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REMARKS

BY

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BEFORE

THE ADVISORY BOARD ON THE STUDY OF EXEMPLARY
SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR INNER-CITY YOUTH

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AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

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122132

It is a pleasure to be here with you today to launch the important work of the newly-convened Advisory Committee on The Study of Exemplary Substance Abuse Programs for Inner-City Youth. This is, indeed, a distinguished panel. Your individual achievements clearly attest to that. The challenging work that is before you certainly requires your expertise, and it also requires your insight and judgment on matters that can have an impact on high-risk, inner-city youth and the perils of substance abuse.

It is especially gratifying to be a partner with The Pew Charitable Trusts as primary sponsors of this study. To date, too few studies have been conducted under the auspices of such a partnership. At NIJ, I have tried to bridge the gap between practitioners and researchers, and between the government and the private sector. Therefore, when I see a concept such as this come into fruition, I feel we are on the right track. In this room we have prominent practitioners, researchers and academicians, who -- working together, we hope will find some of the solutions to the most pervasive problem facing our country today -- the scourge of drug abuse and its impact on our children.

In President Bush's "1990 National Drug Control Strategy," the role of prevention is succinctly stated:

... Preventing drug use before it starts is a long-term imperative of (our) federal strategy. Prevention includes instilling in children the values and attitudes that contribute to a drug-free life; informing families and communities about the harmful effects of drugs; developing formal anti-drug educational programs and policies in the schools; organizing communities to take responsibility for solving local drug problems... To be truly effective, prevention efforts must engage the entire community -- not just the family, the schools, the churches, social service organizations, or the workplace separately, but all together, simultaneously.

NIJ is committed to assisting the implementation of the President's goals in this area -- one of which brings us here today -- the goal of expanding "drug prevention programs targeted on at-risk children."

It is, therefore, our hope that we not only find out what seems to be working out there, but to document it in such a fashion that communities across the country can benefit from the results.

Before I go on and say a few words about the Institute, let me add that it is also a pleasure to form a partnership with our hosts from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) -- David Goslin, president of AIR and Roberta Cronin, AIR Project Director. And, to recognize Connie Marino, program officer of the Pew Charitable Trusts.

I would also like to acknowledge Paul Cascarano, Assistant Director of NIJ, who deserves special recognition for his work and his perseverance in encouraging the formation of the partnership for this project. Additionally, I would like to introduce Virginia Baldau, Director of our Research Applications and Training Division and Frank Vaccarella, NIJ's Project Manager on this endeavor.

Some of you may not be aware of the work of the National Institute of Justice, so let me take just a few moments to give you a sense of the dimensions of our criminal justice research program and then to offer you my views and interests in regard to this study.

The National Institute of Justice is the research arm of the United States Department of Justice. Our mandate is to support research on the problems of crime and justice that are of importance to the Nation -- problems that matter to states and communities throughout the country. Our research programs address problems and needs across the entire spectrum of the criminal justice system. We also focus on improving our

understanding of victimization and the offender so that we can more effectively intervene in reducing and controlling crime. We address these research areas through a balanced program of policy relevant research, coupled with more long range basic research. Many of our programs examine questions related to those that will concern you in your work on this committee.

Some of you may be familiar with our development of the bulletproof vest or our current development and testing of a less than lethal weapon. These are, indeed, significant achievements. But let me briefly focus on another important area -- our drug research. This is an area we have examined for many years. NIJ has supported studies on specific drugs; examined the links between drugs and crime; conducted research on using hair to determine drug use; and sponsored drug program evaluations.

Following our pioneering work in New York City and Washington, D.C. using urinalysis to screen arrestees for recent drug use, we created the Drug Use Forecasting System (DUF). In this system, samples of arrestees in 23 cities across the country are screened for ten different drugs on a quarterly basis. It provides an ongoing measure for analyzing the variations in our national drug problem in a particularly deviant segment of our population. Our DUF report for the second quarter of 1989 shows that range: 56 per cent of male arrestees tested positive for one or more drugs in Phoenix. In Philadelphia, 84 per cent of the male arrestees were drug positive.

Analysis of the DUF program data is done by staff at the National Institute. And while the majority of our research is supporting projects outside the Institute, we also have several research scientists on staff who are addressing various criminal justice issues and problems -- including career criminals, shock incarceration, prison population projections, and drug enforcement.

Much of NIJ's research supports projects in the social and behavioral sciences. We support research on career criminals, spouse assault, white collar and organized crime. A current -- and I think exciting -- NIJ project is a partnership with the National Academy of Sciences to improve our understanding and control of violent behavior.

Within this context of supporting both policy relevant and basic research, let me make a few remarks concerning the current project that brings us all here today.

NIJ shares the concern of President Bush, Attorney General Thornburgh, and citizens across this Nation that **stopping substance abuse is a national priority**. We at NIJ are, therefore, supportive of programs which hold promise of eradicating the epidemic of substance abuse. We feel that prevention programs which target inner-city youth -- the focus of this research -- are absolutely essential to that effort.

The project you will hear more about today holds considerable promise in pointing the way for the research community to follow in the quest to find the answers to the questions: What works? How does it work? And how can we disseminate this knowledge to communities across the Nation in a timely fashion to be of immediate benefit?

This joint venture between the National Institute of Justice and The Pew Charitable Trusts -- conducted by AIR -- will focus on site assessments of some 16 exemplary programs. These programs will be selected from among hundreds compiled by AIR from every available, knowledgeable source at the local, state and national level familiar with programs of these types. It is envisioned that from this group, a number of those more promising will be examined in greater detail. The primary goal of this effort is, therefore, to investigate the range of "prevention" efforts on-going throughout the country and apply the scientific scrutiny necessary to find out what is "working" for this critical target population.

As part of your advisory function to this project, it is our hope that you will bring to bear your extensive background and knowledge in this area to oversee the following major components of this study and ensure that:

-- Programs selected for final evaluation place primary emphasis on dealing with drug abuse, in particular cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and PCP.

-- Programs selected have theoretical underpinnings in behavioral or social science knowledge -- that they reflect what we know about the determinants of use and the key psychosocial factors that promote or inhibit experimentation and abuse.

-- Programs involve more than one local institution (e.g., schools, law enforcement, community organizations, health care providers).

-- Programs selected focus on primary or secondary prevention -- those that target youth who have not used drugs at all, or have used drugs but do not yet use them regularly or show signs of dependency.

-- Programs selected target youth under 16 or their parents. All that we know about the age of onset and the developmental progression of abuse argues that we must begin before age 16.

-- Programs selected can identify the actual recipients of the intervention. Mass media approaches or other strategies in which the actual people receiving the intervention cannot be readily identified would require substantially different methodological approaches.

-- Programs selected can provide continuing interventions with the same target populations. Brief or "one-shot" programs are likely to have weak effects that would be difficult to isolate from the effects of many other influences in the environment.

-- Programs selected should have formally incorporated substance abuse prevention as a goal.

While this list may seem long and detailed in some areas, it illustrates the fact that I strongly believe that advisory committees are working committees and their opinions and recommendations are actively solicited and seriously taken.

Let me close by saying that there are many approaches available to us in stopping substance abuse. But one on which all professionals in the field agree is that we should intervene at the earliest possible time when dealing with high-risk youth offenders, especially those in the inner cities. Therefore, with this project, let us begin. Now that the Nation has been aroused to recognize the challenge, we can act.

It was Edmund Burke who said, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." That may have been how we got into the current drug crisis. But today, city officials, law enforcement, schools, and average citizens are no longer just sitting by. We are all working to counter the evil of drug abuse -- and we will succeed.