Company: **FBI ACS Only account**

Conference Title: **The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice**

Conference ID: **2683642**

Moderator: **Dennis Stoika**

Date: **June 19, 2020**

Operator: Good day, and welcome to the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice conference call. Today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Director Phil Keith. Please go ahead.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Jordan. Good afternoon, and thank you for joining us today. I'll call the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice to order. On behalf of General Barr, we thank you for joining us today for this important Commission teleconference meeting. At this time, I'll ask our Executive Director, Dean Kueter, to conduct the roll call of Commissioners.

Dean Kueter: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And before I call the roll, I'd just like to remind everybody that today's event is open to the press. And for any members of the media on the call, if you have questions or need clarification on anything, please contact Kristina Mastropasqua in the Justice Department's Office of Public Affairs. And with that, I'll begin the roll. Commissioner Bowdich.

David Bowdich: Here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Clemmons.

James Clemmons: Present.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Evans. Commissioner Frazier.

Frederick Frazier: Present.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Gualtieri.

Robert Gualtieri: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Hawkins. Commissioner Lombardo.

Regina Lombardo: Here. Thank you.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner MacDonald.

Erica MacDonald: Good afternoon, Dean. Present.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Moody.

Ashley Moody: I'm here. Thank you.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Parr.

Nancy Parr: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Price. Commissioner Ramsay.

Gordon Ramsay: Here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Rausch.

David Rausch: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Samaniego.

John Samaniego: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Smallwood. Vice-Chair Sullivan.

Katharine Sullivan: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: And Commissioner Washington.

Donald Washington: Here.

Dean Kueter: Mr. Chairman, that concludes the roll call.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Dean. And I did hear from Commissioner Price. He was joining us, and Chief Hawkins is tied up with her city councilors this afternoon.

Dean Kueter: Great. Thank you.

Phil Keith: Any other announcements, Dean?

Dean Kueter: No, sir. We are good to start.

James Smallwood: Mr. Chairman?

Phil Keith: Yes.

James Smallwood: This is James Smallwood. Somehow I got disconnected during roll call. Just wanted to note that I'm here.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Commissioner. Duly noted. On behalf of Attorney General Barr, we thank the Commissioners, the working groups, and certainly the witnesses we have today and the federal staff working towards meeting the goals of this historic Commission.

As noted on previous calls, we encourage our Commissioners to take notes during the testimony of the panelists, and then we'll open up for questions from Commissioners after the last witness.

Our first distinguished panelist today is Dr. Geoffrey Alpert, who is the Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of South Carolina. Dr. Alpert has taught at the FBI National Academy, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and the Senior Management Institute for Police, and is currently federal monitor for the New Orleans Police Department. For the past 35 years, his research interests have included police use of force, emergency driving, and the linkages between researchers and practitioners.

Thank you for joining us today, Dr. Alpert. You're recognized.

Geoffrey Alpert: Thank you. I want to thank Chair Keith, and Vice-Chair Sullivan, and the Commissioners for this opportunity to address you all. This is kind of a critical time in our history, with police and police reform. I want to just start by saying that over the years, we've had many national and local commissions and reports and have identified a lot of areas for reform, and we've generated lengthy and detailed responses, but here we are again in 2020, looking for ways to improve policing and bring police and communities into some sort of mutual understanding and harmony.

I'm going to make a few comments today about my research on accountability, and I think areas that need immediate action. I want to talk first about creating a process of co-production of justice,

or allowing the public to have a voice in how it’s governed. Second, I want to talk a little bit about peer support and the ability and capacity to intervene when other officers are not making the best choices. Third, I'll discuss the idea of early warning or early intervention, which I think we all understand, but I'll make a few comments. And finally, just the general area of accountability for citizens and police, and I think how that can create a climate to influence a positive police culture.

In terms of the co-production of justice, there are many ways to include the public, and I think we've seen the issues of citizen oversight and review, and perhaps the most contentious area within that, is subpoena power. The limited research we've done on this area shows that overall the public approves it. Officers don't really like it. Unions strongly dislike it, and politicians seem to be willing to allow these types of oversight when it's helpful to the community.

There are a lot of difficulties in measuring the effectiveness of citizen oversight, but in 2020 and today's world, we must encourage efforts to find the proper balance in each jurisdiction. They may be different. They could look different in different cities and counties, but we certainly need them.

Another way of co-producing justice, is the involvement of community members in the development of policies. Here, we've seen a lot of success by encouraging citizens to be members of policy committees that have routinely been restricted to members of law enforcement.

Also sharing data with the public and other forms of transparency can build relationship-based policing rather than just developing partnerships. And building relationships will help us develop empathy and a strong bond and commitment between the police and the public.

In terms of the co-production of justice, my recommendations are: the jurisdictions must develop and support the idea and include some type of civilian oversight, whether in a separate agency or part of an existing agency.

Police agencies must create committees that include officers, supervisors, commanders, subject matter experts, and community members to create, review, and modify policies. And agencies must report administrative statistics on police activities to improve that transparency.

The second area of peer support, we all know that policing is a profession that relies on individual actions as well as teamwork. And in today's world, it can be expected that every citizen encounter will be videotaped by more than one camera. In these encounters, peer intervention becomes a critical part of that encounter.

The concepts of active bystandership and the courageous conversation are not new, but they've only recently been put into a comprehensive police training package. An active bystandership can best be understood in the area of - we see the literature starting out as sexual harassment. No one wants a relative or friend to be subjected to sexual harassment, and everyone would hope that a bystander would intervene by saying and/or doing something.

Having a courageous conversation with a stranger or a boss is difficult, and I really like the phrase they've used. It’s not called courageous because it's easy. The program, Ethical Policing Is Courageous or EPIC, was developed in the New Orleans Police Department with community partners.

