

Joe Torre, Robert Listenbee, Jr., Georgina Mendoza, Anthony Taguba, D. Tilton Durfee, Thea James, Steven Marans, Alexis Brimberry, Helen Buster, Michael Atman, Charles Hurley, Charles Cannava, Ed Masheck, Walter Lambert, Keante Humphries, Lisa Lambkin, Shelly Solomon, Carlos Martinez, Isis Snow, Renita Holmes

Joe Torre: Ah, my name is Joe Torre. I am co-chore, ah, co-chair, along with ah, Robert Listenbee. And first off, I just want to say this, the national task force on Children Exposed to Violence is, is so, um, so important, and, and we can't thank you enough for being here, ah, for the public testimony. Um, you know at, at the end of our watch we, we're gonna come up with recommendations and a great deal of it is, ah, in fact, all of it is gonna be c- – all, all the information we get is gonna be considered and, ah, and hopefully, ah, you know go in the right direction. We know we're gonna go in the right direction, we just hope we can, we can make recommendations that will make a difference down the road. So, ah, again, I want to thank you. And before we, we start our testimony I want to thank Ted Hutchinson of the office of Congresswoman Fredericka Wilson of Florida's 17 district for attending. Or ah, Tim. Ted? There you are. Thank you, Ted. Thanks for being here. Robert?

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: I echo Joe's sentiment. We have had, ah, two task force meetings prior to this, this one. The first in Baltimore, the second in Albuquerque, New Mexico. And we've learned a great deal about, ah, exposure to violence that children face. And we're, we're coming here to learn a lot more about the community violence that people are experiencing, our children are experiencing. Ah, before we get started we'd like to allow the members of the task force to introduce themselves. And then we're going to invite, ah, the first four participants to come up to the table. We will call them by name in just a moment.

So we'll start on my right. Georgina.

Georgina Mendoza: It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you everybody for, for being here. We look forward to hearing from you. My name is Georgina Mendoza. I'm from Salinas, California. That's about two hours south of San Francisco. I'm the community safety director for the city, and it's a real honor to be on this panel and be here before you. Thank you.

Anthony Taguba: Hello everybody. I'm Tony Taguba. I'm a retired Army soldier. And, ah, thanks very much for having us today.

D. Tilton Durfee: Hi, good afternoon. I'm Deanne Tilton Durfee, and I'm executive director of the Inter Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect in Los Angeles, California. And it is an honor to be here.

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Thea James: Good evening. Thank you for being here. And it's an honor to be here as well. My name's Thea James. I'm an emergency medicine physician at Boston Medical Center and the director of the Violence Intervention Advocacy Program there.

Steven Marans: Hi, I'm Steven Marans. I'm a psychoanalyst and a professor at the Yale Child Study Center and the director of the Childhood Violent Trauma Center.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: We'd like to have our first four witnesses, ah, come up. Ah, ah, witnesses are gonna be given three minutes to testify, and then we'll allow members of the task force to ask questions. The first four will be, ah, **Dr. Alexis, ah, Brimberry**, ah, director of community outreach and education programs. Um, the agency is, is A Child is Missing Alert and Recovery Center.

The second person will be, ah, **Helen, um, Buster**, director of Seminole Tribe's Family Services Division. The third person will be **Michael Atman**, medical doctor, vice president of the Melissa Institute. And the fourth person would be, ah, **Charles Hurley**, chief Miami Dade Schools Police Department. Would the four of you please come up and we'll start and, ah, and proceed in the same order?

Alexis Brimberry: Can you hear?

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Yes, we can. Thank you. Welcome.

Alexis Brimberry: Well, well, thank you very much. Ah, as you said, I'm Dr. Alexis Brimberry with a Child is Missing Alert Recovery Center. And I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Attorney General's task force this evening about a topic that's serious and something that needs to be addressed by our entire community.

You may know that Florida is known throughout the country as a leader in child safety and prevention programs. And we, at a Child Is Missing, are really focused on the future and will continue to assist law enforcement in the early search and recovery of missing children. And in the 15 years we've been in existence we've helped recover more than, nearly eleven hundred children. And that means families reunited and loved ones saved and lives saved.

But every day we go back to our offices and speak with one another about the necessity for making those calls. Would it not be

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wonderful if we were able to not receive calls and not make calls in regard to the safety and the rescue of missing children? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could impact upon the, the number of children who go missing every day?

And while we address this issue with one another, still millions of children are exposed to abuse, neglect and violence throughout our country. Children and adolescents. And law enforcement does a wonderful job in helping to protect these children from violence and other risks and helping prevent them from engaging in crime and disorderly conduct. But law enforcement will be the first one to tell you, we need to come together as a community. It takes a community to protect our children. And in particular, our high risk children.

Today, children are at risk, and all of our children at risk, but there are children who are in urban marginalized communities whose needs are not being met. These children are at higher risk for abuse, bullying, going missing, running away, sexual exploitation and trafficking. And each and every day their needs go undetected and under responded to.

We ask that you come together with us and put forth a measure that is community driven, partnership driven, an effort that is, by nature, collaborative, by nature, proactive rather than reactive. As a victim and survivor of childhood sexual abuse and bullying, I can speak to the measures and needs that are necessary to help you navigate life once you've experienced the long term, if not lifelong, ramifications of abuse. Would it not serve our children better were we far able, better able to prevent the abusive situations they're in? We need to come together with pro-, proactive educational programs that address not only community awareness but help eli-, help avoid the educational or the endangerment of our children and educate them in manners in which they might help themselves. It's well and good to make the community aware, but we have to couple that awareness with self empowering tools for our children. Thank you.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Are there questions for, from task force members?

D. Tilton Durfee: Thank you so much for your compelling testimony. Can you tell us, the children, the missing children that you have, um, located and brought back, how many of them were abducted from foster care or a relative's home while under a court order?

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Alexis Brimberry: I can't give you the exact number, but a, a, recently in a committee meeting I attended we, they project that probably 30 percent are coming out of foster care. They're at a higher risk when they're leaving foster care for all types of things, including human trafficking. And that tends to be their propensity. To run and rerun and then end up in other types of dangerous situations.

D. Tilton Durfee: Thank you.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Georgina.

Georgina Mendoza: Yes. Thank you for your, for your testimony here. Um, just a, a kind of a general question. Do you have any examples of programs that have been successful in increasing the awareness and empowerment that you just spoke about?

Alexis Brimberry: I certainly do.

Georgina Mendoza: Can you please share them?

Alexis Brimberry: Ah, I'd like to share with you two programs, or, that we offer. We offer a program called It Can't Happen to Me, cause guess what we hear every time we're out in the community speaking with parents and, and adults in the community? It can't happen to me. It can't happen to my child. It can't n-, happen in my neighborhood. This is a program we have developed and taken out into the community, originally just to adults, but have since started offering it to high school and middle school students, because they are our future parents. And it is an awareness program that helps notify the community about the sexual pred-, predators so that we can decrease the endangerment children face.

But we've coupled that with a program called Our Child Safety Education Program that we offer in the summer camps throughout Broward County. And we have certified teachers that come in and teach these children in a very interactive repetitive program. Because you have to repeat, repeat, repeat for little kids. Ah, some basic rules of safety. So what we see is that you need to couple the awareness you're taking out into the community with engaging the children and giving them tools that they can carry for, carry forward and feel self-empowered with.

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Another program we are offering is our anti-bullying and effective communication course. I don't believe it's enough to just tell kids about bullying. I think we've made some wonderful strides in awareness about bullying, but I think we've taken far too soft of an approach. We teach a course called the anatomy of the murder of a bully based on an actual case that took place in Broward County in which seven individuals came together and murdered someone. It shows bullying taken to the ultimate end, which is murder.

We ask them to get into the heads of these individuals and role play so that they can see at any step along the way a different choice would have led to a different outcome. Kids today do not realize that they have some control over the choices and outcomes in their life. So this course is about choices and making different choices and being able to change the choices you've made.

We couple that with express yourself, a course in effective communication. It's a powerful tool because you're giving them tools that allow them to engage and respond to individuals in a manner that they don't have very often anymore. Kids are online. They, we're gonna grow up with a generation of kids with big thumbs but little inability to face one another one on one and converse. And so this course teaches conversational techniques. It also teaches how to build and develop sustainable positive relationships.

What we hope to do and we oftentimes bring kids in who are b— there's always someone who's a bully, somebody who's a victim and somebody's a bystander. And what we hope to do is engage them in an environment that is more accepting and collective rather than separate.

Georgina Mendoza: Thank you.

Alexis Brimberry: Mm hmm.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Dr. Brimberry, one of the things we'd like to recommend that, is that if you have specific programs, as you just, ah, indicated to us, if you could send that material to the task force. I think you have the contact information. Then we will be able to review it. Ah, the thing, what the Attorney General has asked us to do is to make a series of recommendations. We'd like to be able to refer to specific programs that are working successfully in the process of making those recommendations.

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Alexis Brimberry: Thank you. I'd be happy to.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: We thank you very much for your testimony.

Alexis Brimberry: Thank you.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: At this time we'd like to have, ah, testimony from, um, Ms. Helen Buster, director of the Seminole Tribe's Family Services Division. Ms. Buster.

Helen Buster: Yes. Thank you. We need to put this on a _____. Ah, my name is Helen Buster, and I am, ah, a registered nurse and the director of Family Services for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. And as the, um, tribe for the state, I'd like to welcome you guys to our land. Um, m-, my name, ah, my clan is, and as a tribal member we go by, ah, a clan system. And my clan is the Panther Clan. In our tribe we have eight different clans and the Panther being the largest. And I happen to be a member of that.

Um, in our tribe, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, we have thirty-five, ah, right around thirty-five, thirty-six hundred tribal members. And so we're pretty small compared to a lot of the, ah, communities in our area, but it makes for really, um, a really, ah, – we're, we're all close-knit. We're, we're a family. We're either clan, um, family by blood or by clan. One way or another we're all related to each other, so it makes it, ah, difficult to ac-, act like we don't know each others. And so when something happens to one of our children it affects all of us. I mean just as the outside world. But we have a unique situation because we are a reservation and we're in a captured area. The way I see it.

So, ah, what I would, ah, most of our problems, ah, are, ah, related to drugs and alcohol. Substance abuse. Ah, we grow up, I grew up in situations where alcohol and drugs were there, and I had the same id – I did the same thing that my, my mother did. I drank and I drugged. And so, therefore, I taught the same thing to my children. They drank and they drugged. And hopefully we're breaking that cycle. But that's the way it is in our communities. There's thirty-five hundred of us. And we all see what each others do. And this is what I feel like is the problem. And we're working, as a tribe working very hard on, ah, on the substance problem that we have in our tribe.

