

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Start: 10:15 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers  
City Hall

B E F O R E: KAREN KOSLOWITZ  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Mathieu Eugene  
Letitia James  
Stephen T. Levin  
Diana Reyna  
Mark S. Weprin  
Ruben Wills  
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.  
Jumaane Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Iesha Sekou  
Founder  
Street Corner Resources and  
I Am Peace Movement

Janaye Ingram  
National Executive Director  
National Action Network

Lance Feurtado  
Executive Director  
King of Kings Foundation

Viveca White  
Harlem Mothers SAVE

Michael Hines  
Council for Unity

Leah Gunn Barrett  
Executive Director  
New Yorkers Against Gun Violence

Andre T. Mitchell  
Founder and Executive Director  
Man Up, Inc.

Richard Glover

Aditya Kumarakrishnan  
STEM Solutions

Tamika Mallory  
Life Camp, Inc.

Erica Ford  
Life Camp, Inc.

Marlon Peterson  
Director of Community Relations  
Fortune Society

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Allen James  
Center for Court Innovation  
Program Manager  
Save Our Streets Crown Heights

Gabriel Sayegh  
State Director  
Drug Policy Alliance

Thomas Giovanni  
Supervising Attorney  
Legal Aid Society  
Anti-Gun Violence Initiative

Allan Feinblum  
Member  
Jails Action Coalition

Tala Manassah  
Deputy Executive Director  
Morningside Center for Teaching  
Social Responsibility

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Calling the Committee on Economic Development to order. Good morning, I am Karen Koslowitz, Chair of the Committee on Economic Development. Today the Committee will take testimony in consideration of proposed Introduction 1012-A, which relates to the creation of a commission to address the root causes of violence. The subject matter of this bill is a significant one, as it relates to the most basic responsibility of any government -- the protection, safety and well-being of its residents. Our great city is fortunate that we are able to boast being the safest big city in America. Statistics show that the City in 2012 suffered 79 percent fewer serious and violent crimes than in 1990 and also suffered 31 percent of fewer crimes than in 2001. As great as these figures are, every community within our city has not enjoyed a sense of comfort and safety because of these statistics.

While it may appear strange that this bill is being heard in the Committee on Economic Development, one thing should be made clear -- many experts agree that violent crime not only harms the

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individual victims of a community, but violent crime also harms the economic viability of a community. [background comments] Can we have a little quiet, please? Property values, business operations and employment opportunities are all affected by the relative safety of a particular neighborhood or community. It is difficult to imagine how any economic development policy or project can be expected to succeed in a community if the residents and businesses of that community disproportionately suffer the effects of violent criminal activity. Although I am a co-sponsor of proposed Introduction 1012-A, I would like you to now hear from the bill's primary sponsor and fellow Committee member, Council Member Ruben Wills.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you, Madame Chair. I am gonna be very brief, as we have a lot of people that are here to testify and we want to hear from you. I have the honor of authoring this bill and we have 67 or 68 percent of the council members who have actually signed on within the first three weeks. This bill is going to be important towards the positive movement of many communities that miramize [phonetic] across the city. We have as a

1 council done some incredible work with many of you in  
2 this room, dealing with the anti-gang and anti-gun  
3 violence and you who are on the ground are the best  
4 people to help us legislate by shaping the policies  
5 that we put forward. With that being said, we are  
6 now trying to identify or drill down to the root  
7 causes of violence which plague many of our  
8 communities which add to many of the negative  
9 impacts, such as disinvestment and lower property  
10 values. I don't know if many of you saw on the news  
11 today, but there was a major city, and I'm just gonna  
12 give it to you so you can research it yourselves,  
13 that actually put in a lawsuit against two banks that  
14 said because of their participation in the mortgage  
15 crisis, by lending towards minorities at higher rates  
16 and having these creative packages actually led to  
17 the foreclosure crisis which led to lower real estate  
18 values which added to crime in communities. So we,  
19 as the most progressive city in the nation are  
20 actually doing something that will go forward in many  
21 of our communities.  
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23 So with that being said, Madame Chair, I  
24 yield the rest of my time and look forward to the  
25 comments from the gallery.

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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: The administration is not in attendance, but they have submitted testimony, which I will not read for sake of time, but if you want a copy, it's available. With that I'd like to call the first panel -- Iesha Sekou, and excuse me if I'm mispronouncing your name, Viveca White, [background comments] Janaye Ingram, [background comments] and Lance Feurtado. [background comments] Okay. For sake of time we're gonna allow each speaker three minutes. [background comment] We've been joined by Council Member Mark Weprin. You can start; just state your name before you make your presentation. [background comments] No, not at all.

IESHA SEKOU: I'll go ahead and... and start. One, good morning and Member Ruben Wills, I wanna thank you for the opportunity to be here to speak and you know... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Please state your name.

IESHA SEKOU: Yeah. My name is Iesha Sekou; I'm the founder of Street Corner Resources and the I Am Peace Movement and the majority of our work

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is in Central Harlem, although we do work throughout the City.

I'm here today with, you know a lot of feelin' and emotion around what's been happening in our community with young people and just for the record, don't let the suit fool you; I'm usually in dungarees and a tee shirt and with my daughter on the other end of the phone sayin' put some clothes on; that's because we're in the street on a constant basis, almost daily, workin' with young people, trying to prevent violence and what I do know and what's always been in my mind and always been on the edge of my tongue is that we have to do more work around prevention. And one of the things that really concerned me as I was reading the details of today, when it talked about the precincts and what they're being asked to do and I think that that's great; one of the obstacles to prevention work in our community has been the precinct and I have to honest in saying that and I think a lot of it stems from the precinct commanders and officers oftentimes feeling if they look like they're doing a great job, and that's usually in making arrests and having high incarceration numbers, that that would lead to



1                                COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT                                9  
2        promotions and for the most part it has, but it has  
3        not decreased the amount of violence that we see in  
4        our community; as a result we've seen more aggression  
5        begin to happen and coming from our young people  
6        because of the way that they've been treated by  
7        officers involved in the community and NYPD, with  
8        stop and frisk and I don't have to detail what that  
9        is, with a lot of the aggressive behavior of just,  
10       you know, patting... even though it's not a full frisk,  
11       patting people down, telling them to move from in  
12       front of their own buildings, so we get young people  
13       who will become more aggressive and more interested  
14       in joining gangs so that they feel like they belong.  
15       So with that said, if we were able to do more  
16       prevention type work; for example, most of New York  
17       City Housing Authority's community centers in the  
18       Harlem area are padlocked, closed, not to be open at  
19       any time; that's a problem. So that means that  
20       services that could be administered in housing  
21       developments cannot and we're talking about thousands  
22       of young people, we're talking about families that  
23       are undocumented and doubled up; cousins and aunts  
24       and uncles living together and those people having  
25       children that begin to get involved in activity that

1 is violent behavior. So had we had those centers  
2 open and we begged and pleaded -- Street Corner  
3 Resources has -- we met with NYCHA, we met with NYPD,  
4 Commissioner Kelly himself, we also had met with the  
5 D.A.'s office a number of times to talk about  
6 implementing prevention programs, preventive type  
7 programs; what we've gotten as a result, and I have  
8 to be honest and I think these conversations should  
9 always be honest, that we've gotten those agencies  
10 creating their own so-called preventive programs but  
11 then leaving thousands of young people unserved  
12 because they didn't fit into their programs or they  
13 can only service a certain amount. So as a result,  
14 funding does not come to organizations like Street  
15 Corner Resources and other smaller organizations who  
16 don't have the tie-ins that positively tie into those  
17 agencies in a way that make those agencies look  
18 great. So I'm hoping that with the implementation of  
19 this legislation that we are able to see greater  
20 funding to organizations that are directly on the  
21 ground, and when I say directly on the ground, I'm  
22 not talkin' about the ones who get on the mic and  
23 scream out the names of the commissioner [bell] and  
24 other political figures to get recognition for having  
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said their name; I'm talkin' about the people who are in the middle of the night talking the gun out of the hand of the young person and preventing the real crime from happening; I'm talking about the one that will be at the hospital talking with parents as their child is losing life and trying to keep young people from retaliation. So with that, it is my hope that with this legislation that we not only ask the precincts to take action and to find out the source of the violence, but to really incorporate the organizations that need the funding that can create the work and the prevention that is necessary in our community.