Examples of police behavior that have been corrected by peer intervention and active bystandership include the reduction of officer-involved vehicular collisions, injuries, and uses of excessive force. Georgetown Law's Innovative Policing Program and the law firm of Sheppard Mullin, has developed a new program, Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement, which is really an expanded version of EPIC.

This innovative program stresses the reasons and requirements to intervene when officers are making bad decisions and teaches the skills to do so effectively. My recommendations for peer

support are fairly simple. Agencies should develop policies, train officers in peer intervention. Appropriate intervention and courageous conversations must be required, and these actions must be evaluated.

Early intervention or early warning. The U.S. Civil Rights Commission Report, Who is Guarding the Guardians in 1981 pushed this program. We've seen it in a variety of iterations, very sophisticated ones, using all sorts of algorithms, down to the 3 by 5 index cards. Some of you older people might remember what those are.

But the basic concept of early warning is that law enforcement agencies must use data to identify problematic officer performance and identify these officers before they get into trouble. Again, the goal here is to avoid serious problems, to correct an officer's behavior. We've done some evaluations of these programs and they're promising.

My recommendation here is that police departments must commit the proper and sufficient resources to develop appropriately designed, automated systems to identify these officers before they develop habits and practices that result in serious violations. These programs must also include supervisor reviews that can identify proper interventions and follow evaluations of those interventions, to see how the officers respond.

Lastly, the area of accountability. In other areas of government, we see accountability referring to things quite different than holding actors responsible after the fact. Comprehensive accountability refers to establishing evidence-based policies and procedures that are influenced by public opinion.

As I mentioned earlier, this means allowing the public to have a voice in how it's governed, which obviously refers to basic elements of democracy. One interesting program is the Marietta (Georgia) Police Department's Citizen Bill of Rights for Police Accountability that should be used as the

national standard for community and police expectations. Here citizens should be taught how to respond to the police and how citizens' behavior can be interpreted as a threat to officers.

A study we did many years ago in Miami high schools, showed that students' attitudes and behaviors can be modified by explaining why and how police understand certain behavior as threatening. Holding an officer accountable is probably one of the most important duties of a supervisor. If a young officer’s doing something improper, not being appropriate with an individual, then a supervisor and or a peer must correct the behavior. If it's not corrected, then it becomes passively agreed, and it becomes part of the climate of that culture, of that department, and then turns into a culture, as other officers continue the behavior.

So I think it's really important that we stop behavior before it gets going in a more serious way, and we've got to deal with the supervisors who must monitor the behavior. And as far as accountability, my recommendation is agencies must create systems to make sure supervisors do their job, observe and audit their officers, reports and behavior, and there must be audits where supervisors compare a sample of reports and videos for each officer. Similarly, citizens must be taught to respond to the police with non-threatening actions and behaviors.

So overall, my focus is to co-produce justice, an opportunity to revisit community policing and problem-solving in the modern day. During interactions, officers need to be empathetic. That’s a word that we don't use enough, and we certainly don't train enough, to develop relationships and have peer support and the requirement to intervene when other officers are not acting appropriately.

Finally, officer behavior must not be allowed to develop into bad habits. Early intervention must be adopted and used, and accountability systems must create a climate that encourages a positive police culture. I want to thank you for this opportunity.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Dr. Alpert for your testimony today, and the significant contributions to the body of research on best practices for law enforcement.

Geoffrey Alpert: Thank you.

Phil Keith: Our next distinguished panelist today is Dr. Gary Cordner, who is the Academic Director for the Baltimore Police Department's Police Academy, Education and Training Section. Dr. Cordner has decades of experience, including serving as the Chief Research Advisor for the National Institute of Justice LEADS Scholar program, the Senior Police Advisor for the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, and a Commissioner for the Commission on Accreditation For Law Enforcement Agencies, better otherwise known as CALEA.

Not only is Dr. Cordner a researcher, but he is a practitioner, having served as a police officer and police chief in Maryland. Dr. Cordner, thank you for joining us today, and you're recognized.

Gary Cordner: Thank you, sir. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for this opportunity. Let me point out first that my comments today are my own and do not necessarily represent any official position of the Baltimore Police Department. I want to highlight three interrelated topics that I think have the potential to improve American policing: measuring what matters, evidence-based policing, and police education. And I'll offer recommendations related to each of those three.

First, measuring what matters. The phrase measuring what matters has been applied to policing for a couple of decades, but with little real progress. I believe police department should adopt what's called a balanced scorecard, an approach which focuses attention on a handful of key elements of an agency's bottom line, i.e. the things that the public hopes its police will accomplish.

Those bottom-line elements should then drive what needs to be measured in order to assess how well the agency is doing and to identify aspects of performance that need to be improved. We don't

need to reinvent the wheel. Mark Moore and Anthony Braga, have provided a framework of seven elements of the policing bottom line.

If we graded police agencies every year on those seven elements, police executives would have a more coherent and thorough and well-rounded picture of how well their agency was doing, including areas to improve. Political leaders would have a framework for assessing police performance that they simply don't have now.

They could actually tell whether their police department is getting better or worse, and it could help make the political and civil discourse about policing more rational and less emotional. It would focus accountability where it should be, on how effectively the agency is using its resources to accomplish the things that matter most.

Second, evidence-based policing. If policing was to be considered a profession, it has to get more serious about building and using its own scientific body of knowledge. That’s the path of evidence-based policing. it's very important to understand that becoming more evidence-based doesn't mean rejecting experience or judgment nor does it mean that every agency has to start doing big research projects.