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Ah, we have, um, probably in the – oh, wow, that was quick. In, um, in the. Ah, – we have had in the last year, um, about 153, ah, DCF investigations on our tribe, and they've all been drug and alcohol related. So what, what we have done is that, um, – what we, what we as a tribe have done to try to, ah, work with this problem is that we teach positive Indian parenting class. It's a class that, ah, we put together ourselves. And then we have, ah, a prevention program that we use, Too Good for Drugs, with our children. We have Boys and Girls Clubs and things like that that we have where we have the children in a captured area.

We have another, ah, little club they call the **Swamp**, which is Seminoles, um, Without Addiction, ah, Progress. And so, ah, you know we get all these little things together and, um, you know work with them and try to have sessions with them, interactive sessions with them, so that they can – okay.

And then also we have a wellness conference where all of our tribal members can go and a youth camp. And the youth camp is probably has been the best thing that we have done as a tribe. We do, um, two different age groups, from 7 to 12 years old and then 13 to 17 years old. And we take them to camp two different weeks and do classes and things like that with them.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Thank you much, Ms. Buster. Questions for Ms. Buster? Dr. Marans.

Steven Marans: Yeah.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Dr. Marans.

Steven Marans: Um, the, a family of thirty-five hundred is, um, ah, complicated, right?

Helen Buster: Yes.

Steven Marans: Good news, bad news and great parties and complicated, um, when things get intense, right?

Helen Buster: Right.

Steven Marans: So I, I was curious in terms of the drugs and alcohol that you were talking about. Has there even been – but the, the size of the community also gives an opportunity for the rest of us to learn

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about some of the issues. Um, in, in terms of the alcohol and, and drug abuse that you were referring to has there ever been a, a survey of, of, um, ah, psychiatric difficulties, mental health, behavioral health, um, issues? For example, um, depression, levels of depression throughout the community, particularly those who are engaged in drug and alcohol use.

Helen Buster:

Ah, I would say that there probably has not been a survey, survey done, but I can tell you that it's there. We have lots of mental health issues, depression and, you know bipolars and all this stuff that sometimes are drug and alcohol related. But a lot of times are, are secondary. You know they're not, they're not the primary, but they'll, they'll be the secondary problem that we have. And sometimes they are due to the substance.

Steven Marans:

And just so, so I'm, I'm, I'm clear. The, the, um, one of the reasons that, because the, the ravages of alcohol and substance abuse are so dramatic, but often we, we don't look carefully enough at what is actually underlying in addition to genetic predisposition, etcetera. What, you know how does somebody medicate themselves when they're feeling too anxious, too depressed? So I was curious about the levels of, ah, being able to have surveillance of how people are doing in terms of their behavioral health.

Helen Buster:

Yeah. We have talked about, and I'm new. I'm fairly new. I'm actually five years into this position here, so I've been putting a lot of things into perspective as I'm going along. And I, we do need a survey done so that we can do the, ah, you know see where this – you know how our people are affected and why they are affected the way they are. Ah, the things that I am learning is, um, through these programs that we are doing with children, and even the adults, are that there had been a lot of sexual abuse that was going, that had been going on. Ah, unreported, ah, sexual abuse that had been going. And, as I say, due to the drugs and alcohol that's going on, the children, ah, you know people having parties at their home or whatever, you know. And having other people there and not really paying attention to their children and the sexual abuse that goes on. And the children are not saying anything, and the, they become adults. And we're questioning them and talking to them and trying to find out, find out what their underlying problems are. And then they start talking about what's happened in their life and all. And then eventually you find out or I'm

finding out that a lot of it has to do with the sexual abuse of when they were children. M-, male and females.

D. Tilton Durfee: Thank you so much. I have a, a question I think is really important. And that has to do with, um, pregnant women, prenatal care, particularly if you have a drug and alcohol problem to the extent that you, that you have. Um, the damage to the newborns, the, ah, high risk factors, f-, fetal alcohol syndrome, withdrawal, all of those things. Do you have any programs that focus on pregnant women and particularly abstinence with those women?

Helen Buster: We have a health department. We have our own health department that is not a part of the state's. It's, ah, we, the Seminole Tribe is a self-insured entity. So, ah, we, we cover our own people as far as the health, ah, and social services and stuff. So, um, but we do have different programs. But as you know, when somebody is out there substance abusing and all that and they don't want to get found or they don't want to do the things that they don't want to do, they want to be out there drugging, it's very hard to get those people in to do prenatal care and stuff.

And we have had probably I'm gonna say this year alone, probably, ah, five births, five births that were, ah, without prenatal care. And that's out of, you know thirty-five hundred people. That's, that's not very good. You know. So, you know it's – we have a high rate of, of substance abuse. We know that and we're working very hard at it. But, you know we can only do what we can do when people allow us to do it.

Joe Torre: Um, Helen, ah, since this was the way of life for these youngsters with the alcohol and, and the drugs, with these youth camps how have the youngsters responded to, you know what you're doing?

Helen Buster: It's been a very – I was very surprised, you know at, ah, the reaction that we had from the children. But every year, just like I was out in the community this weekend and I saw several of the kids that were at camp. And every time they see me they always say, "Oh, you're from camp. You know and, ah, I'm going back to camp this year." And I'm like, "Okay, great. You know we'll see you." Or if they say, "Oh, you're from camp," and I say, "Are you coming this year?" And they say, "Yeah." You know so it's, we've gotten, ah, we've gotten positive response from the children.

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You know we're very new at – this is like our, would be our fifth year. This, this summer will be our fifth year that we have the camp. And so I really don't have like numbers that I can say it's, it's p-, it's a positive thing. I can just say it's a positive thing by the way I see the children react.

Joe Torre:

Yeah, I, I really wasn't interested in the numbers, but I was interested in, in, you know the face to face, and, and their response. Ah, ah, resistant or, or they really embrace it. That, that's what I –

Helen Buster:

They really embrace it. The children love going to camp. And, and that was really a surprise. Because we don't take the parents. You know we, we had situations where before we had what we call youth conferences and things like that where the parents would go. And we'd set up in a hotel and try to teach these kids, but we're teaching them all kind of things that we, ah, telling them not to do. We're telling them, you know don't do this, don't do that. But we put them in a hotel and feed them bad foods and don't let them exercise cause we got them captured all day. So we decided to take them to camp.

And what we do at camp is we wake up at 6:00 in the morning and 7:00 we're at a walk. We're doing breakfast. We have all outside activities all day. And we do three 30 minute classes during the day. And then the rest of the time until 10:00 that night they're active doing things and being physical. And we find that we wear them out, number one. But we're teaching them things. And they're more accepting of being taught when you're on the field. Not when you have them in your comfort zone. And so we've been really proud of that program.

Thea James:

Ms. Buster, I, ah, thank you for your testimony. I have, um, one question for you. Given all that you've shared with us, what recommendations would you make to the task force that could help to reduce the things you've shared with us or, you know mitigate the si-, the situation?

Helen Buster:

That is such a, such a difficult, um, question because, um, I feel that the only way that we can help people is when they're ready to be helped. And what I feel like that we have to do is put programs in, and I'm, I'm not sure. I can't say a program right off the top of my head, except for things like Boys and Girls Clubs and things like that, where people, where adults are there all the time exposing children to things that they should know. And, you

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know, ah, about substance, about good touch, bad touch, you know and all these things. You know those kind of things are, I think, are very important.

And I think those are the kind of things that are getting cut all the time. You know those programs that the children need are what are g-, are getting cut. And, and I think that if, if we can assure that these things are staying in place, programs like the Boys and Girls Club or, um, the Swamp, like what I was saying is something that we do ourselves, and that's issues that I have to work with with my tribe as far as budget and stuff. But those things like that is what are needed for the children, ah, to be able to keep them, um, you know all the time reminding them that, you know your family, your parents might be doing this, but it's not something that you have to do. It's not a way of life. You have choices.

And I think that's the most important thing is letting our children know that they do have choices. And I think that's where sometimes they're in such a rut in that home where everything has always been this way that they don't feel like they have a choice. They feel like this is way, the way it's supposed to be for me. And they continue that way. And we need those programs in place, you know to say, "No, you know you do have a voice. You do have a choice."

Thea James: Thank you.

Helen Buster: Mm hmm.

Anthony Taguba: Ah, Helen, we had the opportunity to go to Albuquerque and listen to American Indians in that part of the world. And one of the things that they mentioned was they're big on the mentoring program. Um, you know I don't know if you've tried that or you're in the process of doing that. But suffice to say that ah, ah, the Boys and Girls Clubs have been funded for mentoring.

Helen Buster: Mm hmm.

Anthony Taguba: And if they're not doing that I think you should try and at least –

Helen Buster: Right.

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Anthony Taguba: - them as opposed to just being exclusively, you know helping these kids. It's, ah, it's been proven that mentoring actually helps, um in, in some level of success.

Helen Buster: Yes. And, and actually we do do, ah, some mentoring programs too. Ah, we started a mentoring program, um, about a year ago. So I'm not real sure where that's at right now, but we, we have started that.

Joe Torre: Thank you very much, Helen. And ah now, ah, Dr. Michael Atman. Doctor.

Michael Atman: First of all, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you today. Ah, I'm a practicing neurologist and proud to be the vice president of the Melissa Institute. Um, I thought that it was a one in a million chance that an unprovoked, ah, act of violence, ah, would restful in the death of a loved one. And, ah, my daughter was murdered in 1995, ah, in such a circumstance. And I'll briefly tell you how that changed my life forever. Ah, but actually it's not such a rare story. As you go through the statistics as I have, ah, it ends up being that a family member, the, this possibility is about 1 in 100. When you think about, ah, a violent crime is committed 1 every 30 minutes in the ah, ah, a violent crime is committed once every 30 seconds, a murder once every 30 minutes, ah, it doesn't only affect the individual, such as myself, but it affects society as a whole.

Ah, but in, in the instant of a bullet, ah, _____ act of violence transformed my life that at that time was so perfect into something that is, will and will always be tainted by Melissa's death. And I, I guess I came to understand that it, it afforded me a window of opportunity to try to some good in her stead. She was only 22 when she was murdered. And I was 50 at the time. And I, I'm in a rush to get things done knowing the statistics as I do.