JANAYE INGRAM: Good morning, I'm Janaye Ingram; I'm the acting National Executive Director for National Action Network and I wanna thank you, Chairwoman Koslowitz and Member Wills for having this hearing today. As you may or may not know, NAN is one of the country's leading civil rights organizations, we fight for one standard of justice, decency and equal opportunities for all and we have worked in New York City since 1991, when we were founded by Rev. Al Sharpton. Through the years, what we have seen is that violence and poverty are

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2 inextricably linked. We are excited to hear about  
3 the consideration of forming a commission to deal  
4 with the root cause of the violence, because what we  
5 think will happen is that it will expose the lack of  
6 support in lower-income communities and possible  
7 interventions that are needed, as well as social  
8 support. In all of our research, as well as in our  
9 work, we have found that violence is a by-product of  
10 violence... I'm sorry, that poverty... I'm sorry, that  
11 violence is a by-product of poverty and we have seen  
12 through our work in communities across the country  
13 that even though poverty itself does not cause  
14 violence, that when you deal with issues like Iesha  
15 was talking about of stripping people away of the  
16 community resources that they need, of after-school  
17 programs, of educational opportunities, of employment  
18 opportunities, you take away the dignity that a  
19 person has, and by taking away that dignity, people  
20 don't have much to live for, they don't feel like  
21 they're offering anything to the community. And what  
22 we have seen is that some of these issues -- housing  
23 inequalities, the criminalization of African-  
24 Americans and Latinos, specifically when we talk  
25 about policies like stop and frisk; when you tell

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someone that they are a criminal and you continually put that in their mind, it creates aggression, as Iesha mentioned, and so when we look at these things, it is our hope that what will be uncovered are the lack of the support and possibly that you, as a Council and as a Committee, will then restore some of these supports, will restore programs in the communities, will give funding to organizations like Iesha's and like others that do the work in the community, because ultimately we need to restore people's dignity; we need to show people that they have something to live for. And so I think you and I look forward to working with you on this issue and many others in the future.

LANCE FEURTADO: Good morning; my name is Lance Feurtado... [background comment] Okay; can you hear me? My name is Lance Feurtado; I'm the Executive Director of the King of Kings Foundation, also the Project Director for Operation SNUG/Cure Violence.

I wanna speak about the success of this intervention program and the expansion of it. This program has been up and running here in the City now for approximately three years, but some programs,

1 some sites were defunded and my particular site that  
2 I was implementing the program is, was Far Rockaway,  
3 Redfern Community Houses, where we had great success  
4 and two days before we launched SNUG/Cure Violence we  
5 had a murder in broad daylight, so we had to hit the  
6 ground running and when we hit the ground running, we  
7 had 51 consecutive weeks without a murder or shooting  
8 or a homicide, and that's just speaking about the  
9 success of Cure Violence/SNUG. For some reason, when  
10 the Council picked up the program, Rockaway was left  
11 out of the equation and not just Rockaway, 'cause  
12 there's Rockaways all across the City. I think that  
13 this is a great program and it needs to be expanded.  
14 We look at Chicago Cease Fire and they have over 17  
15 sites, as New York City bein' one of the biggest  
16 cities and we want it to be one of the safest, I  
17 think that, personally, we need to have at least 25  
18 to 30 sites across the City to help ensure the safety  
19 of our communities, our neighborhoods and our  
20 citizens, and those wraparound services are vital and  
21 important; the school component, the health  
22 component. And I wanna thank Councilman Ruben Wills,  
23 first off, for allowing us, you know, this  
24 opportunity to share and express ourselves about the  
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importance of saving lives and changing the mindset of our youth out there today, because they are our future generations.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: I'm sorry, before you speak, I just wanna make a point of correction. The Council didn't pick up the SNUG program, we instituted the Cease Fire Program on our own initiative, but hopefully, with this being legislated; we can then work with the State to make sure that we cover everything. It was unfortunate that certain parts were left out, but when the Council took up their own initiative, it wasn't a communication between the City and State, so I just wanted to make sure that was clear with everyone.

LANCE FEURTADO: So I just wanna say that, we're not necessarily just a State, we... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: No, no, no, no... uh no; I just wanna make sure everybody else understands that the City, when we... when the Council did it, it wasn't that we did our initiatives and we tried or intentionally left anyone out; we wanted to cover everyone, but when the State had theirs, we didn't know that the State would be defunding or lowering

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the funding of theirs also; we wanted to enhance it, but now with this and working with your organization and everyone else in this room, hopefully we will be able to get the funding to make sure that everyone is covered.

VIVECA WHITE: Good morning; my name is Viveca White and I'm here as a mother, as victim and a soldier, and I just wanna start off by saying that I'm going to read what I have to say, because it took a lot for me to pull this together, as I'm coming from a place... like I said, I'm a victim.

On June 16th, 2013, this year on Father's Day, my son was murdered. I thank you so much for the opportunity to bring this to the forum, open, and I'm here as a representative of Harlem Mothers SAVE; they pulled me through all the way to this point. And I'm also representin' families nationwide, not just here; everywhere, that have had this experience, so I'm gonna read to you very quickly and straightforward.

My charge here today is to express our importance and need for the establishment of a commission that will address the root causes of violence, the factors that drive a need or desires to



1 comment a crime, to pick up a gun or to take a life  
2 and to support the introduction of this act into  
3 legislature, the Community Violence Prevention Act.  
4 I'll start off by saying prevention is the key word  
5 in the title of this act. Use of prevention forced  
6 this space for accountability. Accountability is a  
7 primary missing component from every level of our  
8 society prior to arrest, incarceration or death; then  
9 everyone becomes accountable, but by then it's too  
10 late. Many of us in this room today have lost family  
11 members to violent crimes and talking about it and  
12 reliving the pain every day only serves to eat away  
13 at the fabric of the family that has been traumatized  
14 by the experience. It is time for everyone to become  
15 accountable and to do their part to execute  
16 prevention of violence. Accountability begins with  
17 parenting and family. We must remind ourselves, if  
18 we don't reach and guide our children, someone or  
19 something will. Then we must solicit the aid of the  
20 various systems of society that are put in place to  
21 help us, such as education, legal, economic, health  
22 care, political, judicial, and all of the other  
23 systems that have been put in place that we are not  
24 being connected to. Each of these systems and their  
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1 interactiveness has a direct effect on every single  
2 person within our communities, from infants to  
3 adults, but yet before the systems work we must rely  
4 on the government and our Council and legislature to  
5 operate on our behalf, and this is where we are  
6 today, relying on our government representatives and  
7 officials to make the right decision on behalf of our  
8 community throughout our city and to resound  
9 nationwide. To this end, our elected officials, we  
10 ask that you recognize our plight and be willing to  
11 provide support [bell] for violence prevention on  
12 every level. If you don't start here, it may become  
13 very possible that there will be no reason to pass  
14 future legislature, because there will be no one to  
15 pass it for.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I just wanna make  
18 a comment. I think now, with this new administration  
19 and the appointment of the new police commissioner; I  
20 had the opportunity to work with him; I think we're  
21 gonna see a big difference in addressing your needs,  
22 and along with the Council, I know I will be  
23 committed; I definitely know that Council Member  
24 Wills is committed and Council Member Reyna, who  
25 joined us, and we're here for you, we are here for

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you and I will work with Council Member Wills to make sure that you are helped in your communities.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: ...you very much. Michael Hines, Richard Glover, Leah Gunn Barrett and Andre Mitchell. I... I do...

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Someone...

[background comments]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: I'm sorry, so... did they call... they called you?

MALE VOICE: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay, but you're supposed to be with the next panel? Okay, that's not a problem. So can we call one other person for this panel to come in?

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Diana Feiman... [background comment] Fa... Feldman.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: We're gonna wait for the gentleman. Please say your names clearly and the organizations that you're from so that the Chair can hear you clearly. Thank you.

