

Submitting Testimony



*Hundreds of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement
Leaders, and Violence Survivors
Preventing Crime and Violence*

Testimony

2015 Joint Legislative Hearing

Health Committee

Philip C. Povero, Sheriff, Ontario County

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Thank you, Members of the Committee, for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

I am Philip C. Povero, the Sheriff of Ontario County. I am a co-chair of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York, an organization of 248 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys and crime survivors across the State who support investments in proven prevention strategies.

I am here today to speak with you about the importance of funding the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) home visiting program. After years of the Legislature championing this program, I am thrilled that the Executive has invested \$3M. Now I ask that you continue your support and add an additional \$2 million in funding to the Governor's proposal to help support the program's sustainability. This investment is especially critical now to offset any additional reduction in capacity and maintain programs at current levels until more stable funding can be secured. Budget cuts in many areas in recent years have put NFP agencies in a more vulnerable position. I don't have an NFP program in my county, but with funding to expand services, I hope to someday.

Some of you may wonder why a sheriff wants to talk to you about maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting. Let me give you some reasons for my remarks. While most survivors of childhood abuse and neglect never become violent criminals, research shows that an estimated 3,000 of the 77,000 victims of abuse and neglect in New York in 2010 will later become violent criminals who otherwise might have avoided such crimes if not for the abuse and neglect they endured as children.

The randomized control trial of the NFP program showed that children of participating mothers had 48% fewer substantiated reports of abuse or neglect than the children of



mothers in the control group, indicating that home visiting can cut abuse and neglect nearly in half among at-risk children.ⁱ The children left out of the program also had more than twice as many arrests by age 15, and they were twice as likely to be convicted by age 19.ⁱⁱ

These large reductions in abuse, neglect and crime mean that home visiting can save far more than it costs. These are measurable outcomes that will strengthen families and make communities safer – especially those with many at-risk lower income families.

New York State has the fourth largest number of people living in poverty in the US. According to NYSCAA, our cities continue to have very high levels of childhood poverty – some at percentages triple the national poverty rate: Syracuse (51.3%), Rochester (51.1%), Utica (48.5%), Binghamton (47.9%) and Buffalo (46.5%). Statewide, 22.1% of children under the age of 18 live in poverty – nearly a million (935,477) children. These children and families need your help.

Police officers all over New York State would tell you this, and personally in my over 43 years in law enforcement, it has become commonplace to see generation after generation of the same family become involved in the criminal justice system.

We have come to expect that children of criminals will do no better than their parents. Fortunately we can stop this cycle.

Because a child is born into a family with low resources, or into a socially disadvantaged environment, we can and—in the interest of public safety we must—provide programs that help that family, help that child, and make our streets safer.

We can reduce child abuse and neglect, we can reduce crime, and we can increase school readiness with the NFP program.

Research tells us that home visiting improves a child's chances in education. There is a clear and undeniable connection between education and crime. We see it on our streets every

day. Our prisons and jails are full of people who did poorly in school. Investing in the NFP program is a way to both improve educational outcomes and decrease crime in the future.

Nurse Family Partnership is a proven program that gets results. That is why I am urging you today to add \$2 million to the Governor's proposal, for a total of \$5 million for the sustainability of the NFP home visiting program.

I thank you for your time and your consideration.

ⁱ The original findings were presented in Olds, D.L., Eckenrode, J., Henderson, C.R., Kitzman, J.H., Powers, J., Cole, R., et al. (1997). Long-term effects of home visitation on maternal life course and child abuse and neglect: Fifteen-year follow-up of a randomized trial. *JAMA*, 278(8), 637-643; Revised results in: Luckey, D.W., Olds, D.L., Zhang, W., Henderson, C., Knudtson, M., Eckenrode, J., et al. "Revised analysis of 15-Year Outcomes in the Elmira Trial of the Nurse-Family Partnership." Prevention Research Center for Family and Child Health, University of Colorado Department of Pediatrics, 2008.

ⁱⁱ Eckenrode, J., Campa, M., Luckey, D.W., Henderson, C.R., Cole, R., et al. (2010). Long-term effects of prenatal and infancy nurse home visitation on the life course of youths: 19-year follow-up of a randomized trial. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 164(1), 9-15; Luckey, D.W., Olds, D.L., Zhang, W., Henderson, C., Knudtson, M., Eckenrode, J., et al. "Revised analysis of 15-Year Outcomes in the Elmira Trial of the Nurse-Family Partnership." Prevention Research Center for Family and Child Health, University of Colorado Department of Pediatrics, 2008.

