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Operator: Good day and welcome to the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice conference call. Today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I'd like to turn the conference over to Director Phil Keith.

Phil Keith: Thank you and good afternoon, and thank everyone for joining us today. I call the commission - the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice to order. And on behalf of Attorney General Barr, we thank all of you for joining us today for this important mission teleconference meeting.

This is the Commission's final teleconference of the week and we will continue our focus today on the juvenile justice system, emphasizing mentoring. At this time, I'll ask our Executive Director Dean Kueter to conduct the roll call of commissioners.

Dean Kueter: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And before I call the roll, once again would like to remind everyone that today's event is open to the press and for any members of the media on the call, if you have questions or need clarification on anything, please contact Kristina Mastropasqua in the Justice Department's Public Affairs Office. And with that, I will call the roll. Commissioner Bowdich?

Male 1: Deputy Bowdich will be here momentarily.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Clemmons?

James Clemmons, Jr: Present.

(Crosstalk)

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Evans?

Christopher Evans: Here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Frazier? Commissioner Gualtieri? Commissioner Hawkins?

Gina Hawkins: Present, thank you.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Lombardo?

Regina Lombardo: I'm here, Dean.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner MacDonald?

Erica MacDonald: Good afternoon, present.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Moody?

Ashley Moody: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Parr?

Nancy Parr: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Price?

Craig Price: Good afternoon, I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Ramsay? Commissioner Rausch?

David Rausch: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Samaniego?

John Samaniego: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Smallwood?

James Smallwood: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Vice-Chair Sullivan?

Katharine Sullivan: Here.

Dean Kueter: And Commissioner Washington?

Donald Washington: Here.

Dean Kueter: Mr. Chairman, that concludes the roll call.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Dean. And just as a reminder to all the panelists on the call, if you would mute your phones on your device or hit star six to mute it, we would appreciate it. It holds down the background noise. Any other announcements today, Dean?

Dean Kueter: No, sir, we are good to go.

Phil Keith: Thank you. All commissioners should have the bios and testimony of this panel. And as a reminder, we'll be posting all these materials on the Law Enforcement Commission website. Once again, we continue to acknowledge everyone's commitment, efforts, and contributions to meet the goals of this historic commission.

And on behalf of Attorney General Barr, we thank each of you. As noted previously, we encourage commissioners to take notes during the testimony of the panelists and we will then open for questions from commissioners after the last witness.

We have with us today four witnesses that have dedicated their lives to helping youth and particularly at-risk youth. We all look forward to hearing from these distinguished panelists their recommendations for this commission to consider and deliberate toward the final President's Commission report. Our first distinguished panelist is Pam Iorio -- I think I got that right -- who is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

Ms. Iorio -- I'll get it right here in a minute -- has led Big Brothers and Big Sisters since 2014 after two successful terms as the mayor of the City of Tampa. She was first elected to office at age 26 and has been a trailblazer ever since. Ms. Iorio, thank you for joining us today and you are recognized.

Pam Iorio: Thank you, Chairman Keith and commissioners. I am Pam Iorio, the President and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. And I appreciate this opportunity to testify before this Commission about our one-to-one mentoring model and innovative law enforcement mentoring that speaks to the Commission's goals of reducing crime, reducing the number of youth involved in the juvenile justice system, and growing understanding and respect for law enforcement.

Since 1904, Big Brothers Big Sisters has been using the power of one-to-one mentoring relationships to help children reach their full potential. Our mission is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and the promise of youth. We have been devoted to changing the life trajectories of vulnerable youth since the program was first founded as a court diversion program in New York City.

We call our volunteer mentors Bigs and the young people they mentor Littles. In 2019, the Big Brothers Big Sisters agency served more than 135,000 Littles across the country. Of these, 73% were eligible for free lunch, 15% had one or more parents incarcerated, and 57% were being raised in a single-parent home.

35% live with a family member experiencing mental health concerns and 26% have a family member struggling with substance abuse. Our programs are evidence-based and our data show that mentoring builds key social and emotional skills youth need to succeed in academics, career, and life.

Our first recommendation is that the one-to-one mentoring model works and should be endorsed to prevent young people from entering the juvenile justice system. Our one-to-one mentoring model is designed to promote emotional support, positive social skills and behaviors, feelings of safety and security, academic skills, and positive relationships with family and peers.

Research on our community-based mentoring program has shown that, overall, youth enrolled in Big Brothers Big Sisters programs are 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, and 52% less likely to skip school. Over the past 10 years, we have served a total of 2,689,388 youth with caring adult mentors, changing the trajectory of young people's lives for the better.