[background comments]

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MICHAEL HINES: Michael Hines; I represent an organization called Council for Unity. Want me to start? Council for Unit has been in existence over 38 years and I can say that I was a product of my environment. I grew up in Edgemere Houses as the brother just said, in Far Rockaway, Queens. At the age of 19 I had a fight, no prior criminal history, no knife, no gun, I had a fight; as a result of the fight I wound up spending 17-and-a-half years of my life in prison. My 19th birthday, 20th, 21st, 22nd, my 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, my 29th, my 30th, my 31st, my 32nd, my 33rd, my 34th, my 35th, my 36th, and my 37th birthday in a maximum security prison -- no prior criminal history -- graduated from high school, football scholarship - what is the cause of violence in our community? Growing up in Edgemere Houses, I'll be the first to say, economics. I know how it feels to go into the refrigerator and see one box of Arm & Hammer baking soda and no food, [background comments] I know how it feels for a parent to drug-addicted, with no father; I understand how it feels to go outside and be either a victim or a part of the team. When you think about... think about anybody in this room; if we were

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makin' \$16,000 a year from what we do, would our kids be in private school? Would we have luxury cars? Would we have houses? Our kids will be in New York City Housing Authority with the rest of them. If a child did eat the night before and he gets up in the mornin' and he goes to school and he's hungry, how is he supposed to learn? How is he supposed to adapt, when there's another kid who has a mother and a father and he has turkey and cheese, he has potato chips, he has juice; all of those little kids who are deprived, 9 out of 10 will make those kids victims. I look behind and I see the gentlemen with the orange jackets, I see the gentlemen with the green jackets; [bell] how is it that... oo... how is it that the people who are in a position to make a difference are turned away because lack of funding? At the end of the day, as long as we turn away people or in a position to make a difference, the problem will continue to happen.

[background comments]

DIANA FELDMAN: Wow. I'm Diana Feldman; I'm the founding Director of ENACT; we teach conflict resolution in the schools for 25 years and I'm not here to speak about the organization; I'm here as a

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voice of the students that we've worked with over 25 years. We've worked in... we started out working with what were called "special populations," teaching conflict resolution and special ed and the needs and the direction that the organization was pushed into more and more were classes where there were and there are "behavioral issues," thus, getting into fighting and bullying and now most of the work... we're in 50 schools right now... is working with dropout prevention and in the violence prevention, and something has always bothered me in the work that we do because I feel that it can't work alone; we go directly into the classrooms and we deal with the psychological issues, the conflict issues and we ask kids what they wanna speak about and yes, they wanna speak about bullying and yes, they wanna speak about problems with teachers, and as we keep digging deeper and deeper, we see that when we ask them how they feel about these issues there's a sense of... the three things that they constantly talk about are fear, hopelessness and shame, over 25 years, fear, hopelessness and shame and yes, we're dealing with cyber bullying and we're dealing with substance abuse and what it comes down to is these kids don't feel a

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sense of safety and a sense of protection and we've had amazing results in our classroom, and teachers come in and watch our work and say, these are the same kids that we work with; why are they responding this way? Because we create families of belonging, where kids feel safe and protected and cared about. But what's always bothered me is that they do... you water a plant and it will grow; you don't water the plant, it will die; they go back into the communities where they don't feel safe, they don't feel protected; they're in fear, and so that they're constantly looking behind their shoulder -- a student came in two weeks ago with a gun and of course was immediately suspended and so the students are constantly looking behind their shoulders, they're in fear and at the end of the day -- yesterday a student said to one of our -- we have actors that deliver the program and then therapists that worked with them say, why are you always faking looking [bell] happy, why are you always faking that everything's okay; everything is not okay, you know, and they had a frank discussion and the student said, you know we're bad. Look, the principal just had an auditorium... they pulled all the kids together and the principal...

1 the school... [background comment] yeah... the school is  
2 a failing school and it was blamed on the kid and the  
3 kid said, "Well we're bad kids, everybody sees us as  
4 bad, so we're gonna act bad." So the answer is that  
5 these are children... we're all children, we all need  
6 to feel safe and loved and cared about; school is a  
7 great place to start, but it does go much deeper, it  
8 goes way deeper and we all need to work together to  
9 help these students thrive in their lives.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you. Just  
12 to make another mention -- we appreciate everyone for  
13 coming down and testifying; we are not asking  
14 questions at this point in time because we wanna make  
15 sure that everyone who wants to testify has the  
16 opportunity to testify. With that being said, we  
17 have three minutes; I know it's a lot to ask you to  
18 put a lifetime of passion, a lifetime of work, a  
19 lifetime of disappointment in a three-minute sound  
20 bite, which seems like a sound bite, but I really  
21 would appreciate, just for the respect of everyone  
22 else if, when you hear the bell going or if you see  
23 us... if you want, I will motion to you when you have  
24 30 seconds left, just to make sure we stay on that  
25 timeframe. Thank you.



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2 LEAH GUNN BARRETT: 'Kay. Alright, good  
3 morning, thank you; my name is Leah Gunn Barrett; I'm  
4 the Executive Director of New Yorkers Against Gun  
5 Violence and I appreciate the fact that we can be  
6 here this morning to testify; thank you to all of you  
7 on the Council and thank you in particular, Council  
8 Member Wills for this opportunity.

9 New Yorkers Against Gun Violence has been  
10 around for 20 years, we were started in Brooklyn by  
11 mothers who were galvanized by a shooting of a  
12 teacher in Park Slope and we have two arms of the  
13 education fund, which I'm here to talk about today,  
14 which works with youth primarily and really, New  
15 Yorkers' across the state to educate about gun  
16 violence and policies that will reduce it.

17 Our education programs are conducted in  
18 New York communities plagued by gun violence, we've  
19 been working in Crown Heights for nine years now;  
20 we're now in Harlem, Washington Heights. Our  
21 programs teach the young people about gun laws, how  
22 to solve problems; conflict resolution without  
23 resorting to guns and how to become more productive  
24 members of a society. We're a member of the Gun  
25 Violence Task Ford of the City Council and we have

1  
2 received funding from the Council to continue our  
3 work.

4           So the problem with gun violence; I know  
5 everyone knows, it's the second leading cause of  
6 death for young people; the leading cause of death  
7 for young African-Americans. Nationally we do quite  
8 well in New York State; we have the fourth lowest gun  
9 death rate in the country; we have strong gun laws  
10 and relatively low gun ownership rates, but in New  
11 York City we know that there are pockets that are  
12 very stubborn and gun violence persists, and we know  
13 that 90 percent of crime guns recovered in New York  
14 City originate from states with weak gun laws, so we  
15 do need strong federal gun laws to stop the  
16 trafficking, but in the meantime we have to reach the  
17 kids who are picking up guns in the first place in  
18 these communities. And so we know the factors  
19 contribution to gun violence are poverty, poor  
20 schools, insufficient recreation, employment  
21 opportunities, etc. So what we do recognize we can  
22 do at the moment though is educate young people and  
23 others in the community about gun violence in a way  
24 to address the wider problem, so we can't change  
25 where these kids live, but we can change their

1 attitudes and give them a sense of their own power to  
2 be advocates in their communities for safe  
3 communities.  
4

5 So our programs operate, as I said, in  
6 areas across the city; we have a full year-long  
7 lesson plan, curriculums and after-school program  
8 focusing on personal development, group development,  
9 educating about gun laws and safety; kids learn  
10 various skills from public speaking, planning and  
11 organizing and teachings in advocacy; every year we  
12 bring the kids to Albany or Washington, D.C. where  
13 they put their skills to use, speaking directly to  
14 legislatures and advocating for gun safety laws and  
15 to be safe in their own communities. We know the  
16 program works; we survey the kids before the program,  
17 they believe guns protect them; afterwards they do  
18 not; they also know they feel empowered, they know  
19 who to go to in their community to get help or they  
20 trust the police more -- all of these things we've  
21 been measuring, so we know the programs work.

22 We also train students to be interns to  
23 go and spread the programs to other schools. In  
24 addition, we offer community workshops throughout the  
25 city to educate community members; we've worked with

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the Fortune Society from the summer to work with [bell] their clients on re-entry. So we recognize that education is an important part of this piece and we're committed to continuing our programs. Thank you very much.

ANDRE T. MITCHELL : Good morning. My name is Andre T. Mitchell; I'm the Founder and Executive Director for a community-based organization called Man Up, Incorporated and we are based in East New York, Brooklyn and in Brownsville, Brooklyn as well. I wanna thank the Economic Development Committee for allowing us the opportunity to testify; of course I would like to thank Council Member Wills and all the other Council Members, Williams and Council Member Charles Barron as well, who's out City Council Member in East New York.

