

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Response to: Senator Amy Klobuchar

From: Edward Davis Police Commissioner, Boston, Massachusetts

- 1) Yes, I agree that we should support drug courts as a potentially cost-effective way to reduce crime.
- 2) Yes, I agree that drug courts can save taxpayers money. There is an abundance of evidence demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of drug courts already in place in the United States. A recent meta-analysis conducted by the Urban Institute found that drug courts produced an average of \$2.21 in direct benefits to the criminal justice system for every \$1 invested—a 221% return on investment.¹ When drug courts targeted their services toward the more serious, higher-risk drug offenders, the average return on investment was determined to be even higher: \$3.36 for every \$1 invested. These savings reflected direct and measurable cost-offsets to the criminal justice system resulting from reduced rearrests, law enforcement contacts, court hearings and the use of jail or prison beds. When indirect cost-offsets are also taken into account, such as savings from reduced foster care placements and healthcare service utilization, studies have reported economic benefits of drug courts ranging from approximately \$2 to \$27 for every \$1 invested.²

Research suggests that these reductions in rearrest extend beyond the first few years following treatment. An evaluation of the Multnomah County, Oregon drug court—the second-oldest in the country—found a 24% reduction in drug arrests for participants 13 years after initial entry into the program.³ In addition, the drug court was found to cost taxpayers significantly less than “business as usual.” Evaluations of 11 drug courts in Oregon, Washington, Kentucky and Missouri found substantial cost savings. For example, six drug courts in Washington saved an average of \$6,800 per participant based on reduced rearrests and victimization costs.⁴

When evaluating the net costs and benefits of drug courts, various research studies generally find that drug courts save taxpayer dollars compared to simple probation and/or incarceration primarily due to the reduction in arrests, case processing, and jail occupancy. States such as New York are now seeing the benefits of taking the drug court model to scale by furnishing drug courts in every county. In a three-year study, the New

¹ Bhati, A. S., Roman, J. K., & Chalfin, A. (2008, April). To treat or not to treat: Evidence on the prospects of expanding treatment to drug-involved offenders. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

² Carey, S. M., Finigan, M., Crumpton, D., & Waller, M. (2006). California drug courts: Outcomes, costs and promising practices: An overview of phase II in a statewide study. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, SARC Supplement 3, 345-356.

³ Carey, S. M. & Finigan, M., “Detailed Cost Analysis in a Mature Drug Court Setting: A Cost Benefit Evaluation of the Multnomah County Drug Court,” prepared under grant number 2000–DC– VX–K004, which was awarded by NIH to NPC Research, Inc.

⁴ Belenko, 2005, pp. 44-45

York State Court System estimated that \$254 million in incarceration costs were saved by diverting 18,000 non-violent drug offenders into Drug Courts.⁵ Another program that has proven to be cost-effective is Hawaii's Opportunity for Probation with Enforcement (HOPE). HOPE is a program that has produced a large body of evidence demonstrating its effectiveness when compared with probation as usual (PAU) with respect to increasing the rates of probationer compliance and decreasing their rates of incarceration.⁶ It currently costs approximately \$50,000 a year to house an individual in prison in the state of Hawaii.⁷ HOPE costs approximately \$1,000 a year above regular probation per offender, but is estimated to provide savings ranging from \$4,000 to \$8,000 per offender over the course of probation.⁸

- 3) Yes, there are many additional benefits of drug courts beyond the cost savings. First, drug courts ensure compliance by providing more comprehensive and closer supervision than other community-based programs, such as probation. Many studies have shown that the offender's relationship with the judge assigned to the court can also play a part in success of the involvement of the participant's compliance.

Next, the success of drug court programs already in place has led to the formation of other courts similar to the drug court model. These programs include family treatment courts for alcohol- or drug-involved parents, accountability courts and DWI courts.

In addition, drug courts have been found to have many positive effects for the offenders themselves. For example, the *Multisite Adult Drug Court Evaluation* (MADCE) found that adult drug courts significantly reduced illicit drug and alcohol use, improved family relationships, lowered family conflicts and increased participants' access to needed financial and social services.⁹

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, drug courts contribute to a reduction in crime. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) concluded that drug courts significantly reduce crime compared to other alternatives.¹⁰ For example, during the entire 15-year time period that drug courts have been in operation throughout New York, the state has witnessed historic reductions in crime, which in turn led to widespread reform measures in 2009. Due to drug courts and other effective alternatives to incarceration, New York

⁵ Rempel, M., Fox-Kralstein, D., Cissner, A., Cohen, R., Labriola, M., Farole, D., Bader, A., & Magnani, M. (2003). *The New York State adult drug court evaluation: Policies, participants, and impacts*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

⁶ Hawken, A., & Kleiman, M. (December 2009). *Managing Drug Involved Probationers with Swift and Certain Sanctions: Evaluating Hawaii's Hope*. Retrieved January 15, 2010, from National Criminal Justice Reference Service www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/229023.pdf

⁷ Alm, S. (2010, April 18). HOPE Probation. (R. Kiyabu, J. Steinberg, & M. Yoshida, Interviewers) Honolulu, HI.

⁸ Essoyan, S. (2010, March 28). Signs of HOPE - Hawaii News - Starbulletin.com. Hawaii News - Starbulletin.com. Retrieved April 9, 2010, from <http://www.starbulletin.com/news>

⁹ Kralstein, D. (2010). *The impact on drug use and other psychosocial outcomes: Results from NIJ's Multisite Adult Drug Court Evaluation*. Presentation at the 16th Annual Training Conference of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Boston, MA.

¹⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2005). *Adult Drug Courts: Evidence indicates recidivism reductions and mixed results for other outcomes* [No. GAO-05-219]. Washington, DC: Author.

has closed two of its prisons and left several others half-empty.¹¹ Seven separate meta-analyses conducted by independent scientific teams have concluded that adult drug courts significantly reduce crime, typically measured by fewer re arrests for new offenses and technical violations.¹²

¹¹ Tremmel, P. (2009). *Report: New York Offers Model for Cutting Crime and Costs in Illinois*. Retrieved from <http://www.northwestern.edu/newscenter/stories/2009/06/crrimestudy.html>

¹² Aos et al., 2006; Downey & Roman, 2010; Latimer et al., 2006; Lowenkamp et al., 2005; MacKenzie, 2006; Shaffer, 2006; Wilson et al., 2006