Our second recommendation is that funding for OJJDP mentoring programs should be expanded. We receive yearly funding from OJJDP which is allocated to our agencies to make matches, carefully vetted and professionally supported, between adult mentors and their mentees.

With this grant funding received from OJJDP, we were able to offer impactful mentoring to over 7,900 youth in just this past year. When you consider the annual cost of juvenile incarceration of anywhere between 35 to 64,000 a year compared to Big Brothers Big Sisters' annual cost of \$18,000 to serve each youth, the potential savings from successful mentoring is in the billions of dollars.

I want to talk a little bit about Bigs in Blue and Bigs in Badges, which we think should be a robust national program and encouraged on the state and the local level. A few years ago, concerned about the increasing tensions in many communities between police and the communities they serve, we took a local BBBS program that connected law enforcement with young people in a one-to-one mentoring model and scaled it nationwide.

Bigs in Blue, Bigs with Badges has grown from fewer than 20 agencies to 103 agencies in 35 states across the country. Mentors come from the ranks of the local police and sheriff's departments to the FBI, the Highway Patrol, and other law enforcement entities and court officials.

If the only time a child sees a law enforcement officer in their community is to make an arrest of a neighbor or family member, there beings a lifetime of distrust. But when a police officer becomes a big brother or sister to a young person, taking an interest in his or her life and future, the attitude can change, and we have seen so many instances of real friendships forming not just with the young person but with the entire family.

In my former life as the Mayor of the City of Tampa, our police chief at that time -- Chief Hogue -- was a big brother. His little brother was nine years old and lived in one of the most economically challenged communities in the city.

One day, when talking about career choices, the chief gave his Little brother his chief's cap to keep and I'll never forget the story that he shared that the Little's mother called him to tell him that every night her son slept next to the chief's cap and now wanted to be a police officer.

We have a great role model here in the state of Florida with our Attorney General Ashley Moody. She is a strong supporter of Bigs in Blue and has formally asked all statewide law enforcement officials to become mentors. And that kind of leadership -- if multiplied across the country -- could make a significant difference in our police-community relations.

We recommend that virtual mentoring initiatives should be encouraged and supported during this pandemic. We know the coronavirus pandemic is changing so many aspects of our lives. Our organization is all about the strength of each relationship and the many activities that our matches enjoy together.

But social distancing is making it difficult for our Bigs and Littles to be together. But it certainly has not stopped the creativity and the innovative spirit of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Federation. Our national office is currently building an e-mentoring platform to be integrated into our national database that tracks the progress of each match. This will be done in mid-June and will open many more possibilities for Bigs and Littles to engage virtually.

Making new matches and keeping current matches together and doing so in a safe, virtual environment takes expertise and skill. BBBSA has been a leader in the industry in providing safe, effective mentoring programming through our affiliate network, partnering closely with

organizations like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to address the evolving technology base safety risks to children and youth.

Commissioners, I thank you for your time and the interest you are demonstrating by serving on this important Commission and listening to this and other testimonies. Our recommendations are, number one, that one-to-one mentoring model works and should be endorsed to prevent young people from entering the juvenile justice system. That, two, funding for OJJDP mentoring programs should be expanded.

Three, that Bigs in Blue and Bigs in Badges should be a robust national program and encouraged on the state and local levels. And finally, that virtual mentoring initiatives should be encouraged and supported during this pandemic.

All of us have the capacity to ignite and defend the potential of young people and it is a privilege for me to represent an organization that reflects this can-do spirit of America, and to see the positive results. We can do more.

Each year we have tens of thousands of young people on our waiting list at agencies throughout the country, hoping to be matched with a Big Brother or a Big Sister. As you continue your worthwhile work, which will undoubtedly result in positive changes, I hope you will include the mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters as part of the solution. Thank you.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Ms. Iorio, for your testimony and for your distinguished public service and advocacy for the youth of America. And just for the record, let the record reflect that Commissioner Ramsay has joined us. Our next distinguished panelist is Mr. Steve Salem, he's the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation.



Before joining the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation, Mr. Salem worked in a leadership role for many years with the Boys and Girls Club of America. He also sits on the board of directors for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and he has spent his entire career working to improve the conditions, development, and opportunities for at-risk youth. We're honored to have you today -- join us. Thank you, Mr. Salem. You are now recognized.

Steve Salem: Thank you to Chairman Keith and to Vice-Chair Sullivan, as well as to the entire Commission for providing me with the honor of testifying today on the merits of the Cal Ripken Senior Foundation's Badges for Baseball program and on youth mentoring and its impact on youth crime.

I would also like to congratulate and thank the other panelists today, in particular, my good friends Pam Iorio from Big Brothers Big Sisters and Wintley Phipps from the U.S. Dream Academy for the wonderful work they do on behalf of our nation's youth.