So it was actually Council Member Barron and I 10 years ago to this year, where we both responded to a shooting of an 8-year-old named Desean Hill in East New York Brooklyn, he was shot and killed on his way home from school with his little brother and sister and Council Member Barron and I, both as community leaders, responsible community leaders, we responded to that said shooting and it

1 was unfortunate that I witnessed the death of this  
2 young brother. It was at that moment that I felt as  
3 a community responsible leader that there was more  
4 that I can do, and that's when I began to organize  
5 the community and mobilize the community around the  
6 issue of gun violence. We founded Man Up, Inc.,  
7 which is now the representation of this unfortunate  
8 life loss, and now, like I said, we are 10 years  
9 young and old at the same time.

11 I'm very appreciative of the proposal of  
12 this bill, this Community Violence Prevention Act,  
13 because of the work of the organizations that you've  
14 heard from today and some of the organizations that  
15 are not here today, but yet we represent a city-wide  
16 anti-violence movement around the issue of violence.

17 The point that I think that is important  
18 to be stressed today is that violence is not just a  
19 public safety issue, and I know that we're having  
20 talks with commissioners of the NYPD, the new  
21 commissioner's comin' in, but I think it's also  
22 important that while we are talking to the  
23 commissioners of the police department that we talk  
24 to the other commissioners of the Department of  
25 Health and other commissioners of other city

1 agencies, because the way that we see violence, as we  
2 know it today, it is a public health crisis and that  
3 in fact violence, the way that we... those of us that  
4 have been trained from our national partners in  
5 Chicago, we now see violence as a disease, and like  
6 any other disease, if left unattended it can spread  
7 and there's too many stories that go on that we hear  
8 in our communities of the ill effects of violence,  
9 and so being that we treat it as a public health  
10 crisis I think is easier for us as a City Council to  
11 support it and then maybe to really be able to bring  
12 more resources to be able to help the work that the  
13 organizations and all of the other partners in the  
14 city, so that we can really be able to help put out  
15 the violence epidemic in our communities. I'm also a  
16 member of the Anti-Gun Violence Task Force that  
17 Speaker Quinn had assembled last year and I was also  
18 responsible with putting together with the other  
19 organizations a crisis management system approach  
20 [bell] to dealing with violence, and so hopefully  
21 going forward, as I mentioned before, we just don't  
22 treat it as a public safety phenomenon, but we also  
23 incorporate the public health in that equation.  
24 Thank you so much.

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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you all very, very much. I'm going to have to ask people that have already testified -- there are a lot of people waiting to come into this room and some want to testify -- so if you can leave -- I hate to do this; I hate to ask you to leave, but we have to give other people a chance. Okay. Erica Ford, Aditya... [background comments] I'm gonna have... I need help... K u m... [background comments] a b... [background comments] a r a k... [background comments] and Richard Glover. [background comments]

While we're waiting for a minute, I want to recognize Council Member Steve Levin. [background comments] Okay.

RICHARD GLOVER: Good morning; my name is Richard Glover, Chairperson Koslowitz; Council Member Wills, thanks for inviting us to make this presentation. The main message that we wanna get across this morning is that violence in certain communities is an emergency, not only to repeat that it's a public health in emergency, but it is an emergency by nature itself. It remains an emergency in certain communities across America and in New York City; it's among the leading causes of death of

1 minority youth in the United States. It claims lives  
2 in numbers comparable to and at time exceeding the  
3 toll from natural disasters. For instance, there  
4 were 10 times more youth killed in violence in one  
5 summer in 2012 than there were lives claimed by  
6 Hurricane Sandy. The costs related to deaths and  
7 incarcerations are comparable to losses due to  
8 natural disasters; for those of you not aware, it  
9 costs approximately \$168,000 per year per inmate to  
10 keep somebody in jail as a result of a violent act,  
11 so we're talking significant numbers here.

12  
13 So despite the fact that NYPD has done  
14 such a commendable job in reducing violence in this  
15 country, we are sayin' that in certain communities  
16 violence is still seen and it continues to be an  
17 emergency. Given that, there is a model for us to  
18 look at, which is the FEMA model; it is designed  
19 specifically as a way to approach and manage  
20 emergencies, it already exists as a national model,  
21 and it's based upon an all-hazards approach, a hazard  
22 that FEMA recognizes -- there are two categories; one  
23 being man-made and one being natural -- certainly  
24 violence falls under the man-made category. However,  
25 we don't wanna task our emergency management



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organizations -- FEMA, CEMO [phonetic], OEM -- with the task of dealing with gun violence and interpersonal violence in our communities; we think they should keep doing what they're doing. The organizations represented here at this hearing should be the ones that have been working and continue to work and lead efforts to fight violence in New York City.

So let me just quickly explain what the FEMA model says. It allows... we're proposing we use this as a framework for three advantages -- it allows those doing violence intervention and prevent work to use a more strategic approach in their efforts, it provides a unifying framework for the diverse efforts within a given geographic area and it will provide policy makers with a context in which two set priorities and comprehensive approaches to address violence. How much prevention? How much intervention? How much response? How much wraparound services? Those are the phases of the Emergency Management Cycle, prevention mitigation, as already been said, is critical in this field, we need prevention, but we also need protection; we also need to be ready to immediately respond to somebody who is

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bein' threatened, we need preparedness, we need our families and friends to know what to do in the light of impending violence; response and recovery, we also need to pay attention to those people in need of mental health services and other support services after violence.

Evaluation is a part of this; I'll leave that for another time. Go on to the next slide please. Training -- so the work bein' done by these folks on the ground, the VIP specialists, is critical, it's skilled and it's professional work. This project and what we're proposing is... and we'll show you a brief... a detail will show you briefly how we train the people on the ground so that they can maximize their skills and continuously improve their ability to do this critical, life-saving, literally, life-saving work in the field, and we wanna provide them with the tools that will help develop those skills and get them recognized as professionals in the work of violence intervention and prevention.

And then in implementation, we simply wanna say is that we are providing technical assistance and program design implementation and evaluation so that violence intervention, CBOs do not

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have to try to do everything all the time by themselves; we can begin to specialize and we can give them the support in doing things they are not necessarily trained or able to grow in. And finally, in order to get all of the people, all these CBOs and different workers in this field synergistically approaching the problem is that we would develop a technology of collaboration where instead of competing with each other because of scarce dollars we can begin to pull the resources and develop a strategy where we can collaborate to bring in more funds and be more effective. Thank you.

ADITYA KUMARAKRISHNAN: Good morning Council; I'd like to thank everyone for the opportunity to be here and present. My name is Aditya Kumarakrishnan and I am the Lead Developer at STEM Solutions; we're an organization that believes... and it is a belief that's backed by dozens of studies, that when young people are out curious and excited about the world around them and they have the resources to build and to experiment with the world around them, that they are less likely to be out committing crimes, violently or otherwise. And so before I get started, I have a video to show, so we

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at STEM Solutions have been working with the various organizations present here who are working on the ground to develop and virtual training tool and this tool implements the FEMA model that Mr. Glover was talking about in dealing with gun violence as an emergency, as a crisis of emergency. And before... I'd like to preface the video of the training tool that we've developed by saying that video games and virtual technology has, as all of you know here, an enormous effect and an influence on the lives of young people all around the world. Just as an important fact, we in this country have spent over \$25 billion every year on video games a video game technology, right, and about half of those video games, as many of you here know, contain serious violence and about a fourth of them have serious violence as their core focus. The main goal of these video games is serious violence. So we at STEM Solutions, working with the many organizations present here would like to propose a shift in that paradigm; we wanna make anti-violence cool and so we've worked on developing this virtual training tool which will help train a lot of the anti-violence workers that are on the ground, but also serve as a

1 fun experience for the young people in our  
2 communities to look at violence as something that  
3 they should be preventing, not perpetuating. So  
4 yeah, you can get started. So this is just a small  
5 tidbit, a small video of what this entire world looks  
6 like, and so we've modeled a New York City block in  
7 Washington Heights and Upper Harlem and it is a full  
8 world experience for the young people that are here  
9 and for the parents that are here -- I'm sure you all  
10 know about Grand Theft Auto, and it is a world that  
11 is like that, but instead of Grand Theft Auto, which  
12 is a game based around the fact that violence is  
13 cool, the main object of this game would be to  
14 prevent violence, would be to prevent it. And so you  
15 would walk around preventing, you would walk around  
16 going up to people and telling them not to be violent  
17 instead of being violent and so that's the point of  
18 this entire virtual training tool and it is a  
19 training tool for the anti-violence workers who will  
20 walk up to the people and implement the FEMA model as  
21 an effective model of preventing violence. And so it  
22 is our plan to eventually have the young people in  
23 our communities build and expand on this virtual  
24 training tool so they will gain the skills needed,

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the skills that are highly in demand in our state, specifically, who will then have unlimited amount of jobs with these skills, who will then go into the job market knowing how to produce and develop computer programs. And so it is a holistic solution, not just a tool; it also provides the young people in our community with these essential skills, which also keeps them out of the streets and out of committing crime. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you very much.