Understanding that, I helped form, in 1996, the Melissa Institute. Ah, w-, whose mission is to prevent violence and promote, ah, safer communities through education and the application of research based knowledge. There's a scientific board that's international in its scope, including, ah, local people, such as **Isaac Prilleltensky** who's on the dean of the school of education here and **Don Meichenbaum**, the founder of cognitive therapy, among others. Ah, one of our, ah, ah, ah, institute, ah, scientific board members I'll speak about in a moment.

The institute is ah, ah created four different websites. Google has rated a couple of them in the top ten already. Ah, one's on _____. One's, ah, I'll discuss with you in a moment. We've presented over 50 conferences, provided consultations throughout the western hemisphere and the Caribbean. And provided financial support to 36 doctoral students and research in the field of violence prevention. We actually are helping now with the VA hospital and their work and with returning veterans who have, as we all know are at very high risk for suicide and domestic violence.

Ah, I, I, as you I'm sure know, approximately 1 every, ah, 30 adults in our country in some way are involved with the penal system. *The New York Times* in 19- 2008 said that was 46 billion dollars. In fact, the state of Louisiana is often looks at statistics of how school performances are to already predict how many more beds they're gonna need to build. I think as Isaac Prilleltensky ah, ah, said before Congress, ah, a dollar spent on prevention is, is \$7.00 saved. Eighty-five percent of prisoners are illiterate. Ah, if they can get to read on level by third grade, then they have a 99 percent chance of not being felons and paying their taxes and supporting our country instead of being supported by it.

We've just launched a free access professional literacy website for teachers. Don't have the time to tell you about it. It, it'll be, it's one of the websites. PreK through six. By Dale Wills, who's a member of the National Reading Panel, ah, through the pr, the president's ah, auspices actually. And, um, th-, in that website there are lesson plans, tours of exceptional classrooms, 500 skill specific videos of master teachers working with their students. Multiethnic, high _____ and, ah, Hispanic area here and Mississippi and J-, in Jackson, Mississippi and in Indian population, ah, up in ah, ah, Toronto.

So the bottom line is we can't be, afford to be complacent. We can't let evil win. The silent majority cannot be silenced. Each of us has the power to be a c-, catalyst to change, to reduce the incidence of child violence. We have research preventive measures that we know work. We need to be able to get that into the classrooms. Literacy is b-, ah, is the thing that prevents violence. Ha, and it, it's interesting because literacy makes dollars and "sense" in both senses. And, therefore, as a community, I urge each and everybody here to join together. Because together we can make a difference.

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Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Any questions from task force members?

D. Tilton Durfee: That was very impressive. Thank you so much and thank you for sharing. And I'm so pleased that you were able to turn such a tragedy into something that benefits so many other children. You brought up literacy, and I'm so glad you did. I don't know if anybody else has. I don't remember, but clearly if you go into jails and prisons that is the common denominator is inability to read. The other, of course, is head trauma from abuse and violence. So.

Michael Atman: _____. I'm a neurologist. I know that.

D. Tilton Durfee: Yes, of course you do. So I just want to thank you so much for, for making a difference. And I hope you have written your testimony in such a way that it can be shared with us all.

Michael Atman: Yeah. Ah, what I was just i-, informed of. I have something I could hand in to you, but I was informed that it might be better to get a, a panel of international experts which our scientific board and present you with some specific, ah, recommendations and any follow up that you'd like we'd be glad to supply.

D. Tilton Durfee: Whatever. What you said would be great to have. Thank you.

[Laughter]

Michael Atman: You're welcome. I'll give it to somebody as I'm walking out.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: And, and I also want to thank you for sharing. I, I, it is almost unimaginable that, um, you know as a parent of, of, of a 17 year old that might lose my daughter at 22. I, it would be just such a tragedy. It would be difficult to kind of keep my life moving in, in the right direction. So I, I thank you for sharing that. Um, um, can you be a little more clear in terms of what you're recommending regarding literacy? I mean what are you telling us that we should be doing or should we be working mainly with children who are in the third grade? Should we be working with children who come into the juvenile justice system? What is it specifically that you have in mind that we should be focusing upon?

Michael Atman: First of all, it's not me, cause I'm, I'm not as knowledgeable as somebody who's on the National Reading Council. But what it turns out is that you can predict how violent a child's gonna be by

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how well they read. It turns out that once you get to third grade if you're not reading on level, you need that in order to learn English and social studies and math and everything else. So you have to read on level by third grade if you – and, and then if you read, if you, ah, so you almost can predict who's coming into PreK. This program is actually essentially lesson plans. If you are a teacher, in order to get your teaching degree do you know how many, how many courses you get for reading to get a teaching degree? One. So teachers don't know necessarily how to teach. And they don't know how to teach in an ethnically sensitive manner.

So this website, I mean it, it's an enormous website. Multimillion dollar website. We've now published and it's free. You know give it away. Let's do some good in the world. So the idea is you have to read in order to succeed. And if you cannot read, you will not succeed. And so third grade is the key. And you, and, just to go back on something I said. Actually even your PreK, the number of words you have when you go into PreK, that makes a big difference. So it, and, and then there are – Dale ____, I, I know her personally. You know there are all these different f-, Jolly Phonics and there's all these different ways to read.

But essentially what she's done and, and she's a, you know international superstar. She's integrated it into a manner that any teacher at any level, starting with PreK, can go in and say, "Okay, I want to teach the sounds." And, and have videos. And then the classroom itself has hotspots. So you, you know you have a class that's set up with a master teacher. And then you hit a hot spot and you go, "Okay, here is the bulletin board for the subject of the, the P sound." Or, "here is the bulletin board for one and one is two." And you can, i-, i-, it's a virtual tour. You know how when you do travel you say, "What does my room look like?" You've got a classroom set up to do that. And, again, it's being, it's all over.

So, ah, one of the ones I love the most is the gospel. Teaching the ABCs in Jackson, Mississippi. Those kids are into it. And the other kids who we've, we've now shown it to are into it as well.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: So, so you're recommending that we use that program as a way of increasing the number of children who are at third grade reading level when they're in third grade.

Michael Atman: Yeah.

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Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Is that pretty much what you're recommending to us?

Michael Atman: That, that's one of them. I mean –

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: I mean, but that is a primary recommendation you're making.

Michael Atman: Yes. Of this –

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Okay. I just want to be clear.

Michael Atman: We have other, you know bullet – we have two people, the two people who run the, the National Bullying Organization in the, in the country of Canada come down every year and also have do-, donated their time to – you c-, we have another website where a principal can go to their school with a check ___ list and find out where the bullyings occur and how to correct it. So it's clear that prevention's the key. We don't need the state of Louisiana saying, "This, this is the number of kids who are not reading on level at third grade. We know how many more kids we have to build prisons for." We don't need that. One of them's gonna, you know put a bullet through somebody's head. And I got two other kids living and two grandkids. Let me tell ya it's, it's not being high and, and everything else. It's a, it's a product of the world we live in.

Steven Marans: I want to thank you as well for your testimony. And actually I'm a-, addressing this to you but looking at the other two witnesses so far. Ah, your testimony reminds me of, ah, what a big elephant we're talking about. And that, ah, how each of us, um, picks a certain patch of the elephant. So your comment about literacy, ah, in terms of predictive, predictive, um, prognostic, as a prognostic indicator, is a very important one. But one could list 15 other prognostic indicators for high risk for violent behavior. Mm. So I'm just curious, but, but I think it's important for us to recognize this. Cause these are big problems. Right? And we get very excited about a particular, right, element and maybe that's the point. It's all, it, it's all of these elements. So I'm curious, and this is maybe more personal question if you don't want to ah –

Michael Atman: It's okay.

Steven Marans: How do you, what do you think the link was to, to – how did you get to the literacy? Which is, I mean, ah, you know I, I com-, I know the work and, and you're reporting it accurately. But why

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you? Why did, why, why is that where you went as opposed to, you know drug and alcohol abuse? Or, you know it's ah, ah, why do you think?

Michael Atman: Ah, I think it, I know it works. You know. And, ah, and also it's something that we can give to the country, ah, internationally or, or internationally _____ translated into Spanish. Again, once you see the website it like knocks your eyes, you know knocks your socks off.

So, ah, you know I, I'm into preventing the problem. You know, ah, you know you say w-, do we do it with juvenile d-, we, the Melissa Institute's worked at all levels. I mean we've worked at the juvenile justice system. We were just talking to some people outside i-, in the state here. But to me it makes so much s-, ah, sense, to give somebody the tools to be able to succeed and not deal with the, the repercussions. The repercussions are gonna be there. Ah, you know, you know to those who are not successful in the program. But the thing, and we've been through – I've listened now since '95 as all these experts – I've gone to all these conferences. So I've become, for a neurologist I've learned a lot of things outside my expertise. And I've, I've, you know prevention, ah, prevention, prevention. And it's not it's, it's in lots of things. We do bullying. There's other things we can do. You got to prevent. Because once they get to a certain stage, it's too late. I mean I hate to say that, but it's too late. So I want to, I think we got to prevent. And this works. In Hialeah we actually instituted ah, we have something called FCATs. The kids were all failing. We went into Hialeah. Dale went in with this program. They went from failing to A. And then they got \$100,000.00 from the **Lenar Foundation** for infrastructure. And now that school – the, the principal wasn't so sure. Now she's giving, you know rave reviews. It works. And it's national and everybody can use it. Just plug into the website. That's why we have four websites. _____ talked about two of the four, but I know I don't want to hog the time.

Steven Marans: Thank you.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Thank you.

Joe Torre: Thank you very much, Doctor. Um, Chief Charles Hurley. You're on.

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Charles Hurley:

Ah, good afternoon members of the task force. Ah, to the two chairmen, *(Clears Throat)*, I do not have a prepared speech. Um, I have some notes that I jotted down as, as my, um, my, um, colleagues here to the, to the left were, were speaking to all of you. But first, let me just, ah, welcome all of you to south Florida. I will keep my comments brief in terms of the, ah, pleasantries only because, ah, the interest of time.

Um, however, what I wanted to do was just kind of give you a lay of the land here in Miami Dade County. Ah, just so you'll have a kind of an understanding of where I speak from. Um, we are, ah, a count of about 2.7 million, ah, residents here in Miami Dade County. There's a significant, ah, amount of poverty. We have been hit, just as Las Vegas and some of the other major cities, very, very hard by the economic, um, collapse. Our housing is, is, ah, in a tough situation here. Property values have plummeted. Unemployment is still in the double digits here in Miami Dade County. Ah, we have over 53 languages that we speak here in Miami Dade, so we are as diverse, if not more, than New York, Chicago or LA. We have the highest population of mental health in the United States of America. *(Clears Throat)*

I am the chief of the county's sixth largest police department. We have 38 police departments here in Miami Dade alone. We are a police department of children. So our own school system is an independent school system with its own full service police department. Ah, as I said, I don't have a prepared speech, but what I do have is about a ten hour workday so far, and I'm gonna go back to work. And I have nearly two decades of experience. And I also have life lessons that have taught me, um, that being a kid, especially in this day and age, is very difficult.

