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Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

Tuesday, April 10th, 2007

1:00 PM in Room 1E of the LOB

Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Frank Sykes the Legislative Analyst with the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) a non-partisan state agency committed to advocating on behalf of African-American in the state, through research, policy analysis and advocacy. The Commission is here today to testify in support of two bills:

SB 904 – An act requiring firearm dealers to report lost or stolen firearms

And

SB 903 – An act concerning lost or stolen firearms

The Commission continues its advocacy for stronger gun control and accountability laws for a number of reasons. Firstly recently there has being an upsurge in violence in urban cities. It is reported that shootings in the first three

months of this year have already exceeded numbers from last year. This violence in most cases has resulted in the death of youth some barely in their teens. The vast majority of victims are African-American. Infact data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirms homicide as the leading cause of death for black teens between ages 15 and 19.¹ In 2003 in Connecticut 82 percent of firearms homicide victims were males and as a group African-Americans were 17 times more likely than whites and 6 times more likely than Latinos to be a casualty of firearm homicide.²

More importantly we realize that strengthening gun control laws is really about public safety. It is often argued that guns don't shoot instead its people who shoot. This is true, but the fact remains that guns are dangerous weapons and if found in the wrong hands have the ability to cause great harm not only to the intended victim but in some cases innocent victims in the immediate vicinity. Therefore as a public safety measure the state must ensure that handguns are accounted for at all times. The Commission is aware that in addition to the infusion of guns in urban communities, there are a multitude of other factors, that contribute to gang violence. To this end the Commission has advocated and called for the implementation of stronger conflict resolution measures and increased funding for after school programs. However there is no denying that stronger gun control laws will provide law enforcement the additional tools needed to keep guns out of the wrong hands. It is the Commission's hope that negligence will no longer be used as a legitimate excuse for a lost or stolen handgun. We urge your support of the following bills.

Thank you all for your time and attention to this matter.

¹ Violence Policy Center, Black Homicide Victimization in the U.S., An Analysis of 2004 Homicide Data

² Center's For Disease Control and Prevention