

**Opening Statement
Chairman Mark Souder**

**“The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Providing Effective
Social Services”**

**Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy
and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform**

July 2, 2003

Good morning, and thank you all for coming. I am happy to be here in San Antonio to convene this second in a series of hearings to discuss what characteristics make faith-based providers especially effective at serving the needs of their communities. As we will hear from our witnesses today, faith-based organizations around the country are raising the bar for social service providers through their tireless efforts and unsurpassed dedication of their volunteers.

Many people toil away day-in and day-out in our communities trying to help those who are less fortunate. For these workers service is not simply a nine-to-five job, but a calling. They know that there is a need in their community, and they are compelled to help. By doing so, they have been

making a difference that cannot be denied. I have had the opportunity to visit many faith-based organizations, and time and time again have heard the testimony of men and women who have seen their lives transformed thanks to the love and support they received from volunteers and leaders in the faith community.

At a minimum, government must not only allow but should demand that the best resources this nation possesses be targeted to help those of us who face the greatest daily struggles. We must embrace new approaches and foster new collaborations to improve upon existing social programs. We know that as vast as its resources are, the federal government simply cannot adequately address all of society's needs. Services provided by faith-based organizations are by no means the only way to reach all people in need. Rather, they offer a unique dimension to that service – a corps of people motivated in many cases by their faith, who are ready, willing, and able to help their neighbors around the clock. I believe that we cannot begin to address the many and diverse social demands of our nation without the help of grassroots faith and community initiatives in every city across the country.

A recognition that faith-based organizations are competently filling a gap in community services has led to legislation and regulations that encourage these organizations to become more involved in their communities, through both action by Congress and the leadership of President Bush.

Charitable choice provisions have allowed faith-based organizations to compete for government grants on the same basis as secular providers so that they can reach more people in need. As we expand that involvement, we must fully consider the specific characteristics and methods that make faith-based groups successful at transforming lives. Today we will hear from organizations that provide care to children, addicts, prison inmates, and the community as a whole. We need to understand how the unique element of faith impacts the structure and success of these programs. It is also important that we understand how your programs transform lives by building self-confidence and self-esteem.

Our witnesses today represent just a fraction of the countless faith-based organizations that are raising the bar for the quality of services they are providing to their communities. I expect that our witnesses today will

provide valuable insights on the provision of social services, and where the government can best assist community organizations of all types provide the best possible care for people in need. I very much look forward to the testimony.