It just means that everything we do in policing should be as evidence-based as possible. Doing things the way we've always done them or the way some other agency does them isn't good enough. What agencies need first is good data and good analysis of that data. Going back to my first topic, using a balanced scorecard to focus on what matters, an agency needs to know what's going well and what's not. And it needs to dig into problem areas to figure out what's going wrong and why.

NIJ recently published a guidebook on evidence-based policing aimed at practitioners so I won't dwell on this anymore, except to reiterate that a profession needs a solid body of knowledge, and

it needs to use that body of knowledge in policing. We still tend to give too much lip service to professionalism. Adopting and embracing evidence-based policing is the way to get to the next level.

Third, police education. In my opinion, police education in the United States has been on the decline for 40 years. I'm not referring to police training, which has grown tremendously over the same period, but police education as delivered in colleges and universities has been relegated to an increasingly small component of criminal justice and criminology. Effectively, there is no police education in America.

Way back in 1970, Egon Bittner, an eminent social scientist, argued strongly for what he called professional police schools as a key building block toward professional policing. In his view, and here I quote him, "It is clearly not for lawyers, sociologists, or psychologists to develop an intellectually credible version of what police work should be like. This must be left to scholarly police, just as the analogous task is left to scholarly physicians, social workers, or engineers." End quote.

Unfortunately, his advice was ignored, and the police profession completely lost control of its own education. To be fair, there are a handful of great police professors out there, spread across thousands of colleges and universities. There are some good books on policing. There are a lot of smart, thoughtful, reflective police officers who have gotten degrees and are well educated.

But unless they took it entirely upon themselves, they're usually not well educated about policing. That’s because their education didn't focus on policing. Imagine if we didn't have medical schools. Doctors would just get some education in whatever, get a bit of training, and then start practicing medicine. Ditto for lawyers, engineers, teachers, nurses, et cetera. That would be crazy, but it's what we do in policing.

Right now, I think we're doing a terrible job of building and sustaining the capacity within our profession to be evidence-based, and to meet the kind of accountability for performance that should be demanded of us. Education is the vehicle for doing that, but we just don't have a system of police education.

So I have four recommendations. Number one, every law enforcement and political leader should adopt a balanced scorecard, like the Moore and Braga model. COPS and BJA should require it of their grantees. And the administration should require it of all federal law enforcement agencies.

Number two, every law enforcement agency should embrace and adopt evidence-based policing. Law enforcement executive development programs like the NA, the Southern Police Institute, LEMIT in Texas, and others, should reorient their curricula around evidence-based policing. The federal government should incentivize the development and adoption of evidence-based policing.

Number three, the federal government should incentivize the establishment of high quality police schools in colleges and universities, not criminal justice or criminology, but scientifically based degree programs focused specifically on policing. Degrees in policing through which up-and-coming police leaders actually master the body of knowledge of their profession. Imagine that.

Number four, the federal government should charter a college of policing, similar to the one established in the United Kingdom in 2012. The UK's College of Policing is not a degree-granting college, but rather it's a body that oversees and sets standards for the profession. A federally funded U.S. college of policing could be a strong engine for promoting better police education, evidence-based policing, and higher police standards across the board.

It wouldn't replace state POSTs or CALEA, or any of the existing police executive associations, but it would bring a level of attention, resources, and seriousness to professionalizing the police that

only the national government can deliver. As Bittner proposed 50 years ago, it would put scholarly police in charge of developing their own profession. Thanks for the time. That's it.

Operator: Chairman Keith?

Phil Keith: Sorry about that. I had my mute off. Thank you, Dr. Cordner, for your service and certainly for your valued testimony today. Our next panelist is Mrs. Sarah Guardiola. She's the Chief Executive Officer for SkyWay Leadership Institute. Ms. Guardiola has studied indigenous peoples and their behavior dictated by cultural beliefs and values. Her research and recommendations on community building were on display at the United Nations Just Governance Forum. Thank you for joining us today, Ms. Guardiola. You're recognized.

Sarah Guardiola: Thank you very much, Director Keith, Vice-Chair Sullivan, Executive Director Kueter, and the distinguished Commissioners. I would also like to recognize strategic partners that make our program successful: U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Oklahoma, Trent Shores; Tulsa County District Attorney, Steve Kunzweiler; Tulsa Mayor, G.T. Bynum; Tulsa city councilors; Deputy Mayor Amy Brown; and Tulsa Police Chief, Wendell Franklin, from my home state of Oklahoma, for without them, this program would not have been successful.

As Director Keith indicated, my name is Sarah Guardiola, and I do serve as the Chief Executive Officer of SkyWay Leadership Institute in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The importance of this Commission has never been greater than it is now. Community building and restoration of social trust is at the forefront of our national dialogue.

Engagement-based policing is considered by many who have participated in our program a deeper interaction between law enforcement personnel and minority youth within the framework of experiential learning. The Commission recently heard testimony by Erik Bourgerie, Director of

Colorado Peace Officer Standards and Commission, regarding the value and benefit of facilitated discussions, which is a significant component to experiential learning.

I know that Vice-Chair Sullivan took special note of this. As submitted in our written testimony, in addition to providing context, SkyWay presents our evidence-based experiential learning program, as a replicable, scalable, engagement-based policing model for law enforcement agencies. And we strongly recommend the need for establishing strategic partners to ensure its effectiveness.

SkyWay shows the potential to lead the nation with its innovative and tested programs. So by utilizing the HelmZar Challenge Course as a tool, a robust community-based policing program called Community Trust Champions has evolved. This program, targeting youth between 6th and 12th grade, partners with police departments, local educators, and Dr. Chan Hellman, an internationally recognized hope research psychologist.