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation is a national youth development organization currently impacting more than 1.5 million young people every year through a variety of community outreach initiatives across the country.

Our primary goal is to work with and strengthen the efforts of existing local youth-serving organizations helping them to deepen the impact they are having on the young people they serve on a daily basis. We do this by offering a variety of programs along with necessary resources. One of these offerings is our Badges for Baseball program, a juvenile crime prevention initiative which I'm here to discuss today.

One of the great challenges our country faces today, as we all know, particularly in urban areas, is the lack of trust between law enforcement and community residents. Most young people residing in these communities have only negative interactions whether in person or anecdotal with the police.

The net result being a stigma that seems impossible to break. This gap in trust among youth leads to increased juvenile delinquency and a slippery slope that continues into adulthood. In communities where adult male role models can at times seem quite scarce, it is our obligation to step forward and seek practical solutions that work.

Fortunately, there is also a great opportunity here. Law enforcement officers and local and federal police agencies have an opportunity and an ability to counteract this negative stigma in a way wholly unavailable to other community institutions. Police officers can serve in a mentorship role in a way that schools and teachers, community centers and counselors cannot. And that is the vision of the Badges for Baseball Program -- a national initiative that uses police officers in the role of a coach and a mentor to these youth.

The program was first developed in partnership of the United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance in the wake of the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri and other communities with the understanding that establishing trust is essential to building positive, constructive relationships between law enforcement and underserved communities, particularly youth. The premise being the earlier youth experience positive interactions with police officers, the more likely they are to stay out of the criminal justice system, build lasting relationships, and become contributing members of society.

Each week the young people in the Badges for Baseball Program are mentored by our program partners and law enforcement officers. Kids participate in sports activities while coaches integrate, our Ripken Foundation's discussion-based character education curricula which focuses on building life skills, developing personal accountability, and respect for their communities. The positive healthy relationship between police and our young people is the beginning of real change in distressed neighborhoods across the country.

Early success of the Badges for Baseball umbrella helped us expand to include college day experiences, instructional leads, installation of STEM centers, and the creation of the I Am Great program designed to build self-confidence in young women -- all led by local police officers. And recently, our Strike Out Hunger campaign which has now provided nearly two million meals to families most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2018, we engaged the University of Michigan Prevention Research Center to conduct a three-year study on the Badges for Baseball Program to provide evidence-based data confirming that we were on the right track. Researchers found strong evidence that the program works, with participants showing significant improvement in many of the measured outcomes. We are quite proud of this study and you have a copy submitted with my testimony.

There are three primary recommendations that we would like to make to the Commission. Each would help at-risk youth make healthy behavioral decisions, build trust with law enforcement, and avoid criminal activity and involvement in the criminal justice system.

First, police executives should encourage and reward their officers -- especially those in urban areas struggling with high crime rates -- to engage as role models and mentors in youth development programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Number two, Congress should appropriate additional funding to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for national mentoring organizations with proven evidence-based outcomes.

And three, Congress should appropriate additional funding to the COPS Office to support further enhancement of their community development program. Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify. I'm honored to be here and I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Mr. Salem, for your valuable testimony and your incredible service to the youth of America.

Steve Salem: Thank you very much.

Phil Keith: Yes sir, thank you. Our next witness is Wintley Phipps who is the founder and President and Chief Executive Officer of the U.S. Dream Academy Inc. Not only is he dedicated to helping our nation's youth. He's also been nominated for a Grammy, not once, but two times. He's grown the U.S. Dream Academy from one city to now operating in seven and has served nearly 10,000 high-risk young people. Thank you for joining us today, Mr. Phipps. You're now recognized.

Wintley Phipps: Thank you to the esteemed commissioners. My name is Wintley Phipps. I'm the President and CEO of one of the nation's oldest minority-led after-school mentoring programs serving young people. Many know me as a singer and pastor and as a spiritual and theological conservative, but -- and I'm glad I'm a person of faith because, believe me, keeping a national minority-led charity alive for 21 years, you have to be a praying man or praying woman.

When I started this work 21 years ago, I did not know that of all the grants given by all the charitable foundations in America, only 2% of all those grants go to African-American-led charities. But this is just another challenge for us to do our best, work hard to overcome.

Our work has taught us that when you are trusted in the community, you can get much more done. Over the years we've built a corpus of trust. For the last 21 years, our core focus has been children of incarcerated parents and children falling behind in school. Our primary goal has been to help young people thrive and break the cycle of intergenerational incarceration.

