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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE CHILDREN
AND YOUTH COMMITTEE ON JUNE 10, 2010**

**DELINQUENCY PREVENTION AND
ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION**



**PRESENTED BY: DANIEL P. ELBY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
ALTERNATIVE REHABILITATION COMMUNITIES, INC.**

Good afternoon. I am Daniel P. Elby, the Chief Executive Officer of Alternative Rehabilitation Communities. ARC is a private, non-profit agency that Bob McKendrick and I founded in 1975. Our first students were sent to us from Camp Hill as part of Pennsylvania's decision to remove juveniles from the state correctional facility. During the past thirty five years, I have served as the only chief executive officer of ARC.

We provide the full continuum of service for delinquent youth who are under the supervision of the juvenile court. At any given time, we are serving a total of approximately one hundred and sixty youth. These young people are in our maximum security program in Chambersburg, our female program in Carlisle, our mental health program in York, our Latino program in York, our sexual offender program in Harrisburg, our two residential programs in Harrisburg, our residential programs in Lancaster and Lebanon and our Neighborhood Reporting Center, which is located in Harrisburg.

In addition to serving as CEO of ARC, I have also had the privilege of serving as the only Chair of the Disproportionate Minority Contact Subcommittee of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. I have served in the capacity since 1986. Although I have worked in our juvenile justice system for thirty five

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Alternative Rehabilitation Communities, Inc. is a non-profit Organization. In accordance with Article Two, the Non-Profit Corporation Law A.R.C. is authorized to render care and assistance to juveniles and their families. A.R.C., Inc. exists only to perform any and all lawful acts providing such services, facilities and environment to juveniles as provide motivation for personal growth, revision of immediate lifestyle, individual goal attainment and introspection, permitting transition to other rehabilitative settings, with no limits of involvement as directed by the Board of Directors.

years, I am still determined to make a difference in the lives of children. In fact, I am still so energetic, that I have registered for the New York Marathon this November, even though I am no longer in the under sixty club.

My comments this afternoon will focus on two issues: (1) delinquency prevention; and (2) the over representation of youth of color in our juvenile justice system. These two issues are intimately connected and must be addressed together if we are to bring about change in our juvenile justice system. It is not a coincidence that ARC's first student was an African American from Harrisburg. Ralph who is now fifty three years old, works in Harrisburg and is still connected to the ARC family. I mention Ralph because he serves as an example of how long we have wrestled with the problem of over representation and how the ARC family has played a major role in his life. Thirty five years later, in our newest program, the Neighborhood Reporting Center, we serve mostly youth of color with the goal of building family and community resources. At the ARC Neighborhood Reporting Center families and the community have come together to help prevent delinquency and to create alternatives to secure detention.

Before I talk more about bringing together the resources that are necessary to prevent both delinquency and secure detention, I need to comment on the importance of relationships. We have served Dauphin County youth since 1975. As I mentioned earlier, our first student was from Harrisburg. The first program we opened was in the City of Harrisburg. My baby brother, who has worked for ARC since 1975, pitched against Steve Suknaic, the Director of Juvenile Probation for Dauphin County, for the City of Harrisburg Baseball Championship in 1963. So, our relationship with Dauphin County is long and strong. When Judge Cherry sends a youth to the Neighborhood Reporting Center and says "I'll be there tonight to see if your there", you can bet that

Judge Cherry will be coming to the program. When Jeff Patton comes to our monthly meetings with his legal pad and the concerns he has about the program, it is clear that he understands that our work is a genuine partnership.

From the beginning, ARC has understood the importance of both the family and the community in preventing delinquency. It is no small thing that we call our alternative to secure detention program the Neighborhood Reporting Program and not an evening reporting center. When we started planning for this program we went to the Bethel AME church to find a home for the program because Bethel has had a long and intense relationship with the ARC Family. We knew that the Bethel community would embrace our new program just as they had embraced our other programs. For example, the students of ARC make up the Bethel Youth Choir. (So, if you have a need for a choir, give me a call.)

As we all know, family involvement is the key to preventing delinquent behavior. It was the recognition of this fact that led us to build much of our treatment at the Neighborhood Reporting Center around the family. The family is involved in the admissions process, treatment planning, monthly meetings to monitor the progress of the student, and daily interaction with ARC staff to discuss the student's behavior and any family concerns. Our involvement in Family Group Conferencing makes a very clear statement to the family that we want to support, not manage the family.

At ARC, we believe that family involvement can be fostered if our staff are from the community and are involved in local religious and social organizations. We know many of the families served by the Neighborhood Reporting Center before they enter our

program. Our program director, Mr. Leon Wilkerson lives within a few blocks of the center.

We also think we foster family and community involvement by having our students participate in community service. Our students clean the facility, help set up for church functions, assist in the food pantry, maintain the outside of the property and clean up the area surrounding other churches in the neighborhood.

Families and neighborhoods that view themselves as respected and as part of the treatment team will almost always want to cooperate with and support the program. Families and neighborhoods that see providers as arrogant and disconnected will not cooperate with or support a program.

Let me give an example of what I mean. We are now in the planning stages with Dauphin County to open a second Neighborhood Reporting Center. We have, once again, approached the Faith Community and are meeting to begin building the kind of relationship that will be needed to make sure the program is both embraced and supported by the church and not just located in their building. It would be easy to enter a contract to locate the new Neighborhood Reporting Center in the building. It will take work and sustained attention to build a trusting relationship in which we see ourselves as partners in serving troubled youth.

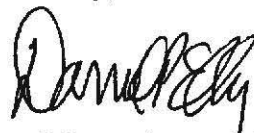
As you consider what actions to take in terms of preventing delinquency and developing alternatives to detention, I would suggest that you need to think in terms of connecting with families and neighborhoods. I also think you need to support programs that are built on the foundation of partnership not the usual contractor/provider relationship.

Now let me turn my attention to the problem of over representation of minority youth in the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System. I need to add that the problem of over representation is a national problem and that Pennsylvania has emerged as a leader in examining and addressing this problem. This hearing is in part a result of the work we are doing in trying to address the over representation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system.

Our work on DMC is guided by research and is directed by a group of people who have long served in our juvenile justice system. Let me give you one example of the work we are doing. We have created a Law Enforcement and Youth Program that has led to many regional forums in which youth and local law enforcement representatives meet to discuss their perceptions of each other and how the relationships between youth and law enforcement can be improved. We have also created curricula that are being used in the Philadelphia Police Department and the Harrisburg School District to help build relationships between the police and young people. This work has been guided by the belief that relationships are fundamental, so probation officers, police officers, families, community members and others come to together to examine the problem and what needs to be done to address this issue.

There is much more that I would like to say, but I am mindful of the time constraints facing this Committee. Let me conclude by saying we must do better in preventing delinquency and reducing the use of secure detention. We must also do better in reducing the over representation of minority youth in our juvenile justice system. The fact that we now have more people of color in prison than in college is a terrible legacy to leave our children. We can and must do better!

Sincerely,



Daniel P. Elby
Chief Executive Officer