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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

In re: House Judiciary Committee Public Hearing

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Stenographic report of hearing held at  
School District #5, 7th & Somerset Streets  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Friday

June 21, 1991

10:30 a.m.

HON. THOMAS R. CALTAGIRONE, CHAIRMAN

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Hon. Gerard A. Kosinski | Hon. Jim Gerlach       |
| Hon. David W. Heckler   | Hon. Dennis M. O'Brien |
| Hon. Chris R. Wogan     | Hon. Ralph Acosta      |

Also Present:

Kenneth Suter, Republican Counsel

Katherine Manucci, Staff

Reported by:

Evelyn J. Lambright, Reporter

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THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to open today's hearing concerning some of the problems that Ralph was having in his district here in Philadelphia and it was appropriate that the House Judicial Committee, which deals with law, order and justice issues come down here and see if we can give our fellow colleague an assist to see what we might be able to do legislatively or otherwise to help him.

I am Chairman Tom Caltagirone from Reading and I would like the members to introduce yourselves for the record.

(Whereupon, the members of the Panel were introduced.)

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay, Ralph, you had some comments you wanted to open up with.

MR. ACOSTA: Yes, the problems we have been facing in this part of the world. I would say this is a separate part of the world. This is not the real state of Pennsylvania when it comes to the problems and the neglect that we have in this city and I have been trying for years very hard, together

with the business community and the community which seems to be going nowhere, in spite of the fact that we get involved, we do everything that we feel and we think has to be done to get the city to move forward but seems that the city administration lacks responsibility to the citizens, especially those in my district.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Since here is one of the witnesses that is going to testify, we might as well start.

MR. HAIFETZ: I would start with my name is Sid Haifetz. I am president of the American Street Corridor Business Association.

I want to thank everybody for coming to Philadelphia to see firsthand what we have to live with and live through everyday, and I hope that when you leave here, you go back with a feeling that we desperately need help from Harrisburg and from the outside communities in Philadelphia, because Philadelphia problems are state problems and not just city problems and without help and understanding from the entire State of

Pennsylvania, these problems are going to get worse and they are going to spill over and they are already spilling over into the suburban communities and we have to face the problem and look for solutions and the solutions will come from the people that live in these communities, along with the city administration and the state administration.

I am going to read this because I put a lot of time into doing it last night. I started at 11:00 o'clock last night because there were other problems I have. At 7:00 a.m. each morning I arrive at a ten foot barbed wire fence, unlock a large padlock and roll back the heavy metal gate, which was installed to protect our cars. After I park my car, I then must open a steel roll-up door and code in a security alarm system.

I must then get a broom and sweep the broken glass, empty shell casings and crack vials from the parking lot.

As my employees begin to arrive, they tell me how they are approached to buy drugs and intimidated by the drug dealers stationed on

corners all around the neighborhood. At 9 a.m, one of my neighbors tells my receptionist someone set fire to my back fence. My morning is spent cleaning the streets and then putting out a fire with the help of two warehousemen.

On any given day at work, an employee or customer may have their truck or car vandalized or broken into. I have had employees raped and robbed at gunpoint. My daughter and I were mugged at the front entrance of our building. Job applicants are afraid to come for interviews. Drug addicts seek to use our bathrooms so they can shoot up. Bullets are shot indiscriminately here.

One afternoon I was standing in my showroom with a customer when a bullet whizzed between us. This winter, I spent \$17,000 repairing bullet holes in my roof. Two weeks later, the roofer was back to patch new bullet holes.

After leaving an American Street Public Service Project meeting one evening, I heard about fifteen gunshots and smelled gunpowder. I dropped to the ground and waited and then

jumped into my car and drove on home.

On another morning, I arrived at work to see a car smashed through our fence. This was the result of a chase by the police against drug dealers. \$55,00 in damage was done. In order to give our customers the appearance of a safe area, we clean and paint over graffiti constantly at a cost of \$5,000 a year. Maybe you should tax spray paint and use the proceeds to clean graffiti.

In February, after returning from testifying before your committee in Harrisburg, I found my car broken into in my fenced in lot for the second time this year. My car insurance was then cancelled. As a responsible said of Philadelphia.

I am a member of the 26th Police District Advisory Board, the Inter-Racial Task Force, the North Philadelphia Partnership and RUDAT. I am also a Trustee of Episcopal Hospital, chairman of the American Street Public Service Project and president of the American Street Corridor Business Association.

The majority of crime in this neighborhood

is related to drugs and it is completely out of control. The police alone cannot take back the streets. The community must be and is willing to be involved but these groups have no funding to support their efforts to retake the streets. It is absolutely necessary to return a portion of the confiscated drug monies to the areas it was confiscated from.

The residents in cooperation with the police know how to effectively recapture the streets. The inner city is a crime incubator which will soon spread to the suburbs. Something must be done now before it is too late.

I thank you for this opportunity to express the views of the American Street Corridor Business Association. Now I welcome questions or discussion or whatever..

THE CHAIRPERSON: The third page, first paragraph, you mentioned, the residents in cooperation with the police, know how to effectively recapture the streets. Tell me how?.

MR. HAIFETZ: We have had a project for

the last 2 and-a-half years in Philadelphia in conjunction with the Administration and what we did was we targeted a demonstration area next to the American Street Corridor, which is included in the enterprise zone, to use it for a demonstration area for people from Washington, when they came up and we were able to get block captains and residents involved in weekly meetings with us and we began to address the problems in the area.

We brought in people from the city administration. We have had about a dozen meetings with the Mayor and his commissioners, including the Managing Director and the Police Commissioner, license & Inspections, Water, Housing.

We have had Ed Schwartz in our meetings discussing the problems in the community and looking for solutions. The outcome of the meetings was that there is so much bureaucracy and so much red tape in the city government and city administration that nothing effective filters down to accomplish anything. We initially two and-a-half years ago started



with a three-block by three-block area and that was to be the target area and after a year of frustration, we changed the area to three city blocks and concentrating two years in three city blocks, reports from the neighbors that live in these streets tell us that we have cut down 70 to 75 percent on crime and drug activities and the people in the blocks have been pleased with the results that they have been able to see in what we have done.

The main emphasis has been on cooperating with police to report what was going on in the blocks so that the police have firsthand information on what and where things are happening.

The other effective thing is that we were able to clean and fence the lots and to take the abandoned housing and recapture some of it or tear down some of it so the abandoned housing in these blocks and the lots are all fenced, which cuts down on drug activity because the drug people will store their drugs on the small streets and come through the lots

to make their sales and purchases.

Some of the things that we ran into in the two and-a-half years is there are a lot of the laws and city government that have to be changed. I know your Committee doesn't have the ability to changes law in city government but the time frame where you have abandoned property and have to take back this abandoned property to do something with it could take four years, three years, five years.

There's too much property in this city that is in straw names or names nobody claims responsibility for that is trying the areas in the communities and laws have to be looked at and bureaucracy has to be looked at to make changes in this.

We hear stories like the drug dealers, when they are arrested and they live in P.H.A. housing, will declare Chapter 11 and then they can't be evicted from the housing and now they don't even have to pay rent and they are able to stay there while going through hearings and there are all kinds of horror stories going on in the City of Philadelphia with the abandoned

housing. 35,000 houses have to be dealt with.

There are so many problems that we have that you can't take a look at the whole city and say, let's do the city. We have got to take a designated area and deal with that area and then expand the area as you go. See, you start with the three-block by three-block area, then you go to a five-block by five-block and then ten block.

THE CHAIRPERSON: What's to stop the drug dealers, and we've seen this in other areas around the state and around the country, from moving from one area to right outside to another area? Do you think it would make any sense to declare martial law and bring in the National Guard and do a cleanup all at once?.

MR. HAIFETZ: That's the only way you are going to clean it up immediately. The people are afraid to cooperate with the police because they are afraid of retaliation. This week's meeting, we had a resident whose windows of their child's bedroom were shot out because she reported some drug activity in the house.

You won't get people to cooperate with the police if they are so afraid of what's going to happen to them and they are locked in and forced into living in these communities and these neighbors.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to hear some comments from some of the members, especially those of you who are learned in the law, to see what your suggestions might be. I am curious to see what could be done within the frame work of the law, of course, to try to eradicate this problem, because I don't think it really is just Ralph's area.

I am sure there are many other pockets, areas of Philadelphia that have similar problems. If you are going to do something on a larger scale, if the Philadelphia government or Philadelphia Police Department doesn't have the wherewithall, whether financially or manpower wise, isn't it in the realm of possibility of bring in the National Guard to attempt to do what has to be done and get it cleaned up..

MR. KOSINSKI: First of all, I agree with

you as far as the refunding drug forfeiture money. We have been fighting that battle for a couple of years in Harrisburg and we will continue to fight for bringing home the money to these groups and by grass roots involvement, by people in the neighborhoods themselves, who play a very very big part of fighting drug use and abuse in these areas.

As far as bringing in the National Guard, I think what's even more effective is some of the Federal programs that are being tried now.

About a week ago in Philadelphia, the Daily News ran a story about how a certain neighborhood, I think in West Philadelphia, was upset because of one particular drug dealer.

Because of the state laws being the way they are, what happened was the man was picked up on Federal charges. He's being held in preventive detention. Magistrate Powers of Federal Court ordered him held, I think earlier this week, under preventive detention because of his failing to appear for trial and even then, people from that neighborhood were

still scared because his minions were going around.

I think that a comprehensive approach along the Federal lines is going to have to be done in this state. I think we have to look at preventive detention. I think we have to look at specific drug courts. We have to look at specific facilities for drug dealers.

I see us more and more becoming more of a Columbian society in that the drug lord is going to have to be taken care of and has to be taken care of in an expedited manner and even then, after that is done, you have to go out and get rid of the demand for drugs. It is not going to end here.

More and more involvement by people, I hate the term recreational drugs because people are out there in all walks of life looking for the thrill and it's just ruining our society. As far as the National Guard being certified for martial law, there are constitutional problems with that but I see the situation getting so serious, it is serious now, that we may have to consider that

and see what happens afterwards, as far as the constitutional aspect of it.

