

Reducing Gang Violence in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Prosecution, Policing and Prevention; A Three-Pronged Approach



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Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Public Safety

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The Joint Committee on Public Safety (2003-2004 Session)

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Executive Summary

Background

The gun shots of summer 2004 shattered a decade-long peace resulting from a consistent decline in gang violence across Massachusetts. In the early 1990's, many cities, most notably Boston and Chelsea, succeeded in stemming a rising tide of youth homicide and other, gang-related crimes by developing a successful combination of tough and targeted law enforcement with innovative community-based programs. Today, as gang violence resurfaces, ten years of budget cuts, persistent problems preventing effective prosecution, and diminished focus on anti-gang efforts at the state and municipal levels have sadly taken their toll on the success stories of the early 1990's.

On September 29, 2004, the Legislature's Joint Committee on Public Safety held an investigative hearing on this emerging public safety crisis. The Committee sought to identify the means to curb the new wave of violence – to find where and when the state could assist local communities and police departments in reducing rising rates of gang-related crime. The central theme that emerged from police chiefs, prosecutors, community leaders and youth advocates was simple: *getting tough on crime, while a key component, is not enough to reduce youth and gang violence; state and local officials have to work collaboratively to get tough on the root causes of gang-related crime.*

There is no silver bullet for combating gang violence. However, a coordinated strategy of focused and effective prosecutions (including stricter penalties for those who violate the law), community-based law enforcement models, and enhanced prevention programs will make a significant difference. Like a three-legged stool, an effective statewide gang-violence reduction strategy must rest on *all* three prongs – or it will fail.

In July 2004, the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition – a working group of ten metropolitan Boston municipalities – began developing a Community Safety Initiative to focus regional resources and attention on best practices for reducing crime, youth violence and drug abuse. The Metro Mayors initiative also called for a coordinated statewide plan for preventing and responding to youth violence and gang activity. In the fall of 2004, Mayor Kalisz of New Bedford offered similar strategies in Southeastern Massachusetts. Suffolk County District Attorney Dan Conley and Lieutenant Governor Kerry Murphy Healey each proposed legislative initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of prosecutions. Each of these efforts had merit; from these and other contributions, a strategy began to emerge.

We conclude in this report that a statewide strategy on reducing gang violence is essential to provide cities and towns with all the tools and resources they need to keep youth off the streets and out of gangs. Successful anti-gang programs depend on a wide variety of solutions from

prosecution to policing and prevention. The goal is simple: *no Massachusetts resident should ever live in fear for their families – in their homes or on their streets.*

Curbing Gang Violence with a Three-Pronged Strategy

Beginning with public testimony last September, discussions led by Senator Jarrett Barrios with stakeholders across the state have culminated in a clear program for confronting increased gang violence.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the General Court have two important roles to consider when partnering with local cities and towns to reduce gang-related crimes and youth homicide rates. Specifically:

- ❖ ***The Legislature*** must act to strengthen state laws to protect witnesses and victims, and to discourage specific gang activities by strengthening penalties for those criminals who break the law.
- ❖ ***The Executive agencies***, supported by the Legislature, must focus resources on proven policing and prevention efforts in gang-impacted communities, and demand as a condition of funding that the full spectrum of community partners – from law enforcement leaders to community-based anti-violence organizations – develop municipal strategies which reach across often-deep divides to coordinate with one another in replicating successful anti-violence efforts.

Municipalities cannot be expected to curb rising rates of gang recruitment and violence by themselves. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts must do more to send the unequivocal message that violent gangs are not welcome in our state. That message will be loud and clear if the General Court and Governor act promptly in the following areas.

Enhanced Prosecution and Punishment

Witness intimidation has for too long placed a stranglehold on a district attorney's ability to put violent gang members in jail. District attorneys must be given additional tools to ***prosecute*** known gang members who engage in criminal activity. Primary legislative and budgetary recommendations include:

- ❖ ***Strengthening*** victim and witness protection laws.
- ❖ ***Establishing*** a statewide witness protection program.
- ❖ ***Adopting*** the federal perjury standard.