And this is a callous unforgiving system that our children find themselves in today. Kids text and tweet. We talk. Um, they are wired differently. They are up against challenges that you as either parents or just good civic minded adults, and I thank you each and every one of you for what you are doing here today for all of us, for this nation, for the future, could never even begin to imagine.

(Clears Throat) I also speak from experience of having been a troubled youth who got a second chance. Who today, if a youth commits the same type of offense that I did, would no longer ever be thought of or considered for a police officer, let alone the

highest ranking police officer in the county. This system is broken.

When you think of promiscuity, drugs, gangs, truancy, curfew violations, social and economical issues, it is far too broad of a subject to just drill down in one particular area. But the doctor sitting to my l-, to my left is right. The one place where we have every child for at least 13 years is in our education system. We can reach them statutorily. We have the legal right to demand that they are in school.

I'm also the parent of two African American boys. And when you look at the disproportionate response by law enforcement towards youngsters of color, whether they be Hispanic or African American, it is far too grand in terms of how we treat those youngsters. We need to recalibrate how law enforcement thinks today. And I'm not bashing. I don't, I haven't even looked over my shoulder to see if there's a policeman sitting behind me. And quite frankly, I don't care. Because this is a profession that is noble and honorable and heroic at times. But we need to recalibrate and make smarter policemen. More sensitive policemen. We don't make them like baseball players, Mr. Torre. More homeruns does not equate to more arrests of children. It doesn't make a better policeman today. In the big leagues, that works. Not in this profession.

I would like to see a more humanistic approach by law enforcement. I would like to see us address the issues at the educational level. We need to work with our educators, cause that's where we're gonna be able to make the difference. Um, I have probably endless amounts of information that I could pass on to you. I know that I've been tapped on the shoulder twice.

[Laughter]

Um, but this is the, this is one US dollar of currency. There is no reason why I should be competing with child services for this same dollar. There is no reason why I should be competing against educators for this dollar. If we get our act together and we prioritize education, there's enough of that dollar to go around. It's not like that anymore, but we can't sit here and cry over the situation we find ourselves in. I should be six foot two, not five foot seven. My waist size should be at least ten digits smaller than my age. Neither hold true today.

[Laughter]

I'm just being very candid with you because, um, w-, we, we really are at a tipping point. We are truly at a tipping point. The children that come to our schools are dying on the same street corners where they catch their buses. They're dying in the parks where they play sports. And you're right, it's not just Mississippi that uses third grade reading levels. It's a profitable business to incarcerate children. And that's shameful. We should all be so honored to lose our jobs in the name of children. I say this, again, not just a senior chief of police here in this county, but as a young man who had contact with the system, as a young who at one point was homeless with my mom when my father died of cancer.

And what we're doing here in Miami Dade is remarkable. We've reduced juvenile arrests by 60 percent. Sixty. That's 60 percent more chances of youngsters becoming the next chief of police, the next neurologist, the next nurse, the next physician, whatever they want to be.

I thank you for your time. I thank you even more for your visit, and I think you for the body of work that you're prepared to do. Thank you.

Joe Torre: Chief.

[Clapping]

Very, very powerful and right on, right on the number. Um, and you're right, homeruns get the attention. But if, if you're talking about teams that win, it's usually the little things you have to pay attention to. A little at a time. And, and that's what you're talking about is, is to, ah, I was, I keep quoting a, a remark that I heard in b-, about children. Is that there are no bad children, they just do bad things. And, ah, I just really appreciate, and I know this task force really appreciates your passion, ah, ah on this, on this subject for sure.

Charles Hurley: Thank you, sir.

Joe Torre: Thank you for that.

Charles Hurley: Thank you, sir.

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Joe Torre: Go ahead, Steven.

Steven Marans: Um, that was music to my ears. I've been working closely with law enforcement colleagues for the last 20 years. And I, I know you know this, but your passion and your voice, um, it often may feel like you're alone and you're not. So I want to ask you a very specific question because the role of law enforcement, ah, in terms of kids is, ah, has enormous mental health, ah, import. Safety and security is the basis for healthy development. But compassionate, understanding, etcetera.

So here's the question. As you described the kind of police officers, the smart policing you would like to see, um, what, what would you like your officers to have, either or all, in terms of training, resources and partners?

Charles Hurley: Ah, thank you very much for the question and through the two chairmen. Let me just give you a snapshot of how it is here in Florida. And Florida, I-, also as a chief, you know what you learn and, and god knows I've made many mistakes. I've been the chief now for four years and, um, you have to be able to express when you've been wrong. Ah, it makes me a better person. It makes me a better parent, a better husband, a better member of this community, a better chief of police. And, um, Florida's done a lot of things right, but right now, um, it's not doing that right.

Minimum requirement to become a police officer in the state of Florida is about 440 hours. You have to go through an academy. Now they can tack on another 400 or so hours. So some academies in the northern, northwestern parts of Florida may be 4- to 500 hours. Here in Miami we have 870 or so hours. Forty hours of human behavior. That's all we get.

Now we'll spend countless amounts of hours teaching cops h-, and I am in no way, shape or form making light of the violence that our officers face each day. It is a dangerous job. It's a thankless job. But I can tell you I've pulled out my pen at least 1 million times more than I've had to pull out my gun. Why do we not address it at the BLE level? At the basic level. When a, when a policeman comes off the manufacturing line, why don't we address it then? Let's drill down and make them smarter. Let's teach them about autism. Let's teach them to, that, that, that these people, not just children, but that these people can't speak and verbalize for

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themselves. Let's make them maybe not child psychologists and experts in mental health, but let's make, m-, maybe not even a, a specialist, but can we make them a general contractor? Can we teach them a little bit about all the challenges that they're gonna face?

So the first thing, to answer your question, sir, is at the academy level we need to change the way we train our policemen. Fast forward, agencies aren't hiring. They're firing. So even if we build the new cops the right way, we've still got thousands and thousands of officers that are already in the job that we need to deliver in-service training to. Now let me tell you, as a chief, it's the heaviest lifting I've ever done is trying to change the culture of law enforcement. And I love them. I love them dearly. But it is a stubborn organization that doesn't like to be told what to do or change its ways. It's got to start from the top. It can't just be a movement here in Florida, because your next city that you visit is Detroit, and it's going on there. And I've trained officers in Nevis and St. _____ in the Caribbean. And I hear my friend here at the Seminole Tribe and you say drugs and alcohol were a challenge. Sounds like adult problems to me too. It's all, it's the same anywhere and everywhere you look.

So we've got to get buy-in from law enforcement, and buy-in can be completely what it is in my house. And my wife has buy-in from me. She tells me what I'm gonna do and I do it.

[Laughter]

That's buy-in in my house. We need to direct law enforcement to change the way they do business. And they can still be great shots with their gun. They can still drive carefully. They can still have all the authority in the world to do it is what cops do. But we've got to make them smarter and more caring more sensitive and more compassionate. That's where it starts, sir.

Steven Marans: Thank you.

Georgina Mendoza: I just want to thank you so much for your testimony. Can you hear me?

Charles Hurley: Yes, ma'am.

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Georgina Mendoza: I work very closely with law enforcement, and including the chiefs and, and deputy chiefs of police. And I'm really proud to say that in the city of Salinas in California we've starting doing, ah, community policing. Where we're actually, um specifying designating police officers to simply work as community, ah, policing. So that actually, you know I was kind of nodding my head up and down when you said law enforcement can be very stubborn when it comes to changing. You know, um, and that took years. And only to designate two officers in this. So I understand it is a low or ah, ah, a slow kind of process that it would require to get there.

Um, but you just said so many things that I, I just agree with and would love to just ask you a ton of questions, but I won't. Um, you hit on communication. I love what you said about kids tweeting, we talk. That's a major discrepancy. Communication. We want to talk to them. We want to build this relationship with them, but we're not speaking the same language. Some are texting, tweeting, Facebooking, we're not doing that. We still talk on the phone. Ah, one on one. Um, and, and we're speaking differently. So we need to be more cognizant of that and try to have better communication in a method and in a form that would be more workable for juveniles. So I really appreciate you making that comment.

Um, I was also very impressed by the fact that you said there's been a reduction, ah, by 60 percent of juvenile arrests.

Charles Hurley: That's correct. We've been able to reduce –listen, there's a pipeline. And it's, it needs to not be crimped. It needs to be cut and shut off. And the pipeline is from the schoolhouse to the courthouse to the jailhouse. And in some cases, the funeral house. Funeral home. It needs to be stopped.

Now there is a need to be enforcement heavy in certain instances, in our most violent youthful offenders. But that same – life is not a **gant** chart. We can no longer say, if you do this, then you get this. It doesn't work. It's a bad fit. And we were doing that down here. So we looked – and, and I, and I have to tell you, it's not about me. Here in Miami Dade County I do know I have at least one friend back here seated three or four rows back. You may not recognize him. He's our public defender, Carlos Martinez. He's a good man. And, and he used to be much bigger, and he's lost so much weight.

[Laughter]

But his part is probably the still s-, same size. Carlos? It's perfectly okay for the police to work with the public defender's office. So I sit here and I know I, I work very closely with all my juvenile justice board. I chair the school's committee for the juvenile justice board. I chair the juvenile committee for all 40 chiefs of police. It's okay to collaborate and bring in partners. Cause if you think, as much as I'd like to think that I'm still a fairly strong guy, I can't hoist up 353,000 children on my shoulders and carry them. It takes all of us.

So we've been able to reduce arrests through arrest diversion programs. Through a program such as the Bigs in Blue, which is police officers becoming true big brothers through the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America program. It's an academic based mentoring program where I have one cop adopt one kid and they see them every single week. One hour is all it takes. So if you shave about 12 minutes off your lunch break each day, you can go – or even better, go have a healthy nutritious school lunch, but have it with a kid. And invest like that. And I got to tell you, and, and, and I, I certainly know that I'm getting longwinded here. But just one quick testimony as to how powerful mentoring can be. And, and we use the civil citation program, by the way, and a lot of other div- and it was just about recalibrating cops.