MR. WOGAN: I don't think that's a constitutional problem, using the National Guard but from something called the Poscomfit Act(Ph), an Act enacted after the Civil War, I guess because of the use of the Federal Army down south, I don't think you could use the National Guard, which is really in a way, a Federal component of the Armed Forces, in any major way.

I think that a law was recently passed where some of the reserve components could be used very narrowly for certain drug interdiction programs, maybe at airports or on the railroad facilities but generally speaking, I think Jerry's right. You cannot use the National Guard in any way.

THE CHAIRPERSON: You are attorneys; let me ask you this. In cases of national emergency, whatever that may mean, or state emergency, now you know that we have had different disasters in this state in our history and they have had to bring in the

Guard and/ or other units to do what had to be done to maintain law and order, number one, and to help these needs, to help get the community back on its feet.

I can remember distinctly back when Hurricane Agnes was flooding much of our communities. I think Philadelphia got a pretty good dousing of that and many communities along the river and they had to bring the National Guard in just to maintain law and order because there was such a breakdown in everything at that time that without the Guard, you wouldn't have had, in many of the communities, any type of water.

MR. WOGAN: Right. Poscomfit(ph) doesn't prevent the use of the Guard..

MR. KOSINSKI: You would have to bring it also up to legal snuff in the fact that you would have to hook it up to riot or insurrection because that is legitimate use of the National Guard.

Now, if this committee would like to check the record of the Military Veterans Affairs Committee of last session, we held a committee



meeting at Temple University on Representative Thomas' bill to use the National Guard for certain drug capacities and we had extensive testimony in that committee from people in the National Guard.

I believe there are some legal experts and community people who knew what would be a legitimate use of the National Guard. Again, I think the situation is going to be so serious, it is serious now, rather than maybe ignore legitimate use the constitutional aspects, whether we have to say let's do it first and worry about that later.

The other problem is, is the National Guard trained to handle drug arrests? It's one thing with a soldier out there with a gun.

Are they trained to investigate this? Are they trained to risk their lives in what has become virtually, as Sid can tell you, a shooting gallery? Even the National Guard from that testimony last session was scared to come in in what I could understand about that.

Hey, we're not here to do that type of work, so...

MR. ACOSTA: I would ask this committee to set up some kind of committee governor's office. I don't think the National Guard has to come in to do policing work but the presence of the National Guard in areas such as at this where we have a big drug trade and big loss of life, especially children, I think the National Guard could just to come along to have persons in this community, together with the Police Department, if need be, probably to help make arrests for the police.

In other words, we don't expect the National Guard to come along to do policing work or make arrest work but their presence, of course it would be having a weapon with them at all times, I would say if we could do that for a month, for one full month in this community, we could probably clean up the drug activity without even making arrests because having the presence of the National Guard will prevent a lot of the buyers from coming into the community just to buy because the problem here is to weaken the amount of drugs being sold.

If we can get the customers away from buying, that alone will do something.

MR. KOSINSKI: Within those hearings, we also talked about the uses of the National Guard to clean and seal crackhouses, to clean up some of the property in the neighborhood that really needs to be cleaned up, to make better the living conditions in the neighborhood, which is a definite and legitimate use of the National Guard after a flood or any other natural tragedy because Philadelphia, the city of Philadelphia definitely cannot do this.

You don't have the expense, you don't have the wherewithall, you don't have the money. So instead of using the National Guard for two weeks of summer training which is definitely a good thing, why don't we use them for those few weeks to have a massive project, not just in Philadelphia but in every community throughout the state, throughout every community, weekends, where we could specifically have the National Guard in with the residents of the neighborhood for cleaning

up.

MR. GERLACH: You say there was testimony on that last session?

MR. KOSINSKI: Yes.

MR. GERLACH: Was it down there?

MR. KOSINSKI: I think it was formal testimony in front of the Military Veterans Affairs Committee.

MR. GERLACH: But no report coming out of that?

MR. KOSINSKI: No. That was a committee hearing much like this.

MR. GERLACH: I wonder if we could get someone to get that testimony, summarize it and perhaps even arrange for some sort of subcommittee of this group to look at the feasibility of that idea?.

MR. O'BRIEN: I think that's a great idea Jerry had because they have already participated in the community, first in the city of Philadelphia, cleaning up creeks and streams, to putting in steps for youth organizations and recreational facilities or something like that..

MR. GERLACH: All right for me to follow up? Following up with what Jerry said, again there's a specialty unit that was recently created and the problem in drug prosecutions in the city of Philadelphia involves the lack of pre-trial detention which, Sid, we have discussed.

One of the unique aspects of this new unit that was formed is that the persons charged would remain in the District Attorney's Office but would also be sworn in as special U.S. Assistant Attorneys General. What that would allow these prosecutors to do is cover all, handle all the drug cases and it would give them the power to come into an area such as this and either arrest the 50 drug dealers that are standing out there invading the community or concentrate on finding the biggest drug dealers in that area.

Up until this is point you may have had five drug cases in a year that the Feds were handling also. This will give them the ability to handle some 500 cases in the same time period because they will be able to

through plea bargaining or whatever, they would be able to say, for instance, I am going to try you in the Federal system rather than in the state system.

There's pre-trial detention in the Federal system where that doesn't exist right now in the city of Philadelphia. Also the sentence that would be meted out if a conviction were found would be much more substantive in the Federal system than it would be in the state system.

The bottom line up until this point is that the crimes just weren't sexy enough for the Feds to get involved. The prosecutors were looking at maybe doing some white-collar crime or some political indictments, whatever. This would allow them to flip 500 cases in the same time periods where they used to handle five before.

The other thing I found interesting along the same lines was there recently was a million dollars given, half a million dollars, to the District Attorney's Office and the State Police and another half a million

dollars given to the Mayor's Office and we are not going to get into how effective that money is going to be but the idea again would follow Sid's recommendation, that you go into an area that is basically three-blocks by three-blocks or ten by ten blocks and you go along with the community.

They plan a comprehensive strategy to go in, recognize the problems in that area and then have a comprehensive approach to cleaning that problem out. They are going try it. I think in the 7th District, the Mayor has appropriated that money he has for a problem that exists in the 7th Police District---not the 7th, I'm sorry. It's not the 7th. I am not sure.

I will share the memo with you and Let you know where it is but it would be interesting to track those plans and see how effective that approach is.

I would be right on that and if you could coordinate the National Guard properly and try to fund this unique approach that is being coordinated by the District Attorney's Office

and the U.S. Attorney's Office and also try to find some more money for these Concentration A grants, in fact, they are useful and helpful but the other problem is you have to have, as you pointed out, Sid, increased dialogue with the community so there is a response.

You are doing a great job on covering all the information that is needed to combat the drug problem but there is no response because you don't have the cons, you don't have the prison space, you don't have the equipment and you don't have the follow-through which Ralph has told us all about and the follow-through is all important; otherwise the people that are out there on the front line in the community like yourself and the other community groups are going to be frustrated and they are going to be turned off and threatened because these drug dealers are returning after three hours to the same corners they were arrested on and they are more intimidating because they know who made the phone call and they go right up to them and they say, I know you did it and I am



coming after you, or you, as a business leader, they will come after your business, so there's a lot of things that have to be done.

It's a big wheel and we have to fill in all the spokes but I think the National Guard being used for sealing off crackhouses would be an effective area to explore..

MR. HAIFETZ: Last year a family was burned out on Christmas Day in Philadelphia in our community. They went, husband and wife and 6 children went to the grandparents for Christmas dinner. Drug dealers broke in the back door, poured kerosene on the first and second floor of the house, ignited it and they lost everything except what they were wearing and the community came together.

We had an article put into the Inquirer and we were able to raise \$10,000 from the community along with donations of furniture and clothes and we got them into another house. This is what happens when you have people in the community that are resisting the drug culture and that crisis is just as much of a crisis in our area as there would be if

there were a hurricane or foreign invader and the governor would say, we have to call out the National Guard.

This is a crisis and this demands the same type of addressing by the state as if we had a typhoon like they just had in the Phillipines.

MR. HECKLER: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I think actually the conversation has kind of moved on. I was concerned in our initial discussion of the National Guard that I think there would be some serious difficulty, both in their ability to make cases to investigate and make cases in the way, I am not sure in all ways but in the way which our judicial system requires for conviction.

I think that some of the other discussions, Representative Kosinski's suggestion concerning the uses of the Guard for reconstruction, for sealing crackhouses, for generally keeping order, perhaps is more appropriate, more in tune with their training and abilities.

Basically, what we have got is a system which is nearly in a state of collapse, the

criminal justice system because it simply is not, I think there's the capacity to deal with the problem but it's not dealing with it right now.

One of the fundamental difficulties is if you don't have sufficient jail cells to incarcerate people after conviction, you can put aside the issue of preventive detention and take the appropriate people off the street immediately but if drug dealers know that it is a minor offense, again, I don't think any drug deal is a minor offense ever but if there's a presumption that that first time or two you are caught on the street selling drugs, you are going to get a minimal jail sentence, if any, you've just destroyed most of the credibility of the legal system on the street.

I think that some of the legislation we have passed in recent years should address that to some degree but if the resources aren't there to bring cases to trial and to convict, to have the adequate resources so the cases are fully investigated and the cases

adequately made and therefore a conviction results and then have a jail cell to put that person in and the resources, when they are in that cell, in the facility, to help them, reorient them following that they are coming out of that cell again, to take advantage of that time to turn them into somebody who has some viable options in the community aside from selling drugs, is all important and that's mostly a question of money and the question of proper administration, proper use of that money and I think right now, we are failing woefully.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Let me ask you this as just a hypothetical: if, in fact, a facility could be made available for specific instances like this, could there be an expediting of the criminal justice procedures with the appointment, let's say, of certain prosecutors and or judges that sit to handle these particular cases in an expedited manner so that you wouldn't have to have them drag on and on and on, and is there anything within the state or Federal constitution which

prohibits such particular emphasis and activity that would hone in with specific cases, I am going assign you as president judge of this county and you are going to handle these cases and the prosecutor's office is going to be working with you and we are going to bring them up now?