Our data collection and assessment is overseen by the University of Oklahoma's Hope Research Center, and it shows statistically significant increases in hope and trust. Now, for clarification, our facility is located at a challenge course, but this is not a pre-requisite for program success. It is merely a tool.

Rather, success lies in the use of evidence-based programming. It is the intentionally sequencing of activities, incorporating the experiential learning with a focus on trauma awareness and underpinned by the science of hope. These four methods, when used correctly, build community between people or two groups. And to learn a little bit more about that, I addressed it in greater detail in our written testimony.

Now, if you would let me share with you a story so it's not so esoteric about what experiential learning looks like when applied to real-life police and youthful engagement. One of our great

partners is with Youth Services of Tulsa, and they've asked us to work with their first offender program.

So on a regular basis, we run the five-hour Community Trust Champion program, or as we call it, CTC. And we do this to challenge the perceptions that they may hold against each other. Well, not that long ago, we did - we ran a CTC program, and the participating officers in full uniform, walked into a room with at-risk youth, or first offenders.

Trust me, this got the kids' attention and instantly, their anxiety was tangible. What made this particular event very interesting is that one of the officers immediately recognized a girl she had recently arrested. And as you can imagine, they had very clear, well-established opinions of each other. But the purpose of starting the day with uniformed police and youth is to provide them an opportunity to engage, to ask questions.

Now, while many of these kids are really angry and sometimes are completely silent, if they do manage to communicate, or the officers are able to open them up, what we hear are comments like, every time you show up, someone in my family disappears. My mama told me not to trust you. And a very common one, have you ever been shot?

After the Q&A, the officers left the room, and you could feel the kids kind of breathe a sigh of relief. However, these same officers, return in plainclothes as participants, and this is a very intentional point. The power dynamic is removed, and it alters the way the group engages, which is incredibly important, because the day revolves around working through tough obstacles, finding new pathways, and creating agency, which is motivation to reach that goal.

So, for me, during that day, I spent my time capturing observational data and watching the paradigm shift slowly take place. I watched as a skilled SkyWay facilitator, took them through specifically

sequenced initiatives. I saw that same girl who had earlier been arrested by that female officer intentionally avoid her.

However, toward the middle of the day, this young person spoke up for the first time in a debrief session. And what you need to know is that debriefing takes place after every challenge. It creates intentional moments. It reinforces new concepts or beliefs. The participants are able to develop personal insights that they do access at future times in their lives.

Now, this teenager began sharing during that debrief, how surprised she was that she came up with the solution to the challenge we placed in front of the entire group. And the reason for her surprise, she shared, was based on past trauma of hearing her father tell her how worthless she is on a regular basis.

This teenager had no reason to trust that her contributions would work. But what's interesting is, I observed a flicker of sadness across the female officer's face due to what she was hearing. As the day progressed and the initiatives got harder, the group dynamics began to evolve, and we call this group cohesion.

Then after one of the hardest challenges of the day, I listened to that same teenager as she beamed with pride. She accomplished something she did not think was possible, and it was because she asked for help from that female officer. At the end of the day, we pulled both of them aside to gather data about their experience.

And the officer simply stated, what I really appreciate about going through this program, is that the relationship deepens with every sequence we're put through. We go from perfect strangers to experiencing empathy for both sides, and I did not know before today that she and I had similar trauma. It’s scary that one moment or one person can alter the direction we take in life. The young

lady we interviewed simply said, I learned that this officer has a personality and has more things in common with me than I thought, and it made me understand a little bit better how hard their job is.

So universally, each group, police and youth, on that day walked away surprised at how their perceptions changed, not only about themselves, but how they viewed each other. What SkyWay is really excited about is we can show data to support this change. My clear recommendation to the Commission is the need for law enforcement agencies to incorporate this kind of sequenced experiential learning in their community-policing model. And we strongly recommend strategic partners to ensure their success.

It has been an honor to be recognized by the Commission and to provide testimony about our community engagement program. Now is the time to look at innovative programs to bring communities and police together in a positive and authentic way.

And we're excited about the opportunity to potentially partner with federal agencies, and we look forward to working with Vice-Chair Sullivan and her team at Office of Justice Programs, but I must share with you regrettably, because of COVID, despite doing everything, applying for grants, relief funds, cost savings, furloughing staff, our doors will permanently close this July.

The impact of COVID was devastating and meant the loss of hundreds of thousands of donor dollars committed by local foundations. And understandably, those funds were redirected to immediate health and safety needs of the community. The challenge for us is that even after reapplying to seven organizations, those donors who love our work, cannot consider granting us funds until spring, and we simply can't wait that long.

However, I am hopeful. With potential federal partnerships and the possibility of Congress appropriating more funds to communities in need, we might have the opportunity to enhance,

expand, and replicate this program beyond Tulsa, beyond Oklahoma, to other communities nationwide who need help now to bridge the gap between their youth and their officers.

But to do this, we need an infusion of financial support to continue our proven program. If you can help or know of someone, please send them my way. I want to say thank you again, Commissioners, for your generous time today.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Ms. Guardiola, for your commitment to service and for your testimony today. Our last distinguished panelist today is Dr. John MacDonald, who is professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. MacDonald teaches and conducts scholarly research on a variety of topics, including public policy responses to reduce crime and violence in a society, and reducing race and ethnic disparities in criminal justice.

His research on these topics have been published in numerous academic journals, including The American Journal of Public Health, Criminology, The Journal of Quantitative Criminology, The Economic Journal, and The Journal of American Statistical Association. Thank you for joining us today, Dr. MacDonald. You're recognized.