And we had the data under our noses. And the reason why I'm gonna point each and every one of you back to your local schoolhouse is there is – what is kept there, it's, it's all the kids' names, all their information, where they live, their parents' names, their grades, their exceptionalities, what, what, what – their individual counseling records. Everything is there. How advantageous to all of us is it to have this data under our fingertips? How shameful it is for us not to use it.

So when you, when you look at being able to go in there and drill down and find out the manifestation of why a child does what he or she does, you needn't look no further than go back and, and just speak to the child or look at the, the, the student case management. Or go visit the home. One big brother, big sister, the way that this little boy, who had already been labeled. And we all know that labeling is not healthy. It's not good. No one likes to be labeled as being fat. No one likes to be labeled as being stupid. Well,

nobody wants to be labeled as being, you know ah, LD, learning disabled.

This child couldn't read. It turns out, one of my officers, big brother, noticed that he wasn't holding – in order – the way that the b- correct me if I'm wrong. The, the mind works when we read is I read your names, Dr. Thea James. I've already read the word J- or, or Thea when I'm already on James. So I'm processing. I may be the exception to the rule, but generally the mouth doesn't work as quick as the brain. And my wife would agree.

But if my thumbs are holding or in the way of my reading, how can I keep up with my mind? I can't. And one of our officers just simply sh-, showed him. Now his mother's illiterate. So how do we expect the child to read when his mom can't read? So we reposition the book and this boy is out of his LD classes. Something so simple. Investing a little bit of time in a child's life at the schoolhouse.

Points to this kid to now reading at grade level. Which all indicators say he – it's not guaranteed. But he stands a far greater chance of being a successful member of our community. So the, the data, and I'm more than happy to, to send it to you. Our arrest data. Significant drops. Our incident data. Significant drops. Positive –

Georgina Mendoza: What time period was that in?

Charles Hurley: Pardon me?

Georgina Mendoza: The time period where the 60 percent reduction took place.

Charles Hurley: In the first, first half of this year. Over, over the last 3 ½ or 4 years I know that I've been here, we've been able to reduce arrests by some 40 percent. Most of that minority children.

Georgina Mendoza: I'm sorry, one last final question.

Charles Hurley: Yes, ma'am.

Georgina Mendoza: Um, regarding the Bigs in Blue, did you make that a requirement for every single one of your officers or was it a voluntary program?

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Charles Hurley: That wouldn't work. If we s – cause I've, listen, I'm not gonna sit up here and name names, but I've got a couple men and women that work for me that will just say, "Wouldn't be a good fit for that." Every organization has them. Now they can still eat dinner at my table at any night, they just wouldn't be good big brothers or big sisters. So there's got to be some buy-in. You got to want to love a kid. Um, and they may be good cops, they just wouldn't be good big brothers and big sisters. So we did it – we had to sell it. And, and it was a good product and, and there was enough buyers out there.

Georgina Mendoza: Great. Thank you.

Charles Hurley: Yes, ma'am.

Joe Torre: Thank, thank you so much. All four of you. It was ah, it was just very informative and, and thanks so much. And, and we're going to, ah, we're going to continue now with the next, ah, four, ah, testimonies. Ah, Ralph Martin. Also **Judge Donald Cannava**. Ah, **Ed Masheck**. And Walter Lambert. If you'd please take a place at the table.

The, the one thing I, I do want to say and, and also remind our task force, the building here cl-, we have to be out of this, finished up by 7:20 cause they padlock it. So, um, and we want to make sure everybody gets a chance to, ah, to testify. So start.

Donald Cannava: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Donald Cannava, and I'm a Mia- Miami Dade County judge in the domestic violence court. Prior to my appointment to this position I served as the statewide deputy director for children's legal services at the Florida Department of Children and Families. As well as regional director of Florida southern and southeast regions. And I'm also a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

It's been an honor to advocate for the safety, stability and wellbeing of children, and I commend the task force for your work and your commitment to children exposed to violence.

While defending children from exposure to violence, it is of utmost importance that children do not live in a vacuum. Parents are currently excluded from the DCI focus. Non offending parents I, are primarily the person's responsible for ensuring their children

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heal, protect and thrive. The impact of keeping non offending parents in children's lives must not be underestimated. It is essential judges inquire about the lived reality of the children and their non offending parents, identify needed supports and understand these implications to act appropriately. For this reason, judges must be trained and sufficient funding allocated for this purpose. As judges increase their capacity, they will become more adept at asking questions about the impact on children's exposure to violence and be able to render thoughtful and knowledgeable decisions.

Training will also ensure that judges fully comprehend and recognize characteristics of perpetrators who commit power and control based domestic violence and the impact of these behaviors on their families.

One overriding factor of note is that batterers fail to set emotional and physical boundaries between themselves and their intimate partners and their children. Believing that they have absolute right of access to their family members. This nuanced aspect, along with others impacting families, will only be sufficiently recognized through extensive judicial training. Training will also prepare judges to assume a variety of leadership roles, which will have a far reaching impact on children exposed to violence. These include acting as conveners to bring together representatives of all involved systems to achieve a coordinated approach for handling cases. Ensuring that all systems consistently supply pertinent information impacting case decisions and working within communities to ensure appropriate culturally relevant services are available to children suffering the ill effects of exposure to violence.

As the task force continues its critical work to address issues impacting children exposed to violence, efforts must include non offending parents who can provide safety, stability and wellbeing for their children and juridical education to ensure that children exposed will benefit from the best possible judicial response.

We must give our children the opportunity to maximize their exposure to supportive roles and their non violent parent. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Any questions from task force members? Your Honor, we thank you very much for your testimony, and those are two very crystal

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clear recommendations, and we'll definitely take them into consideration.

Donald Cannava: You're welcome. Thank you.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Thank you.

Ed Masheck: My name is Ed – *(Clears Throat)* I apologize. I've been losing my voice. My name's Ed Masheck. Um, I'm speaking to you as a survivor of many abuses that are being discussed here today. Um, I was told in the interest of time I should start with what I think should be done. Education. Most abusers are adults and the overwhelming majority of abusers know their victims. Relying on these people to fix their problems is ludicrous. Change will only begin once every potential victim, which is every child in the country, knows what is right and wrong and knows what to do when something wrong happens.

Children have to be taught what should happen to the people who do these wrongs, and then need to have a network of people that they can tell until what is supposed to be done is. They need to see that these punishments happen or they will never believe it is actually wrong and will never know if they have told the right person. This type of education should start at a very young age and should be mandatory in every classroom in the country. It should be coupled with a periodic opportunity for students to voice concerns or ask questions about potential abuses in a private setting.

Accountability. No institution should be allowed to investigate itself or protect itself or declare itself immune when it comes to the abuse of children. Any member of any organization, political or religious or social, who covers up or protects child abuse should be held accountable for that abuse as if they had done it themselves. No more slaps on the wrist for failing to report.

For children who abuse, a national bullying offenders list needs to be created and maintained in much the same way as the sex offender list. With zero tolerance given for those who reoffend or for adults who cover it up.

Most importantly, those who are victims need to be allowed to seek justice for their abuse. And our legal system needs to ensure that it does not further contribute to their victimization. To this

end, the statute of limitations needs to be completely and retroactively overturned when it comes to any serious crime committed against a child. The Supreme Court declared such an action unconstitutional in 2003. If we are able to change our constitution in the name of voting rights, equality and alcohol consumption, then surely we are able to change it again in order to protect our children and allow them to confront their abusers however long it may take them to be able to do so. I don't know who in their right mind would vote against such a measure, so there is no excuse for this not being done immediately.

Now as far as my own story, my mother, my biological mother was raped in her adopted home. I was being tortured and abused in my adopted home by the age of four or five. The abuse included being drowned, being kicked in the crotch repeatedly, being raped and, um, my adopted parents instructed me to cover this up and not talk about it. But when I was 16 they threw me in the mental ward because they could no longer physically beat me because I started fighting back. I was diagnosed with PTSD, RAD and ODD while in the hospital. But because my parents were the source of those abuses and those diagnoses, I did not know about them until last year when I got my records unsealed. I've never been treated for any of them.

My parents were allowed to adopt four children, three of us are convicted felons. One's a registered sex offender. They're still teaching other people's kids. The only people who have ever been made to suffer for their actions are their children.

I have two associate's degrees, a bachelor's degree. I completed with honors a master's degree. A certificate from Georgetown University. I completed an internship on Capitol Hill. But because I have a felony in my record from 18, from when I was 18 years old, those pieces of paper are worthless for me. I've never been able to use my degrees for anything.

If you personally want to help somebody, you really want to do something to help someone who only wishes to help others, then, please, put me to work for your organization and let me, give me the tools to make a difference.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Any questions for task force members?

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D. Tilton Durfee: Thank you so much for your very compelling testimony. I'm sorry for what you experienced, and I, on behalf of the panel, appreciate you sharing. I have a question about what, your first comment on enforcing the reporting laws. Now you were in an adoptive home and hurt and it wasn't reported. And then you were in a mental health institution where you were hurt and it wasn't reported. Um, I have a concern about the, um, the lack of consequences for non reporting of child abuse. We see this in schools and churches and teams and whatever. And do you think it would have made a difference, would it have been better for you if somebody had reported this? Would you have, obviously escaped what you were, um, living with at that time? Or were you clinging to what was familiar? I, I'm trying to get away from blaming the child for the fact that they don't tell anybody. What kept you from telling somebody or did you and nobody did anything with that?

Ed Masheck: I told my mother, um, after I had been raped. And her response to me was not to tell anybody else because I would be made fun of for it. Now my parents are both teachers. They're licensed by the state as educators and as foster care providers. They're both required reporters. They both failed to report. Same with the psychiatrist. Who was told about the rape. And he also failed to report it to the authorities. Um, I do believe if it was common knowledge, if it was commonly practiced to hold adults and especially licensed professionals, um, accountable, you know hold them to the same account as the abuse themselves if they don't report it. I believe that would no longer be an issue.

Um, as far as, you know the education programs I was discussing. When my mother told me not to report it because I would be made fun of for it, I was already being teased for being the fat kid and having, you know sweat pants. I didn't have a pair of jeans till I was in high school. Um. And I didn't want to be teased, so I didn't say anything. Now if I had been told in school, if there had been an education program, if there had been seminars that told me that this is wrong no matter who does it, no matter who tells you to cover up, and told me what's supposed to happen in these situations and that if my parents didn't provide that remedy that I needed to tell somebody else, I like to think I would have.

