



**TESTIMONY OF CONGRESSMAN JOE BACA, CA 43<sup>RD</sup>**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY,  
HEARING ON "GANG CRIME PREVENTION AND THE NEED TO FOSTER  
INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL"  
ADDRESSING H.R. 1069,  
MYNISHA'S LAW  
OCTOBER 2, 2007**

Good afternoon Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Forbes, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to present testimony today on behalf of HR 1069, Mynisha's Law.

This bill serves two primary purposes: first, it directs the Attorney General to review applications from cities wanting to be designated as Comprehensive Gang Prevention and Relief Areas; and second, it establishes an Interagency Gang Prevention Task Force where federal agencies will coordinate efforts focused on gang prevention.

I would like to share with you the sad story behind the creation of Mynisha's Law.

Senator Barbara Boxer and I became involved with a local anti-gang group called Mynisha's Circle that was formed in the wake of the killing of eleven year old Mynisha Crenshaw, who died on November 13, 2005.

Young Mynisha was from my district, in San Bernardino, California. She was killed while eating Sunday dinner with her family after gang members shot at the Crenshaw home, located at the Cedarwood Apartments in the Del Rosa neighborhood.

Another young, innocent life was lost due to gang violence.

These acts of violence are not uncommon for city streets. Young people regularly claim they live in a world of domestic warfare.

We hear about the devastation happening in Iraq and we honor the soldiers fighting for our freedom. But, we are not giving the necessary tools to young people here, in our own country, to avoid gang life.

We do not hear about the mothers who have to bury their young sons and daughters. We do not see the elementary and middle-school aged children who are recruited to join the ranks of gang brother and sisterhood.

After Mynisha's death, I am proud to say that our community did unite. We came together and vowed to find solutions to the gang violence crisis. Mynisha's Circle was created as a forum to address this issue.

And Senator Boxer, with the help of Rev. Reggie Beamon, Steve Lambert and other members of Mynisha's Circle, created S. 2671 Mynisha's Law. I am proud to sponsor the House companion to the Senate bill.

This bill is crucial to the fight against gangs.

It creates a Federal Gang Task Force - with members from the Departments of Justice, Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development.

This task force would create a comprehensive national gang prevention strategy that would focus on all aspects of the fight against gangs - from early childhood intervention to at-risk youth intervention, literacy, employment, and community policing.

By allowing the Attorney General to decide which cities have the highest gang activity, many communities where gang violence is growing or is out of control will have newfound resources to combat this issue.

Anyone who thinks this bill is unnecessary, or that gang violence is no longer a problem in America is wrong. There are currently an estimated 24,500 gangs operating within the United States. Gang violence and drug trafficking remain serious problems throughout the country, causing injury and death to innocent victims, and too often children.

According to the National Drug Threat Assessment - criminal street gangs are responsible for the distribution of much of the cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and other illegal drugs throughout the United States.

I thank you, Chairman Scott for your leadership and support, and I thank Rep. Schiff and others for including Mynisha's provisions in your gang prevention bills.

It is important that we explore all avenues in addressing this issue because the cost of inaction is too high. We cannot forget that we are fighting for the future, to make tomorrow a better and safer place for our children. Thank you.