Community Policing and Law Enforcement

At the cornerstone of any successful anti-gang effort is community policing. Law enforcement professionals must be given the tools to build trust with residents and protect neighborhoods by keeping criminals and dangerous weapons off the streets. Budgetary recommendations include:

- ❖ **Restoring** Community Policing Grants to put police officers back on the streets in gang-impacted cities and towns in which municipal government has coordinated with state, regional, and local partners.
- ❖ **Increasing** the geographic scope and duties of the Massachusetts State Police Gang Task Force, and dedicating a portion of the already-funded trooper class to this effort.

Legislative recommendations include:

- ❖ **Strengthening** penalties for the illegal trafficking of firearms and the illegal possession of a loaded firearm.
- ❖ **Eliminating** the backlog in the State Police ballistic fingerprinting database so guns used in crimes can more easily be tracked to the criminals who used them.

Prevention Programs

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, preventing youth from joining gangs is the most cost-effective long-term strategy.¹ Consequently, a primary goal of the Commonwealth should be to **prevent** gang recruitment and violence by providing cities with information and targeted resources to develop dynamic police-community partnerships focused on violence prevention programs for at-risk youth. Recommendations include:

- ❖ **Creation** of a statewide competitive grant program for projects which feature partnerships between local law enforcement and community-based anti-violence organizations seeking to stem gang violence through community partnerships, summer employment, youth leadership development and other activities.
- ❖ **Expansion** of formal community partner “contacts” with at-risk youth in gang-impacted cities through schools and youth employment opportunities.

Last summer’s increase in gang violence pushed communities to fortify their existing anti-gang programs. For Massachusetts, it brought into focus lapses in the Commonwealth’s overall response to increases in gang activity statewide. The Joint Committee’s anti-gang hearings and subsequent roundtables with stakeholders have yielded a crop of specific legislative proposals.

¹ “Youth Gangs: An Overview.” Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Juvenile Justice Bulletin. August 1998. p. 13. Retrieved 9 December 2004, from <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/167249.pdf>.

Senator Jarrett Barrios and Representative Stephen Canessa have filed an omnibus bill containing these initiatives, and are urging the Governor and General Court to undertake in the 2005-2006 session. In addition to stricter criminal penalties, this Committee recommends focused attention on effective prosecution, community-based policing, and replicable prevention anti-gang efforts that deserve to be supported in this FY06 budget.

It is the Committee's sincere hope that the Legislature will use the recommendations of this report to work with communities and the executive agencies of this state to begin putting the pieces of the anti-gang puzzle back into place. Completing these efforts will not end violence in Massachusetts, but will largely stem tragic instances of youth violence connected to gangs.



Introduction

A Decade of Decline: Lessons Learned From Two Communities

Gang intimidation and youth violence reached unprecedented levels in the early 1990's in many communities across the nation. Boston and Chelsea responded by forging alliances between law enforcement and community members. These experiences continue to serve as potent examples for anti-gang efforts now and in the future, and help provide the foundation for this report's recommendations.

In Boston, the dramatic increase in youth homicide and gang recruitment prompted the creation of the Boston Strategy to Prevent Youth Violence. The Strategy brought together community leaders, particularly those involved in faith-based activities, with law enforcement officials to forge solutions. The "Boston Strategy" has been lauded widely for achieving a dramatic reduction in gang violence.² Perhaps most importantly, the Strategy created clear channels of communication and trust between Boston's Police Department and neighborhood leaders.

This challenge of building bonds was not – and could not – be left solely to the police. In Boston's minority neighborhoods, religious leaders mobilized faith communities to become partners with city government and law enforcement agencies as a route to protecting minority youth at risk for violence and gang activity. This effort became known as Boston's Ten Point Coalition; a group of 52 church and "para-church" members initiated a wide range of activities targeted toward at-risk youth and neighborhoods, including street outreach programs, court advocacy, mentoring programs, economic development strategies, health care programs, neighborhood crime watch support, male and female gang intervention programs, and suburban, downtown, and inner city church partnerships.

Across the Tobin Bridge, the City of Chelsea also struggled with an increase in Latino gang activity. In the early 1990's, when the Commonwealth's Secretary of Public Safety Ed Flynn was Chelsea's chief of police, residents and municipal leaders galvanized around the problem. Community activists supported the formation of Roca, Inc., a grassroots, multicultural human development and community building organization based in Chelsea and which now serves the communities of Chelsea, Revere, East Boston and Lynn. Roca developed a variety of teams and committees that have provided opportunities for youth at-risk of becoming involved in gang-related activity:

- ❖ Street Outreach Teams were organized to support leadership development and growth of at-risk youth through relationships and "peacemaking circles," and events such as basketball tournaments, car washes, hip hop parties, etc.