TAMIKA MALLORY: Thank you. Good morning. First of all, I wanna thank you all for having us here today; this is clearly a very important conversation and we appreciate your time. I want to just say first off all that I completely support the FEMA model, as we've been working together as many organizations to help put this model together and we believe that it truly will be successful. I prepared my remarks so that I would not go over my time and so I will read.

There is no such thing as contained violence, every crime; every act of brutality has a chain reaction of cause and effect that jeopardizes a

1 wide range of individuals economically and socially.  
2 Even with a decrease in gun violence, this Council  
3 has reported that in recent years crime rates have  
4 remained high in communities across New York City.  
5 Violence is a public health crisis that puts the  
6 future of our city at risk; this we know from the  
7 recent experience with the Bryant Park shooting,  
8 which happened outside the bounds of under-served  
9 communities where people assume violence occurs most  
10 and the new knock-out game on the rise among young  
11 adults makes an unlucky passerby a victim of  
12 violence; however, in many cases targeted victims  
13 have been older people and in some cases older white  
14 people. The Children's Defense Fund reported that  
15 the number one cause of death for young people of  
16 color nationally is homicide by firearm and the New  
17 York City Department of Health reported that gun  
18 violence is the leading cause of death for young  
19 people in this city; beyond that, many of our youth  
20 do their rounds in prison every year for violent and  
21 petty crimes. A generation of young men and women  
22 who are lost to violence by death or incarceration is  
23 a tragedy that is limiting the opportunity and  
24 preventing our city from moving forward. Children  
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2 and families devoid of resources and opportunities  
3 are much likely to experience and perpetuate  
4 violence; we cannot afford to waste their potential  
5 and turn a blind eye to the issues they face, our  
6 city government; our organizers, we need to be  
7 working together to discover the root causes of  
8 violence and ensure that this very public crisis is  
9 stemmed at the root. The public crisis is  
10 preventable, but not unless we care for all children  
11 in New York City equally. The Community Violence  
12 Prevention Act is an embodiment of what community  
13 organizers have been advocating for so long,  
14 organizers like Erica Ford of Life Camp, A. T.  
15 Mitchell of Man Up, Lance and Todd Feurtado of King  
16 of Kings, Iesha Sekou of Street Corner Resources, and  
17 New Yorkers Against Gun Violence and the list goes on  
18 and on and on. We need to be fighting the root  
19 causes of violence to not only reduce crime, but to  
20 give our under-served communities opportunities to  
21 succeed. We need to make sure that we occupy our  
22 children with opportunity, give them resources to  
23 pick up a hobby before they pick up a weapon or throw  
24 a punch. We need to fight economic insecurity,  
25 create jobs for struggling families and young adults



1 and we need to desperately treat mental illness and  
2 build a city that takes care of its most vulnerable  
3 to stop violence before it starts. With the CPVA we  
4 have the opportunity to use all of our city's  
5 resources and brain power to expand the existing  
6 efforts of community organizers working in  
7 communities every day to prevent violence, provide  
8 support and create opportunity. I've spent my life  
9 as an anti-violence advocate and I've seen and felt  
10 the effects of violence firsthand, like helping the  
11 4-year-old mother of Lloyd Morgan, Jr. shot to death  
12 by a stray bullet in a Bronx playground in 2012 to  
13 order a specialized casket because the smallest one  
14 at the funeral home was too big for him. There is no  
15 denying that violence is not a disease in and of  
16 itself, but a symptom of a much greater crisis, a  
17 crisis of inequality that many of us have been  
18 battling for generations, which we have the  
19 opportunity to reduce and we must reduce it now more  
20 than ever, but we must place the same value on every  
21 child, every single child in New York City must be  
22 valued the same, and I along with my colleagues in  
23 anti-violence work reject the idea that because there  
24 may not be as many shootings as in the past, that  
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somehow one of our children's lives is not as valuable, that is unacceptable, especially when the shooting could've been prevented by courageous and aggressive intervention from us as leaders. The answers, the intelligence that you are looking for, it is right in front of you; engage us, use us and please help us. Thank you.

[applause, background comments]

ERICA FORD: Good morning. Blessings of faith and happiness to everyone. I definitely wanna start off by thanking Christine Quinn and her staff for supporting and helping us create the Gun Violence Task Force and the Crisis Management System. I definitely wanna thank all the councilmen and councilwomen that are here for the foresight and vision to even develop the Community Prevent Act; that we think it is very valuable to not only the work that we do, but the lifeline of our community.

In the beginning of time it says life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that everyone is entitled to quality of life, a divine liberty and the blessings of happiness is all we want in society, is all that the citizens want, but when we see what happens on a daily basis, as in two days ago a 30-

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year-old... a 30-something-year-old woman was shot dead in the head in South Jamaica, Queens, we know that prevention is a better tool. [pause] [background comment] I felt that... you know, I thought you all were busy, so I wanted to wait until you were finished to that I could... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: No, no; we hear you... and it's being recorded, all the testimonies are being reforded.[crosstalk]

ERICA FORD: Okay, I just wanted you to know.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Actually, the Council Member wanted to ask a question... [interpose]

ERICA FORD: So one... so we... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: And I... and believe it or not...

ERICA FORD: so...

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Believe it or not, I watch it again on television.

[background comment, laughter]

ERICA FORD: So we... we... we are one planet, one life support system and many of us in this room are the oxygen mask for hundreds of

1 thousands of voiceless people in urban communities  
2 that... last year, 2012, in South Jamaica, Queens we  
3 had 340 days with no shootings, the prior year, the  
4 same time span there were seven people shot; that  
5 means hundreds of thousands of dollars, that means  
6 lives that were saved, that means families that were  
7 not destroyed; that, when we look at violence and gun  
8 violence, it's not in a box, it can't be fixed in a  
9 box, it can't be put in a box; that is it is a  
10 disease and it is a disease because all of us  
11 similarly suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder,  
12 diagnosed or undiagnosed; this unaddressed leads to  
13 the disease of violence. There was a young man that  
14 we worked with that once said, "All of my friends I  
15 played with in a sand box are no longer here. I  
16 don't sleep at night, afraid I'm going to be killed.  
17 I held my brother's head on my lap as he said, 'I'm  
18 gonna be alright, right?' He wasn't, he died from  
19 the gunshot. Whether it's post-traumatic stress  
20 disorder from homelessness, systematic poverty,  
21 domestic violence, cultural oblivion, police  
22 misconduct, or the dilapidated neighborhoods, our  
23 people are hurtin' and we need help. Hurt people  
24 hurt people. One of the things that I have... and the  
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1                   thing is article from Chicago, where as Richard  
2 Glover talked about, it was \$2.5 billion a year,  
3 \$2,500 per household for the cost of violence, that  
4 when we look in our community and we look where money  
5 goes and we look that we don't have money for child  
6 care or after-school, we can begin to prevent  
7 violence and save money and put it where it needs to  
8 be; that when we look in this months' Oprah magazine,  
9 that there's a group of young people doing yoga in a  
10 housing development; historically never happened and  
11 this housing development most of the times it's guns  
12 goin' off, but for every Wednesday during the summer,  
13 there were young men and woman doing yoga, helping  
14 them to refrain from acts of violence, helping them  
15 to redirect their energy to do positive things. If  
16 you look in Hampton's magazine, there's a group of  
17 people from New York City in general because of the  
18 crisis management system that were able to go to the  
19 Hamptons; this young man, whose father killed his  
20 brother and then went on the bus and senselessly shot  
21 four other people, one of them subsequently died from  
22 their wounds; that trauma destroyed this young man's  
23 life; that trauma destroyed his mother's life; they  
24 stop breathing, they stop living after they lose a  
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life. So I heard as I sat here that we will help you resolve you all's problem; this is our problem, this is our city, these are our children and if we don't collectively see the urgency in this emergency to save a life and to redefine how we address these issues, to redefine how we allocate funds in City Council, where we have small grassroots organizations who are the front line of the resolution to violence in communities, that they can't get money unless they have money, which is in itself absurd, that we have to find different ways to resolve different problems that are happening; we are suffering as a people, we are suffering as a city, so last night we celebrated the Knicks because there was a victory and we felt the victory of a city; we have to have the same victory of our children's lives bein' saved.