We can delay and delay and delay but sooner or later, we are going to bring them up, get them disposed of as quickly as possible, put them in a facility we could designate. Is that possible?.

MR. KOSINSKI: In Philadelphia, we had that already. We had something called crash court and anybody who was incarcerated and couldn't make bail would go through crash court, which was an expedited hearing. It was administered in to get these people out of the system as soon as possible.

MR. ACOSTA: Mr. Chairman, I have a difference of opinion. I think what's needed in this community is not locking people up, putting them in jail. If anything, the problem is lack of work, lack of jobs, lack of

different things. This community could do a lot to alleviate some of these problems.

For example, I know that the D.C.A. put in four million dollars into housing. We never see programs with that four million dollars. We never see how it's spent, who has the discretion to put the money to good use we could probably get the D.C.A. and Ed Schwartz(ph) together to sit at a table to say next year that four million dollars, we'll use the money to fix some of the abandoned properties we have in the city.

That would create jobs for some of the children in this community. The problem is the one year old not in school seeing the guy with the gold and car and cash. We are creating the kind of environment that that kid is forced to be involved with drugs.

But if we come up with ways these kids can make 6 dollars an hour, they would rather make 6 dollars an hour than be on the corner so the problem of building more jail cells or spending more money to put guys in prison 6 months or a year, I think that's a bad

approach because when they come back to us again, we got to pay the bill.

MR. HECKLER: There's no question that jail is an expensive way to deal with any problem. The difference, is for one thing, we have the laws on the books. We pass more laws, and I have said it before in Harrisburg, we pass laws and we think that's a way to address a problem.

Unless the resources exist to implement that law, it is meaningless but I agree with you, Ralph. That makes good sense. If people don't have jobs, if they don't have alternatives, it's hard to expect them not to resort to crime. In other words, I think part of this is a question of what comes first, the chicken or the egg.

You're not going to have every Tom, Dick and Harry come in here, and Sid,, I marvel at his hanging on by his finger and toenails nails but he's creating jobs in the community.

You can't expect a system which is going to produce jobs and opportunity for the folks who live in your community and a lot of the

communities in this city unless there's a certain minimal level of confidence that they can park their car in the morning and have it still there when they come back at night and that when they come in in the morning, they are not going to be, rain is not going to be coming through the roof because some drug dealer shot holes in it so it's a circular thing.

You're right in a broad sense. We have got a terrible crisis in our nation as a whole. All of the manufacturing is taking place in Japan and Mexico and Korea.

People see that an awful lot of folks who had jobs lose them. Grandfathers and fathers had jobs and grandmothers had jobs and now they just don't have those options.

We have got to find ways to deal with that but I still believe that at least where drug dealing concerned, I think there's a very appropriate place for a lot of latitude and leniency and helping people who have become involved with the criminal justice system but I think a lot of the kids who, even if they



didn't have a job, if they see the guy with the gold chains and the car and they see him gone next week and the word is that he's now doing two years in prison, I think that's sort of a base line that it's all got to come together.

MR. ACOSTA: Providing we then come up with a program where this guy doesn't have to be on the corner and could be fixing up houses at 6 dollars an hour, and we could bring those results because we do have programs from the state to the city and Ed Schwartz(ph) has been very very lazy in finding ways to work this community in terms of housing.

He's been very apathetic to spend the money in this kind of community and a few weeks ago we had a couple of projects, the one on York, the Second Street senior citizens project that was built there, four apartments,

The following week we had another project that was done by the community, people from the community. We had these big apartment houses. These are the kind of things that have to come into the community and we will do

the unemployment part of it.

We will get rid of guy that wants to be on the corner and at the same time we will be providing housing for some of the people here.

This city, changing the subject a little here, is a disgrace. You walk around Center City, people are sleeping in the gutters. We have so many abandoned houses that could be rehabbed and it's a disgrace for the Mayor and Administration of the city to allow 20,000 abandoned houses to exist.

We have all these dollars we are giving to the city that is not doing nothing with that. I have a problem with that.

MR. HECKLER: Well, on the record, if I could offer what I think is a bipartisan comment, as a suburban legislator whose constituents look at Philadelphia and say, what a sinkhole to throw money into, I think we are coming into an exciting time.

I think with the elections that lie before us, whoever wins, I think there is a strong potential of the city being a winner and I am hoping that we'll see a new day, an

administration which will be credible to those of us who represent district outside the city so that we can have some level of confidence that if monies are, state tax dollars are sent here that they'll be used not to make jobs for political folks but to get work done.

The other thought that I would advance, and I don't know to what extent this may be happening in the city, I have been involved locally in my area in affordable housing. It's a terrible problem there and they are working in other ways with some folks from Habitat for Humanity and other folks, rehabbing one rowhouse at a time and getting families into them.

I wonder if there are any volunteer efforts in which people have the know-how are working and training some of the young people, especially who may not have the building trades skills but who would be able to learn, accomplishing the rehabs at the same time they are giving kids some skills they may not have picked up otherwise.

MR. ACOSTA: We have those groups

developing. In fact, we have more groups that we think could do the job as professionally, as good as any contractor. We have a man sitting right there. Right now, you have rebuilt how many homes in the area here?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have done ten apartment units.

MR. ACOSTA: And you should see those units, beautiful beautiful apartments at probably 50 percent less than the cost of hiring a contractor. Those folks from the community who have the self-interest of doing the job well, done for pride. They want to feel proud of their work for the community and we have another group, Central Pedro, I was able to get them \$150,000 last year. They did 37 houses with people in them. \$150,000, if you get a big contractor, he will, I think, do about two or three homes?

What's more significant is what Carlos is doing is he's taking young people in the community and they are training them.

They are learning to be carpenters, plumbers and electricians because Carlos is bringing experienced older people in to work

with them and when they finish doing a house, they are able to get a job because they now have the ability to do the job and you are accomplishing two things: they are learning on-the-job-training; you are taking them off the streets. They are not into drugs but they are into training to do this, and I have been with Carlos to meetings, fighting to get them funds so continue his efforts and from time to time, Carlos calls me and says, I have to lay everybody off because we are out of money now and we have to stop and there should be groups to let people like this work in their areas and in their communities because it's a very positive thing they are doing and it has positive effects on the community.

MR. MATOS: I wanted to talk, too.

MR. HECKLER: For the record.

MR. MATOS: My name is Carlos Matos(ph). I am a construction manager for Norris Square Civic Community. In our community, a lot of people got to looking around and saw there was a lot of work needing to be done in the community, especially construction related,

there was lots of talent and unemployment and noticing big contractors coming in, bidding on jobs, taking the money and then moving back to Jersey or wherever they came from and we said, that's crazy.

We have lots of people who can do the work. Why don't we keep the money and at the same time, developing a strength with the people in the community into receiving not just housing but providing employment and providing a certain amount of pride by people instilling in themselves by being a part of the thing, developing something themselves.

We have been successful in doing that. The problem is maintaining steady work. Once we get certain grants to do certain buildings, once that is over, we have to wait for the next projects to come along. So I always call Sid to let him know we have good people. Does we know people who can get them working until we get started because we are good worthwhile people and he knows I am not referring anybody who is not willing to work.

I want to get back to that you were

saying, teaching lessons, letting people know you can't get away with this. I think that wouldn't work in our community because when we hear of people getting busted with a key or three or four ounces, they are going to do three years.

Basically, those people who have money get out and the guys who end up doing the time are the guys who don't have the money to afford a good lawyer and a lot of people doing hard time are the nothings, nobodies, and the people who got it are walking so that doesn't work at all.

That tells me if I am going to sell drugs I better do a lot so I can afford a good lawyer to get back in the street.

I was listening to the National Guard talk. I don't think standing on corners locking people up, I don't think that will work but I think to use them to clean up houses and neighborhoods and maybe even build up some of these houses so people can feel good about what they have got and be part of that so they can say, we helped to do this,

and I think if people have something to look at, something positive to look at, people become more responsible because you can't change a kid without changing the parent and I think the parents are the biggest tool.

When I was a kid, we used to go around beating people up but we used sticks. Today, they use semi-automatic weapons. I am scared to walk down the street myself. We need to look at this younger population.

Most of the kids I talk to, kids dealing in corners as part of what's happening want to change but they want to make something decent and I don't think it's a question of just to work for the man. I think it's a question of being able to be self-employed.

The unique thing about what we're doing is people are working towards a goal for themselves. They are not doing it for me or Ralph or Norris Square; they're doing it for themselves in the long term. When they get the package together, they are the ones that are going to benefit from it as a whole and we need to develop more programs.



I was talking with Mr. Costa a couple of months ago. We need to develop more programs that self-empower people so they don't have to work for somebody else because there's nothing like a dead-end thing. You get to be 65 and you work for \$4.50 the rest of your life.

If we can do something to develop people, to enhance them, well, I'm going on this, then people have something to look forward to.

Do you understand what I am trying to say?

We need to develop more of those self-empowering programs so people can say, this is worth my while, I am going to invest in it.

Basically, that's what I wanted to say. Thank you.

THE CHAIRPERSON: How bad is it on the streets and what do you suggest to get people on the streets that are dealing in drugs, I am talking about not only the runner, I'm talking about the fortified crack houses I have seen in your districts with the barbed wire on the roof and metal doors. Do you think the local police can get in there.

MR. MATOS: I hate to say this but the local police may be part of it. We have people that can work certain corners and don't get harassed and others can't. You have cops go in and bust certain houses and you hearin the streets, I have \$50,000 missing, and nobody gets locked up.

Like you say, who comes first, the chicken or the egg? So these are real facts in our community. I am not saying all the cops are bad, they are certainly not but you got to make the choice because we know when somebody get busted. Everybody knows. Word travels fast.

But then you know the guy is out in the street and then the guy is telling somebody he is missing a key and 30 thousand, 40 thousand worth of the jewel and then people say, I am not going to call the cops. You may call the wrong cop. That cop will tell them.

When I was young and I was dealing drugs, I got busted. I am going back 15 years. You know what the cop did? He told me who busted me, who set me up, so if I was any kind of

guy, I would have gone back and hurt this person.

