

Testimony of Ann Harkins
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Thank you, Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah, for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee today regarding FY12 funding for the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance in the Office of Justice Programs, and especially for a \$40 million funding level for the Byrne Competitive Grant program. I am Ann Harkins, President and CEO of the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), an organization providing practical information on proven and cost-effective crime prevention practices to local law enforcement, community leaders and citizens for almost thirty years. I am here, as I was last year, to express NCPC's strong support for the Edward Byrne Memorial Competitive Grant program. We realize, of course, that in the present budget climate this Subcommittee, like everyone else in Congress, is looking for places to trim budgets and reduce spending. As you undertake this important task, we urge you to consider not only the importance of the work done through the Byrne program, but also the cost savings in the long run that support for Byrne funded prevention initiatives will realize.

Therefore, we respectfully urge the Subcommittee to continue to appropriate \$40 million for this program in FY12, the same level of funding this Subcommittee provided in FY10. That level of funding, of course, remains in place for FY11 under the present Continuing Resolution. We also respectfully suggest that the Subcommittee provide a direct appropriation of \$1 million, from the Byrne Discretionary fund, for the purpose of evaluation and dissemination of evidence-based best practices for crime prevention.

Equally important, I respectfully request that the Subcommittee provide specific guidance to the Office of Justice Programs to ensure that two essential crime prevention functions, ones this Subcommittee has supported in the past, are funded within Byrne Competitive in FY12. The first is ensuring the existence of an independent, non-governmental national repository and clearinghouse on best practices and evidence-based crime prevention. This function has been intended to ensure that state and local law enforcement have access to the best materials on effective crime prevention practices--to get the best possible outcomes from the Subcommittee's substantial investments in Byrne Justice Assistance Grants and other state and local assistance programs. The second essential function is a strong national public service advertising campaign to reach the general public with evidence-based crime prevention messages. The Subcommittee has supported this function in the past because such a campaign has been shown to have tremendous impact in changing individual and collective behavior to prevent crime.

Finally, we request that the Subcommittee include language in its Report instructing the Office of Justice Programs to give priority consideration to applicants for Byrne Competitive Grant funding who are best able to leverage in-kind funds and thus secure a higher return on investment for the government's money.

This Subcommittee has historically made significant investments in a number of important crime prevention programs. On behalf of the NCPC Board of Directors, its staff, and the thousands of crime prevention practitioners across the country whom we represent, I want to thank you for that support. I also want to thank the Department of Justice, especially the Bureau of Justice Assistance and everyone at the Office of Justice Programs, who have been our main funders and strong partners from the beginning.

NCPC is a private, non-profit, tax exempt 501(c) (3) organization, whose primary mission is to be the nation's leader in helping people keep themselves, their families and their communities safe from crime. We are funded through grants and contracts from the federal government and from various private sources. Through a variety of materials, programs, advertising campaigns, training, curricula, and websites, NCPC enables communities and law enforcement to work together to create safe environments, especially for children and youth.

Established in 1980 by officials from nine states, the Department of Justice and other federal agencies, and private sources, the NCPC-led National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign and related initiatives have featured our beloved icon McGruff the Crime Dog ® and his signature message that beckons all Americans to "Take a Bite Out of Crime ®." Recent survey data reveal that McGruff and his message have an aided recognition rate of 83% of adult Americans and that more than 80% of kids would follow his advice on crime prevention. Over 90% of adults describe McGruff as informative, trustworthy and effective. Federal resources invested in the National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign have been well spent. For every dollar of federal investment, the Campaign generated \$100 or more worth of public service advertising. Over its history, the Campaign has produced \$1.5 billion worth of free advertising at very modest cost.

Since the inception of the Campaign, NCPC has maintained a close partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and local law enforcement in creating cost-effective and award-winning public service advertising, launching groundbreaking and comprehensive support initiatives for crime-besieged cities, providing technical assistance, producing and distributing hundreds of ready-to-use publications filled with practical tips, expanding the reach of crime prevention tools through online resources, conducting conferences and training, and more.

Along with our partners in DOJ, NCPC has administered such programs as "Be Safe and Sound in Schools" and "McGruff Neighborhood" (including McGruff Club) and developed "Community Works" curricula for after school programs. Working with the National Sheriffs' Association, NCPC has helped create safe neighborhoods by partnering with local law enforcement, communities and citizens through the Celebrate Safe Communities initiative. Since the inception of this initiative in 2008, more than 300 communities in 38 states and the District of Columbia have brought law enforcement and communities together through their participation in CSC during Crime Prevention Month in October and throughout the year. Through the Safe Cities program we have helped local law enforcement agencies and their community partners in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. design, implement and assess comprehensive crime prevention strategies.

