump and quote statistics. Are you kidding me? It's a disconnect.

What about the 14,000 murders last year? What about that statistic? What about the—Mr. Federico, what did you say 39 violations and 25 felonies? He is out.

This is an insult. You can fill this entire room with victims across Charlotte, not from South Carolina, but you can fill—you can take just a county and fill everybody here. Y'all using your voice as Members of Congress?

No, it's more than about money. What about cutting the pay of those judges who cut these criminals loose? What about them? Yes, y'all put the handcuffs on the police, and you've put the handcuffs on the police instead of on the victims? It blows my mind as I sit here and hear this.

Let me give you a visual. Mr. Federico, I see your daughter. What about this?

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Chair.

Mr. NORMAN. What about this?

Ms. ADAMS. The family member is here.

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Chair, it's my time. It's not her time.

Ms. ADAMS. Well, have some respect for this family.

Mr. VAN DREW. It is the gentleman's time, and it is his right as a Member of Congress to testify.

Mr. NORMAN. No, I'm serious. What about this? Where was her—well, how about that statistic? Did it help her? Tell me, did it help her? No, it did not. It's a miscarriage of justice.

For the Members to sit up here and use their time, it's amazing that, in America, what happens here? What happened to this young lady, what happened to your daughter, and your granddaughter—

Ms. ALDERMAN. Mary.

Mr. NORMAN. Mary. That's what happens in Third World countries. What happened to Charlie Kirk—that's what happens in Third World countries.

You have Members of your party who are, many of which, identified with the assassin. All I'm saying is this is not time for politics. This is not time for any race. It's not time of any party. It's about time of justice.

Like Mr. Federico said, until we stop—putting people in prison, no amount of money, no amount of heartbreak and try to decide is its mental illness, whatever it is, I don't care what it is; they murdered, right here. It's sick. That's what we've got to correct. That's what many of up here will stop or at least stop.

Ms. King, we had a perfect example of a statistic I doubt you ever would hear of. It's the former law enforcement from my home State that came up here for a bowling alley. His wife got assaulted. He jumped up and stopped it like the people failed to do with this lady. He shot at him—I mean, the criminal. He had the license tag and all. Guess what the police said? "We can't prosecute. We don't have enough evidence." He said, "I've got the license number." That statistic never showed up. The Charlotte Police, for whatever reason, wouldn't report it.

The bottom line is, until we start getting a lot harder and start—these do-good policies have to go away. We have got to start—the crime needs to be prosecuted. Judges that don't do it, they ought to be replaced. Call for cutting their salary. I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. The gentleman yields back. I know we have some unanimous consents on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Fry, I believe you—

Mr. FRY. Yes, Mr. Chair, I have got two UCs. One is an article in the *National Police Association* written by Doug Wyllie, "After 21 Years as Defense Attorney, Byron Gipson Isn't Much of a Prosecutor."

I also have the—do you want to do them all collectively?

Mr. VAN DREW. Yes.

Mr. FRY. I also have the SLED report from Alexander Dickey, who was the murderer of Logan Federico.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Mr. FRY. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. VAN DREW. Ms. Ross, I believe you have some, Ranking Member.

Ms. ROSS. Yes, I have a few. Thank you. I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a report written by Kylie Murdock and Jim Kessler, “21st Century Red State Murder Crisis,” published by *Third Way* February 27—

Unanimous consent, a report written by Chandler Hall, “The Highest Rates of Gun Homicides Are in Rural Counties,” published by the *Center for American Progress*.

An article written by Nick Wilson, titled, “Trump Administration’s Budget Will Undermine ATF’s Effort to Prevent Violent Crime.”

An article written by our witness, Mr. Asher, who had to leave, “What To Do About Crime’s Persistent—“

Then, unanimous consent to enter into the record an article written by Michael Waldman, “Trump Defunds Effective Crime-Prevention—“

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Ms. ROSS. Oh. Ms. Adams has one.

Mr. VAN DREW. I’m sorry.

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Chair, I would like enter into the record and ask unanimous consent to submit the CMPD report, weekly crime report of Charlotte–Mecklenburg, from August 24, 2025, showing a 30-percent decline in homicides compared to the same period last year.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Ms. ADAMS. I want to apologize to Iryna’s family for that photo. They don’t want that to continue to be used to politicize. That’s exactly what—

Mr. VAN DREW. Ms. Adams, your time has expired. Your time has expired.

Mr. CLINE. I’ve got a unanimous consent request.

Mr. VAN DREW. Yes.

Mr. CLINE. I move to admit *Heritage Podcast*, “The Blue City Murder Problem.” The Left’s claim that America has a Red State murder problem is misleading and deflects from Progressive soft-on-crime policies that have wreaked havoc.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

I want to thank you all for being here. I do want you to know one thing: Politics is not what it should be sometimes. I believe that the Majority of folks up here really did hear you for real. We’ll do the very best that we can.

This concludes today’s hearing, and we thank our witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee today.

Without objection, all Members will have five legislative days to submit additional written questions for the witnesses or additional materials for the record, as so desired.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:42 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

All materials submitted for the record by Members of the Subcommittee on Oversight can be found at: <https://docs.house.gov/Committee/Calendar/ByEvent.aspx?EventID=118642>.