See, this is what the police do, make you an informant so they inform on you and hope you go and inform on somebody else. The legal system doesn't work. There's not that trust in the community. There's a lot of people who want to change but it's hard. You don't get the kind of help you need. You really don't.

MR. ACOSTA: I don't think I should cut into the question but just for the purpose of the record and having the other members, what kind of support do you get from the city in terms of dollars to carry the programs you have in Norris Square and other people have throughout the city? What support do you get from the city.

MR. MATOS: I am going to be honest with you. I am not into numbers, I am into people and I am into getting projects. I leave the numbers to Pat. Pat says to me, you got this amount of money to finish this project.

I don't write proposals . I know we have been, as far as I am aware of, we have got a

couple of projects, a few hundred thousand dollar grants or loans from O.H.C.D. and we have got money from you. I am not into that.

MR. ACOSTA: But if you had the programs rolling all the time.

MR. MATOS: Oh, yes, certainly, we would be able to hire more people and we would be able to make a bigger difference because basically, what we are doing here is we have got this big whole and you are trying to patch it, using little Band-Aids to cover a big sore and it needs to be wider spread so you can see the effect and certainly, what I was thinking when you were talking about ten-block areas where you are going to go in and hit it, I would be interested to know what happens because I am sure that's going to make an impression on the people and going to make it even spread out more because I think people need to feel, to be a part of the something big.

You fix one house here, you got ten more empty in the same block. It doesn't make any sense. Certainly, we need to look at programs

that are working, that are empowering people and look at that and say, shit, it's going right. Here. What can we do to enhance this, make it better and then move it on to a bigger scale.

We don't have all the answers but we have been successful in pulling people off the streets, making them responsible people.

MR. ACOSTA: Mr. Chairman, I know the state puts in four million dollars in the city of Philadelphia. I know Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are the only two cities that get the monies direct instead of the state giving the monies to programs and giving monies to agencies.

There is some kind of a mandate or some kind of committment between the state and the city that the money has to come straightforward in the O.H.C.D. program and that is why we don't get to the money. Once it gets into the hands of Ed Schwartz, we don't see it.

What would this committee do together with others members of the House to change some of

that? Again, if we could get a million dollars, one shot, into any of these programs, we could probably fix a square hundred blocks all around one area but because we don't get the money, we get \$150,000, \$50,000, then between the time of getting \$50,000 and the time of getting another 50 is always a problem because you have got to lay off the people until you get the other money. Something should be changed to get change in the way this is instituted.

MR. O'BRIEN: In response to that, I think where that case ought to be addressed is to the Appropriations Committee, which would be Dwight Evans and Joe Pitts. You have concerns with what the Federal monies and the guidelines for the use of those Federal monies are because sometimes when they come from the Federal government, not the state, we appropriate those but because of the guidelines, they have to go through certain conduits.

So when you are talking about that four million, that question would be answered by

the Appropriations staff and if they are no guidelines...

MR. ACOSTA: If there are no guidelines?.

MR. O'BRIEN: Then you look at it through the budget process we are just about ready to engage in.

MR. ACOSTA: We had a meeting with Karen Miller and Nilda and it seems they don't want to break the habit and work with the community groups because it's more paperwork. They claim they have no manpower and this and the other so they try to make it hard to get anything given to specific groups.

They'd rather do it through Ed Schwartz, one shot, one set of paperwork and that's done. I think we should look into it.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes, something should be done. I know we have other people here.

MR. GONZALEZ: My name is William Gonzalez and I work with the Norris Square Civic Association and I am program director there. I work with Carlos and with a lot of the programs he was talking about. Our service area is the area between Berks and York and

Front and Fifth Streets.

I am glad that the Committee moved away from talking about the National Guard and militarizing the neighborhood because I strongly believe it should consider pertinent action to treat the causes of the drug problem, not just the symptoms and when you are talking about a patient who has pain, you just don't prescribe painkillers and forget about what's causing the pain.

You have to look at the causes and try to deal with them. In our community, that happens to be problems in terms of lack of jobs and adequate, affordable housing, the decaying educational system and horrendous prison system. We need more programs that provide jobs for our community and alternatives to the drug trade.

If you are a young person faced with the choice of earning \$100 a day or minimum wage and you don't have the values instilled in you through a good educational system or a good family life that is fostered by having good housing, you are going make the choice of



going for the \$100 a day job.

One thing that is good about the program that Carlos has is it not only provides jobs but it is also providing self-worth, trying to make the person feel empowered, trying to make the person be responsible and providing them with the tools to make these decisions of thinking in the long-term rather than the short-term.

In the short term, I might be able to earn \$100 for a number of weeks or might be months but in the long-term, if I get caught, I am going to affect my family, my own health, et cetera.

In terms of the inadequate housing, the fact is people live in housing that is not heated properly, is not safe, it's delapidated, it's a depressing environment. A depressing environment can cause people to do desperate acts and turning to drug selling or using them is a desperate act. Also, there is the fact that this housing is so expensive. You'd be surprised how much people pay to live in a messed up studio apartment or a one

bedroom apartment in our neighborhood, and the fact that people have to catch up with this cost of housing causes them to have to look for a better paying job which, because they don't have the skills, they can't get, which means they have to go to doing something illegal so it's like yes, it's a vicious circle, and just concentrating on the police part of the it or the crime prevention part of it is not really addressing the whole problem.

We have to look at the causes.

The other thing is with our educational system. I have gotten some complaints from people in the community having to do with how bad the school system is in terms of not enough teachers, not enough resources so that the kids can take books home with them, not enough bilingual staff.

That's a reality in our community. We need bilingual, bi-cultural staff so that the educational message gets through to our youngsters because we have a group of parents organizing a lawsuit against the school system because they are so unhappy with it and

education is the pillar of building character and of building the sense of self, knowing what's right and wrong and helping people make these decisions that eventually will affect other people, i.e., should I deal drugs, should I use drugs.

Another problem which leads to this drug problem is the status of our prison system. I mean the rehabilitative aspects of the prisons have just gotten out of the window. It's now basically a storage space for human beings. People are just rotting there out of boredom and, if anything, becoming more bitter and learning among other criminals how to be a better criminal or how to be nastier or meaner or even, in some instances, carrying on the business from the inside.

So the prisons have to start providing people with the tools, education and training tools, the literacy tools to get these people to think clearer, to be able to move to other alternatives other than crime.

If they can learn how to read, if they can get the G.E.D.s or acquire the skills that

when they come out, they don't necessarily have to go for the minimum wage job but for a better paying job, in other words, something that should have been done when they were free, those are the most, in my opinion, the four most obvious problems, the four most obvious causes of the drug problem that need to be addressed and I hope that the Legislature takes a holistic approach to this problem and drug problem and doesn't just look at, let's try to get as many police and National Guard here, because it's not as simple as what's first, the chicken or the egg, but also an understanding of trying to go for the causes first, also, to pay attention to the causes, not just problems.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. I am listening to you but I am going to say this to you also. If you do not have law and order in the society, you do not have a society. You can't build a foundation if it's weak to begin with.

The point that's being made about establishing law and order in the community is if you have to take people out, you take them

out. You've got to eliminate the cancer. We have cancers all over this Commonwealth. The cancers have to be cut out. If you are dealing with a sick patient, and these communities are sick and dying, you cut out the cancer first.

He just testified that even he's afraid to walk the streets because of the Uzis and the bullets. Sid, who was sitting here before him, he's trying to do what you're saying as a businessman, employing people and trying to deal with customers and the customers are fearful and the employees, they are getting raped and robbed.

He's got bullet holes coming through the roof. How do you eliminate that if you don't him fight the cancer? The cancers are these drug dealers. I understand what you are saying. I understand what Ralph is saying. Don't think that we have been sitting idly up in Harrisburg twiddling our thumbs, watching these problems go by. We have been addressing them.

As a matter of fact, this coming Monday,

we have the Intermediate Sanctions Bill, a major piece of legislation that I know is going to get out for this community, that provides treatments and alternatives, both at the state and local levels, to do these things and I agree, we have made them a commitment of a lot of dollars for law enforcement, for prosecutors, for judges, for prisons and we are trying to dovetail programs in with a lot of these things and provide alternatives.

There are causes and for every cause, there is an effect. We continue to pour so much money into education, we are not talking about just another 500 million dollars, we are somewhere around four and-a-half, 4.7 billion in the state.

In other communities outside of this country, japan as an example, don't pour nearly what we put into education and they are turning out ten times better students than we are. The problem is not the money. It's the use of the money that we're giving to the communities to run our schools and everything else.

There has to be a re-ordering. That's my own personal opinion. It's not shared with any of the other members. I don't pretend to speak for anyone else up here but I am telling you it's a re-ordering and a restructuring of what we have available with our resources.

First, we have to come to the reality that this is a poor state. We cannot do everything. Government cannot do everything. We can't be the answer to all the problems in our society. I am convinced of that. The well is only so deep and when you hit bottom there, you cannot continue to tax the hell out of the people in our communities and expect them to survive.

You want to put them into housing but if they can't pay the tax to afford the housing, they are going to lose the housing, anyway. You have to train them to get these jobs but I think the schools play an integral role there.

I have the same problems with my Hispanic and Black population in Reading. They are dropping out, they are not trained, not qualified, they are illiterate. I blame that

on the schoolteachers and the administrators. They take care of themselves first and the children are second. It should be the other way around.

We are so top-heavy in this state with administration in the schools, with teachers and benefits, you know, and I am a former teacher and I taught special education and I was a social worker and community organizer. We teach 180 days out of the year. You think about it; 365 days, they get paid a full year for 180 days. Any other person in this Commonwealth has to work a full year.

They get paychecks even in the summer months. I am not saying they don't earn it, don't misunderstand it, but it's just like any other product we produce. We produce legislation, you produce housing, you produce whatever you do in your business. The product of these schools is producing an education, and for the children that graduate, they should have the tools.

Most of the kids don't go on to higher education so you have to equip them for that



world outside these windows here and that means job skills, job skills that they can market individually through the trades or collectively through manufacturing businesses that they can get hired into but you've got to link them up and started funneling them into these jobs, if there are jobs available but if you continue to have the situation like Sid's how many Sids do you think are moving out of your area?.