NCPC administers two membership organizations. The Crime Prevention Coalition of America (CPCA) is an association of more than 400 local, state and federal crime prevention-related organizations representing thousands of constituents. The National Crime Prevention Association (NCPA) is a membership organization of approximately 1,400 individual crime prevention practitioners, mostly from law enforcement. This year, through Byrne Competitive Grant funding, NCPA is implementing a program under which, for the first time on a national level, qualified crime prevention practitioners can be certified as experts in the field. Both organizations provide resources, information on lessons learned and best practices, training, networking opportunities and other crime prevention-related services.

NCPC works closely with state and local law enforcement and their national organizations to anticipate and respond to persistent crime challenges, emerging crime trends, and the changing crime prevention needs of communities and states nationwide. Through a Byrne Competitive grant, NCPC is working with DOJ and a number of other partners to conduct a crime prevention awareness campaign to address the dangerous and costly problem of intellectual property crime such as pirating and counterfeiting.

NCPC is also implementing Byrne grants to make crime prevention information available to “first timers,” the often overlooked population of young people ages 18-24; provide practical, ready-to-use resources on such emerging crimes as mortgage and foreclosure fraud and vacant property crime; and help keep senior citizens safe from abuse and telemarketing and other forms of fraud.

A traditional concept in crime prevention is the crime prevention “triangle.” Simply stated, in order for crime to occur, three elements must exist: desire, ability, and opportunity. Removing one element will prevent the crime. NCPC’s newest initiative, the Circle of Respect, is about reducing desire. Two years ago NCPC set out to work on a new crime prevention initiative that would “inspire us to live in ways that embody respect ... where we live, learn, work and play.” That is our vision for the Circle of Respect. Lack of respect is contributing to online aggression and a new class of crime often called cyberbullying. A lack of respect is also contributing to traditional crimes like school violence and property theft among teens. At the end of the cyberbullying spectrum is “sexting”—the sending of inappropriate sexual images through electronic devices. Sexting and cyberbullying have demonstrated tragic consequences.

The Circle of Respect is a national initiative that will engage and challenge children, young people, adults, families, and communities to promote a culture of respect that transcends what has been a traditional tolerance of unacceptable behavior. Although the initial focus of the Circle of Respect will be on cyberbullying and bullying, as the initiative expands we will address such crimes as gang violence, vandalism, child abuse, workplace violence, abuse and fraud aimed at seniors, dating violence, and substance abuse. As the circle expands from respect for self to respect in other aspects of our lives, we will be reducing the opportunity for crime to occur and we will be promoting productivity at school and work in the process.

When McGruff and NCPC came on the scene 30 years ago, community groups and individual citizens thought that crime prevention was the sole responsibility of law enforcement. Since then, working together with the DOJ, local law enforcement and communities all across the nation, we have “moved the needle” such that today community groups and members realize that crime prevention is everyone’s business. McGruff has carried the message that all people—whether they are 7 or 107—can do their part to prevent crime and make America safer. Now, 9 out of 10 adults describe themselves as responsible for helping to keep their communities safe from crime.

We have all seen recent surveys and reports indicating that crime, including serious, violent crime, is down all across the country and has been decreasing since the early 1990s. To be sure, many communities large and small have made terrific progress in combating crime. We can take solace in this encouraging news but this is no time to become complacent and let our guard down. For one thing, these data can be misleading. New forms of crime are emerging, such as identity theft; mortgage and foreclosure fraud; and cyberbullying, sexting and other on-line crimes that are not captured in traditional surveys. New types of gangs and new forms of drug

abuse are spreading. New technology has spawned new forms of intellectual property crimes that are not reflected in traditional crime statistics.

Although crime is down nationally and in notable large cities such as New York City and Los Angeles, there are still cities, towns, suburbs and rural communities where this is not the case. Talk to people in various parts of the country and they will tell you that crime is not down in their communities. A 2009 Gallup poll found that 74% of Americans believe there is more crime in the United States than there was a year ago. In addition, 51% say there is more crime in their areas now than a year ago. That perception causes people to alter their lives in undesirable ways.