In my own family, my wife's seven brothers and sisters been incarcerated. Her oldest sister had five children, five of them have been in prison. And we've learned that intergenerational

incarceration fuels what I call the normalization of incarceration. Or to put it another way, when negative interaction with the criminal justice system becomes the norm, that reality puts a strain on law enforcement.

Our work has taught us that children of incarcerated parents and children falling behind in school, they are children with two primary risk factors; not doing well in school and dropping out, account for most -- most -- of the juvenile delinquency and negative interaction with law enforcement. Children of incarcerated parents have a high -- unusually high -- dropout rate. And of all the males in state and federal prisons in this country, 80% of them -- 80% of them -- are high school dropouts.

Our work has taught us that helping a child to be successful in school eases the burden on law enforcement. Our work has also taught us you become like what you see around you unless you are shown something different.

If negative interactions with law enforcement is your household norm, then the criminal justice system becomes an accepted and even anticipated future. When a child sees a parent arrested and incarcerated, we have to remember that they are just kids; they are only flesh and blood. And they hurt.

Often in order to cope with these traumas, they develop hardened exteriors; they suppress emotions and create personas that often challenge the authority and responsibility of law enforcement. And so to mitigate and alleviate unnecessary and preventable negative interaction with law enforcement, you must tutor, mentor, and encourage children.

I want to tell you about some of the most exciting and successful work we've ever done in the life of our organization. In 2009, the DOJ asked the Dream Academy to lead a coalition to reduce delinquency and violent crime in Ward 6 in Washington D.C. And the final report showed, according to the local police precinct, that a 33% reduction in violent crime occurred during the time of our

active engagement. That's why we were able to do - that's what we were able to do with just one year of funding. It showed that a comprehensive strategic plan to coordinate a coalition from the community is extremely successful.

That year our work significantly eased the burden on law enforcement in Ward 6. We were able to help re-establish a relationship of trust between law enforcement and the community they served. We were able to demonstrate that residents and law enforcement can work together collaboratively to reduce delinquency and crime. And we have asked that that final report be shared with all the commissioners and those who would like to see it.

We must understand -- and I've done more than 20 years of research in the area of character development -- and I can tell you that not only do you have to tutor kids, and you have to build character. Character is everything. General Norman Schwarzkopf once said, "Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one," he said, "be without strategy." Even in business, we hire for skills but fire for character, so character-building is important.

And finally, why mentoring? Well, when the family disintegrates, mentoring is the last great hope of a nation. Mentoring makes sense on an economic level, some may say a big investment with a gargantuan payoff. And allow me a moment to share another one of my favorite quotes, "Love may be silent, but gratitude must speak."

I am who I am today, doing the work I've been doing for the past 21 years because of the mentoring and encouragement of two people; Chuck Colson -- who helped me to get started -- and Senator Orrin Hatch. And before Chuck Colson died, I said to him, "Chuck, you taught me so much but you didn't tell me I would spend the rest of my life begging with dignity."

Finally, we live in a world where anything that is brick-and-mortar dependent is under stress. Brick-and-mortar institutions -- where we have gone to for fellowship and instruction and inspiration and transformation -- they are all being digitized. And over the last eight weeks, the educational and mentoring community have been taught a huge lesson.

One of my original quotes is, "People of character respond to crisis, not with criticism, but with creativity." And we now have a chance to give leadership in the virtual mentoring world. For even now, the better schools are preparing as though they will only be able to come back virtually.

In my church the other day I said to the congregation, "God can bless a poor plan. What he cannot bless is no plan." And we as a nation must continue to invest in virtual mentoring. We must utilize technology to strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations.

We can keep young people engaged. As AT&T said years ago, "It's the next best thing to being there." We may never go back to our dependence on brick-and-mortar as we've known it in the past. In the Dream Academy, we have been developing mentoring strategies and software designed to ensure the safety and security of our mentees to be sure our solution is a blended approach. We believe virtual mentoring -- like in-person mentoring -- must be expanded where possible and always, always done well.

The Dream Academy -- with your help and support -- we would like to do our part in reducing the burden on law enforcement by helping young people with multiple risk factors through mentoring, tutoring, and character building. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you today.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Mr. Phipps, for your valuable testimony and certainly your legacy of service to our youth.

Our last distinguished panelist today is Mr. Jim Clark. He's the president and chief executive officer for The Boys and Girls Club of America. Mr. Clark joined the organization in 2012. And he's led a major restructuring of the organization and continues to make operational improvements. Mr. Clark thank you for joining us today and you're recognized.

Jim Clark: Well thank you and good afternoon. I'm Jim Clark, President and CEO of Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Thank you for inviting me here today to speak to you about America's youth. And the way Boys and Girls Clubs use mentorship and early intervention to combat juvenile crime. First I applaud the commission and Attorney General Barr for taking this important work which will impact our nation's future for years to come.