MR. MATOS: That's what I want to get to before you take me too far off and I can't remember. I happen to know Sid very well. He's good friends. He means well for our community but you can't take a whole community captive because of one businessman. That's what you're telling me.

You're telling me because Sid is in the middle of a cancer, that we're going to destroy everything else around so he can make a living.

THE CHAIRPERSON: No, that's not the point.

MR. MATOES: That's what I heard because

that is the point, because Sid, I'm telling you, I have a lot of respect for Sid but we can't tear the whole neighborhood down, I am telling you, because of what Sid would like.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Sid is an example of the business community that are afraid to locate here because they don't have any protection. I wouldn't spend ten cents in this community because if I don't have the police protection, if you had a million dollars to invest as a businessman, would you want to invest....

MR. MATOS: You're asking the wrong person. I know every guy up here.

THE CHAIRPERSON: If you would separate yourselves, you would say, wait a minute. I am looking at a business decision. I am handling somebody else's decision. Maybe it's not your money. Do you really want to locate it here and take those chances of having the business destroyed, people being mugged, people being raped, robbed?.

MR. MATOS: I was working and I was making 16 dollars an hour. Coming home one night in a beat up car, a cop stops me. Said, you got

your registration and license? He says, what are you doing here? I says, coming from work.

I tell the guy where I work, he says, where do you live.

I said, I live 1324 North Fourth Street. He said, what are you doing living in this neighborhood with the kind of money you make? I look at the guy, which is similar to what you are telling me.

I feel safer down here than over there because at least I know who my enemies are down here. If I work close to my enemies and I help to develop and make my enemies agree with me, eventually they pave a way. Sid's been doing some of that.

Sid's been going out there dealing with that problem that is making his business hard to be thriving. Sure, I would like to see him make millions and millions but he needs to, whatever he's making, to reinvest back into the community.

You can't give people two or three jobs and say you are helping to support the whole community. You got 15 people working for you,

you only got two or three. You are not employing people from our community, people see that.

When you got a hundred people working for you and you got 85 working from the community, that community is going to protect you. They do that with us, they do that with our own people. That's from a job, from well-being. They are not going to let nobody come in and mess with their rice and beans. So people need to employ more their own surrounding so people can take pride and protect what's theirs.

THE CHAIRPERSON: How do you secure their investment if they don't feel that secure to begin with?

MR. GONZALEZ: That's the wrong approach, asking people from the outside to come in.

THE CHAIRPERSON: How do you get money flowing in the community?.

MR. GONZALEZ: The drug trade is doing pretty well.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Don't you think we have to eliminate the drug trade?

MR. GONZALEZ: Yes, but that shows there is support and interest in entrepreneurship, that development from within and that's what needs to be done and that's why you need good schools, housing, jobs, and that's what I was talking about, addressing the causes. I am not saying I don't want law and order.

MR. MATOS: You got a million dollar drug business drop outside.

THE CHAIRPERSON: I don't care how they are taken out of society; they have to be taken out.

MR. GONZALEZ: I am not saying don't take them out. I am trying to say we have limited resources. Government cannot do everything for us so since we have these limited resources somewhere where you do have extra money to throw, just don't throw it at the police, at law enforcement.

Deal with the fact of empowering these people, providing them with education so they can make the right decisions. They are doing very well with this drug trade which, unfortunately, is the only way they can

succeed, the only way they can make money.

If you could give these people different tools, they would do as good a job and that's what we are asking for. Give us the tools.

MR. HECKLER: One of the things you touched on I would like to explore a little further in terms of what happens in the community because I think the apprenticeship and the reconstruction is super. You're talking about the schools as being a major resource.

I am not using your exact words but in a lot of respects, where does the family fit in and what, if anything, is being done in the community to help people be better parents, because my sense is that the schools can only carry really a minor part of the burden in terms of teaching basic values, in teaching people how to be responsible adults but I know in an awful lot of communities in all communities, we've got an increasing number of folks who aren't ready to be parents being parents and that creates a repetitive cycle of people who are not empowered and you may help

to salvage some of them when you get them at 18 or 20 years old but it's much, much more important to reach them earlier, if possible.

MR. GONZALEZ: The family is very important. You can't rely solely on the schools but at the same time if you have a dysfunctional family the schools have to step in and society has to step in because an innocent child's---we in our society say until you are 18, you are not responsible for your actions. We're going to take care of you, et cetera.

So for this dysfunctional family the society is responsible to try to make sure that that person goes along the right track and that includes not starting a family too early when they are not ready and all these other things.

What is available right now? There are some agencies out there to help these dysfunctional families. Not enough, not enough, very little.

MR. MATOS: We differ because I grew up here. He comes from a nice family, good

educational background. My experience with the school system has been, first of all, I understand we got one of the biggest dropout rates in the city, 73 percent in the city or state, hispanic kids.

My experience with the school system being a father of five is that they have a way of making you feel stupid. When I go in and want to be a part of my kids' education, they make me feel stupid in front of my kids. Look, I can speak the language but sometimes they use words I don't understand.

What I am saying is people don't want to accept the fact that I am different from other people and when you are looking at people culturally, you have to accept we are different from black and different from white, from this one, that one and the school system doesn't identify that and adjust to that and you can't expect people to be part of a system that doesn't open their arms up to welcome you so you can become a part of it, because they have a way of keeping us out so how can we be influential in the education of our children?



MR. GONZALEZ: Also, the view that the schools are only for children. The schools should also help parents and the community become better, not just limit them to children. Give the schools a bigger role and for that you need to attract more people who are willing to take on those roles and tools, expand those views.

MR. O'BRIEN: Those are issues for the school district. They are not something we can directly impact. The School District of Philadelphia, they tell us just like I can tell you we have the same frustrations. We do.

They tell us they are trying to change the method of operations in the school districts, to change the concept. They want to return the control of neighborhood schools back to the neighborhoods.

Whether that's a viable solution like the kind of solutions they have for fighting the drug wars remains to be seen but the kind of issues you are addressing are something you should probably be talking to the

superintendent for this district about.

Tell them what you want for your schools out of this area. Tell him that you can't instill or empower your young people with the values to make this a great neighborhood if you are only waving a minimum wage job in front of their face. Tell them that you need the kind of job skills and maybe the kind of vocational and educational skills that they need.

Not everybody is going to go to college and become a lawyer, doctor, something like that.

What they need and what used to be great in this city was a system of small manufacturing plants and if you have a manufacturing plant that's going to locate in this area, they are going to bring people that have those skills into this area.

It's impossible for small businesses to compete and bring somebody in and teach them how to run a grinder and machine drill press, how to do something like that because as soon as you teach them as a small businessman in

Philadelphia, they are going to leave your business and work for Boeing because they are going to make the big bucks.

But what is going to attract that kind of business, like Tommy was saying, into this area, is first, and this gets back to where you are going to invest the dollars first. Certain things have to take place. The first step is you are going to have to secure the neighborhood because that's part of the cost of doing business and...

MR. GONZALEZ: Make the people secure it, too.

MR. MATOS: You took that money and gave it to Sid and said, Sid, here is a million dollars, instead of using it to come out and train people from the neighborhood.

MR. O'BRIEN: Do me a favor; don't jump on one thing as you are trying to impress us. This is an entire wheel with a lot of spokes but I know investing dollars in the police force is something that you are sensitive about and you would like to see other areas addressed but as Tommy said, what you have to

do is you need to secure the area.

You need more police protection because that will drive down the insurance costs so that businesses know when they come into this neighborhood they are going to be able to compete with other areas and what you are saying about the school district, it's important.

A small business cannot afford to do the training and the school district has to do that and if you have a school district that addresses that need and creates those kinds of skills, that's another incentive for the businesses to come into your neighborhood and invest but you are going to have to work with your school district people and tell them that the kind of skills you are giving to our young people are not preparing them to go out in the environment that exists in the city of Philadelphia for our kids to develop and have meaningful lives.

There's no question if you have a minimum wage job in front of somebody in this neighborhood and they see somebody with the

gold and fancy cars, they are going to go for the quick bucks because nobody, especially if you're young, has the patience to wait and you want to work through it but you are going to have to work on different areas here.

You are going to have to impress upon the school district their responsibility to give you the opportunity to deliver to the kids the skills they need to compete in this environment.

MR. MATOS: I see something wrong with that..

MR. O'BRIEN: You have the opportunity, if you have a Boeing and you have a major industry like that, you have an opportunity in that a lot of businesses that would like to work with a company like Boeing would like to locate in this area but you have to have the skills.

The company is only going to move into this neighborhood because maybe it has a good work force and the transportation is something that benefits us in the city of Philadelphia where there is a good transportation system

and that's one of the things they suffer for in the suburbs because they can't get a work force from the inner city to parts of Montgomery County or Bucks County because you have to have the car, the person can't afford the auto insurance, et cetera.

So we have the opportunity that we can bring business in here but evidently something has to be addressed.

MR. GONZALEZ: I agree with you. We should impress the school system but today we are trying to impress you. We are trying to put into your minds that this is important so when you go back, you have that in mind and also this is our point.

The police by itself, money for them is not the only answer. If you empower people, they will organize themselves, self-police themselves. They will stand together as a group against retaliation or to move someone out who's dealing drugs.

I mean, just imagine. You don't need the police, just all these people standing together taking a corner over. I mean, that's

what some of these grass roots groups are doing and have been successful at but you have to instill in people the security and the jobs.

The little corner bodegas, most of the people buying their stuff are drug dealers. Are they going to kick them outside? Assuming if I sold to them, am I going to kick my job away? Where else am I going to find a job this good?

You have to give people alternatives, the sense that they can do something together, this jell that will bring them together, fighting together to try and eliminate this problem. That's what we are trying for.

It's not just the police coming in busting heads. You are going to keep arresting people and more people will follow them. They will crowd the jails, come out eventually. It's a cycle. So I don't believe in just incarcerating more people.

Granted, I am not saying let them all go but I am trying to say you have got stop the cycle and the best way to stop the cycle is

with the causes.

