

Opening Statement  
Chairman Mark Souder

“How Can the Federal Government Assist State and Local Programs to Protect Citizens & Communities Against Drug-Related Violence?”

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

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Good morning. It is a real pleasure to be here in Baltimore today, and particularly to be in the district of our distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Cummings. The subject of our hearing today, however, is a more serious one prompted by a tragic incident – the violence against the Dawson family. We are here today to consider how the federal government can best work with cities and state and local governments to support and protect brave individuals like Angela Dawson who are willing to stand up in their communities against drug dealing and drug violence.

In Baltimore, the pain of drug abuse is especially felt. There were nearly 500 drug-induced or drug-related deaths in 2001 – approximately 10 percent of all deaths in the area. Drug dealers have taken over many parts of the city, making law-abiding citizens virtual prisoners in their own homes. In the face of this threat, many citizens and families have stepped forward to try to take back their neighborhoods from the dealers and gangs – often at great personal risk.

The Dawson family is the most recent and poignant reminder. Angela Dawson lived in Baltimore with her husband, Carnell, and their five young children. In an effort to rid her street of drug dealers, she repeatedly called 911, reporting suspicious activity to the police.

Her efforts came at a terrible price. In the early morning hours of October 16, 2002, the Dawson family's home was firebombed by a local drug dealer in retaliation. The bombing claimed the lives of Angela, Carnell, and all five of the Dawson children.

This horrible crime is but one illustration of the dangers faced by honest citizens when they seek to work with law enforcement authorities to improve their neighborhoods and the lives of their families. These murders, however, have steeled the resolve of local communities and federal authorities to find ways to protect people like the Dawsons from retaliation by drug dealers and other criminals. The federal Drug Czar, John Walters, and other officials and Members of Congress have also stepped forward to find ways to assist state and local authorities in this effort.

In direct response to the tragedy, my friend and colleague, the Subcommittee Ranking Member Elijah Cummings, introduced H.R. 1599, the Dawson Family Community Protection Act. I strongly support this bill as a cosponsor. It directs at least \$1 million in funds for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program to be spent on neighborhood safety measures, including the protection of potential witnesses and the operation of a toll-free telephone hotline for use by the public to provide information about illegal drug-related activities. The bill was subsequently added to H.R. 2086, the legislative reauthorization of the Office of National Drug Control Policy which has been approved by both the Subcommittee and the full Committee on a bipartisan basis. I expect it will soon be passed on the House floor.

The recent announcement of the "25-Cities Initiative" by Director Walters is another response to the problem, demonstrating the commitment of the Administration to this issue. Additional measures may need to be taken, however, to ensure the protection of people like the Dawsons, not only in Baltimore, but across the country.

We hope at this hearing to have a broad-ranging and open discussion of these pressing issues and potential solutions. We are pleased to be joined by the Mayor of Baltimore, Mr. Martin O'Malley, who has taken the time out of his very busy schedule to discuss this

problem. We also welcome two representatives of federal agencies responsible for fighting the scourge of illegal drugs, Mr. Preston Grubbs, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the DEA's Baltimore District Office; and Director Thomas Carr of the Baltimore/Washington High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, administered by ONDCP.

It is equally important for us to talk to the state and local law enforcement agencies who do so much to combat drug trafficking on the streets. We are therefore pleased to be joined by Director Alan Woods of the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention; Commissioner Kevin P. Clark of the Baltimore City Police Department; Lieutenant Colonel David Czorapinski, Chief of the Operations Bureau of the Maryland State Police; and Chief Anthony Romano of the Baltimore Police Department's Organized Crime Bureau.

Finally, we always need to hear from private and faith-based organizations that dedicate themselves to educating young people about the dangers of drug abuse, and providing treatment to those burdened by drug addiction. We welcome General Arthur Dean, Chairman and CEO of the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), a frequent witness before our Subcommittee; the Reverend Dr. Robert Burley, President of Oliver Community Association and Pastor of New Life Ministry Baptist Church; Dr. Linda Thompson, Coordinator of the Baltimore Community Anti-Drug Coalition and Acting Chair and Associate Dean of the University of Maryland School of Nursing; and the Reverend Iris Tucker, Pastor of Knox Presbyterian Church. We thank everyone for taking the time to join us today, and we look forward to your testimony.