John MacDonald: Good afternoon. Director Keith, staff, and distinguished Ccommissioners, It's a pleasure to present for this historic Commission. Today, I'm going to talk about changing places and the role that rebuilding infrastructure can have to reduce crime in communities. This is also a feature of a recent book out by the same title that I released in 2019.

Specifically, place-based changes I'm going to talk about, should be viewed though as complements to police in the co-production of public safety, not a substitute. So I'm making that clear. My discussion is going to focus specifically on the role of place-based programs that make structural changes to crime in hotspots or crime hotspots, areas of high crime concentration,

changes to places that can be scaled to entire municipalities, and changes that are sustainable over time.

The programs I'm going to be speaking about take an up-front investment between the public and private sectors, but they're relatively low cost to maintain. And a growing body of scientific evidence shows that place-based interventions help reduce crime in communities, even when crime is not the central focus of these interventions.

During Q&A, I can also speak about a growing body of evidence showing that redevelopment incentives and partnerships with local businesses can also be used as a place making agenda to help reduce crime. So, why does place matter so much? Well, it turns out that in every community, a small number of locations generate most of the serious crime.

Criminologists have known this for now 40 years. And even going back into the 1800s, there was some work on this topic. These pockets of crime we see in every urban and even rural community, it's true across the country, and it's even true across the world. In Philadelphia for example, just 5% of the addresses where crime rates was reported to the police in 2018 accounted for about 50% of all serious crime.

Within these crime hotspots, research suggests a small fraction of people living nearby generate the bulk of reported crime. So crime is both highly concentrated by place and highly concentrated by a small number of people in these places. Everyone who serves on this Commission with the experience as a police officer knows the problem of the repeat calls for service to the same problematic addresses.

So the locations of these pockets of crimes in communities, it turns out is also remarkably stable year after year, suggesting that if we focus more attention on curbing - doing things to change these places, we can actually curb crime and victimization. Concentrated poverty, dilapidated and

abandoned homes, and vacant abandoned lots, are endemic in these pockets of crime. We see this throughout the country.

So one approach to thinking about changing places, is to address those structural deficits, specifically remediating abandoned homes, cleaning up vacant land. Turns out it's a cost effective approach to addressing one of the major sources for why crime is so concentrated by place. Place-based programs like I'm going to provide a few examples of can also be incented through a regulatory framework that encourages, for example, reinvesting in distressed communities, such as the adoption of new building codes, or making the zoning of land more flexible.

A focus on changing places also helps reduce the need for the police to repeatedly respond to crime and disorder in the same address. Abating vacant land, repairing abandoned houses in high crime places, turns out can help reverse some of the spiral of decaying communities and produce transformational improvements and opportunities for people living in these places.

For example, programs that are remediating abandoned buildings or vacant land are being experimented with throughout the country, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Flint, Michigan, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I'm going to briefly describe one such program that I've been studying with my colleague, Charles Branas, who is the Chair and Professor of Epidemiology at Columbia University.

We’ve been studying this program for the past 10 years. The program is called LandCare, and it was developed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in 1996 when a group of residents living in a Philadelphia neighborhood, Kensington, decided they were really frustrated with the constant eyesore of vacant lots in their neighborhood and the problems of crime and disorder those lots were bringing.

They noticed that - the Horticultural Society had a community garden program nearby. And so they asked if there was something that the Horticultural Society could do to help them address the vacant land. What the Horticultural Society did, is they came up with this program called LandCare. And they started the pilot there in Kensington.

I'll talk a little bit about what that program looks like, but I just want to note that this little partnership that started as a pilot with this Kensington neighborhood, now has expanded with local contractors throughout the entire city of Philadelphia. It’s transformed more than 12,000 vacant lots, and affected more than 80 million square feet of land. Today, roughly about a third of Philadelphia has been remediated by this LandCare program.

So the LandCare program intervention, it's fairly simple to implement. You can scale it to an entire city, and it's relatively - it's reproducible, and it's relatively low cost to maintain. So what they do is, with vacant lots that have trash and debris growing all – trash, debris growing, they remove the trash and the debris. The land is then graded within. Grass is planted, maybe some small bushes, a few trees.

They install a small wooden post fence around the lot that just signals that someone in the community is caring for its use. The actual cost of the intervention is relatively low. It’s about $1,000 to maybe $1,300 to clean and green a vacant lot, and about $150 a year to maintain through biweekly cleaning and mowing.

So these newly greened trash-free lots, create the appearance of basic small pocket parks in Philadelphia, in some of the highest crime city blocks. What we found in our research studying what happens to crime - other outcomes around these vacant lots that are cleaned and greened, for example, we track crime patterns before and after the cleaning and greening of vacant lots, and we found that serious crime was reduced substantially on blocks after receiving the cleanup.

We also recently conducted a controlled experiment with funding from NIH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where we took up 541 vacant lots, and we randomly assigned some of them to receive the cleaning and greening, and some of them to remain in a control condition - receive no treatment.

What we found is substantial reductions in serious crime and in gun violence. We also found that residents living nearby reported improved social interaction. And there was also evidence that even people living nearby these vacant lots saw improvements after they were cleaned in their depression.

The LandCare program I'm talking about, provides a clear example of a simple program that can address blight and abandonment. It can be transformative for addressing some of the negative effects of living in the most impoverished areas facing high rates of disorder and crime. There are similar programs, like the one I'm talking about in Flint, Michigan, in Youngstown, Ohio, that have been studied and found similar benefits.

There's also a growing body of evidence, including some work I've conducted, showing that remediating abandoned houses, relatively low cost remediations can also reduce crime in communities. So communities throughout the U.S. that confront problems of vacant lots, abandoned houses, it turns out they all have eligible workforce that can be employed in a major vacant lot and abandoned housing abatement programs.