² More on the strategy can be found at: <http://www.bostonstrategy.com/>

- ❖ Project Victory is an intensive after-school program for young people between the ages of 12 and 15 that operate both during the school year and the summer to help them increase their academic skills.
- ❖ The Vision, Intent and Action (VIA) Project involves community partners and employers in a basic education and employment readiness program for gang-involved and vulnerable youth.

Roca also began to meet regularly with Chelsea police officials. Communication, information sharing and complementary strategies of preventing gang violence emerged out of this sometimes rocky, important dialogue.

Two Massachusetts cities facing parallel problems chose to tackle the plague of gang violence with different strategies, both with promising results. The lessons of Boston and Chelsea have laid the foundation for anti-gang efforts throughout Massachusetts and continue to inform the decisions of policy makers and law enforcement officials for the future.

Unfortunately, the successes of the 1990's appear to have taken a turn for the worse in the summer of 2004. The upsurge in violence has forced many civic and community leaders to re-evaluate the declining effectiveness of anti-gang prevention programs, and to take stock of the larger context facing young people at risk of being recruited into gang life.

A Summer of Violence Renews Anti-Gang Efforts

In 2004, residents in cities throughout Massachusetts – from Springfield to Boston, from New Bedford to Lowell – expressed alarm at what appeared to be increasing rates of gang activity and youth homicide. A report released in September 2004 by “Fight Crime: Invest in Kids,” a bipartisan, nonprofit anti-crime organization led by more than 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, victims of violence and leaders of police officer associations, indicates that Massachusetts’ experience mirrored a national trend that saw youth-gang related homicides up more than 50 percent from 1999 to 2002 (the last year data is available).³

Some communities responded quickly to the resurgence of gang violence by refocusing attention on the foundation of successful anti-gang programs from the 1990's.

- ❖ Boston launched Operation Neighborhood Shield, a joint law enforcement endeavor aimed at curtailing violence in the city's streets by engaging community partners and other law enforcement agencies. Community groups and leaders moved to revive youth-based programs that had withered because of budget cuts. The Legislature directed modest funding in the FY'05 state budget to State Police Anti-Gang task forces in both Boston and Springfield.

³ From “Caught in the Crossfire: Arresting Gang Violence by Investing in Kids,” Fight Crime: Invest in Kids 9/14/04, available at <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/gangreport.pdf>

- ❖ In Lowell, the Multi-Department Task Force, including members of the Building, Health, Fire and Police departments, targeted enforcement attention and resources on improving the neighborhoods and residences where gang members live.
- ❖ In 2003, the Chelsea City Council passed a cluster of ordinances that cracked down on specific gang-related activities while protecting the Constitutional rights of their residents. The Truancy Ordinance allows an officer to stop and detain a minor for being on public streets or in public places during regular school hours. The Anti-Gang Recruitment Ordinance makes unlawful the solicitation, recruitment, enticement, or intimidation of a minor to join a criminal street gang. The Graffiti Prevention, Prohibition and Removal Ordinance forces perpetrators to remove graffiti within 24 hours of being apprehended and be responsible any costs and expenses associated with graffiti removal.
- ❖ In New Bedford, the Mayor and police adopted several strategies, including Operation Make Safe in which the City filed complaints in the Superior Court requesting that the Court find certain properties within the city to be public nuisances, private nuisances and common nuisances. Owners were asked to take immediate steps to address these nuisance conditions. Operation Pick Up was adopted, involving three groups of police officials targeting areas including narcotics, violence and gangs, and warrants. Clergy ridealongs -- where members of local clergy ride with police officers on patrols through various neighborhoods -- and city lawyers forged working relationships with ATF, DEA, the Massachusetts State Police Gang Unit, and the US Attorney to combat gang violence.

As municipalities wrestled with this surge in youth violence, the Joint Committee on Public Safety – led by Senator Jarrett T. Barrios (D-Cambridge) and Representative Timothy Toomey (D-Cambridge) – initiated its response first with a hearing in September 2004 to investigate how the state could collaboratively work with communities to develop a statewide plan to curb anti-gang recruitment and violence. The Committee was concerned that the Commonwealth lacked a coordinated plan to reduce youth violence and promote community safety, leaving many cities and towns to fend for themselves.