For 160 years, Boys and Girls Clubs have served some of our nation's most vulnerable populations, spanning over three centuries. We've faced and worked through demanding periods, including wars and the Great Depression. Today, amid this unprecedented time, Boys and Girls Clubs are more committed than ever to serving America's children and teens. Each year Boys and Girls Clubs serve more than 4.7 million youth at 4,700 sites across the country, including on native lands, in affordable housing communities, in schools, and on U.S. military installations worldwide.

Boys and Girls Clubs change lives and are a sound investment. A study conducted by the Institute for Social Research and the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan found that every dollar invested in Boys and Girls Clubs returns \$9.60 in current and future earnings, as well as cost savings to American Communities. Much of the proof is our outcomes.

Teen club youth consistently report lower levels of alcohol, cigarette, and drug use when compared to their peers nationally. And 88% believe that they can stand up for what they believe is right, even when their friends disagree. Today in America, so many youth face risk factors in their peer groups, their homes, their schools, and their communities, which presents challenges that threaten to overcome their ability to cope and thrive.



These problems, often out of their control, make them particularly vulnerable to environments and behaviors that can make it seem impossible to succeed. Issues such as poverty, family instability, failing schools, and neighborhood violence persist, all exacerbated by the ongoing opioid crisis that has exposed and accelerated substance abuse in families and across entire communities.

Youth exposed to even one persistent risk factor are more likely to initiate or escalate unsafe behaviors or become a victim of crime and abuse. Regrettably, many youth are exposed every day to multiple risk factors in their homes or communities, greatly increasing the likelihood they could fall off course and interact with the juvenile justice system. Youth impacted by risk behaviors at all levels need highly targeted support to redirect them from problem behaviors, and forge a path towards - forward to be productive and valuable contributors to their communities.

Boys and Girls Clubs are optimally positioned to build positive collaborative partnerships between local law enforcement and the communities they serve. Through the years we've worked with the White House administrations, as well as our congressional supporters, to create solutions for young people. For more than two decades Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention worked closely together to meet the specialized needs of youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

Today we are here to continue that progress. We see three key opportunities where we can enhance our work and impact even more of America's youth. First, increasing investment in youth mentoring programs. Second, prioritizing early intervention and prevention. And third, making emergency investment in youth-serving programs during critical times.

The first, since 2008, with grant funding from the Department of Justice, Boys and Girls Clubs have supported at-risk kids and teens through the youth mentoring program. Our mentoring approach unites powerful mentoring elements already present in clubs with formal mentoring practices and

evidence-based prevention programs. The program provides a combination of individual mentoring, group, and peer mentoring services. Mentoring is site-based and provided by club staff, volunteers, and peers with ongoing efforts to recruit minority male mentors.

Boys and Girls Clubs' mentoring services target communities where youth are more likely to face risk factors. Clubs have greatly increased their mentoring impact and reach by implementing research-based enhancements to mentoring practices. Most recently, we integrated trauma-informed practices into our mentoring approach to better support youth who may have gone through different forms of trauma that impact their well-being.

For the last 13 years, Boys and Girls Clubs have mentored an average of 30,000 youth ages six to 17, each year, through the National Mentoring Program. Youth targeted for the program include those involved with the juvenile justice system at every level. In contact with and/or referral by police to re-entry. There's also a focus on population under the age of 12 given that exposure to risk-factors at an early age increases the likelihood of delinquent behaviors and/or substance abuse.

Second, one key way we continue helping our kids is to prioritize prevention and early intervention, each of which reduces the potential for community violence, gang participation, and engagement in high-risk activities. Boys and Girls Clubs have the scale, scope, and most importantly the trust of communities and community leaders to help lead this critical work.

Boys and Girls Clubs and law enforcement agencies share a strong bond. Over 90% of clubs have an ongoing association with local law enforcement. And 56% have a member of law enforcement serving on their board. And more than half of clubs have members of law enforcement as mentors for club youth.

These relationships build deep ties and trust between youth and law enforcement to the point that the club is seen as a resource to help law enforcement connect and form relationships with often hard-to-reach youth. Still, boundaries continue to exist among young people and law enforcement. In a survey of club teens, 87% said they believe law enforcement officials are hardworking and do a good job. However, 52% stated that they are afraid to interact with law enforcement.

Clubs continue to elevate young people's opportunities to interact with law enforcement and educate them on how communities can work together. For example, the police chief of Kenosha, in Wisconsin, shared that over a six-year span juvenile crime decreased 47%, thanks in large part for their partnership with the local club.

