



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



SHEILA DIXON
Mayor

October 26 2009

FREDERICK H. BEALEFELD, III
Police Commissioner

TO: The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400 City Hall
Attn. Karen Randle

FROM: James H. Green, ^{HE} Deputy Chief Legal Counsel
Baltimore Police Department

RE: City Council Bill No. 09-0130R-Informational Hearing-The Status of
Baltimore City's Gang Violence Reduction Activities



The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed City Council Bill No. 09-0130R-Informational Hearing-The Status of Baltimore City's Gang Violence Reduction Activities. The resolution requests that the Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), the Baltimore Police Commissioner, and the Chief of the Baltimore City School Police (BCSP) brief the Council on the implementation of the Baltimore City Gang Reduction Plan, Project Exile, and the status of gangs in the Baltimore City Schools.

Reducing gang violence continues to play a significant role in Baltimore's crime fighting efforts and violence reduction strategies. Gangs have existed in some form in Baltimore for several years and cross all demographical boundaries. The ages of gang members range from the early teens to the late thirties. The intelligence also indicates that there are an increasing number of females involved with criminal activity associated with gangs. The emergence of "national gangs" in Baltimore suggests that gangs are becoming more organized in their structure and the impact of gangs is not only significant on the street, but also in our school and prison systems. Gangs exist and commit crimes without respect to jurisdictional boundaries and through intimidation. The BPD has identified over 2100 gang members in Baltimore with "Bloods" affiliation representing the largest group citywide. In 2008, the BPD arrested 340 persons who were identified as being a known gang member.

Baltimore is taking continuing affirmative steps to combat the growing threat of gangs to the safety of our communities and must focus on prevention and early intervention in concert with law enforcement's suppression activities. The Dixon Administration has employed a two-pronged approach that incorporates targeted enforcement and suppression and outreach and service delivery in the community. The collaboration between law enforcement, prosecution, and community is essential in combating gangs and gang violence in our neighborhoods. While law enforcement faces

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significant challenges in this area, central to our overall successes is a comprehensive approach to enhance prevention and intervention activities in our communities.

Baltimore is not alone in its efforts to curb gang violence. In response to Maryland's gang problems, Governor Martin O'Malley established the Kaizen Project in 2008 and invited a range of stakeholders to discuss various aspects surrounding gangs including prevention, intervention, and suppression. Commissioner Bealefeld served as one of the primary law enforcement executives for this Project. One workgroup that included law enforcement, prosecutors, and the Attorney General's Office was tasked to review Maryland's Gang Prosecution Act (MGPA) and to make recommendations to strengthen the current statute. This review centered on establishing clearer definitions of "criminal gangs" and "criminal gang members" and the expansion of the underlying crimes to reflect those most frequently committed by gang members. These proposed changes were outlined in House Bill 1387 and were presented to the House Judiciary Committee during the 2009 Session. Unfortunately, the legislation died in Committee but the testimony did highlight the need for an overall comprehensive strategy throughout the state.

Last month, the House Judiciary Committee heard testimony and recommendations to address these issues again in the 2010 Session. Among the matters that will be addressed in the next year include a uniform definition of gang membership and gang-related crime statewide. There was also discussion about the need for increased communication between law enforcement and schools. There is a growing consensus that there needs to be statewide efforts to deter gang violence and laws that allow information sharing. See Baltimore Sun editorial, *Detering gang violence* (October 26, 2009). <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bal-ed.gangs26oct26.0.4057887.print.story>

In Baltimore, there remains on-going communication with the BCSP who work with the BPD to identify gang members. The schools have developed a school safety plan which includes indentifying youth in gangs, teacher training, intervention resources, and law enforcement partnerships. Their data shows a reduction in "gang activity" in 2009. There is continued cooperation and intelligence sharing at the law enforcement level to identify youth involved with gangs and a directed effort to curtail any activity which threaten the safety of students, school staff, and school property.

Suppression efforts also include the identification of violent offenders who are participating in gangs. Through partnership with the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, United States Attorney's Office (USAO), Maryland Parole and Probation and Department of Correction, Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), federal and state law enforcement, and BCPS there continues to be intelligence sharing about gang membership, violent individuals, and coordinated law enfacement action. As detailed in the below news articles, these coordinated efforts have led to successful prosecutions and enforcement efforts:

http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/baltimore_city/bal-williams0611,0,940941.print.story (Gang Member sentenced to Life plus 20 years)

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/crime/bal-md.crimebriefs304may30,0,7888841.print.story> (PDL Bloods Member sentenced in Witness Killing)

http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/baltimore_city/bal-md.ci.raids29may29,0,7188690.print.story (Raids sweep up dozens).

While suppression efforts remain critical in the overall City gang strategy, prevention and intervention efforts too are necessary to engage youth and provide alternatives to joining or participating in gangs. Community mobilization, opportunities, and intervention are key components of this strategy and are being employed. Baltimore participates in several initiatives that incorporate these elements; Safe Streets, EXILE, and CSAFE. These initiatives are discussed in the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice report to the Council. The BPD remains central to these initiatives and is in the process of launching the GREAT program in each of the nine (9) police districts. The schools identified for this program were selected based upon law enforcement intelligence and community needs. Through EXILE, the USAO also provides outreach to communities and schools in Baltimore. DJS also continues to work closely to monitor youth under their supervision who are identified as being "gang involved." Heightened supervision and structured programs are especially important for these youth.

Employment, after-school programs, and activities for youth remain vital to the City's success. The Mayor's summer jobs program continues to expand opportunities for youth when school is not in session. The Family League for Baltimore City (FLBC) also provides programs and activities for youth throughout the year. They have compiled a list of resources which will be included in the presentation to the Council. The "after school" resources are critical components to prevention and intervention. Parents and educators must continue to identify their youth that are "at-risk" so that they can be encouraged to participate in productive activities in their communities.

The "war on gangs" must continue to be waged in our communities. Early prevention and intervention are critical components to this strategy. The BPD remains committed to this overall partnership with communities and law enforcement to curtail this growing problem.

cc: Frederick H. Bealefeld III, Police Commissioner, BPD
Angela Gibson, Mayor's Legislative Liaison