At the State House hearing, the legislators received more than five hours of testimony from 21 state and local law enforcement officials, community leaders and youth outreach workers.

- ❖ Attorney General Tom Reilly testified that the federal government’s inability to extend the assault weapons ban (despite an extension of the state’s ban in April 2004) has compromised the safety of Massachusetts’ law enforcement professionals, streets and neighborhoods.
- ❖ Suffolk County District Attorney Daniel Conley spoke strongly about the alarming trend toward witness intimidation cases, which can seriously undermine the successful prosecution of known gang members. Conley urged the Legislature to strengthen witness intimidation laws and that suggestion has become a primary recommendation of this report.

- ❖ Community leaders from Boston, New Bedford, Chelsea, and Springfield who attended the hearing -- including Reverend Ray Hammond of Boston's Ten Point Coalition -- stressed the need for targeted state aid for community policing and community-based programs for at-risk youth. (A list of individuals and organizations who testified at this hearing can be found in Appendix I.)

The past has proven that communities in Massachusetts understand what must be done to prevent gang violence and how to knit together the relationships among state officials, prosecutors, municipal leaders, community activists, young people and faith communities. The Commonwealth must rededicate itself to providing support for these partnerships, improving the laws that allow us to focus attention and enforcement on youth violence, and continue – even in the face of horrible incidents and rising trends in youth violence – to do the hard work of building community and providing hope to young people.



Findings and Recommendations

I. Prosecution

Stronger Witness and Victim Intimidation Laws to Ensure the Prosecution of Known Gang Members

The criminal justice system only works if witnesses can testify free from fear of retribution. Criminals and gang members use a number of methods to intimidate victims and witnesses and force perjured statements under oath. Important changes to Massachusetts law can be made to provide prosecutors and police officers with additional power to keep dangerous criminals off the streets and away from witnesses.

Witness Protection Program

(developed in cooperation with the Office of District Attorney Daniel F. Conley, Senator Cynthia Stone Creem, and Lieutenant Governor Kerry Murphy Healey)

In April of 2001, State Senator Cynthia Stone Creem, then co-chair of the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice, released a report detailing the need for a statewide witness protection program in Massachusetts. Citing the budget constraints faced by District Attorneys and local law enforcement departments and the success of programs in other states such as California and Connecticut, Senator Creem's report called for the establishment of a statewide witness protection program and a much stiffer penalty for criminals convicted of witness intimidation. Although such a program would cost the Commonwealth less than \$300,000, more than three years later no such program exists.

In 2004, the Governor's Crime Commission – led by Lieutenant Governor Kerry Murphy Healey – recommended that the Commonwealth create a statewide witness protection program to help encourage witness participation in the criminal justice system. The Lieutenant Governor has subsequently expressed full support for strengthening witness protection laws and the development of a witness protection program. The Legislature should take immediate action on the witness protection recommendations promoted by Senator Creem and Lieutenant Governor Healey, including the establishment of a witness protection program and stiffer penalties for witness intimidation.

Illegal Use of Grand Jury Transcripts

(developed in cooperation with the Office of District Attorney Daniel F. Conley)

A grand jury transcript contains a verbatim report of a witness testimony at a criminal grand jury proceeding and often contains the witness' name and address. The information contained in this transcript can be used by violent criminals to frighten or intimidate witnesses, victims, or their families. However, for a defense attorney, a grand jury transcript can be an important and necessary part of a successful defense. In order to protect witnesses and preserve the criminal justice system, the Legislature should pass legislation to punish individuals who use a grand jury transcript to interfere with a criminal trial without interfering with a defense attorney's ability to properly represent a defendant.

Adopting the Federal Standard for Perjury

(developed in cooperation with the Office of District Attorney Daniel F. Conley)

Prosecutors frequently use active gang members as material witnesses in criminal proceedings. These witnesses may be friends of the defendant and may offer testimony at trial that differs dramatically from the testimony they presented to a grand jury. Currently a prosecutor in the Commonwealth must overcome a tremendous burden to show that a witness has perjured himself. Under Massachusetts law, a prosecutor is required to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that a contradictory statement made under oath is false.⁴ In order to discourage witnesses from lying under oath, the Legislature should adopt the federal standard for perjury so that a person who makes irreconcilable statements under oath can be convicted for perjury on that fact alone.

