

**Testimony of
Robert A. Bermingham Jr.
Gang Prevention Coordinator
Fairfax County**

**Before
The Committee on Government Reform**

“Every Kid Is Worth Fighting For: A Community Partnership”

July 14, 2006

**Room 305
Fairfax City Hall
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Good Morning Chairman Davis and distinguished committee members. My name is Bob Bermingham and I currently serve as the Gang Prevention Coordinator for Fairfax County. I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee today and discuss how Fairfax County has responded to gangs and how Fairfax County has collaborated with the other jurisdictions within the region on gang prevention efforts. Chairman Connolly has done an excellent job outlining Fairfax County's response to gangs. I would like to tell you about my responsibilities as the Gang Prevention Coordinator and my participation on the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force.

First I would like to say how fortunate I am to be working as the Gang Prevention Coordinator in Fairfax County. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors placed such importance on this position that they directed that it report directly to the County Executive. The position also was designed so that I would have direct access to the Chief of Police and all agency heads in Fairfax County. While the leverage which is afforded by being part of the County Executive's Office is helpful, I truly believe that if the elected officials in Fairfax County had not put this issue on their list of priorities, we would be working individually and inefficiently in regard to gang prevention. As a result of the spotlight put on gangs and gang prevention by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors we are progressing in our coordination of gang prevention services and are starting to enjoy some of the benefits of our labor.

My job, in short, is to be the point person in Fairfax County when it comes to gangs. I have been tasked with developing and implementing the County's response to the gangs through suppression, prevention and intervention methods. I am very fortunate to work with one of the finest police departments in the nation. When it comes to suppression of gangs in Fairfax County, we are in good hands. If you are a gang member in Fairfax County you are finding it harder and harder to conduct your business in this County without being detected by law enforcement.

While suppression is a very important part of our overall gang prevention strategy, it will not be successful without a strong and sustainable prevention and intervention system. Therefore the Board of Supervisors has tasked me with coordinating the County's agencywide response to gangs along with developing partnerships within community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations and faith-based organizations. Today, Fairfax County has begun to establish a unified service delivery system when it comes to gang prevention and develop partnerships in the community, which in time will allow for greater service delivery to those in need.

Fairfax County has proudly joined with our neighboring jurisdictions in Northern Virginia to form the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force. The Task Force provides regionwide law enforcement services and now regionally based education, prevention and intervention programming. Along with Jim Dedes, the Director of Court Services for the Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, I represent Fairfax County on the Education, Intervention and Prevention side of the Task Force, which is developing regionwide gang prevention programming.

In closing, let me thank you for providing me the opportunity to present at today's hearing. I, like the Chairman, understand that there are still obstacles to conquer to effectively deal with gangs and gang violence, but given the level of commitment within Fairfax County to openly and collectively address the issue of gangs, we will surmount those obstacles and prevail. The Chairman frequently asserts, "Seize the mission!" I can tell you that Fairfax County Government has seized the mission and is moving forward in gang prevention.

Please let me know if you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them.