This work is meaningful work. It can be done with very little training, and it can even be done employing individuals, for example, who have prior criminal justice involvement and come from these same neighborhoods. And you think about it from the kind of perspective of re-entry, employing individuals with criminal justice involvement in semi-skilled occupation like cleaning up vacant lots and mowing, remediating abandoned houses, provides a decent wage that can spur economic self-sufficiency, and it can even lead to some entrepreneurship.

Some of these individuals will then go on to become truck contractors themselves. And as Father Greg Boyle of Homeboy Industries famously notes, nothing stops a bullet like a job. Programs that change the land use of places, they also don't require major up-front investment from taxpayers, or creating large government agencies to administer.

What they require is basic local partnership between landscape workers, contractors, municipal organizations that oversee maybe the legal arrangements of regulating land. And then those partnerships can be built to immediately clean-up blighted blocks and provide employment opportunities for people in these communities, many of whom have past or current criminal justice involvement.

So programs like LandCare, again, can be reproduced throughout the country. They can be easily scaled to cover entire sections of cities that need remediation, and they're sustainable with really limited overall public investment.

The final thing I'll just note is that I think reducing abandonment and remediating properties, rebuilding the infrastructure in these high crime places, can help communities restore both the places and also the people. Thank you very much, and I look forward to sharing additional comments with you during question and answer.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Dr. MacDonald for your testimony and your services. Commissioners, we are now open for questions to the witnesses. Commissioners with a question, please state your name prior to your question, and direct the question to a specific panelist or the entire panel. Just as a reminder to our Commissioners, your mics are hot at all times. Thank you, and Commissioners with questions for our panelists.

David Bowdich: Hey, this is Dave Bowdich, and my question is directed towards Geoffrey Alpert. I appreciated all the testimony of those today. Here is something jumped out at me on the accountability aspect of your testimony and really resonated because having read a number of the DOJ reports on departments that were at one point problematic, one thing that seemed to jump out a lot to me, is sergeants not being sergeants, which led to a lot of the lack of accountability and control over certain situations.

You talked on page 5 of your testimony about these sergeants and the supervisors roles rather in accountability, and I'm curious, from your vantage point, looking at your background, if you see departments that are doing this well as far as training their supervisors, are they the rarity out there right now, or is this becoming more common as these issues show themselves?

Geoffrey Alpert: Unfortunately I think it's not a common practice. Obviously with 18,000 departments, it's hard to say what's going on in all of them, but it's rare that you see supervisors who are, as you put it, doing their jobs, or I guess I would call it cop with stripes, rather than being a leader. And I think there are some ways to do it, and I mentioned in my remarks, requiring them to do certain things.

But you hope when you get promoted to a first-line supervisor, that those kinds of skills and those kinds of jobs would be part of what you want to do. And unfortunately, I don't see it. Unfortunately, what we see when we start looking at past analyses of these leaders as not being leaders. So unfortunately I agree with you that it's much more of a rarity than it should be.

David Bowdich: Okay. And then just a follow up question. Of the departments you have worked with and seen out there, specifically at the local level, which ones have you seen that you say to yourself, they're doing it right?

Geoffrey Alpert: I mentioned Marietta, Georgia, in my remarks because of the Bill of Rights, but they also seem to be doing it very well. Now, mind you, that's a very small department. And I think in these

smaller departments, Coral Gables, Florida, seems to be doing it quite well. Again, probably a mid-sized department. I can't point you to a large department that I think is really handling its supervisors very well.

David Bowdich: Thank you.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Director. Other Commissioners with questions?

James Smallwood: Mr. Chair, this is Commissioner Smallwood. I have a few questions.

Phil Keith: Mr. Smallwood, you're recognized.

James Smallwood: And my line of questions are for the same speaker. As it relates to your commentary about accountability, do you feel like that failure point of supervisors is because there is a lack of leadership training for those front line supervisors when they're promoted?

It seems like from my perspective that oftentimes, folks are promoted into the next rank, and we kind of put them in a work test period, and wish them the best and see how it pans out, and the training for leading at that next level is a little bit lacking. I just wondered if you see that across the country.

Geoffrey Alpert: Yes, sir. That's spot on. I think it's rare that we see good training for people who were recently promoted. It's rare that we see good systems that they can start learning how to do their own supervision and what to do.

And I think that's a real shortcoming because it creates, as I mentioned in my comments, it creates a climate where mistakes are made by officers and not corrected, and then they become part of the organization.

And I think it's such an important thing to get these first line supervisors to do their jobs. And I think we can learn from corporations as well, because we see a lot of the same behavior in other - in businesses and in other corporations where they're doing a better job than we are in policing of getting their managers trained and up and running.

And I think as Gary was talking about the evidence-based policing and measuring what matters, we need to measure these kinds of performances. And basically if the sergeant can't do it, he or she shouldn't be a sergeant.

James Smallwood: I appreciate that comment. And I may have missed it in the packet that was sent out before. The document that you mentioned about Marietta Police Department, Mr. Chair, do you know if that was included in that?

Phil Keith: No, sir, Commissioner, I do not, but I will have you an answer as soon as this call is over with.

James Smallwood: Perfect. Thank you. And to my second question for the same speaker. Accountability in policing, as far as I know, seems to be mainly focused on punitive accountability. Have you seen any models across the country that may be more educational accountability, rather than punitive, that are successful, where we're not actually taking something away, or creating a sense of pain or harm to the officer, like us taking money or taking vacation days away, rather than correcting the behavior by continuing to educate them on their mistakes?