Stay Away Orders as a Condition of Bail

(developed in cooperation with the Office of District Attorney Daniel F. Conley)

A defendant released on bail can often put fear into the hearts of potential witnesses, alleged victims, or other personal associates. Committee testimony documents a number of released defendants who have attempted to bribe, intimidate, or communicate with the parties to his case. Currently, Massachusetts law permits a court to order a defendant to stay away from potential witnesses, alleged victims, or other personal associates only in specific cases, mostly those involving a felony offense that includes the use of physical force against a person.⁵ In order to protect witnesses from inappropriate – and often threatening – contacts by the defendant, courts should have broader discretion to apply a stay away condition whenever it may be appropriate, allowing the courts to determine the necessity for a stay away order on a case-by-case basis.

⁴ Mass. Gen. Law ch. 268, §1 (2002)

⁵ Mass. Gen. Law ch. 276, §58A (2002)

II. Policing

Stronger Criminal Penalties for Illegal Gun Use and More Tools for Law Enforcement to Address Gang Violence in Neighborhoods

Law enforcement must be given the tools they need to address gang violence and keep deadly weapons out of the hands of criminals. Unfortunately, federal and state budget cuts and legislative inaction have made the job of law enforcement officials more difficult.

The Bush administration has made deep cuts in the Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, an important community policing grant program that has promoted strong relationships between police departments and neighborhoods.⁶ In September of 2004, the US Congress failed to renew the assault weapons ban, allowing cop-killing weapons back on the street and making law enforcement's challenge of taking on violent gangs more dangerous.

Although the Massachusetts legislature renewed the assault weapons ban -- reinforcing the state's reputation for having the strongest gun laws in the nation -- more can be done to help prosecute gun crimes and keep guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals. The following recommendations balance the right of responsible gun owners with the responsibility of the Commonwealth to protect the safety of its residents.

Discouraging Gun Trafficking and Increasing Penalties for the Illegal Possession of a Loaded Firearm

(developed in cooperation with New Bedford Mayor Frederick M. Kalisz, Jr.)

Law enforcement testimony before the Joint Committee on Public Safety recounted numerous instances of gang members engaging in gun trafficking. The so-called "community gun" tactic features a gang's use of one illegal firearm for a series of crimes and passing it from one gang member to another. Under current law, the illegal transferring of firearms is punishable by no more than 2 ½ years in prison and a fine not exceeding \$500.⁷ Where ammunition is contained in an unlawfully owned firearm, judges may allow a defendant to serve the sentences for illegal firearm and ammunition possession concurrently, effectively creating no additional penalty for possession of an illegal, loaded firearm. Responsible gun owners do not engage in illegal trafficking; legislation increasing the penalty for illegally transferring firearms should be adopted to discourage "community guns" and punish those who possess loaded firearms illegally.

Tracing Guns Used in Crimes

The ballistic fingerprinting database is a system that links the unique markings on a shell casing recovered in a criminal investigation to the same unique markings on the gun that fired it. Administered by the Firearms Identification Section of the Massachusetts State Police, the comprehensive database is instrumental in solving gun crimes throughout the Commonwealth.

⁶ <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/>

⁷ Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 269, §10 (2002)

Like many state programs, the Massachusetts State Police is doing its best to work with limited resources. With a limited staff, technicians at the Firearms Identification Section must prioritize the cases that they encounter, paying immediate attention only to the most serious of cases and creating a backlog for less serious offenses. Unfortunately, the shell casings recovered from many crime scenes could lead investigators to dangerous criminals who committed more serious crimes such as murder in the past.

The Legislature and Governor must dedicate sufficient resources to eliminate the backlog of shell casings to be catalogued within the ballistic fingerprinting database of the Firearms Identification Section of the Massachusetts State Police.

Building Bridges Between Police Officers and Neighborhoods

(developed in cooperation with the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition)

Last year alone, the Commonwealth's Community Policing grant program awarded over \$20 million to municipalities to put more police officers on the street and help local police departments build relationships within their communities.⁸ Community policing programs are universally recognized for building trust and communication between residents and law enforcement officials. The information and relationships built from this trust is the foundation of successful anti-gang efforts in Boston and other urban communities.