THE CHAIRPERSON: You have got to understand that this is the House Judicial Committee. One of the reasons Ralph especially requested we come down here was for the law and order and law and justice issues. We feel compassionate and we are understanding because we all come from various districts in the state and we can sympathize with you.

We can certainly support those types of issues and I am sure I speak for everyone up here today and on the floor of the House. Specifically, what we are charged with with this committee are those justice issues that impact on people and I continue to maintain that unless you provide a safer and secure environment, it's not secure for children, the families or the business communities.

If you don't have that, how can you build on a foundation? I am just saying this is the perspective on this committee..

MR. MATOS: But it's strange you would ask questions about the law and order of the stuff we are dealing with and when I talked about



police corruption, you didn't question anything about that. Do you understand what I am saying?

MR. O'BRIEN: We are not questioning that. We understood.

MR. MATOS: What we need to address is how a corrupt police system that can't keep itself straight is going to straighten out our neighborhood.

THE CHAIRPERSON: I didn't suggest that. What I suggested was bring in an outside force to do what has to be done. Once that's done, let me say this; you can break that cycle once you eliminate the problems in the neighborhood. You know what the Crime Commission told me in their reports this year?

One way of looking at these kind of problems is, have you eliminated the problem. If you haven't, then the problem hasn't gone away. It's still a problem.

If you have eliminated the problem, it's no longer a problem that's the status with the Crime Commission and they are right, absolutely right. You can say, take this guy

off the corner, they replace him as fast as you take them off. You eliminate the supplier or big dealer, then you are hurting them. Those are the guys you have got to take down.

MR. HECKLER: Is this a substantial part of the population who don't have a command of the Spanish language?

MR. ACOSTA: No. I would say we have a big dropout rate but most of the people here are bilingual. They don't have a problem of the language. They do have a problem with the schools.

They don't learn anything in the schools and the kinds of problems we have in the schools are not finishing. People get tired of going to school, taking the same thing over and over and not learning anything. The school system itself needs to be rehabbed.

We need more concerned teachers in the community and we need to attract the teacher who wants to teach. A good teacher doesn't want to come into the district if they know at the end of day they will not have a car because it's going to be robbed, broken into.

So those kind of issues have to be addressed.

MR. FRANKLIN: My name is Del Franklin. I am representing CUNAD.

MR. FRANKLIN: And I am Cheryl Franklin, his wife.

MR. FRANKLIN: Many things that were already said, what you were speaking about are my concerns because I live in the neighborhood. We live here on Fifth & Allegheny so we have been here for quite some time now but we try to get involved with the community because we are concerned about where we live.

We live in an area right now that is infested with drug users. People are moving about playing with firecrackers as opposed to dynamite. Sticks of dynamite. My wife and I were sitting in the house last week and we heard this explosion.

Pieces of fragments came in into our window and that's not too pleasant but I am saying that what we are trying to say is we don't have to be a part of that. We don't have to and we are very concerned. That's why

we got involved with the Community Outreach.

Also, we are Christians. We go to church around the corner from where we live and we have an outreach, a sidewalk ministry for kids in the neighborhood, not only this neighborhood but down through the other North Philadelphia areas, the projects.

We are trying to do as much as we can but we are not the Lone Ranger. The same kinds of things that effect the gentlemen just here, it affects us, too. I am concerned because we are living in an area where we have to be concerned.

If we can't have respect for our neighbor, who can we respect? If I can't get along with my neighbor here, I am not going to get along with anybody anywhere. But the point I am making is the education is very serious in this neighborhood, not so much the teachers, not so much the schools, but it's the parents in this neighborhood here today.

You see a lot of the parents dealing with drugs, a lot of them are illiterate. I have seen times we have literally gone door to door

asking people to come to community meetings and people don't even want to get involved and I am not Hispanic. Can you follow me?.

But they don't want to get involved. Some of the people there, the block captain on the block was afraid to come outside of her door because the corner is infested with drug dealers. It's almost as if drug dealers own the whole area and I know they don't but they have got to be eliminated.

They are literally calling me now, you rat. All I'm doing is trying to go to church and help the community and they are calling me a police so I got to watch my back when I walk outside my door.

I have 3 children. We are trying to do as much as we can. I know most people that hang out on the corners because again, I live in that type of setting.

I was a victim of prison. I am an ex-con and all that but while I was there, I wanted to do something for me. You see, I didn't want to go back and forth, back and forth at a revolving door so I took advantage of those

resources in prison and I straightened out the  
and I am living productively, have a good job,  
a beautiful wife.

I never thought this thing could happen  
but I know it can if you are sincere enough to  
really do something with your life. That's  
the whole key. If I can do it, I know any  
Spanish person can do it, I know any Italian  
person can do it. I know anybody living in  
poverty don't have to live that way.

But we have to keep on pushing. I went to  
school all last year for my daughters and the  
kinds of material that they have in school, I  
believe it was helping her but she didn't want  
to take time with that. She wanted to deal  
with some of her friends in the street.

You see, her friends were influencing her  
to do other things, and I am not saying it was  
all her friends but she needed to tighten up  
herself. We as parents that have got live in  
the community have got to make a team effort  
and this is why we joined CUNAD and they have  
been doing great things.

Right now I am a musician. I am playing

guitar so what we are trying to do is get enough guitars in the community from the city so in September, I can start an elementary guitar class for some of the kids in the neighborhood because a lot of the kids, there is no example for them.

Some of the older people are not an example for them. I mean, the language, you wouldn't believe. Kids are running around with half sticks of dynamite. Crack is a rampant thing. Eight, nine, ten year old kids, you wouldn't believe it, would curse you in a minute.

So what we have got to do as family and as adults is eradicate that set so that we can start sticking together and bring our resources together so that we can make a better community. I know it can work.

MR. ACOSTA: It can work. I happen to be a member of the same group he is a a member of. We go out on Friday nights and we take the streets over the whole night, sometimes till three in the morning and it works because being that we have large groups of people,

then the Police Department comes along with us and helps us look out and do the things that probably they should be doing because the Police Department won't do it unless we come out.

MR. FRANKLIN: We can call the police to report seeing a crime across the street and the police will say this is not a priority, we will not be there. We have seen people getting killed. I have seen people get killed.

In fact, it was mentioned here earlier. Last year, a couple of kids after closing up for the day, as they walked around the corner there was two bodies there across the street. We have seen in this community problems you probably would not believe if I just say it to you.

You have to hear it from a lot of the other folks because it's the kind of crime you would never believe happened . We have seen guys from the dance hall, a guy dancing with the partner. A guy took a gun, blew his brains out two weeks ago.



What I am saying is that the people in the community have to get together. I mean, for example, if they take that center down around on Fifth Street, where are the kids going to go? Already they are throwing stones at cars because there's not enough activities in the center.

The swimming pool needs to be fixed up. I am saying that the media, sometimes they will come in and they will say, all this is what they call a vacant area and there is lots of trash and garbage that needs to be cleaned up.

They are not looking underneath that. Also, buildings need to be repaired. Where are the monies coming from to get the buildings repaired? The media has a tendency of blowing things out of proportion. We have to look under that and see the actual needs and then support the needs under that.

That stuff can be cleaned up. I am talking about repairs underneath that swimming pool. The plumbing system is corroded. All the that stuff needs to be cleaned up. I am saying if we stopped focusing on this stuff

that doesn't mean anything and start focusing on the real needs like the housing.

For example, I just graduated P.T.C, building Maintenance technician so I lay floors, put in ceilings, that whole bit and there's a lot of houses in the neighborhood that are vacant, as Carlos said.

How come instead of him running his jibs, how come we can't get together and try to do something where we can get some of these houses fixed up. These are problems we need to address. Kids are sleeping in their homes and rats are biting them and they have to go to hospitals for infectious diseases.

I am talking about things that are needs. How can a kid function in school if he's going through problems with his parents at home because they can't get along? Mothers are separated from fathers, you have husbands who are drug addicts. How can they sit and function in classes when all these things are bombarding the kids' minds?

This is some of the kinds of things that caused me to do my thing, because of my mother

and father going through changes when I was coming up. It took me to go to prison to understand that I have a life and understand I can live this life productively without going back and forth, in and out of prison.

But it doesn't have to take a child to go through what I went through if we eliminate some of these problems now. Every time you turn around, on billboards and signs and stuff, you see alcohol and hot sex, drugs. All this stuff is associated. How can kids really function in class?

MR. ACOSTA: Mr. Chairman, if I may, one of the problems we have in the inner city is the lack of playgrounds, swimming pools and a whole bunch of items that have to do with the Recreation Department here. I know every year we get the commissioners to come in to us and ask us to deliver them more money.

I would like to get a subcommittee or some of us to approach the Evans committee and to probably tell these folks if you come in here for more money, I want to see what you are representing.

What are you doing with those dollars that we are giving you, because right now, we don't have any recreation for these kids. The child has problems in the house, sometimes they have to get up on their own, grab something to eat and run to school because there's no parents who do that at home and when they get out from school, the environment he has doesn't have a swimming pool or park to go to.

Those we have in the community, they are loaded with broken glasss and all kinds of drug pushers and so on. We could be looking to those dollars that we give in these departments. What do you do with this money?

We had the Commissioner of Recreation last year banging on our doors. They need 2.4 million dollars more, and sometimes you wonder what is happening with those dollars.

So we are not really attacking from Harrisburg, from our jobs there, we are not attacking those people that are saying give me, give me, and we are not saying, show me what you do with what I give you.

THE CHAIRPERSON: If I may suggest

something to you, as a community organizer from many many years ago, one of the things that always was very successful--- we are our brother's keeper, by the way. I firmly believe in that and whether you believe in a Christian God or whatever God you believe in, those are basic principles.

I think every one of us would try to do the right thing, whether we are in government service, community service or in any kind of work force.

One of the things that works when you want to unite a community around common goals, and everybody is saying the same thing here today, in getting people organized, and I know it works, it worked any number of times I have been involved in this. The issue here is law and order.