D. Tilton Durfee: Thank you so much.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Mr. Masheck, ah, your testimony is very powerful. And there are many members on this task force who would like to ask you a l-,

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just a, a long list of questions. We are simply limited by time. So we're not going to go any farther with that today, but I do want you to know that we really appreciate your, your testimony and we understand how sensitive it is and how powerful it is and how you've asked a lot of questions that we are not attempting to answer at this juncture. So we're gonna move on, but you know please stick around a little bit later on today, and, and if you're available tomorrow, there are those of us who would love to talk further with you about how to address some of the concerns that you've raised.

Ed Masheck: I'll be here all three days. I'd be happy to talk to anybody at any time.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Excellent. Thank you.

Walter Lambert: Good evening. Ah, -

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Mr. Walter Lambert?

Walter Lambert: Yes. My name Walter Lambert. I'm a pediatrician here at the University of Miami School of Medicine. Um, and, and, and you probably are not aware that Florida is the only state in the country that has a requirement in our statute that there be a group of people who are independent to the state. So independent to the Department of Children and Families, independent of law enforcement of the state, of the, ah, ah, state attorneys, of the judges, to look at cases that are reported to the hotline as sup scion for child abuse. We do work, we've existed since 1979. Ah, parenthetically I was a social worker for four years prior to go, prior to going to medical school working child welfare. Now I've worked in this field for 24 years. So our team, um, the other thing in Florida is that our teams cover specific geographical areas. My team is Miami Dade and the Florida Keys. Six hundred fifty thousand children, 8,000 children. It's just as important that children who live in rural areas. The Keys aren't really rural, but rural areas get that same interdisciplinary, ah, role as others.

My concern specifically is this. The federal government keeps saying this is the first time the economy has gone down and violent crime has not gone up. I don't dispute that fact. But it is very, very clear that interfamily violence has skyrocketed since the economy went down. In Florida at the year 2008 and the year, at the end of the year 2008, about 2,000 – 225,000 reports were

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accepted by the hotline. At the end of 2011, we were almost at 294,000 reports. Interestingly, I read those reports every single day in Miami Dade somewhere about 110 to 120 reports a day. Whereas before, over 50 percent of the reports had to do with substance abuse, neglect related to substance abuse, overwhelmingly the rise of these new reports is domestic violence. Florida is one of those states that domestic violence can be recorded as child abuse.

So it's very, very clear since the economy has gone down that domestic violence has gone up and the effects of domestic violence have been talked about before me, are very clearly affecting children in this economic. As a clinician, I see many more server cases in th-, these last two or three years than any of the 25, 28 years that I had before this. And I'm not only talking about little babies who get hospitalized, but I'm talking about severe, severe beatings of the nature that I used to see those occasionally that, that they're now so frequent that I am surprised that I can be shocked. As somebody who's worked in this field for a very long time, by the brutality of some of the physical punishment/abusive punishments.

If I was gonna make one suggestion I would make this. That is that we need to make children have rights. If children had rights, there would be a lot of things that would be off the table. I know that we are not from one day to another gonna go from a society that doesn't hit their children that d-, to those that will look at that. But when we talk about prevention of child abuse, we're talking about stopping something that is bad from happening.

What we need in the United States is to have a goal. We don't have a goal. We don't have a word for we want. En-, interestingly, in the Spanish speaking world you never talk about (*Spanish*) without talking about (*Spanish*). We don't have a word for (*Spanish*) in English. We don't have a goal for what is it that our society wants. But I clearly know that one of the things that we absolutely need to have is to move to a concept of child rights. Because it's really, really sad that the police will arrest a man, it doesn't matter the sex, the, a man for hitting a woman but a father or a mother does the same thing to a child and we say it's okay. It's not okay.

So that's it for me. Thank you very much.

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Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Task force members. Just one question. Have you articulated in writing what those rights are that you're talking about so that we could –

Walter Lambert: I think clearly the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Child would be – the United S-, the United States was very crucial in the writing of that. Unfortunately, we did not ratify it. There is a new rewrite going on. That clearly is the framework for which we're talking about.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Once again, the United Nations –

Walter Lambert: Nations Declarations on the Rights of the Child.

D. Tilton Durfee: Con-, convention on the rights of the child?

Walter Lambert: We are the only country in the world that has not ratified it. Now remember, we have protective systems. Lots of people it's in their constitution children have rights and they're not protected. I'm not advocating the loss of protections instead of rights. But clearly that's part of the pathway towards where we're gonna get to. And I, two or three generations away. I, I understand that. But clearly that's one of the ways to do it.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: All right. Thank you very much. Thank you very much to panelists.

[Mumbling]

And, ah, please forgive me for the, if I mispronounce a name here. Is **Keyonte Humphries**? Close. All right.

D. Tilton Durfee: How do you spell that?

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: You, you can correct me when you get up here then, okay? Ah, Lisa, ah, **Lambkin**. Shelly Solomon. And Carlos Martinez. Please, have a seat. And we will take testimony in the order in which you were called. And, please, clarify the pronunciation of your name so I'll get it right next time. Thank you.

Keante Humphries: Good evening. My name is **Keante** Humphries, like the wine but spelled differently.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Ms. Humphries, welcome.

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Keante Humphries: Thank you. Well, first I'd like to thank the task force for sponsoring tonight's hearing. Um, for local advocates, families and others who want to share and have the opportunity to share, um, how we're trying to help eradicate violence against children. I am an advocate with the Southern Poverty Law Center. And here in the state of Florida, the Southern Poverty Law Center focuses on reducing the number of children who are in prison throughout the state, replacing abusive, brutal prisons with proven alternatives to imprisonment and keeping children in the juvenile justice system out of developmentally inappropriate adult systems.

It is fitting that we're meeting here in Florida to discuss violence and its affect on children in the wake of the tremendous tragedy involving **Trayvon Martin**. It appears from recently released, ah, 911 tapes, that Trayvon, a 17 year old African American man, who was armed with nothing more than a pack of Skittles and a ice tea, was killed because he was perceived as a criminal merely because of the color of his skin. Trayvon represents the hundreds of thousands of African American men and boys in Florida who are viewed by our criminal and juvenile justice systems as subhuman and disposable.

I am here today to ask that the task force take action to end the criminalization and brutalization of our young men. I hope you will use your position to ensure that not another young man dies a senseless death. And I hope you will start by recommending significant reforms to the way that this nation administers juvenile justice. Particularly, like many other states, Florida relies heavily on expensive residential facilities that pull thousands of children out of their homes and communities for nonviolent offenses. In addition, Florida transfers thousands of children into the adult system every year where they have little hope of rehabilitation and education for their future.

Florida's juvenile justice system is dominated by private providers who care only about making a profit, not about helping children turn their lives around. And despite a national trend to reduce the number of children who spend time in adult jails, Florida has recently passed a law that significantly increases the likelihood that its children will be exposed to sexual abuse, prolong isolation and violence that is well doc-, that is a well documented consequence of how th-, housing children in facilities.

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As a result of these policies, lives have been lost, opportunities buried and futures stolen. Ah, allow me to share a few of these incidents.

In Polk County, Florida, Sheriff Grady Judd houses all children in his adult jail. Children as young as eight years old languish in this facility. And what Sheriff Judd trumpets as a cost saving measure, both adults and children are housed in the jail. Conditions for these children are horrific. Staff leave them unsupervised and violence plagues the units. Staff spray children with chemical agents, such as pepper spray, for minor rule violations. Children are frequently punished by being held in a cage similar to that of a dog kennel. Children are frequently, frequently, um, allowed to go unsupervised, as mentioned, and, um, turn on each other in m-, as a means of self-regulating themselves instead of that of supervision from adults.

Under a law passed by the Florida legislature last year, it is now legal to house children in adult jails in order to save county taxpayers dollars. Unfortunately, as well last year, two young men died while in the custody of Florida juvenile justice system. Eric Perez, an 18 year old at the time, was being held at a Florida Department of Juvenile Justice facility where witnesses saw, heard him and saw him complain for hours about not feeling well. The facility's response was to give this young man an antacid. He was found the next morning in a fetal like position.

Then in August, a fam-, the family of Demetrius Jordan, a 17 year old boy, year old boy, at through being housed at the Indian River Correctional Institution under the Department of Corrections, um, failed to a, a, also lost his life . And the, it's uh, inconclusive at this point what happened. But it is believed that it was foul play and that inmates got into an altercation and, and took his life.

My recommendations to this, to this body is this. Ensure that federal law and specifically the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and the Prison Rape Elimination Act prohibit the placement of children in adult jails. Systematically reduce the number of children in prison by adopting proven data reforms that can save jurisdictions money and increase public safety and better serve children and communities. Develop strong, independent oversight for all prisons and jails and other juvenile facilities that house children. And proactively incorporate families and communities into the rehabilitative process.

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Thank you for this opportunity to share.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: And thank you very much. Questions from task force ____.

Georgina Mendoza: Hi, thank you for your, for your testimony. I like what you just said at the end about including the community in the rehabilitation process. Do you have any specific recommendations on how the community could do that? Oftentimes we do hear residents who say, "I want to help, I just don't know how." How would you respond to that?

Keante Humphries: Well, great. Ah, definitely information, excuse me. Dissemination. Um, there are several, ah, local organizations that we know of and work with in the state of Florida that are always looking for parents to participate. But at a systematic level, the Anti Casey Foundation we believe does a awesome job in working with, um, institutions, municipalities and the community building oversight, community organizations that provide oversight, um, to institutions that also manage grant funding and, and, things of that sort. So, um, definitely just encouraging people in the community to find out what resources are there. But also taking advantage of those in-, those entities that provide grant monies and other things for f-, um, community and families to collaborate with the various institutions and facilities.

Georgina Mendoza: Thank you.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Other questions? Just a, a couple comments. I am a juvenile defender. I've had two of my clients, ah, killed while in placement. Um, and I say kill because that was the finding. Um, so I'm, I'm very sensitive to issues you've raised. A couple of comments. One, the Prison Rape Prevention Act is symbiotic in that it needs people to actually bring information to the attention of the federal government. I've had federal government investigators contact our office and ask for information about what's going on in placements. And I think that, ah, the Southern Poverty Law Center, I don't know what role you're playing in terms of gathering data that you can share with the federal government, but I know they are very interested in implementing the act and making sure that where there are violations that they are addressed properly. I know that because they've testified at conferences that I've attended. So that is something that, that is, is there.

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The juvenile del-, ah, Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act has ___ - acted. And there are a lot of preventions that are, a lot of provisions that are con-, being considered, including separation of adult and juvenile offenders up through certain ages, but certainly through the age of 18. So that is being considered. But that's something where people have to really raise their voices about it. Because, ah, it has been open for, um, reenactment for several, several years at this juncture, but you're gonna need a lot of advocates to bring that to the attention of the powers that be in Washington in order to make that clear that it's time to, to move forward on that. So.