The Legislature should increase its community policing grant program by at least \$4 million, and target those additional funds towards communities that demonstrate they have been impacted by gang violence – *with a catch*. Communities seeking funds must *both* demonstrate that they are impacted by gangs and gang violence, *and* also submit as part of their grant application a plan for combating gang violence developed by city officials in collaboration with partners in the police department, community-based organizations and, if applicable, state and regional partners. With increased support for this important program, we can help our local communities struggling to reduce violent street crime.

The specialized gang unit within the Massachusetts Department of State Police has proven extremely effective at reducing violent gang crime through partnerships with local police departments. This gang unit works closely with communities to address flare ups of gang activity and coordinates with local law enforcement to develop long term strategies that address gang violence. The State Police gang unit serves all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth and could be more effective with additional resources and personnel. The Legislature should work with the Executive Office of Public Safety to expand the State Police Gang Unit and target enforcement in every community in the state facing an increase in gang violence. Recommendations of this report and the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition include increasing funding to hire new officers, boosting the number of minority officers, particularly Latino officers, in the gang unit, and expanding special operations in active gang areas.

⁸ <http://www.mass.gov/legis/05budget/conference.htm>

III. Prevention

Collaboration Between Community Programs and Police and Municipal Officials to Fight Gang Recruitment and Youth Violence

Community-based outreach programs can only be effective in deterring gang recruitment and violence in high crime neighborhoods if the programs have partnered successfully with police officers and municipal officials to create trust among and leadership opportunities for youth – keeping them off the street and out of trouble.

Community-based organizations play an integral role in preventing gang violence. Every day, grassroots organizations are on the streets working directly with gang members and at-risk youth to stop violence before it starts⁹.

However, these programs have suffered from years of severe budget cuts and inadequate funding. A lack of funding has forced a cut in services and contributed to the recent increase in gang violence. In order to keep effective community and outreach programs on the streets, a state-funded competitive grant program should be established for community and outreach programs. Grant funding should be targeted at high-impact communities, paying close attention to community programs that have demonstrated a working relationship with police and municipal officials in cities that have been particularly devastated by gang violence.

One example is Roca, Inc., in Chelsea. Its efforts have been recognized as a national model for community-based outreach programs.¹⁰ Like other successful community-based organizations, Roca, Inc. has built partnerships with state and municipal officials, along with local law enforcement agencies to provide highly effective prevention and intervention services for the communities it serves. Innovative models like this one should be replicated through a grant program that requires eligible recipients to participate with municipalities in developing an anti-gang strategy. The state should renew its focus on funding prevention activities, but only where they are done in concert with city officials' and police's efforts.

Expanding Opportunities for Youth in High Risk Regions

(developed in cooperation with the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition)

Youth in high-crime neighborhoods often fall target to gang recruiters during afternoon hours and summer months – out-of-school time when unsupervised youth are susceptible to entreaties and peer pressure to join. Efforts to resist gang recruitment are clearly helped by community-based organizations with street workers that raise awareness to the pitfalls of gang life. But a serious attempt to reduce gang involvement of youth must also address this predictable – and preventable – opportunity of gangs to recruit.

⁹ See <http://www.rocainc.org/>

¹⁰ <http://www.rocainc.org/>

Massachusetts can provide alternatives to youths in gang-impacted communities by helping them focus on activities during out-of-school time which emphasize the development of values and leadership skills. The Legislature should provide funding to pilot youth summer job programs which focus on these goals in communities affected by gang violence. This is not just a summer jobs program initiative; grants will be for community-based efforts which provide part-time employment together with additional educational and leadership development components. State officials and legislators must expand school-based gang prevention programs and after-school programming for students in school districts dealing with gang activity.