The drugs are destroying this area of Philadelphia and maybe many other areas of Philadelphia. You need to get people together. I understand that you have some community organizations and some groups. You have got expand that base.

The more people you have involved, the more groups you have involved, the more churches you have involved and businesses, when you come together, you are talking about coming together.

When I have organized groups, I have organized groups two, three, 400 people, okay? That's what you have got to do. You want to catch the politician's attention, whether it's down to City Hall or up in Harrisburg, you've got organize. You've got to organize.

You've got to get people together with mutual interests. You talk about housing and housing problems, you talk about the money going into Philadelphia but not coming to this section of Philadelphia . You want to get their attention. Get the community who are totally organized, not just Hispanic, not just Black, not just white. Everybody here has the same problem.

It affects everything. It affects the businesses there, whether they are Black, white or Hispanic. They have the same problem. Housing. You talk about recreation?

It's the same problem.

What you need to do is to bring all of those groups together: the business community, the churches, the black groups, the white groups. Get them all together, get them totally organized and speaking with one voice and you set up your priorities.

First of all, you have an election coming up. Let's talk a little politics. You have an election coming up. You can let them know how you feel and you can take it out on them in the ballot box, one way or the other. All you want are results. You want to see changes.

That's number one. Number 2, you are talking about Harrisburg? All right. You can force them to make changes. All you have to do is put a little money in a legal fund. You want to take them to Court to see how they are dispensing their funds, if they are not dispensing funds in an appropriate manner.

Everybody says about there are too many lawsuits and what not. Well, if you feel that you are being shortchanged, I'll tell you

what. There are probably a couple hundred attorneys that would probably want to take a case that certain areas of this city are being shortchanged.

You are talking about equalized housing, equalized funding for areas of the city? If you're being shortchanged, and you may very well be, you need to find that out and then maybe you need to take the city to Court. When they say about minorities not being treated fairly, black, white, Hispanic, whatever, women, what they do is take them to court, right?

They want subsidies for housing, they want subsidies for jobs or this or that and the other thing, if the money is flowing into Philadelphia but this particular area of Philadelphia is being discriminated against, I think you may have a hell of a good case to really take them on and that may be but what you have got to do is get the groups together and if you are singing with one voice, okay, somebody is going to hear you. It's not going to be swept away.



MR. ACOSTA: Mr. Chairman, now that you touched on the issue, a few weeks ago, most of you saw me on television breaking in to a Philadelphia home improperly and putting a family in there. Because of that, I was taken to Court.

Of course, the family got situated because the publicity was so big against P.H.A. They felt embarrassed. They didn't drop the charges. I went to Court but what I am trying to say is now, we are getting homeless people who are represented in different areas.

We are sitting with George Gold(ph) from the Community Legal Services. We are going to have a case put against P.H.A. for the same purpose. They are also a government agency, city government agency and they are part of the problem.

Most of these abandoned properties we see in the community are owned by the Philadelphia Housing Authority. So we are using my case and my crazy act, as they call it, to fight this problem. So we are going to Court with them and I want you to know that because we

have been fighting from all angles.

We have been doing everything we feel is necessary to get people's attention, to get them to deliver services to us and this town has been very difficult because you cannot bust these city agencies, for some reason. You can't make them work.

THE CHAIRPERSON: It was a standing joke in Harrisburg that the Northeast part of Philadelphia wanted to secede and a senator even put in a piece of legislation to do that.

Maybe it's time for you to do that, say, we want to secede from Philadelphia and form our own little part of the city and say maybe that way, maybe we will get attention from the state, Federal and local government.

Maybe we ought to run our own government here. That sounds outrageously stupid or simple but I will tell you what; sometimes it's stuff like that that you have got to do to catch the attention of the officials, to say help us, we're dying out here in an island surrounded by all this trouble and no one's paying any attention to us.

That's what you keep telling us up in Harrisburg. I hear about all the different groups and I have been down here before and learned that. But has anybody ever thought about bringing these groups together and uniting them into one single vocal group that can really be organized to put the pressure on?

MR. ACOSTA: Mr. Chairman, everything that you are saying is happening. For example, we just formed a task force with the police, the community businesses and the churches. We have Sister Eileen and we have this group of people working together to force city agencies and government agencies to come down and do the kind of things that they are supposed to do because the government has a portion of responsibility towards the people.

In this town, unfortunately, the money comes from various sources at state and Federal levels but when it gets here, it gets into center city and doesn't pass from the city so the rest of the community doesn't get the services.

This has been the outcry of this community for a long long time so now it seems with these groups, CUNAD, the Task Force and many groups together, we seem to be heading in the right direction but it has taken us a long time to do it because every time we call officials and we tell them the problems we have, they commit themselves to do certain things but then they forget about us.

So in the meantime, we start working, start pushing until we get angry again and do it over again. So this is how it's been in the last ten years. They have been stalling the process, buying time to get the community to keep them quiet. That's the problem.

Now we don't believe or trust anyone, including the politicians. Now we are coming up with the task force really put the pressure.

THE CHAIRPERSON: It will work. Believe me.

MR. O'BRIEN: I think what Tommy and what Ralph were alluding to, a lot of the problems you are talking about are city-related

problems. Like Tommy said, up in the Northeast, that's the area I come from, we talked about it. The state senator did introduce a piece of legislation to secede from the rest of the city.

When I talked to him, I told him it would never happen but I said I would support the concept because it would act as a vehicle so we could demonstrate our frustration for the lack of services we were getting in my area of the the city and I will tell you, it's the same services we were complaining about, the lack of recreation facilities, drug problems, the same type problems.

I will tell you what I tell the people up there. You have an election going on up there. In talking to every one of my civic groups, youth organizations, I ask them, do you know who your council people at-large are.

I don't think there's anybody in that room that may be able to name the 7 councilpeople at-large running in this town. All you need are 9 votes to do anything you want and there

are seven council people at-large. Nobody knows who the hell they are.

They wander around the city. They basically don't have a constituency they are responsible to. We all do. I have a district that is defined by geographic boundaries and I am responsible to those people in that district and I am supposed to reflect their interests, needs and concerns.

Council people at-large wander around the the city. They don't have a constituency. If I had anything to do with, they are talking about Charter changes in the city, I would change one thing. I would get rid of all the council people at-large and have 15 district council people.

Then you would have more responsive government. Right now, you have seven people.

If you don't know who they are, vote against them. Put new people in in there and that will send a message. I think you saw in this town everybody that was councilman at-large was scared to death and they should because they haven't been doing the job. They really

haven't.

I am not saying Democrat or Republican. I am saying right across the board. If you don't know who the council-at-large are, vote them out and start concentrating on who the candidates are who are running because there are seven of them and all they have to do is pick off two councilpeople and they can control the agenda.

MR. FRANKLIN: That's funny, when you said that because a couple of days ago, I was telling my wife almost the same thing. A lot of the people they vote for, I don't know. I don't know what they do. You don't hear about them but when they come up for election...

MR. O'BRIEN: They'll grandstand and frustrate all the things you are doing in the neighborhood. They'll be the kind of people that will come in here, listen to this big meeting you have and they will do one or two things you ask them to do that night and you'll never hear from them again.

That aids the frustration you have and we have, no matter what part of the city you are

from.

MRS. FRANKLIN: I just want to ask for a solution. What can you come up with in terms of parents involved in the neighborhood? My husband keeps saying it was an accident but I heard talk that it wasn't an accident.

They threw a stick of dynamite through our windows. They said we are community informers and Christian rats. My husband was trying to better the community and I have heard threats about what they are going to do to my husband.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Has this been reported to the police, the District Attorney's office,

MR. O'BRIEN: I am beating the same drum again when you are talking about witnesses and being unprotected because you are giving out information and I told the same story at one of the Judicial Committee meetings where a Jamaican Shower Posse guy walked up and shot someone.

A woman witness, she walked over to the police told them what she witnessed and they took her information. They told her don't go home, these guys will find out where you live,



go live with a relative or friends.

Another Jamaican Shower Posse guy found out where she was staying. When she walked out of her friend's house the next day, he was sitting there. He said, I saw you talk to the cop. I'm going to have you killed, your body chopped up into little pieces if you provide any of that testimony.

I will tell you you what happened. Because of this prison code in the City of Philadelphia, they could not put that person behind bars. He just threatened somebody's life, they couldn't put him behind bars. So Norma Shapiro(ph) and the City Solicitor had to violate their own order to put that person into a Federal prison, but that was only because of the special attention that was given to that specific case.

From the thousands of like cases happening out there, if you are going to be safe, if you are as a community activist, if you want to provide information to law enforcement, you are only going to be able to do that if you feel secure that your lives and your

properties are going to be protected and this system is not doing that right now.

They are not responding to that fundamental need and what has to happen is they have to remove that consent decree and they have to open the jails again and they have to do a couple other things we were talking about at sidebar and this is something if we can get people in the City Solicitor's Office to answer these questions, they closed the jails, they don't aggregate sentences in Philadelphia, somebody sentenced to 11 and-a-half to 23 months, they don't go to state prison because you have to be convicted and sentenced to two years.

In Bucks, they aggregate. If you are sentenced to two consecutive terms, 11 and-a-half to 22 months, you go to Gratersford.

They are talking about building another 500 room, one thousand bed facility. It will take a couple of years to come on line. They could increase the prison space immediately and give you protection for your home, address

those kinds of terroristic threat situations that right now are on the house because nobody goes to jail.

They could increase the capacity if they aggregate the sentences, remove the prison cap and then you could have an impact on what's happening on the corners. Right now, you have that revolving door and they are more intimidating when they go out.

That sounds simple. I talk about it and bore everybody with it but I am frustrated as hell because nobody wants to do anything about it.

MR. FRANKLIN: And the point is, I am not even informing on anybody. All I am doing is trying to be of help. I know where my life has been. I understand some of these drug addicts more so than some of these people that haven't in that set.

I learned I don't have to do what everybody does. I try to get along with them most of the time. I try to respect everybody in the neighborhood but those guys will kill you when it involves drugs and money,

particularly big money.

They will kill you. I'm sure, on that corner where we live, I am sure there was more than three bodies in 6 months on the corner I live on. People got killed. I don't try to get in their business or be newsy.

