

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF CORRYNE DELIBERTO
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**Before the
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE on APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE and Related Agencies**

April 2, 2009

Chairman Mollohan and Congressman Wolf, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee today regarding fiscal year 2010 appropriations related to juvenile justice and youth violence prevention. My name is Corryne Deliberto, and I am World Vision's Domestic Policy Advisor.

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Internationally, World Vision works in nearly 100 countries. In the United States, we work in 11 major urban and rural areas, including the 1st district of West Virginia and the 10th district of Virginia, and serve over 600,000 children and youth nationwide. We partner with over 2,000 local community-based organizations, schools, churches, and businesses in the United States, as well as parents and youth themselves, as they work to transform their neighborhoods. We provide support through several Education and Youth Development efforts, providing strategies to improve academic achievement, build positive life skills, and create opportunities for disaffected youth, offering them a chance at a brighter future.

As practitioners in the field of youth development, we know that supporting vulnerable youth with programs designed to reduce the risks of delinquency and address their needs holistically helps to steer them away from a life of crime and empower them to make choices that lead to a productive future. I am here today to urge you to help us continue to serve young people effectively by increasing FY10 federal funding for the following programs:

- Restore the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) Title II State Formula Grants program to its FY02 level of **\$89 million**.
- Restore the JJDP Title V Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention program to its FY02 level of **\$95 million**.
- Restore funding for the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) to its FY02 level of **\$250 million**.
- Continue to fund the Juvenile Mentoring program at **\$80 million**.

As you are aware, Title II, Title V, JABG, and Juvenile Mentoring funds support a wide range of state and local programs that are designed to reduce the risks of delinquency, enhance prevention efforts for youth at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, and intervene for first-time and non-serious offenders. Despite the importance of these programs, many suffered drastic cuts since FY2002. Restoring these funding opportunities to their FY02 levels will enable States and youth development organizations around the nation, like World Vision, to increase their impact, enable more youth to realize their full potential, and build stronger communities.

Investment in Youth Violence Prevention Works - World Vision's Experience

World Vision's U.S. Programs team works across the nation in urban and rural communities characterized by poverty and violence. Conditions in these communities are creating a sense of despair and hopelessness in families, particularly young people who without intervention are unable to take full advantage of living in a country where opportunity is abundant. They struggle with daily obstacles resulting from poverty, low-performing schools, substance abuse, substandard housing and healthcare, and violent crime. Yet we see evidence every day of their profound potential and willingness to make good choices once given the opportunity. World Vision works to create leaders of the young people we serve by building their self-confidence, strengthening their voice, and fostering the ideas and vision they have for their own lives and the communities in which they live.

Through our Education and Youth Development efforts, World Vision provides mentoring, academic support, employment training, and after-school programming to over 600,000 youth in 11 major urban and rural areas around the nation.

Community Mobilization Initiative

With Rep. Wolf's support, World Vision launched the Community Mobilization Initiative in Northern Virginia in 2006. The project is designed to provide compelling alternatives to draw high-risk youth away from gang involvement, violence, and criminal activity. The project works to:

- Implement neighborhood strategies to reduce the risk factors that fuel gang membership, such as lack of community bonding and lack of alternative activities available for youth.
- Engage high-risk youth in gang prevention programs.
- Increase the number of youth who choose to leave gangs.
- Build the capacity of gang prevention task forces, which represent public and private sectors, to serve as an ongoing, effective gang-resistance presence in Northern Virginia.

To date, the Community Mobilization Initiative has reached over 11,500 youth and their families through one-to-one and group mentoring, workshops, family-based activities, motivational presentations, and recreational activities.

World Vision Career Builders

World Vision's work extends to rural communities in our nation as well. With the support of Rep. Mollohan, our team in the Appalachian region of West Virginia is preparing to launch World Vision Career Builders, a program that works to prevent youth delinquency by:

- Building the employment skills of youth through technology training.
- Partnering with the judicial system and the Board of Education to improve family engagement in the development and rehabilitation of system-involved youth.
- Providing adult mentors in service-learning formats for high-risk youth.

World Vision's team in West Virginia has worked successfully with young people in vocational training for several years and will now be able to target the most high-risk youth and their families through the Career Builders program.

Youth Empowerment Project

In 2006, World Vision established the Youth Empowerment Project, a youth leadership and civic engagement program that seeks to strengthen the voice of young people in public policy reform. The Youth Empowerment Project provides youth (ages 15-19) from World Vision program sites with 20 weeks of training to study the needs and assets of their community and develop policy recommendations that reflect their vision for change. Participants present their findings and recommendations each summer to their members of Congress at a Youth Summit here in Washington, D.C. Over 200 youth have participated in the program and have continued local advocacy efforts in their own communities. This year, we will welcome a new cohort of 115 young participants to Washington, D.C. from 12 different areas of the country.

Through programs like these, World Vision has seen the incredible impact of investing in our youth by providing opportunities and alternatives to violence.

Investment in Title II, Title V, JABG, and Juvenile Mentoring Programs Will Improve Efficiency and Save Money

By increasing funding for Title II, Title V, JABG, and Juvenile Mentoring programs, Congress will demonstrate their commitment to program efficiency and cost savings to taxpayers. Additional funding will support the implementation of evidence-based practices in juvenile justice and delinquency prevention that ensure that the most cost-effective programs are funded. Programs that are 'evidence-based' are subject to rigorous evaluation to demonstrate their effectiveness in reducing juvenile

recidivism and promoting positive outcomes for youth. World Vision supports the use of evidence-based practices and the direction of funding to communities for this purpose. Strong monitoring and evaluation plans will ensure that the programs we provide for our youth are meeting their needs, building upon their inherent strengths and helping them to reach their full potential.

In addition, research indicates that investment in prevention promotes long-term cost savings to taxpayers. A recent study by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that youth violence prevention programs such as Functional Family Therapy and the Nurse Family Partnership cost on average \$2,325 and \$6,142 per youth respectively, and yield approximately \$32,000 in benefits per youth, measured in terms of costs avoided by taxpayers and crime victims. The study also noted that 73 percent of adult offenders in prison in the state of Washington have previously been in Washington's juvenile justice system. Therefore, it is essential that we invest in our youth early to put them on a path toward a productive future.

Conclusion

As an organization that walks alongside our nation's most vulnerable children every day, we urge you to support these critical funding increases in juvenile justice and delinquency prevention. Early investment can go a long way in the life of a child. With your partnership, we can continue to impact the lives of many more young people, creating strong community leaders that exemplify the ideals of our nation.

We appreciate your consideration of our request today, and we thank you for your leadership and support of our work. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.