I'm just wondering, it seems like as we continue down the path of progressive and punitive discipline in police departments, it kind of creates a mentality of - I'm trying to think of - just an upset employee who's not going to be as productive, because they feel like every time they make a mistake, it's just a punitive motion.

So I'm wondering if there is an education based or some other based system of accountability that you see that may be more successful in other places. Have I lost everybody?

Phil Keith: Commissioner, who is that question directed to?

Katharine Sullivan: I think that was for Dr. Alpert, right, Commissioner?

James Smallwood: Yes. The same - I'm sorry, Dr. Alpert, same speaker.

Katharine Sullivan: Thank you. Yes.

Geoffrey Alpert: Yes. So, I mentioned in my comments the early identification systems. And I think that's kind of the best approach. Now, we haven't done them very well. We haven't put the resources and the assets into them that we need, but that identifies officers who are committing a pattern or a series of behaviors that, before it gets real serious, it can be corrected.

And if done well, the limited research we've done in this area, shows that it can be effective of identifying the person coming up with a program of training, or coaching perhaps, is a better term, and making sure that they audit it so the behavior doesn't continue. And I think that's probably the best answer I can give you.

There are isolated programs I've seen around the country where officers again are coached when they've done things that aren't quite appropriate, where there's no discipline, there's no time off, but it shows that the behavior has to be corrected. And how they correct it again is through - whether it's peer intervention, whether it's retraining, but it's way before there’s discipline.

And I agree with you, if I can read into your comments, that that has to be pushed rather than just a negative discipline. And the only thing I also wanted to add is, accountability in the front end of

making sure - and we'll go back to the sergeant example. We should include sergeants in, or good first line supervisors, in developing of the kinds of training that the up-and-coming young sergeants need.

And I think as long as, if we can get a buy in, then I think that kind of training and that kind of program, will be far more successful than if we just as command staff, just tell them what to do, because that's the way we did it back when we were down there. And I think again, by getting the buy in on the front end, and getting to coach them as they go through, is a far more successful approach than just punishment.

James Smallwood: I really appreciate your comments. That's all I have, Mr. Chair.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Commissioner. Other Commissioners with questions?

David Rausch: Chair, David Rausch.

Phil Keith: Commissioner Rausch, you're recognized.

David Rausch: Dr. Alpert, I want to ask you a question. I have one for Dr. Cordner as well. But Dr. Alpert, on community oversight, just curious as - so it seems to be, and quite frankly, most of them are adversarial in nature it appears, right, is there a model for something less adversarial and more engaging?

Geoffrey Alpert: That's probably the toughest issue we see these days and most cantankerous issue we see in policing. And I cannot point you to one that's been evaluated successfully. There are parts of them. One in Portland, Oregon, for example, has done well over the past few years.

And then as I said earlier, we get into this whole issue of subpoena power that it just becomes a fight, and I'm not sure how best to resolve it. I think looking around and maybe trying to find some of these successful programs and pulling out the best parts of them. I just don't have a good answer for you because it's - like I said, the police don't like it, the community like it, and the unions will fight you to the death for it.

David Rausch: Thank you. And for Dr. Cordner. Dr. Cordner, I appreciate your insight. And just so you know, I've been a student of yours for years. And so - but my question is on the training and education piece. And it has to do with, we hear a lot about, should police training be - and education, be more trained as a trade, or should it be a degree program? What’s your feel on that debate?

Gary Cordner: As you say, that's an oft debated topic. It seems to me that inevitably it's both. That’s probably a mealy-mouthed answer, but if we think about doctors, or in particular, like for example surgeons, I mean, they have to have really good skills. There’s a trade. And if you're going in for surgery, you want a surgeon who has a really good hands and really knows how to use his or her equipment.

But they also obviously - that has to be backed up by a solid body of scientific knowledge so that they not only are good at what they do, but they know what to do and what not to do, and which organs to cut into and which ones not to. And so I think a lot of the things that we think of as professions in fact combine a sort of a trade component, a craft component, as well as a knowledge component. I think police belongs in the same category, but we're having a hard time getting there.

David Rausch: Yes, sir. I agree. And so - and I know in your testimony, you had addressed kind of the education side of it. And we have a hard time getting people to come into policing. And so trying to set a standard of - as we've seen, it's been difficult to set a standard of a degree requirement. What are your thoughts in that arena in terms of, how do we balance the need to get people into the profession, and the need to have the education standard?

Gary Cordner: Yes. And certainly especially a couple or three times in the last decade or two, when there's been just such a recruiting crunch, a number of places that did have at least some higher education standards, eliminated it because they just couldn't get enough people. So, that is a heck of a tough topic.

Personally, I'm convinced that in an ideal world, police officers who are better educated are better prepared to do the awesome job that police officers have to do. But then there's the practical side of getting enough bodies in. I think if we in the police profession were in more control of the education of police officers, we could incorporate more education in the training that we do.

We could come up with systems of continuing education, not just continuing training. And we could also come up with systems for - as officers rise through the ranks, much as in the military, they would get a significant amount of education periodically throughout their careers. And I don't think we do that very well in policing. I mean, there's a bit of catch-as-catch-can, but I think it's - I don't think we have a system for doing that in which we really groom people for the most important, higher level jobs in our profession, unfortunately. And I'd like to see, as a profession, see us be more in control of that so we could do a better job of it.

David Rausch: One last question on the education side. I think some research, but there's not a lot out there, on the impact of education on an officer's use of force. Is there further research that needs to be done, or is there other research that I just haven't seen?

Gary Cordner: No, I think it's a mixed bag, and I'm sure you - what you've seen and your sense of it is right on target. Certainly, there's more reach research to be done. I don't think that most of the research that we've had to this point, has been able to answer the question. I mean, we've got studies that show that officers with more higher education, use less force, make better decisions, have fewer complaints, have less absenteeism, and so forth.

