

August 29, 2000

Distinguished members of the House of Representatives, Judiciary Committee, and subcommittee on courts hearing on House Bill #2165, please allow me to introduce myself:

My name is Luis A. Mendoza, a City Council Member of Lancaster City, Chairman of the Public Safety Committee for Lancaster City.

I am the Founder and have been President of the Lancaster County Partnership to Hang-Up On Drugs for the past 11 years. The Lancaster County Partnership to Hang-Up On Drugs is an organization that is formed by parents, teachers, the business sector and political figures alike. The main objectives to work with our children in the fight against drugs. One of the most popular events is "Papitos Soccer Festival", an annual event that involves Lancaster City students from kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

I have been employed at Y&S Candies, Division For Hershey Foods, for the past 30 years, and am a Manager of Quality Assurance. I have a family of four children; the eldest, Luis Carlos is a veteran of the Gulf War and a first Lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

My presence today before you has one main objective: TO SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 2165.

In yesterday's local newspaper there was a report from Washington, D.C. that Violent Crimes had plunged by 10%. Here in our beautiful city of Lancaster, the Red Rose City, the Garden Spot of the United States and most recently the "All American City", crimes have increased significantly. Firearms incidents increased 86%, Robberies with firearms increased 62%+, aggravated assaults increased 26% and robberies are up 11%+. (Comparing from March thru June 1999 Statistics.) As you see, all these numbers do have a common denominator...the common denominator being that the majority of the crimes are drug related incidents. What is more critical is that the current laws in Pennsylvania are inadequate in punishing those who have committed crimes with firearms.

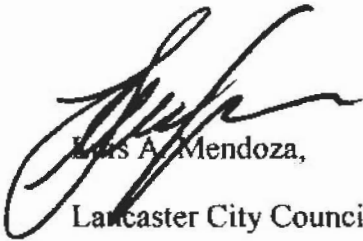
On April 7, this year Leslie Samaniego, a mother of three beautiful children, was killed while two gangs were having a shoot out over whose turf it was at which spot. Another incident was at the Carter and McCrae Elementary school. Students were outside in the playground yet at the same time at serious risk when guns shots from different gang members were fired back and forth at each other while students frantically ran for cover. Again this was a drug related incident where gangs were claiming territory

Also, this year our police officers have been hurt and by bullets of the many drug dealers and gang members trying to take over OUR city.

I, as Councilman Mendoza who recommended the implementation of the Cease-Fire Federal Law in our City of Lancaster and Lancaster County with a minimum for those found in possession of illegal guns and as the chairman of the Public Safety Committee I ask you, distinguished members of the House judiciary committee to please provide our District Attorney, Don Totaro with the resources to protect our citizens, especially our children of Lancaster

County by adopting the mandatory minimum of a state prison sentence of five years for any drug dealer that commits an offense while in possession of a fire-arm. (Clearly defined in Bill #2165)

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luis A. Mendoza', written in a cursive style.

Luis A. Mendoza,

Lancaster City Councilman, Chairman Public Safety Committee