After a shooting involving a juvenile in Brookings, South Dakota a law enforcement officer decided that the community needed more teen programs and diversion opportunities. That law enforcement officer and other youth advocates eventually started the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Plains. The organization has grown from a little over 100 members in 2003 to over 3,500 today.

There's an enduring need for strong collaborative partnerships between local law enforcement and the communities they serve. Boys and Girls Clubs are optimally positioned to continue building these relationships. Today in our society we are also facing new challenges to this work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The risk factors that kids face at home and in their communities are magnified, putting them at even greater risk than ever before.

It will be more critical that we support programs that provide positive mentors and early intervention, like those of Boys and Girls Clubs, as these youth will need focused outcome-driven development programs to help them succeed. As we begin to recover from this crisis, children will be some of the most vulnerable to changes in our economy and society. We must all support them to find pathways to future success.

In closing, my thanks once again to this commission for inviting us to these critical hearings so that we can share the impact this work has and will continue to have on the young people of America. Increased investments in youth mentoring programs, such as the National Youth Mentoring Initiative can make a significant difference in communities. Mentors offer steady positive influences, guidance, and support that lead to increased confidence and self-esteem, improved academic performance, and much more to help a child realize their true potential and avoid engaging in risky behaviors.

We are very grateful and proud of the support we receive each year through the Youth Mentoring Program. Unfortunately, the need is so great for so many vulnerable youth, that even with this significant support only about half of the clubs that apply for youth mentoring grants can receive them. Prioritizing prevention and early intervention with youth will reduce the potential impacts of community violence, gang activity, and engagement in high-risk activity.

And, emergency investments for youth-serving out of school time organizations that provide mentoring due to the COVID-19 crisis will continue to be critical in meeting the need. We urge you to advocate for funding to support critical youth-serving organizations in the out-of-school time with any COVID economic recovery funding so we can continue critical services. We believe that by strengthening these programs with youth development organizations, like our more than 47,000 local Boys and Girls Clubs, we can catalyze this transformational work in communities around our country at a time when it's needed more than ever before.

Thank you again for your time.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Mr. Clark, for your valued testimony and for your service to the youth of our great country. Commissioners, we are now open for questions for the witnesses. Commissioners with questions please state your name prior to your question and direct the questions to a specific

panelist or the entire panelist - entire panel. Just as a reminder to the commissioners, your mics are hot at all times. Thank you and now commissioners we are open for questions for the panelists.

Craig Price: Mister - director this is Craig Price with a question.

Phil Keith: Yes Commissioner, you're recognized.

Craig Price: This is for Steve Salem. And first, off I'd like to thank all three of you for your - or all four of you for your presentations. I - mentoring and getting involved with youth is critically important in our country. And I think that's something that's consistent no matter where you go.

Specifically, Mr. Salem, I'm curious in how many states are - is your program active? And what is it that you really believe separates your program from the many other youth mentoring programs that are out there?

Steve Salem: Thank you very much, Commissioner. Over the past, probably five or six years, the program has been implemented in over 45 states. Today, there are about 550 communities that have had the Badges for Baseball program implemented. Of course, the success of the program is dependent upon the commitment of the police officers, probably more than anything else.

And just like any local youth organization, you know, it varies - that varies from community to community based on time availability, resources of the police department, the commitment of the chief of police in that community is a very, very big one for us. And what distinguishes us is, among other things, but is that you know, we have a legendary athlete Cal Ripken Jr., who spends more time supporting the foundation, spends more time with kids in our programs across the country than anything else he does in his life these days.

And that is like magic. It generates attention and excitement, and where he goes and when our program comes into a community, thousands of people turn out because of him. The beneficiary of that excitement is our local youth partner. And so they are exposed to opportunities that they never would have had exposure to before: potential funding, public awareness, the media. Our entire goal is to support that local organization.

And so what makes us unique is that while we have our internal structure that we have to support to operate, our goal is to increase resources to everyone else. If we don't do that it's not working. And we've been very good at that. And I think you'll find that quite different from any other mentoring organization. And we're proud of that.

Craig Price: Okay, yes, very good and I appreciate your input and feedback on that. Are there - are you - do you mostly support other non- you know, non-profits or private group - I mean what types of entities do you support typically?

Steve Salem: Across the country, we're working with - you know you go into some of these communities - many of these communities, and you don't have a lot to choose from. There's a Boys and Girls Club, there's a Big Brothers, Big Sisters program, there might be an inner-city Y, you've got the police department, the sheriff's office, a church. And we go into that community and identify, with local leaders who have reached out to us, who that best local partner is. And then we start working together.

Craig Price: Very good thank you, sir.

Steve Salem: Thank you very much.

Gina Hawkins: Director, this is Commissioner Hawkins.

Phil Keith: Commissioner, you're recognized.