Okay. Next. Would you please identify yourself?

Lisa Lambkin:

Good evening. You can hear me? My name is Lisa Lambkin, and I'm here today to share with you my son and I's story. Psalms 127:3 says, "Behold, children are the heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward." When God blessed us with our children, he does so in hopes that we will protect them. When you have a child, this precious little one looks at you knowing that you will protect them from all harm. But as life goes on, things happen, and sometimes unexpectedly.

As a mother, you are faced with the fact that your son or daughter is in jail and in the hands of other people. You pray that they will be protected and that the people who hands they are in will not cause them any harm, but that's not the case in the state of Florida. First, your child is told that you are no longer their parent but they belong to the state of Florida, as if they are a piece of meat given to a bunch of animals to devour or some sort of property to be sold to the highest bidder. And, in fact, that is exactly what happened to my son when he was placed in a private facility in south Florida.

This is true not only for children but adults as well. Florida policymakers want to privative the youth and adults prisons. You may not realize this, but this is where the abuse start. Mental abuse. But it's definitely not where it ends.

No one seems to care young children ages range 11 to 19 years old are being talked to and treated as if they were animals, as if they were less than human. They are being put in cages for 23 out of 24 hours in a day. These kids are being held in conditions that I would not want my worst enemy to experience. It is hard for a mother to see her child and know that people are mistreating your

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child and you are powerless in stopping them. If you, (*Clears Throat*), if it was the parent beating, cursing, isolating, starving or raping their child, the Department of Children and Families would come and take our kids away. Can someone please tell me how can the state of Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and Department of Corrections condone these behaviors of abuse against our children? It's not right. And we have no say in how they treat our children or what they do to our children. This has to stop.

I wonder if you were in my shoes how would you feel knowing that your child is being abused mentally, physically all the day in and day out? Do you think you would be able to handle it? Does anyone know how this affect the family? I will tell you. First, as a mother, you worry about your child. Then you see them in a place they are in and you worry more until you don't sleep. Instead, you pray and ask God to protect them. Do you know what it does to your health to sacrifice sleep and being constantly stressed not knowing that every days is affecting you? Well, I do. I know all too well. At my weakest point I had a blood sugar of 685, acid ketosis in my legs, congestive heart failure and ended up in ICU for 2 ½ days. I am now a full blown diabetic. I never had diabetes before. I inject insulin four times a day. Three times, breakfast, lunch and dinner and one time before I go to sleep so I don't sleep myself in a coma. It, and I still have to worry about if someone is beating him or if he's not moving enough so they're cussing him out.

I know I'm my son's strongest advocate. Thank you for listening to me.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Questions from members of the task force.

Anthony Taguba: How long has your son been in prison?

Lisa Lambkin: Well, he was first sentenced – he was in a youth facility. And then on October 14, three days after his son was born, my son was sentenced to 25 years in the Department of Correction. Ten of those years are minimum mandatory.

Anthony Taguba: Thirty-five years.

Lisa Lambkin: Yes.

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Steven Marans: I just wanted to thank you. Um, it is really hard to hear the story you've told, but it needs to be heard. And I think that the comment that both of you were making about throwaway people no matter what they've done to require the attention of the law and the courts, they become throwaway people, don't they? And you're reminding us that they are our children. Our brothers, our sisters, our uncles, our aunts. And, um, boy it's hard to hear, but thank you for letting us.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: I'd also like to thank you. Um, just, ah, ah, one question. How, do you have it documented how long your son was in isolation? Was that documented?

Lisa Lambkin: Yes.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Okay. Do you all have that evidence or that information that you can submit to, to the task force?

Female: Not this evening but.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Yes. I think we would really like to see that. But we've been hearing stories of children being held in isolation, um, that I've heard personally in Ohio and New Jersey and here in Florida. And there are some rules and regulations against that. So we'd like to, to be clear about what's happening, and then we'd like to take a look at the federal regulations that govern that to see if there is a, any room for us to make recommendations in that area. But we'd greatly appreciate, you know hearing that information. This is, of course, the state that gave us **Graham** v. Florida, ah, and, um, I, I just attended a convening on that, on, on that case. And I think our Supreme Court is trying to put forth some pretty clear direction saying that children are indeed children. They cannot be, ah, ah committed to jail without, ah, um, life without p-, parole for certain kinds of offenses. And another case is, of course, before the Supreme Court tomorrow on, on a very similar issue.

So our Supreme Court is giving us guidance and direction. We're gonna take that direction and follow the case law and where it's leading. It's leading us back in a direction of treating kids like kids. So we're hopeful that some of the direction that will be helpful to your son and other children in the same situations here in Florida will come from our US Supreme Court. Thank you.

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Steven Marans: But Mr. Chairman, just one specific request. If we could get information, because what you're describing is often the gap between the regulations and the resources available to monitor and enforce. If there's any, ah, information that you have with regard to that gap, that would be enormously helpful. Thank you.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Ah, we've, ah, being reminded of the time. It's 7:03 and we'll have to finish by 7:20 – 7:04. Seven twenty. So we'll continue. And Joe will take over.

Shelly Solomon: Thank you for this opportunity to share my perspectives. My name is Shelly Solomon. I am the project director for the Service Network for Children of Inmates, a unique collaboration of ten community, faith and professional organizations operating in Miami Dade County with funding from the Children's Trust of Miami Dade. More than 15,000 children in Miami have a parent in prison or jail. Our network coordinates services to address the child's basic and emerging needs, to interrupt the cycle of incarceration, to strengthen the bond between the child and their imprisoned parents and to mitigate the trauma caused by the separation.

Since 2008, the network has provided services to over seventeen hundred children, conducted over 90 child focused bonding visits to Florida Correctional Facilities and worked to raise awareness about this forgotten population. Children of incarcerated parents often experience violence as a matter of course. Typically they reside in neighborhoods plagued by a history of violence, poverty and disorganization. For many, they are the sons and daughters of the very people who have engaged in this violence. In fact, over 150 of our children have parents serving life sentences. Many have multiple family members involved in the criminal justice system so much so that they begin to believe that their own involvement is inevitable.

At school, they are bullied because they are a child of an inmate with teachers and fellow students quick to say, "You're gonna end up just like your mother or dad," at the slightest infraction of a rule. But let me be specific in giving you an example of an 11 year old in our program. Her mother is incarcerated for a violent crime until 2025. On her tenth birthday, she ceremoniously felt her body with her hands. When asked why, she stated, "I can't believe it. I made it to ten and I don't have any holes in my body."

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Many nights she's cowered in the bathtub fearful of the gunshots because she lived just half a block from the worst firearms violence hotspots in the county. Over the years she experienced a SWAT raid, a DCF investigation, a custody shift with significant verbal abuse, started school three weeks late because of paperwork problems, as been bullied and become a, and became a bully, got in a fistfight, learned how to throw gang signs and learned her father is now also incarcerated. The child continues to act out, becoming angrier and angrier. When asked why she's taken this path she responds, "It's my DNA. I'm born to be bad."

What is the point of this story? One, it's real. Two, it points out the bureaucratic challenges faced by caregivers as they try to acquire the support they need. Third, it points out that children grow up quickly. Their decision processes are emerging while adults are working to figure out solutions. At this point, there is no conclusion to the story. I can tell you that in this case the service network is doing what we can to support her, but we wonder if it will be enough. As the network, we've invested numerous hours into her and her family. But as local, federal, state funding is cut and needed support systems disappeared, her struggles and ours continue and it becomes much dif-, more difficult. What she needs is a more coherent coordinated systematic response.

Her struggles cannot be served by one per week of mentoring or by a prescribed best practices model set by, set forth by federal program managers.

So I leave you with three recommendations. Continue target support for children whose lives are impacted by crime and violence. Develop strategies that are research informed but are more open, flexible and dynamic to deal with the myriad of problems these children face. And don't give up. Yes, working with these children is complex, difficult and emotional with a high rate of failure. But as a society we must step up to the plate if we expect children to do so. As this child elegantly wrote when responding to mentor feedback, "You're saying this stuff to me because you love me and I know that. I'm still not doing the right thing, but I'm gonna push myself to be better at home and at school." Believe in them and they will believe in you. Thank you.

Joe Torre:

Questions? Thank you very much. Carlos Martinez, public defender of Miami Dade.

Carlos Martinez: Thank you for the opportunity, ah, to address the task force. Um, there are a lot of people who spoke today, and I think it's really important that, ah, the task force really follows up, ah, with the Melissa Institute. Um, because the Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention has been a godsend, ah, in this community. We specifically, ah, in the public defenders office, we worked with them and they actually helped us develop our internal protocols on how to speak to our clients and how to find out information and interview our clients, ah, in a way that it was developmentally appropriate. And we were able to actually assist in the development of defense in that way. Ah, wonderful organization.

Let me just give you a brief background. Ah, the public defender of Miami Dade County. I'm an elected official, ah, for the entire county, 1.2 million voters. I'm up for reelection, so that's how I know that number. Um, and, ah, in Miami Dade County the public defender's office we approximately represent about 100,000 people a year. And we only have 200 lawyers to do that labor. So you can imagine how busy our office is.

Seven thousand of those cases are juvenile clients. Ah, so in our office, ah, our staff, ah, they see the clients, they find out their stories, they find out the information. Ah, it is really heartbreaking to know that approximately 70 to 80 percent of our clients who are juvenile clients have been exposed to violence. Some of them have seen it. Ah, whether it's domestic violence, whether it's, ah, someone beating somebody up, ah, a family member being beat up by the police or some other way. Ah, and many times it's the abuse that they have suffered themselves. Ah, at the hands of, of caregivers. Ah, and I use that term loosely.

Ah, it, it was mentioned earlier, and I was very glad that, ah, several of the deaths in Florida have been mentioned. But let me mention two more. Omar Paisley, ah, who died in our local jail on, ah, June 9, 2- 2,003, from a ruptured appendix. I have one minute. I'm on line number two. *(Laughter)* so I'll try to, ah, speed it up. But Omar Paisley, and the other one was Martin Lee Anderson, ah, who died in our, in a boot camp up in north Florida. And Martin Lee Anderson thankfully resulted in a huge change in Florida. We eliminated our boot camps completely. Ah, and there are no longer, ah, statutory.

Ah, please do not forget to include in your report transfers to adult court. They increase victimization of adolescents and worse than that, they increase victimization of our communities. Because report after report has shown that children who are transferred to adult court come out of adult court system worse than they went in. And they offend more quickly and more violently. So please, do not forget to include that, ah, in your report when you're trying to reduce, ah, victimization.