There are several factors that portend an increase in crime rates for the foreseeable future. Crime has traditionally increased during times of recession or economic downturns. According to a January 2009 study by the Police Executive Research Foundation (PERF), 44% of law enforcement agencies reported crime increases linked to the economy. The “baby boomlet” effect will produce more young people between the ages of 15 and 24, the age cohort that tends to commit the majority of crimes and be most victimized by crime. Many of the under-educated, unskilled and economically disadvantaged among them can be expected to turn to lives of crime. Scarce law enforcement resources are increasingly being devoted to anti-terrorism at the expense of traditional crime. Shrinking budgets have led to downsized police departments and will continue to do so.

Crime, of course, extracts a high cost from its victims. Crime also has a significant financial cost—approximately \$430 billion per year—borne by victims and their families, employers, insurers, communities and taxpayers. In 2005, governments at all levels spent more than \$200 billion for police, corrections and legal activities associated with crime—corrections alone costs \$68 billion annually. That same year crime victims incurred more than \$17 billion in costs. In 2007, consumers lost an estimated \$1.2 billion to fraud. There is also an unknowable opportunity cost both financial and social. All these costs have been trending upward and in the present economy we can ill afford them.

Common sense, therefore, leads to the conclusion that investment in crime prevention has never been more critical. We know that crime prevention works; it makes individuals and communities safer. There is no doubt that when individuals, community groups, and businesses work closely with law enforcement to help keep watch over their communities, crime is prevented. Basic crime prevention techniques also help individuals and communities improve homeland security and keep themselves safe from terrorist attacks.

Crime prevention also saves money. Money spent on prevention initiatives reduces the need for government spending on intervention, treatment, enforcement, and incarceration. Credible studies conclude that crime prevention initiatives are cost effective; we can pay modest costs now or exorbitant ones later. Investments in crime prevention should be welcome in an era of tightening budgets at all levels of government.

The federal government sets the tone by promoting crime prevention strategies that work. It provides leadership through funding, education, technical assistance and support for state and local programs. Research and identification of what works, and translation and transmission of evidence-based best practices and lessons learned to and among the field, are important functions for national programmatic leadership.

Appropriations of \$40 million in FY12 for the Byrne Competitive Grant program will provide BJA resources to fund important crime prevention programs along with the other authorized criminal justice programs. This will allow NCPC and other non-profits to submit a variety of grant proposals for funding of proven and cost-effective crime prevention programs. For example, in FY11 NCPC hopes to submit competitive applications for grants, among others, to:

- Provide tools, publications, training, and other resources and services tailored to each community's needs, to enhance state and local partners' crime prevention work;
- Introduce McGruff and his message to a new generation of children teaching Internet safety, gang and drug abuse avoidance and cyberbullying prevention;
- Help Americans of all ages learn how to protect themselves from identity theft;
- Bring essential crime prevention information to college campuses through basic and advanced training classes for campus law enforcement and students;
- Enhance the accessibility to parents, law enforcement, and teens of crime prevention information available through NCPC's Internet and social media;

NCPC is committed to promoting and advancing evidence-based crime prevention practices. To the greatest extent possible, NCPC designs messages and trains law enforcement, community leaders and other individuals on crime prevention practices with proven outcomes based on the highest standards of research. NCPC's commitment to promoting the most effective crime prevention tools and messages is based on the organization's capacity to monitor crime prevention research and translate that research into practice.

To that end, in Fiscal Year 2012, NCPC respectfully requests that \$1,000,000 be directed from appropriations within the Bureau of Justice Assistance-Byrne Discretionary program to evaluate best practices in crime prevention. If provided, these resources will allow NCPC to: conduct and disseminate findings of a meta-analysis of research on crime prevention practices; survey the crime prevention field to develop recommendations for crime prevention research questions; publish materials for practitioners on evidence-based crime prevention practices and messages; design and implement new evaluations of crime prevention documents, programs, and training; determine trends in crime to predict where the agency and other organizations should focus its efforts; and produce logic models for crime prevention.

A well-funded national repository and clearinghouse for best practices is essential to identify and publicize the most effective forms of crime prevention and ensure this Subcommittee, and American taxpayers, that the investment in prevention has been worthwhile. We suggest, therefore, that the Subcommittee include report language directing OJP to fund—within the \$40 million appropriated for Byrne Competitive—the activities of a national clearinghouse on best practices in crime prevention.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear today and for your ongoing commitment to state and local crime prevention programs. NCPC is proud to have worked with Congress, DOJ, state and local law enforcement and other agencies, and the private sector in the past, and we believe we can be competitive going forward. As Congress works to prevent crime, please consider NCPC and McGruff as your active partners in empowering citizens and working with local law enforcement to build safer communities.