Gina Hawkins: I just wanted to add a couple comments of thanking everyone who testified today. As I've recognized the foundation of the community for our future in the youth specifically and I just wanted to thank Mr. Clark. My department, we have been utilizing Badges for Baseball. It has been impactful and you are correct. The commitment is not just – the officers are dedicated and committed to be a part of this.

We intertwine it with our PAL program and so it's very resourceful, it gives us a good advantage and good outlet. So for everyone who testified today, I appreciate everything that you've done and all your commitment to our future. Thank you.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Commissioner. Other commissioners with questions or comments?

Ashley Moody: Chairman, this is Ashley Moody. I have a question.

Phil Keith: Yes, ma'am. You're recognized.

Ashley Moody: Thank you so much to all of those testified this afternoon. I firmly believe that trust in our government by those it serves and its representatives in this respect, law enforcement officers is the major stabilizing force in a civilized society. And so this work that you're doing is so important.

I wanted to direct my question to President Iorio and thank you so much and we know each other from the Tampa Bay area in Florida and I just think that this program, Bigs in Blue, is just such a remarkable twist on the one-on-one mentoring because it does focus specifically on building that trust with law enforcement and it's just a remarkable, creative way to focus on that issue.

And in Florida, we've been able, through executive order by our governor and administrative rule, to offer to our statewide employees one hour per week administrative leave to be a mentor in this type of program and I was hoping that President Iorio could comment on whether or not other states offer similar incentives or programs that make it easier for law enforcement to participate and whether or not you find that that is helpful in recruiting more men and women in law enforcement to participate in your program.

Pam Iorio: Thank you, General Moody, and I so appreciate your partnership and everything that you do to really promote respect for law enforcement and understanding between law enforcement and the communities that they serve.

Florida's executive order that offers an hour per week for state-level law enforcement officials to mentor is not typical and we think that a recommendation should really be made across the country that all governors and attorneys general should consider this as part of their statewide work because, you know, many people want to be mentors but they just don't have the time.

But if the person who heads up the Florida Department of Law Enforcement says, "I want you to be a mentor," then they have the time. And we find this with the success of Bigs and Blue across the country it all depends on the police chief and the mayor. In Tampa, as you well know, we have a real history of our police chiefs being Big Brothers and Big Sisters and so they lead by example.

And so then you have a flood of officers who want to be Big Brothers and Big Sisters. So I really think that that leadership from the top to give - to say as a governor of a state, as an attorney general of a state to say we think that this program is so important that we're going to give you an hour off each week so that you can connect as a Big Brother or a Big Sister, well then that's how it's going to spread across the country. It really does need that kind of - the very leadership that you have demonstrated is what we would like to see replicated across the country.



Ashley Moody: Thank you so much, President, and thank you, Chairman, for giving me that opportunity.

Pam Iorio: Thank you. Good to talk with you.

Chairman Phil Keith: Thank you, Commissioner.

Katharine Sullivan: Mr. Chairman, it's Katie Sullivan. I have a question.

Phil Keith: Yes, ma'am. You're recognized.

Katharine Sullivan: Thank you so much. Hi everyone. Thank you all so much for what you're doing. Oh my gosh, I love you guys, and this is really great. I have a question, let me say for three of the panelists if we could hear from Pastor Phipps, Mr. Salem, and Ms. Iorio. I'm wondering about age. Mr. Clark kind of addressed that in his testimony already but age.

One thing that - at what age should mentors be getting involved with these kids because we know that criminal enterprise is driven oftentimes with the youths of juveniles and the juvenile justice system, you know, oftentimes uses diversion and they feel the kids are pawns but unfortunately they're learning a criminal way of life. Ultimately there's a crime committed and they end with a life prison sentence. I don't know if we're getting to these kids quickly enough or soon enough in their lives. So if you have any thoughts about that, it would be helpful. Thank you.

Steve Salem: Katie, this is Steve Salem. It's nice to talk to you.

Katharine Sullivan: You too.

Steve Salem: Yes. I think you're right on point. Our belief is that there's a tipping point, you know, a fine line and you need to get to these kids before the gangs and the other negative elements of society

get to them. But there's also a point in time where they're too young to understand or have the ability to make the decision of what's right and what's wrong.

And so we target late middle school - sorry, late elementary school to middle school. We want to get to these kids when they're old enough to understand and digest these lessons but young enough that we haven't lost them yet.

Pam Iorio: Katie, this is Pam and it's so good to hear your voice and thank you so much for everything that you do to support mentoring and helping young people. It's always a pleasure working with OJP.

We really think that in terms of introducing young people to the concept of law enforcement can be your friend, we think around the age of nine to ten is a good time to start. By that time, you know, they may have - in a lot of urban centers, by the age of nine or ten many young people have already seen law enforcement in their communities, but it probably is arresting someone.

