

**Opening Statement  
Congressman Dennis Kucinich, Chairman  
Domestic Policy Subcommittee  
Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
“Combating Drug Abuse and Drug-related Crime:  
What Is Working in Baltimore”  
Monday October 1, 2007 – 9:30 a.m.  
Ceremonial Moot Court Room  
University of Maryland School of Law**

I want to recognize the contributions of Congressman Cummings in organizing this hearing. The Congressman’s commitment to his home city of Baltimore is profound, and this is only the most recent of field hearings on the city’s efforts to combat drugs and crime that he has helped this committee convene. These hearings continue to be important both because of the pressing issues facing Baltimore and what this city’s experience tells us about national drug control and violence prevention efforts.

As we all know, the levels of drug abuse and drug-related violence in Baltimore are unacceptably high. It is estimated that 60,000 of Baltimore’s 650,000 residents are drug dependent, mostly abusing heroin and cocaine. By many metrics, Baltimore is the most violent major city in the country and recent indicators

are troubling: non-fatal shooting and juvenile shooting are up, and most tragic, homicides have been creeping upwards since 2002. The city is on pace for more than 300 murders for the first time since 1999.

Five years ago, our predecessor subcommittee held a field hearing in the War Memorial building to examine what it termed Baltimore's "integrated drug demand reduction strategy." Since then, "The Wire" has allowed a larger audience to learn about some version of the Baltimore's drug and crime problems. In some respects, this hearing develops the same themes as the earlier hearing; it looks at city-led and community-wide efforts to provide effective drug treatment, and, in particular the role of drug treatment courts in this process. It also highlights how harm reduction efforts are part of the solution: then it was methadone provision, and now it is buprenorphine.

By focusing here on drug treatment, the coordinated provision of services, and community-based violence prevention, we do not mean to suggest that law enforcement and policing strategies are not crucially important. They are even if they are not the main subject of this particular hearing: in May, this subcommittee held a hearing that revealed the ways in which federal policies,

including the Tiahrt Amendment and inadequate gun ownership registration, were stymieing the efforts of local law enforcement to remove illegal guns from the streets. In addition, criminal justice is not just policing, as the Mayor's criminal justice coordinator will explain, there are many other effective strategies.

Nonetheless, drug abuse is largely a public health problem and combating drug abuse is dependent on a coordinated strategy to offer at-risk individuals multiple services. Put another way, because drug abuse and drug-related violence have multiple causes, programs and strategies to combat them must be multifaceted and provide multiple services in a coordinated fashion: not just drug treatment, but job training, housing assistance, and referrals to mental health facilities when needed. Similarly, to combat gangs and prevent violence, it is not enough to place people behind bars, but instead we need to develop programs that ensure that youth stay in school, learn to resolve their differences peacefully, stay off drugs, and plan for a career. That is the insight behind what our witnesses will variously term "wrap-around services," or provision of a spectrum of services.

Our witnesses will introduce a number of these programs today, and there are many more worthy initiatives operated by community groups and faith groups.

This hearing will also hear from a panel of judges who together have been most instrumental in Baltimore's successful implementation of drug treatment courts. Drug courts have been an effective model for coordinating criminal justice agencies, mental health, social services, and treatment communities to provide multiple services. Drug courts demand accountability from their participants and are sophisticated about monitoring outcomes and ensuring best practices in how they operate. The judges will describe efforts to improve these courts by providing more rapid evaluations and treatment referrals, better monitoring of participants, and an expanded array of services. They will also explain how the problem-solving court model is being applied to reach children and families in juvenile drug courts, teen courts, truancy reduction courts, and family courts.

Important questions are raised by the simultaneous development of judicially-led problem-solving courts and of non-judicial programs that aim to provide a similar spectrum of services. Have we thought hard how to coordinate existing services in

order to prevent wasteful replication? Have the demands of collaboration and coordination been reflected in institutional changes? And there are other challenges specifically for the federal government: does the government adequately fund drug treatment and the types of institutions like drug courts that have been shown to be effective? Does the federal funding process hinder the development of programs that provide multiple services because these programs naturally need grants from multiple federal funding sources?

Breaking the cycle of drug addiction and violence in Baltimore is an immense but not insurmountable task. Understandable frustration about the persistence of these problems should not blind us to the fact that those who care passionately about this city—church members, social workers, judges, and public policy advocates alike—have made progress in identifying types of interventions that work. To help Baltimore, the federal government must be attentive to what is working.