[background comments, applause, cheers]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Please, we can't... we can't have any clapping at all. Next panel. Thank you panel for everything that you've said. Next panel. [background comments]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: We've been joined by Council Member Mathieu Eugene and Council Member Leroy Comrie. We hear you loud and clear, whatever

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you are saying and we will work to help you. Marlon Peterson, Allen James, Gabriel Say... Sayegh and Thomas... [background comment] Giovanni. [background comments] Okay, can you please begin?

: Good morning. Good morning to the City Council Members, thank you for having me today; my name is Marlon Peterson; I'm the Director of Community Relations at the Fortune Society. I wanna thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Economic Committee this morning.

For over 45 years the Fortune Society has been a powerful criminal justice advocate and re-entry service provide; we are a long-standing member of a coalition of service providers from across the City and State, offering alternatives to incarceration, re-entry and related programs. These programs divert appropriate individuals who have been arrested or convicted to community supervision and sanctions and connect people who are transitioning from prison or jail into our communities to needed services. [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Can I... can I just interrupt you for one moment? I wanna thank all of

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the kids who came here today; we promise you that we will help you.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: They're from Harlem Man Up and it was so nice of them to be here today.

THOMAS GIOVANNI: They were also from I Love My Life, Cure Violence as well, Queens and Harlem.

MARLON PETERSON: Should I begin... start over? [background comment] Good morning once again; thank you Council Members Comrie, Wills, Eugene, as well as Chair Koslowitz; my name is Marlon Peterson of The Fortune Society and I wanna thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Economic Committee today.

As I said before, The Fortune Society has been around for over 45 years; this has been a powerful criminal justice advocate and re-entry service provider; we are a long-standing member of a coalition of service providers from across the city and state offering alternatives to incarceration, re-entry-related programs. These efforts protect the public and save the city and state revenue by



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2 reducing jail and prison costs, prevent recidivism  
3 and stabilizing these individuals and their families.  
4 At The Fortune Society, for instance, every dollar  
5 invested in ATI programs yields \$3 in jail and prison  
6 displacement savings to the state.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: I'm sorry; repeat  
8 that statistic.

9 MARLON PETERSON: At The Fortune Society,  
10 for instance, every dollar invested in ATI programs  
11 yields \$3 in jail and prison displacement savings to  
12 the city and state, while providing individuals an  
13 environment that enforces change, allows clients to  
14 stabilize themselves and develop legitimate income  
15 streams.

16 Most recently, The Fortune Society,  
17 through its David Rothenberg Center for Public  
18 Policy, created the initiative, iLive. Inspired by a  
19 quote by write and activist, "Living is the most  
20 radical act that we can commit ourselves to." iLive  
21 aims to reach individuals from neighborhoods  
22 throughout the city who have been affected by gun  
23 violence and help them get professional licensed  
24 mental health treatment. As part of this effort, we  
25 are developing a campaign to address the stigma that

1  
2 impedes many people from receiving needed care and  
3 support. iLive will also host a variety of groups  
4 and events throughout the City and at Fortune in  
5 collaboration with community-based partners such as  
6 Harlem SNUG, Man Up, Inc. Life Camp, SOS South Bronx,  
7 Legal Aid Society, and others working to end gun  
8 violence.

9           When I read the term "root causes" of  
10 violence in Prop 1012-A, I immediately thought about  
11 nature and the fact that there are trees taller than  
12 football fields and that these trees are nourished  
13 from its root below the surface of the ground.  
14 Elaborating on that example, to substantively address  
15 the problem of violence it is imperative that we  
16 investigate and address the underlying causes, the  
17 smaller problems and systemic deficits that result in  
18 the huge illustration of violent acts New Yorkers  
19 experience every day. School violence, subway  
20 violence, street violence, institutional violence and  
21 other forms of violence are evident displays of  
22 poverty, over-incarceration, insensitive policing,  
23 community alienation, archaic social service  
24 procedures, unfair immigration policies, under-funded  
25 and under-cared for schools, inadequate housing

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policies, and a lack of culturally competent measures to acknowledge and destigmatize behavioral health. The violence we see that cripple our feelings of safety are a condition of these and other social ills. We must move beyond the common thought that our young people are the problem, [bell] but that these institutions that... that should be... alright, just... just making sure... We must move beyond the common thought that our young people are the sole problem, but that the institutions they must interact with also shoulder the burden of being labeled the problem.

Understandably, recent media attention to young people wantonly pushing passersby evokes vitriolic feelings in most people. "These kids need to rot in jail." That I'm sure is a reaction of many. Yet how much thought is being given to what circumstances are leading young people to partake in such very random acts of violence? According to U.S. Attorney Eric Holder, "We cannot simply prosecute or incarcerate our way out to becoming a safer nation." He goes on to say, "A vicious cycle of poverty, criminality and incarceration traps too many Americans and weakens too many communities; however,

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many aspects of our criminal justice system may actually exacerbate this problem rather than alleviate it." For example, in FY 2012... [background comment] Okay. I think it was started over because of the time. [background comments] Okay, alright. I just wanna go off by saying this... [interpose, background comment] Alright then. Well I just wanna say lastly is this; lastly, I encourage this commission that consists of persons... that this commission consists of persons impacted by violence on both sides of the victim spectrum -- persons harmed and the persons that did the harm. Inviting impacted persons to this commission invokes authenticity to the cultural competence necessary to produce qualitative recommendations to the root cause of the violence. Thank you.

[background comments]

ALLEN JAMES: Thank you, good morning; my name is Allen James; I'm representing the Center for Court Innovation; I'm Program Manager of Save our Streets Crown Heights; we are a cure violence replication, part of the New York City Cure Violence movement. I'd like to preface my written statement by saying that we fully agree with the findings that

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are set forth in the proposal 1012-A and deeper, more insightful and specific analysis of the problem that we're facing has been set out by my colleagues and I really don't wanna try to add to that, except to say that this is a problem that is not simply confined to our inner city neighborhoods; it's really reflective of a trend of meanness and violence that's going on in our nation and that as we approach it we're gonna find probably that it's fixable, it's doable, but it's gonna be hard and it's gonna be expensive and when we discover that, I hope we don't shrink from it.

I'd like to say that as program manager of Crown Heights SOS, we have, along with the South Bronx and Brownsville Anti-Violence Project, been part of a significant commitment by the Center for Court Innovation to explore the potential for a community-based anti-violence initiatives in New York. The formal components of Cure Violence model are outreach, community mobilization, education, faith-based leader involvement, and recognition from law enforcement. Cure Violence takes a public health approach to gun violence and the approach response to outbreaks of violence in much the same way that

1 health workers respond to the outbreak of contagious  
2 disease, by identifying the locus of the outbreak,  
3 isolating those who are infected and deploying health  
4 workers to stem further transmission.  
5

6 In the four years of operation, SOS Crown  
7 Heights has contributed to a significant reduction in  
8 the number of shooting incidents in the defined  
9 target area that we work in. The program operates in  
10 a 40-square-block area in the 77th Precinct; the  
11 target area contains two NYCHA housing developments  
12 and a combined population of approximately 20,000  
13 people. In 2010, our first operational year, the  
14 target area experienced 24 shootings, five of which  
15 were fatal. In 2011 there were eight shootings, five  
16 of which were fatal and in 2012 there were 17  
17 shootings, three of which were fatal. So far this  
18 year there have been 14 shootings in our target area,  
19 three of which have been fatal, and so we've come  
20 down and kept the numbers down over the past years.