So we feel that when we can get to a young person at that age and if we can match them with a mentor and that mentor can stick with them through middle school, well then your chances for really changing that trajectory of that young person's life is very, very high.

Wintley Phipps: Katie, this is Wintley. Thank you for the question. Through the last, I guess 21 years, we have focused on our work beginning with middle school children. We have found that that is the most critical age to really impact the trajectory of the heart and the mind and then the choices of young people.

One of my - one of the principles that drives our work is a quote by Frederick Douglass who once said that, "It's easier to build strong children than it is to repair broken men." And so we think starting in middle school is where we've had the most success and focusing on academic support, focusing

on character-building, and focusing on mentoring at that strategic age has been the most success for us.

Katharine Sullivan: Thank you.

Phil Keith: Thank you. Questions, comments from other commissioners?

Gordon Ramsay: Director, this is Gordon Ramsay.

Phil Keith: Yes, sir, you are recognized.

Gordon Ramsay: I want to express my sincere appreciation for each and every one of the panelists today.

I appreciate the great work that your organizations are doing with our youth. No doubt it is one of the most important issues that, I believe, that our communities face and really don't know what we'd without each of you.

In light of the stay-at-home orders, the one thing that many of us in urban environments are seeing, and I have seen particularly, is vandalism is up. Our parks are being vandalized, a lot of tagging issues. Shootings are up, homicides are up, and it really highlights the need for structured opportunities like you all do in the mentoring for our kids.

We are getting a great idea of what happens when these programs are out of service and what we've seen in the last few weeks is very concerning. The kids have no activities and we're seeing significant problems as a result. I just appreciate all you do and I wish we could find more money to fund your terrific programs. Thank you.

Wintley Phipps: Thank you.

Phil Keith: Thank you. And questions or comments from other commissioners?

David Rausch: Mr. Chair, David Rausch.

Phil Keith: Yes, sir. You are recognized.

David Rausch: Thank you. I just want to echo the accolades. There's three of the four that I have - in my previous role in Knoxville, Tennessee as the chief there, I'd worked directly with Big Brothers, Big Sisters, the Cal Ripken Foundation, and the Boys and Girls Club. Unfortunately I didn't have the opportunity to work with Dreambuilders. They were not in our area.

But I think an important point is that for our youth, mentoring's happening every day. The question is, is it positive or negative. These organizations provide the opportunity for very positive mentoring and I think the engagement of those in criminal justice as law enforcement, and other professionals in the field to engage their personnel to be part of these programs are absolutely critical.

There are some really amazing things happening in each of these organizations, the creativity - and I appreciate, Pastor, the creativity that can come as a result of engaging really shined through. And so kudos to each of you. Thank you for what you're doing in our communities and it's absolutely vital that we continue that relationship between your organizations and law enforcement in order to make sure that the future of this country is bright.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Commissioner. Questions or comments from other commissioners? Questions or comments from other commissioners? Hearing no further questions, let me close by thanking our distinguished panelists once again for your time and most valuable testimony and the responses to the questions from commissioners.

On behalf of the Attorney General and his leadership team of Rachel Bissex and Jeff Favitta, and all the commissioners, your contributions provided today are most sincerely appreciated and will assist the commission in their deliberations and work.

Before we close, please note that our hearings next week will focus on recruitment and retention. It's also Police Week, when we as a nation honor the brave men and women who've made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting and serving all of us.

As a reminder to all the Commissioners we will continue the Commission's work through teleconferences through the month of May and into the first week of June. We continue to plan for the possible in-person Commission meeting in late June. Please continue to check the President's Commission web page for additional updates of documents and information as we'll update it regularly when information is available for posting.

Any questions or comments from Commissioners?

James Clemmons: Director Keith -- this is James Clemmons -- I just wanted to thank the panelists for their commentary and discussion today and thank God for people willing to stand in the gap for others and they've done a fantastic job and I just hope that the light that they're shining is followed from those in the dark to follow their lead. So I thank them from the bottom of my heart for the work that they've done.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Commissioner Clemmons. Other comments or questions?

Female: Thank you all very much.

Phil Keith: Thank you again.

Male: Thank you.

Chairman Phil Keith: If there's no further before us today, the President's Commission is adjourned. Thank you, Commissioners for your continued dedication and commitment. Have a restful weekend.

Male: Thank you, sir.

Male: Thanks, Phil.

Female: Thank you.

Male: Thank you, Phil.

Phil Keith: Thank you.

Operator: Thank you. Ladies And gentlemen, this concludes today's teleconference. You may now disconnect.