The Metropolitan Mayors Coalition recommends that any state programs or local community efforts follow a model that includes five components: mentoring, safe havens and structured activities, health, employment and education, and civic participation. School-based programs following this or another model can be supplemented by the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program, a law enforcement officer-instructed classroom curriculum administered by the Federal Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance.¹¹ The G.R.E.A.T. Program emphasizes face-to-face interaction between police officers and youths at the elementary and middle school levels. Trained police officers in this program serve as school faculty, teaching courses aimed at early prevention of gang recruitment, delinquency and youth violence. Massachusetts police departments which face rising gang violence would benefit from participation in the G.R.E.A.T. Program. Federal funding is available to police departments interested in this program through a grant administered by the Department of Justice.¹²

Preventing School Violence and Keeping Troubled Kids on Track

A national survey found that nearly one in six American children in sixth through tenth grade – more than 3.2 million children – are moderate to frequent victims of bullying each year.¹³ Bullying often takes place outside of formal supervision, leaving adults unaware of the problem. Childhood bullies also tend to have problems later in life, including poor school attendance and performance and even engagement in criminal behavior. Young adults who have disengaged from school activities are more likely to join gangs and participate in gang violence. Requiring schools in the Commonwealth to develop a Safe School Plan would specifically address the problem of bullying. Safe School Plans will lay out consequences for bullying and establish guidelines for reporting bullying incidents in schools while protecting victims of bullying, limiting the activities of bullies and including families in the entire process.

¹¹ <http://www.great-online.org/>

¹² <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/great.html>

¹³ “Bullying Prevention Is Crime Prevention,” Fight Crime: Invest in Kids 9/14/04, available at www.fightcrime.org



Conclusion

Regardless of statistics, it is clear that violent gangs have woven themselves into the fabric of many Massachusetts communities. It is time to take the best practices of the last decade and push for a statewide agenda to reduce youth violence, gang-related crime and drug abuse. As the Legislature convenes its session this January, there is no way to predict if these increases were isolated, or are a troubling sign of things to come. In an area shrouded in uncertainty, one thing is definite: no city or town in the Commonwealth can solve this problem alone, nor should they have to.

The presence of gangs should be enough motivation for the Governor, Legislature, law enforcement officials, and community groups to work together in sending the message to violent gangs that they are not welcome on our streets, in our parks and in our neighborhoods. Experience has taught cities and towns that successful anti-gang efforts, built on a foundation of community partnerships steeped in prevention, and aided by effective prosecution and protection will pave the way towards the goal of reducing gang violence in the Commonwealth. The Legislature and Governor can best encourage these partnerships and goals by acting quickly on the recommendations of this report.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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INFORMATIONAL HEARING

GANG VIOLENCE

Wednesday, September 29th, 2004
State House, Room 222
10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Order of Testimony *Subject to change at the discretion of the Chair

10:00 am

Massachusetts Attorney General Tom Reilly

10:30 am

District Attorney Daniel F. Conley, Suffolk County,
Massachusetts District Attorneys Association

10:50 am

Superintendent Paul Joyce, Boston Police Department

11:10 am

Undersecretary Secretary Robert Haas, Executive Office of Public Safety

Department of State Police

- Lt. Colonel John D. Kelly, Commanding, Division of Investigative Services
- Lt. Colonel Thomas M. Walsh, Commanding, Division of Field Services
- Major Michael P. Concannon, Commanding, Troop H, Boston
- Detective Lieutenant Thomas J. Quigley, State Investigations, Gang Unit

11:40 am

Deputy Chief Thomas McCarthy, Investigative Services Division, MBTA Police Department

12:00 pm

Boston Ten Point Coalition

- Reverend Ray Hammond, Chairman
- B. Christopher Sumner, Executive Director
- Chris Womack, Field Coordinator

12:30 pm

City of Chelsea

- Paul R. Nowicki, Councilor At-Large, City of Chelsea City
- Anisha Chablani, Director of Operations, Roca, Inc.

12:40 pm

City of New Bedford

- Latisha Silva, Co-chair, South Central Neighborhood Association
- Suzanne Braga, Co-chair, South Central Neighborhood Association
- Erik Andrade, Youth Empowerment Program Supervisor, Treatment on Demand

12:50 pm

City of Springfield

- Darryl Moss, Program Director, U-Turn Outreach Services

1:00 pm

City of Worcester

- Acting Chief Paul F. Campbell, Worcester Police Department

1:10 pm

Metropolitan Mayors Coalition

- Mayor Joe Curtatone, City of Somerville
- City Manager Jay Ash, City of Chelsea

1:30 pm

John Rosenthal, Executive Director, Stop Handgun Violence

1:45 pm

Ken Smith, Executive Director, Youth Build Boston

2:00 pm

Public Comments (time permitting)