I work every day. I try to do the best I can as a community leader and also as a family man. I try to do the best I can. I try to stay away from those guys but what's ringing in my head is what you were saying earlier about more security because I am not just concerned about myself, but you have a lot of older people in the neighborhood afraid to come out to their door.

MRS. FRANKLIN: When we do call the police, the police are afraid of that neighborhood. When they bombed our house, they didn't even come. They rode through the neighborhood and that was it.

They didn't even come to the house.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Change has to come. I want to thank you very much for your testimony. You are very courageous. God

bless you.

The next person to testify is Ida Serrano.

MRS. SERRANO: Good afternoon, members of the panel. I am a member of CUNAD, Community United Neighbors Against Drugs. I believe that if anyone here today can tell you about the crime in our community, it is I. Today, I am speaking to you from my own personal experience.

On May 1, 1990, my deceased husband, David Pachebay, was shot twice in the heart and once in the chest with a 45-caliber pistol. My family suffered from this tragedy. Six months later, my 12 year old son was beaten by four teenagers, ranging from ages 17 to 19 years old.

After they had beaten my child, one of them shot him in the heart while he was lying on the ground and killed him. I feel that I am a victim also, not because the man that shot my husband tried to run me over with his van, but because, along with my deceased husband and son, part of my dreams went with them.

They were cheated out of life because these people felt they could play God. These people were angry and took their anger out on my family.

Last year during the end of the school term, around 3 p.m, there was a shootout around the schoolyard. Bullets were coming in all directions. They reminded you of a civil war. Parents, teachers and children had to run inside the school for protection. Thank God no one was wounded or killed.

Not long after that, I saw a man get shot six times in the back at a gas station, and also in my neighborhood, an eight year old was shot in the leg while playing outside.

At this moment I will not speak for myself. I will speak for all of us. We deserve safe streets, more police protection. The city should be focusing on recreational facilities and activities, also work for the people who work in this area because they play an important part in the youth of today.

Also, I don't understand why the gun control bill was not passed in Philadelphia. I

believe that a gun control bill should be passed all over this country, due to the fact that without the gun control bill, it is easy for just anyone to get a gun and sometimes they are sold to the wrong people and end up in the wrong hands.

I also believe that when children are coming out of school, I have seen lots of violence. I have seen lots of abuse. The children all come out together at the same time and the older children, they beat the other children. They take their brand new sneakers, take away their clothes, their change, their money and beat them up.

I mean, some of them are being killed. This is an important time for the children, you know. They are tired, they have worked all day, they've used their minds. They come out and what are they going to see out in the street?

They have to fight all the way home. They should have some police protection in these areas to show that there is authority, to see that these people who are selling drugs don't

put things in their heads, to show that there are other things besides fighting, low moral values, there are higher standards.

They need to see that and like, for instance, in the school system, there should be a program with something there to help the children cope with these crimes within their homes, within the community and drugs and all these things that are going on because a lot of parents are taking drugs and with those kinds of values, what kind of principles are they showing these children?.

There needs to be somebody within the school system involved about this matter.

Do you understand what I mean? And I don't see that that has been done.

MR. ACOSTA: Mr. Chairman, I understand the problem firsthand. I am aware. I have been fighting for three years to get one school clean of problems that, in fact, the community got themselves involved and we cleaned up all the graffitti and put a lot of the pressure on the School Board and were able to get railings around the school so the kids



are safe.

When they have lunch time or breaks, they can play within the schools. Before that, all the criminal element were just walking into the school, using the bathroom facilities and all kinds of problems.

We also had difficulties with the sewer system and a whole bunch of problems. I am going to get myself in line to testify at the next School Board and I want you to get some testimony. You have to do the same thing you did today.

You have to write testimony and make up copies in order for you to be able to testify and I will do the same thing. Some of the things that you want to do, we all want to do the same thing.

The the only problem we have, for example, the school superintendent here, Theresa, which is one of the best persons to have come to this district, she doesn't have the power. They don't have the respect downtown to give to her.

One of the problems we have in this

community is that they don't want to spend any money doing any things that will benefit the community so we might have to get ourselves into groups and go downtown and testify in front of them and if need be, we might have to get ourselves together and make the noise and picket the Police Department and do the kind of things that are going to force the people to give us the services.

In the state level, again, we can probably sit down with the chairman of the Appropriations Committee and some of the people that allocate funds to the city programs and hold them responsible not to do anything in terms of dollars also, unless these people running these agencies in the city commit themselves to us in front of them that they are going to be doing programs here to help us.

Any time there's money to come to Philadelphia, even though we have problems with the suburban legislators, we always talk and convince them we cannot allow the city to go down the drain. We always come up with the

money that is needed for the program. But when the money gets down here, we don't see the programs.

So we might have to get a different approach and that would probably be to testify in front of the School Board, testify in front of the Legislature, testify in front of City Council people for these people to come out to help this community out because this community is just completely ignored and we have got to do the things to force them to work with us and I would be glad to sit down with you.

MRS. SERRANO: I am willing.

MR. ACOSTA: And I want to sit down with CUNAD and let's work on some kind of a thing here. I don't want to go crazy again and do the thing I did with the Philadelphia Housing Authority again but if need be, I am going to do it again but I'm tired of these people every year.

They want more money every year and we don't see the results. I'm getting tired of it and I need the help of the members of the House and I'm sure you guys now have a clear

picture as to what I have been complaining of.

THE CHAIRPERSON: That's one of the main reasons we came down, to support Ralph. He represents the same constituency all of us do in the House and he's one of our colleagues, one of our brothers in the Legislature and when they impact on any one of us, they impact on all of us.

What we're dealing with is taxpayers' dollars and if you are not getting treated fairly here, it's an insult to us and what we have to do up there because it should be handled fairly to any one of these communities around the state.

MR. ACOSTA: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Committee, after we are done here today with the testimony if we could get the governor together with us and tell them we are just getting tired. He's going to be out of office in the next couple of years and we are just as bad now with Casey as governor as we were before with any other governor.

So we don't see any changes. We don't see any results and at least in his last years of

office he could concentrate on doing something in this part of the state, because this is a disgrace to him as governor and this is a disgrace to us as citizens, a disgrace to us as people in this community.

We are afraid and ashamed to bring friends to this community. We have friends from other places and other parts of the world who want to come and see us and I myself am ashamed to say, come to my house.

This is a stain on all of us. It's not just Ralph Acosta or the people in this community. It's all of us, including the governor.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Alfredo Gonzalez, would you like to testify now?

MR. GONZALEZ: My name is Alfredo Gonzalez. It is my pleasure to appear before you and present the Friends Neighborhood Guild's position with regard to the criminal activity devastating our youth and our communities. The Guild has a history of providing service to youths and their families and as such, we have first-hand knowledge of

the importance of investing in our youths.

Whenever the issue of crime is the topic of discussion, crime prevention is our focus, for taking a bite out of crime, as the saying goes, cannot be achieved without providing an alternative to crime and it behooves us, the citizens of this city and of this Commonwealth and you, the legislators, to see to it that an enormously increased attention be given to our youth.

It has been well established that if we fail to this the drug peddlers and other criminals will capitalize on their ability to attract the attention of our youngsters.

Fifty to fifty-five percent of our Spanish students drop out of school. Something must be done. Children and families who live in North Central Philadelphia need more programs geared toward preventing criminal-based behavior, ex, identifying positive parenting methods, providing vocational and educational training as well providing youth with structured recreational activities.

More monies need to be spent providing our

children with better living conditions. If we don't spend money now to prevent our children and families from turning to selling and or using drugs or getting involved in any criminal activity, we will pay an uncontrolled amount later.

A large percentage of money confiscated in criminal activity in our community should be put back into where the damage originated. Our children are crying as loud as they can out of desperation. They need support from all areas of the government.

Money is spent on placing people in jails and institutions, though it should be spent on correcting the problems which caused criminal behavior. Community based programs geared toward adjudicated youth provide family members with assistance in identifying and finding solutions to their problems.

Recidivism is extremely low verses the rate of recidivism among youth placed in juvenile facilities. Out of 61 cases, only three cases resulted in rearrest. In providing youths and families with

alternatives, we decrease their chances of committing criminal acts.

In changing the way of thinking, you change the way of acting.

The Friends Neighborhood Guild provides service to a community composed of four public housing developments and an area with over 100 scattered site buildings. It is in communities such as the ones we serve that that presence and effectiveness of youth programs is more of an urgent nature.

Therefore, we propose the following recommendations for your consideration to be included in current and the future legislation:

1. That proceeds of drug and criminal activity forfeitures be allocated to crime prevention programs geared to youth, on the basis of 50 cents for every dollar seized;

2. That the programs eligible for these specific grants be those providing the youth with the training of trades and other skills to compete in the job market;

3. That these programs also have a



job placement unit to enable our youth to develop a mindset geared to gaining remuneration for lawful activities and employment;

4. That agencies and/or organizations applying for these funds must serve communities of family income at or below the poverty level.

MR. ACOSTA: The last time we met in regard to the forfeiture bill that we have introduced, some of the members at the time did not realize the kind of impact that we will receive if we can get some of that money that is taken away from this community in terms of drug activity.

If we could get some of that money to come back, that money could provide a lot of services. We know that we can not go to government and say give me more money to fight drugs because there is no money we don't have the money.

But the dollars we know come from this community into the Federal government, state government, city government could come back, a

portion of it could come back to fight the same problems that are created by the drug problem.

In other words, we could get some money to make programs to prevent, to education, even to build housing with the same money we take away but somehow, in the minds of some of the legislators, it's somehow wrong to say that the money that is taken away from here cannot come back or because the half-assed D.A.'s Office doesn't want to release money because they need it.

I think it's crazy, knowing at least 50 million dollars is taken away from this community every year and nothing comes back. If we can convert the minds of those guys we have against it to vote for us. How we are going to do it, I believe I am going to need the help of all of us.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Since there are no other presenters, we will adjourn the hearing for today and I want to thank you for your testimony.

(Whereupon, at 1:45 p.m., the

hearing was adjourned.)