Ah, some quick recommendations. Ah, and it was mentioned here before, and I was very glad that Chief Hurley, ah, he is, ah, the time is up, but I'm gonna keep going. Ah. *(Laughter)* I think we have like a few more minutes, so I hope that I can wrap this up quickly. Ah, but Chief Hurley mentioned that law enforcement has a big role to play in making sure that they actually are role models. We cannot have law enforcement, ah, really be a law unto themselves and treating some of our children on the street and some of their parents on the street as if they're second class citizens. And it is not just the language that – it is not just physical abuse or use of force, but it's the language that is being used to demean people on the street. And that has to change.

Ah, eliminate indiscriminate shackling of kids in court. I think that's a national shame. In Florida, ah, we had a process. Ah, we worked hard to get it eliminated, and we have eliminated indiscriminate shackling of children in court. Ah, it's an abomination. It's an affront of the dignity of the individual. And I hope you consider that too.

Ah, the, a few more quick ones. The first and any subsequent court involvement of a child should involve exposure to trauma being documented. We, everybody keeps talking. I mean I've heard from a lot of people. I'd say about 70 to 80 percent. Sometimes it's 90 percent. We need to document what specific violence and what can we do about that violence. Whether reducing the violence. Yes, my friend is touching me in the back again. Ah, but I'll keep. I'll, I'll wrap it up.

Trauma informed training and technical assistance must be available for every professional that interacts with a child. Ah, and the last one is human trafficking. Ah, there is a lot of work that's being done nationally in the state of Florida regarding safe harbor statutes. But those safe harbor statutes should not revictimize and treat children as a commodity. Some prosecutors are using the

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children and holding the criminal charge over the head of the child so that the child cooperates with law enforcement. And, in fact, what they're doing is they're using that child as a commodity. That is wrong, and we should address that.

And the last one that I'm glad you all got into the whole issue of learning and learning by third grade. It is counterproductive to require learning as a punishment by all our juvenile courts. Every single juvenile court in this country they use, you got to obtain your GED. You got to do something. Guess what? Children look at it as a punishment. Us adults, we're like, oh, no, we're helping you come along. Well, there's rebellion on that issue. So what ends up happening is the kids don't comply and they end up getting deeper and deeper into the system.

I have more but I'll put it in writing. Thank you.

Joe Torre: I want to thank you very much. Um, you crammed an awful lot into a short period of time. And, ah, I want to thank everyone who testified today and, ah, certainly information that, ah, we will, ah, make good use of. Thank you. Hold on. _____ you guys can go.

Carlos Martinez: Thank you.

Joe Torre: Thank you.

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Thank you very much.

[Mumbling]

Joe Torre: Okay, um, we have three more we're, we're trying to get in, um, with just three minutes. If they would be so kind as to do that. It's, um, Isis Snow. Um. Thelma Campbell. And, ah, **Renita Holmes**.

Female 1: Ah, good evening.

Joe Torre: Good evening.

Female 1: My, my name is Isis Snow. I am a mother and advocate for children in the justice system. I want to start with a reminder that our children are our future, no matter how cliché it may sound. It is true. As a parent of two I have only the best intentions for my

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children and their future. Now because of my family's and I involvement with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, my sentiments extend to all children, especially those who don't have strong love and support from their families.

When your child is placed in the care, or lack of care I should say, of the Department of Juvenile Justice, I expect that the last word in the title of this department could carry some weight. But the system has gone so far off course in its pursuit for justice. The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has looked the other way and turned a blind eye to incidents that have resulted in the serious injury and even death of our children. I've seen firsthand the violence and abuse agencies in Florida ah, impose on youth. How do you justify the actions of abusive and negligent guards, officers, investigators and administrators? How does a mother console her son after he's called the abuse hotline and told the investigator he was choked and beaten unconscious and in need of medical care, but the investigator takes two weeks to respond, his wounds and scars have began to heal, and having never questioned her son, the investigator closes the file with a ruling stating the incidents and circumstances are unfounded? Now her son is left to deal with retaliation from other inmates, guards and the administrators for snitching or being weak.

Sadly, events like these, um, are routine at facilities across the state. These public but mostly private facilities have received the state's quality of insurance rating of dean status. We would all think that, ah, think him foolish if a shepherd left a blind and deaf man to care for his sheep in a pasture of wolves. Yet no one seems to care that the state of Florida lacks an objective independent body to provide oversight to the, again, I stress, mostly private facilities housing our children

These, these youth, ah, prisons catalogued under names like vocational academies and intensive mental health programs provide no such services. They hold our children in cages filled with mildew, mold, scabies and filth. For these profits, ah providers keep their low providing little, little to no education services, food or medical care. Our children are subsequently stuck in a revolving door of illiteracy, anger, abuse and violence. These programs are supposed to be a place of reform, a place of redemption for those who have strayed from the right path. And some may say that Florida, the, that the Florida Department of J-, Juvenile Justice is not to blame.

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Well, as a taxpayer I put my money and trust in the system to be fully accountable for the private companies that they contract with. It is unfortunate that we as parents have to see our children fall to the temptations of the world, but it is even more tragic when they do fall the system puts a foot on their neck to keep them down literally. We may, we make so many rules, stipulations and laws in regards to the treatment of our children, but turn right around and bend and break those very laws that were created to protect them. I thank you for your time.

Joe Torre: Thank you very much. Renita Holmes.

Female 2: Thank you. Ah, good evening. My name is, ah, and I'll make it clearly, ah, well, my name is Madame Renita Biggie Mama Holmes. And what comes with that is a story. That's Madame like in pioneer, ah, came out of public housing not as in pimp, like I feel the system has mistreated a lot of us impoverished. I represent – I'm the executive director and the founder of WAVE of Education, Support and Advocate, which is an acronym for Women's Association and Alliance Against Justice and Violence for Empowerment. It took me many years to get to that point, ah, in public house, ah, because I was considered a kid actually when I started there. It was one of the first not for profits. But it was always for me to go up against the stigmatization and the discrimination and the boundaries and the least of expectations that those had of me as an impoverished African American inner-city woman or a mother. Um.

I've seen – I live in Liberty City and represent over 238 mothers who have lost their children in the last 2 years. The medical examiner report has 50 entries. And out of those entries, 49 are young, black and gifted. I think what makes me unique is that I've survived without any resources, any funding or grants. There before the grace of God go I. But I ask a question after you've heard all of these things that it would be redundant for me to say. Why do we deal with trauma? This is Amber. Knowledge. As pretty as she is she's pretty frisky. You can no a thousand times, but she won't get it. But unfortunate there seems to be more animal rights than there are children rights enforced in Miami Dade County where children die 49 to 50. We have a killing every other day. The value and life of a young boy, let alone a young girl, is hardly considered. When I look at the way that the media

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represents young, ah, children, and, and, and youth in my community, I think we're highly discriminated and misrepresented.

When I look at leadership, I was always taught by my grandmother and my grandfather, when I was not in foster homes or in runaway programs or when I become an emancipated minor, was that good leadership breeds good leadership. I don't think there should be any education that does not utilize leadership development. Education, reading, writing, arithmetic is no longer good in this community. All right. And, and, I think when you listen to me I would like to tell you about 200 and some mothers. I wish you could multiply that one minute that I have left. But we'll invite you to come back. How do you, how do you deal with a child and not deal with a mother? There, we do ministry and outreach into prisons where young boys, although they're illiterate, I can bring you two that have written books since they've been in there in the _____. They're up to be transferred into adult floors now. I don't think that's right.

So if that's the expectation and that's what they say about the education of a young man that's incarcerated or a young lady, then I think we need to take a look at ourselves first. Understanding the culture of youth, understanding the culture of mothers, understanding their heritage are parts of education, ah, the system that I think that we need to apply. You need to tell me where I come from. When it comes to African American inner-city youth, nobody considers it. Chief Hurley and Carlos Martinez are great partners. But when I go to most of the funding meetings or when I go to the community meetings when we talk about public safety, particularly in public housing, I am told to be quiet. Task force officers call me all kind of B's and W's, but we still keep going. We brought tapes for you to review about how we're treated when we talk about public safety in public housing.

If my child, my oldest child, does not go, and I'm going to wrap this up, but if my oldest child, these are what mothers say. If my oldest child doesn't go to school, it gets reported and the rest of us are up for eviction. But if I live in a private home, particularly in middle class neighborhoods, that's never reported. Why are my constitutional rights oppressed? So I need to be considered more than that. If I'm good enough to create this item, this product, this _____, the reason why we're here, then it's good for you to consider my voice. If you're going to empower my children with safety, empower me with the same safety.

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There are 234 grieving mothers, including Trayvon Martin, that did not hear about this until I sent out a blast of texts and started driving all around my neighborhood. My last thing I can say to you is, please reconsidering having a fifth hearing. This time do some outreach to those who have paid the biggest price, the taxation of blood and children. By the way, Amber is a trauma dog. When I go into my neighborhoods and I walk where there are about four or five teddy bear sites with children walking around with t-shirts grieving where there are no psychologists and no psychiatrists if one only in their institutions or in their schools that take a look at them, then this dog gets more attention. Gets more respect. And teaches us more love. And we have a conversation about grieving. PTSD is in the war zone in the inner cities whether he's already caught because he's reacting or whether it's in school to prevent it from becoming an issue about mental health, please take a look. Mine was bipolar, antisocial dysfunctional after being raped and sodomized in a foster home. I became an emancipated minor. I didn't know that I was having mental health issues as a result. I thought it was the norm.

So when you find a little animal like this and someone who reaches out like I do, who utilizes underground stations, media and hip-hop artists and hits those blocks at a time when people who get nine to five checks can't do it, maybe you should consider these just grassroot organizational programs, concepts and initiatives that promote healing. And maybe take a different look at what education is most important when a child or a youth or a mother is trying to teach them how to survive. Thank you very kindly.

[Clapping]

Robert Listenbee, Jr.: Thank you very much, Ms. Holmes. Thank you very much, Ms. _____. Where at a juncture where we're bas-, basically four minutes away from the time when we're supposed to leave the room. So, again, we're not gonna be able to ask any questions at this time, but we'd like to thank you for your testimony. We look forward to an opportunity to talk to you individually. We'll be back here tomorrow morning at 8:30 when the hearings will begin again. And, ah, we thank everyone who came out to testify this evening. We're gonna give serious consideration to all the testimony that we heard. It has certainly been very powerful. And we thank you for welcoming us here to Florida to gather this evidence. Have a good evening.

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