21 At Crown Heights we've had success in  
22 establishing ourselves and being a calming  
23 neighborhood presence. Using our street experience  
24 and powerful intuition and ongoing training, SOS  
25 outreach workers and violence interrupters have been

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successful in detecting and mediating conflict before it escalates into gun violence and their outreach team is influential with the [bell] middle schools and high school students.

In the South Bronx our project has been operating for just over one year and has already had a calming affect, logging weeks without shootings. The network of the Cure Violence initiatives in New York that are operating now in each of the boroughs is demonstrating their effectiveness in contributing to the reductions in street violence; these initiatives should be supported, strengthened, expanded and built upon with policies and practices that strengthen and support families and communities. Thank you.

GABRIEL SAYEGH: Good morning, I just need to get some water. I'm Gabriel Sayegh; I'm the State Director for the... [interpose]

FEMALE VOICE: You're not on a mic.

GABRIEL SAYEGH: The mic's on, [background comment] thanks. Alright. Thank you. My name's Gabriel Sayegh; I'm the State Director for the Drug Policy Alliance; we're a national organization of people who are working to end the

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failed war on drugs and promote more sensible policies.

I was really pleased to see the announcement for this bill, because the notion of the Council trying to address root causes and pull together a committee to pursue that end I think is a fairly remarkable opportunity to take a step back and look at the big picture. We don't often get that opportunity and in fact quite often we pursue things in these narrow manners, not without purpose; we have standing committees, as an example, to take up issue-based areas; that helps government function properly. But when you look at drug policies themselves, we've spent the last 40 years with a war on drugs, we've spent over a trillion dollars as a nation, we've had 40 million arrests and we're no closer to dealing with the drug problem than we were when we began, but we're a lot poorer as a result and we have mass incarceration, very severe problems associated with racial disparities and so on and so forth. Here in the City we have a unique opportunity right now to approach our drug policies in a new way, to coordinate that approach in a manner much outlined as the announcement for this committee did, and while we



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focus on drug policies, the intersection between drugs and violence is well-known here in the city of New York and in other communities; it's not an absolute connection, but it's certainly one that pops up periodically and impacts communities and people.

Part of our testimony includes a report that we produced with the New York Academy of Medicine called a "Blueprint for a Public Health Approach to Drug Policy"; that report is in your folders and it outlines what a coordinated approach would look like, both at the city level and the state level. Many of the speakers before us talked about violence as a public health issue and I just wanna echo, particularly the community groups that were here asking for more funding, they should get funding to do their good and important work. But violence as a health issue is a conceptual framework that is increasingly employed around the country and we can't talk about public health and violence without also talking about drugs and drug use and addiction and the associated factors. When this bill passes, as it should, and this committee is formed to address these root causes, our hope is that this blueprint that you have [background comment] in front of you now could

1  
2 serve as a tool to hopefully contribute to the good  
3 work of that committee and looking at the root causes  
4 of violence. One specific thing to point out here is  
5 an example of the lack of coordination and the  
6 problems that it engenders here, is that with syringe  
7 exchange programs, which are among the most  
8 successful intervention strategies that we have in  
9 the city of New York to reduce the transmission of  
10 HIV and AIDS, Department of Health funds that,  
11 supports it, runs it; at the same time, NYPD often  
12 sits outside of those very programs and arrests  
13 people for syringe possession. We have a situation  
14 where the left hand does not know what the right hand  
15 is doing and that leads to outcomes that diminish  
16 [bell] both public health and safety for individuals  
17 and communities. So it's our hope that this bill  
18 passes and we would like to support the Council's  
19 effort in addressing these questions and really wanna  
20 applaud you for asking these big picture questions  
21 that ask us to step back and look at the framework  
22 and context within which we operate. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: We've been joined  
24 by Council Member Williams, Jumaane Williams.

1  
2 THOMAS GIOVANNI: Good morning, I'm  
3 Thomas Giovanni, I'm supervising attorney for the  
4 Legal Aid Society's Anti-Gun Violence Initiative and  
5 we're a specialized unit in a civil practice that's  
6 dedicated to providing legal services to community  
7 members who are being served by the Council-funded  
8 Cure Violence organization, some of which you've  
9 already from today. I'm submitting this testimony  
10 today on behalf of Legal Aid and I want to thank the  
11 Chairperson Koslowitz and also Council Member  
12 Williams and Wills for their work and the Economic  
13 Development Committee for inviting our thoughts on  
14 establishing this commission to study these root  
15 causes of violence.

16 As you all know, the Legal Aid Society is  
17 the nation's oldest and largest provider of legal  
18 services to low-income families and individuals. We  
19 provide assistance to over 300,000 legal matters that  
20 involve civil, criminal and juvenile rights issues.  
21 As such, we take on more cases for more clients than  
22 any other legal services organization in the country.  
23 We believe that that brings us a particular  
24 perspective and a useful perspective on the wide  
25 range of issues, some of which we've touched on here

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today and we would like to make sure that we continue our work in this to bring that expertise and bring that support.

Specifically my unit, the Anti-Gun Violence Initiative, we are the legal support component of this coalition of service providers that have been brought together in the City Council's Anti-Gun Violence Task Force. We have four staff attorneys, all of whom are here right now sitting with me and myself, and we're seeking to fulfill our mission... [interpose, background comment] hm? [background comment] We're seeking to fulfill our mission to support these five community organizations that have already testified here in doing their work, using the Cure Violence model; that model works; that model should be funded.

We believe, and it's also supported by the best research, and as you've already heard from the on-the-ground experiences here, that the community partners have the right model and the most effective means of combating violence is preventing it and the most effective means of doing that is... is a multi-spectrum, long-term investment in communities. And I wanna repeat that, I wanna say

1  
2 that very clearly, each one of those terms is  
3 important -- multi-spectrum, long-term, investment  
4 and in these communities -- it really matters that we  
5 take the long view, the funding cycles are killing  
6 these organizations; they need to develop this  
7 capacity long-term.

8           To that end, our mission in the AGVI unit  
9 is to provide comprehensive wraparound services in  
10 all the areas that they have that have legal  
11 components, and as such, some of the subject areas  
12 that we deal with -- and this is a non-inclusive list  
13 -- housing, public benefits, immigration, employment,  
14 collateral consequences of criminal convictions,  
15 family law, health law, criminal defense, including  
16 juvenile delinquency, school suspension, safety  
17 transfers, both in public housing and in schools, and  
18 as I said, that's the short list. And as you've  
19 heard from the testimony from the real experts here,  
20 the ones that are providing the direct services, if  
21 we successfully support communities in these areas  
22 and in the other areas which they've identified as  
23 areas of need, [bell] we will reduce the violence and  
24 we will do better.

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We support this effort and we also wanted to make... [interpose, background comment] one recommendation that I wanna highlight, is that we would add to the list of commission membership, the Department of Health and Mental Health, Department of Probation, an agency or organization with a proven track record of providing family support services, an agency or organization with a track record of providing trauma or mental health services, and at least one organization, I say at least, that serves and represents the formerly incarcerated, such as The Fortune Society to my left; the voice of the formerly incarcerated must be heard. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you very much and I can't begin to tell you how much we agree with all of what you say and thank you for doing what you do and we wanna be partners with you. [background comments] We've been joined by Council Member, a short time to go, Letitia James. Thank you very, very much. [background comments] Okay. Tala Manassah and Allan Feinblum.