But we've also got studies that compared officers with and without higher education and found no difference. So I don't think that there's very solid ground to make any claims at this point.

David Rausch: Thank you.

Phil Keith: Thank you, Commissioner. Dr. Cordner, I have a question for you regarding the police education. You talked about the scholarly police. And you and I worked on a project together 12 years ago on law enforcement leadership, and we found that the vast majority of leadership literature was written by non-police. How do we approach the academic profession for that type of change?

Gary Cordner: That's a darn good question. I'm afraid I've become a bit cynical, having spent so much of my time in that academic world. And I have hundreds of friends and former colleagues that I will aggravate by what I say. But my feeling is that starting in the 1970s, the academics, the people in the academic fields of criminal justice and criminology, were given the reins over police education.

And at the time, it was probably the best choice, because I don't think there was an alternative. But that was also a point in time 40 years ago, 40 plus years ago, when we didn't have a strong literature, a strong research base in policing. So we sort of couldn't argue for anything else, we, in the police profession, because we were not on solid academic ground ourselves.

But that was 40 or 45 years ago. It's a different day now. There has been so much research in the police world since then of all different kinds, but a lot of it along the lines of what works and what doesn't. And we're at a point where I'm frustrated that the people in policing aren't being taught - or people who are going to go into policing - aren't being taught that body of knowledge about policing.

And I really think part of the reason is that professors of criminal justice and criminology, are in charge of the educational enterprise, and the body of knowledge on policing is not their number

one priority. It's not their first love. It's not what most of them do. And that's why I'm trying to argue for a different vision, a different framework, a different system.

Frankly, as you may know, this is what's happened in the U.K. in the last five to 10 years is, they've started to create degree programs in policing, both for entry level and also at the graduate level, instead of having everybody study something else and then come into policing. So they've put their eggs in that basket, and I think we would be wise to do the same.

Phil Keith: Thank you. Other Commissioners with questions. Other Commissioners with questions.

Katharine Sullivan: I can't help it. I've got to go, guys. It's Katie. I do - I have a question for - I'm recognized? Sorry, Phil.

Phil Keith: No. I was just recognizing you. Thank you.

Katharine Sullivan: Okay, good. Thank you. Okay. So Sarah, I - and I'm sorry, I'm using your first name, but I wanted to just ask you, because I've been hearing a trend through a lot of our testimony, and that is that kind of this idea of changing - getting to communities and community engagement through interaction with children can be key to better relationships with the police going forward. Are your studies showing that, or do you not go that far? Is it really just specific to the individuals that you're engaging?

Sarah Guardiola: So the easiest way to explain that is, those that go through this program, what's interesting about success is it begets success, and it becomes a social gift. So what we're seeing is, when these young people go through our program with police, and it's typically a full classroom, we see that not only does their behavior change in the classroom and that classroom management changes, but the way that they interact with the officers that are onsite or on campus completely changes.

Our next step is to really look at, what is the longevity of the impact, and how far does it go into the community? When that child comes home and says, "Hey mom, I just experienced something that I didn't think was possible." and so now we've changed that conversation from, this is the only way to think about it to, there might be another way.

The other area that we're really looking at when it comes to recruiting, is beginning that process of reflecting the faces that they see in the officers, because it's long-term, but as they begin to see the fact that they are capable of being this officer, their perspectives change. And we're already seeing young graduates who are calling up our recruiters and saying, "Hey, I went through this experience. I just wanted a little bit more information."

And Tulsa, Oklahoma, requires a four-year degree. And so there is a pathway for them through a partnership with a junior college and a college, and also a mentorship within the department that gets them there, because their resources are not normally the same as our traditional applicants. So to that point, yes, we do see that. I don't have data on it, but we do see it anecdotally.

Katharine Sullivan: Great. Thank you. And Dr. MacDonald, I wanted to ask you about - so as I understand (inaudible, fades out).

Phil Keith: Jordan, do we still have the call hot line here?

Operator: I believe so. Katie, can you hear me? It might have been that we just lost her.

Phil Keith: Okay. She'll call back in. other Commissioners with call - with questions, I'm sorry. Other Commissioners with questions for witnesses today? Hearing no further questions, let me close by thanking our panelists once again for your time and your most valuable testimony, and responses to the questions from our Commissioners.

On behalf of the Attorney General, his leadership team of Rachel Bissex and Jeff Favitta, and all the Commissioners, your contributions provided today are most sincerely appreciated and will assist the Commission in their deliberations and work. I'd also please remind you to check the President's Commission page for additional updates of documents and information on the main Justice website, and we'll update it regularly when information is available for posting.

I want to once again thank the FBI for use of their teleconference network and support, and again for all federal program staff supporting the Commission. Dean, please let the record reflect that Commissioner Price joined the call. And Commissioner Smallwood, your information will be sent to you soon.

James Smallwood: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Phil Keith: Yes, sir. Any questions or comments from Commissioners? Vice-Chair Sullivan, have you rejoined the call? We're planning hearings for the week of June the 22nd on the topics related to the use of force in policing culture. Commissioners and working group members will receive additional information for those hearings and the final agendas, testimony, and the witness bios soon.

If there is no further business before us today, I thank our witnesses again. The President's Commission is adjourned. Thank you, Commissioners, for your dedication and commitment. Please have a good weekend. Travel safe.

Regina Lombardo: Thank you. Thank you, Phil.

David Rausch: Thank you, Phil.

Dean Kueter: Thank you all.

James Smallwood: Thanks, Phil.

Operator: And this concludes today's call. Thank you for your participation. You may now disconnect.