ALLAN FEINBLUM: My name is Allan Feinblum; I'm a member of JAC, Jails Action Coalition. [applause] One of the things that we try

1  
2 to do is end violence, not only in the street, as far  
3 as different gangs -- the Bloods, the Crypts, the  
4 Marcy Chaplains of Williamsburg; what we try and do  
5 is end institutional violence. I'm a member of JAC;  
6 we're trying to change the jail system, the criminal  
7 justice system. I testified prior to this meeting  
8 with Councilman Williams and Councilman Wills about  
9 solitary confinement, about people... the immigrants,  
10 they get arrested and put in jail for no crimes, but  
11 because they're involved with the immigration  
12 problem. I met with the president of COBA, the union  
13 that represents people that work in correctional  
14 institutions and even though I disagree with some of  
15 the things he says and he doesn't agree with entirely  
16 everything I said, we were able to meet for 45  
17 minutes, man to man, and we realized that one of the  
18 things that we agreed on is people that have a mental  
19 illness do not belong in jail; people that have  
20 mental illness need treatment, young people... 19... 16  
21 to 21, they don't belong in jail, they don't belong  
22 in solitary confinement; they need treatment, they  
23 need people to try and educate them, they need  
24 programs; people shouldn't be in jail... in the United  
25 States, we have the most people that are in jail in

1 the world; there's more people in the United States  
2 in jail than in China and Russia and Iran, Iraq.. we  
3 lead the nation, mostly because the drug.. the drug  
4 laws, we put people in jail for smoking marijuana; in  
5 some states they legalized it; something is criminal  
6 because they decide it's criminal; in some states  
7 it's criminal, in some states it's not criminal.  
8 What we have to do is end the violence in Rikers  
9 Island; the correction officers are not properly  
10 trained, they don't know how to deal with people that  
11 are mentally ill. The correction officers are  
12 victims of the same stigma as the inmates.  
13 Correction officers don't get the respect that they  
14 deserve. Correction officers are considered gods..  
15 police officers, they get the credit, they get the  
16 respect of the public, but correction officers;  
17 they're the last people -- even though they get  
18 adequate pay, they get good pay, they get good  
19 pensions, but nobody respects them. There were  
20 surveys taken where people that work in the prisons  
21 as correction officers; they don't even tell their  
22 friends that they work as correction officers; people  
23 don't respect them, and one of the things I'm working  
24 for is an advocate; I'm working for the prisoners,  
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but I also wanna speak on behalf of the correction officers; they deserve respect and they deserve additional training and with the new mayor and the new council... we have 47 democrats out of 51 members, more things have to be done; we can't blame the republicans, we can't blame Bush, we can't blame Reagan, it's the time... this is all democratic, so if things don't go right in the next administration, we can't blame... we can't [bell] blame the republicans.  
Thank you.

TALA MANASSAH: Well, I think you can always... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you, sir.

TALA MANASSAH: blame Reagan for something, but that's beside the point. My name is Tala Manassah; I'm the Deputy Executive Director of Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility. Morningside Center has worked in New York City public schools for the last 30 years; we're the national leader in school-based social and emotional learning programs, so I come at this topic from a slightly different angle than all of the other wonderful people who have spoken here today; most of whose recommendations I strongly agree with.

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2 Morningside Center defines social and  
3 emotional learning, right, as the process by which we  
4 acquire skills to manage our own feelings, right,  
5 relate well to other people, resolve conflict in a  
6 way that's creative and non-violent, make good  
7 decisions and take responsibility for our  
8 communities. And so I suppose what I'd like to  
9 submit to this conversation is that actually the  
10 question of violence prevention relates very closely  
11 to a reimagining and reclaiming of what happens on a  
12 very basic level in our public schools, right. I  
13 think that we need, as a city and I think we're  
14 standing at a very interesting precipice for doing  
15 this, to move away from having schools be places  
16 where there is an undue focus on high stakes  
17 standardized testing, right, and reclaim public  
18 education as a space within which young people need  
19 to acquire the skills that they need to be non-  
20 violent, productive members of their communities.

21 Morningside Center's operating premise is  
22 that our young people do well if they can, right, and  
23 doing well if you can means that you have the skills  
24 to do well. There's a lot of research that shows  
25 that through sustained in-class curriculum, right,

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our program is the four R's; there are a number of wonderful national programs that focus on social-emotional learning skills, that kids develop the competencies that they need to make good decisions so that violence is not the only option that's available to them.

I think I'll stop there and just say that the... we are strongly in support of this; I thank the members of the City Council who've taken leadership on this issue and let's continue the conversation. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Absolutely and I just wanna tell you, where education is concerned and I saw it first-hand in one of our high schools in Queens, along with Council Member Comrie and Council Member Wills, where the children that aren't doing as well as they want them to do, they push them aside... [interpose]

TALA MANASSAH: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: they... [crosstalk]

TALA MANASSAH: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: they basically close the door and I've been a big advocate for that to stop and hopefully, with this new administration

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that will stop; that we treat each child individually  
and if a child needs extra help, don't shut the door  
on that child... [crosstalk]

TALA MANASSAH: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: but help that  
child.

TALA MANASSAH: Yeah, I mean kids need  
more skills than the adults need more skills...  
[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Yeah. Alright, I  
am...

TALA MANASSAH: and we have to find a way  
to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, right; and  
what that means is that we have to reimagine what  
discipline looks like in school... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Exactly.

TALA MANASSAH: school should not be a  
mirror for prison, right... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: No.

TALA MANASSAH: our kids are not  
dispensable.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: And we... and kids  
should not be rejected in schools. [crosstalk]

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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TALA MANASSAH: Exactly right. Thank you so much. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay. Thank you and... Okay. Council Member Williams.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: One; I'm sorry that I came later than I wanted to; it's a very important topic, but I wanted to congratulate Council Member Wills for putting this bill forward and for pushing for this hearing and I thank the Chairwoman and the Committee for having this hearing; it's extremely important, this bill and even more important is a discussion; it is something that many of us have been trying to push for the past few years; unfortunately it was lost in the shuffle and discussion around stop and frisk and so I'm glad we're moving past that, hopefully, so that really we can be talking about the issues that we should be and although most of the attention for me has gone to stop and frisk bills, the thing I'm probably at least as equally proud of is the work that we've done on the Gun Violence Task Force and the fact that this speaker, with her fortitude, the only initiative that was funded in the past four years was for the things that were going on in Gun Violence Task Force,

1 directly trying to get to the heart of this problem  
2 and unless we do that we will be continually  
3 resourced to sending only police as the only resource  
4 to deal with this violence and we all know that does  
5 not work and is not the answer and I think a  
6 commission like this would be fantastic to push this  
7 conversation further and really get the resources  
8 that we have and need focused like a scalpel to the  
9 areas that need the most help and sending police when  
10 needed and sending all the other resources, like the  
11 mental health resources, the vision of youth and  
12 community development, all agencies should be  
13 involved in discussing this issue; it always  
14 frustrated me when I speak to [background comments]  
15 the commissioner of DYCD and I ask, "Have you ever  
16 spoken to the commissioner of the police department  
17 about how the cuts will affect violence" and the  
18 answer's invariably no. So I hope that this bill  
19 moves forward and I hope we move this conversation  
20 forward; I'm happy I got to see many of the people I  
21 work with and people I consider friends downstairs  
22 who have testified and doing fantastic work in the  
23 City. Again I wanna say congratulations to Council  
24 Member Wills. Thank you.  
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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Council Member Comrie.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: I also wanna congratulate Council Member Wills and Council Member Williams for their work in putting this together; I was also unavoidably detained this morning; I was on my way here; I had to take care of an important matter that a constituent asked me to take care of as I was walking out of my district office, so I wanna apologize for not being here for the entire hearing, but I think that it's critical that this discussion on how we try to deal with the endemic social issues and especially issues leading to children... to violence, giving preventive measures, having the city responsibly look at it with a focus on how to do the preventive programs in districts that have these issues and how they can provide it by the city and I hope that this new administration quickly puts together a package using the same predicate that they did for the gun violence initiative, using the statistics that are clear in neighborhoods that are underserved and where we have a high need to have preventative programs to prevent the rising crime and the rising frustration that young people have within

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our communities, so I think that it's something that you know we can do quickly, we can do productively and hopefully we can do in a manner that can be resolved by budget time, by next June so that we can really work to put some things in the June budget for 2015, 2014-2015 that can really stem to provide preventative services in communities that truly need them. So I wanna congratulate you; I hope that this bill can actually be passed this year to set up this oversight opportunity and hopefully... now I would be willing to serve on any of the working committees, even outside of my role as a council member. So thank you for holding the hearing.

CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I can assure my colleagues that we are gonna work and pass this bill and you know, try and pass this bill; I am committed to this bill and I will work along with my colleagues to see that justice is done. I have a little more confidence in this coming administration that these issues will be addressed and that these issues will be in the budget to help people have the funds to carry out what they want to do. Thank you.

[background comments].



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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Okay, with that this committee meeting is  
adjourned.

[gavel]

[background comment]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 27, 2013