

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE!

ON BEHALF OF OUR 2.7 MILLION RESIDENTS, IT'S A PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, AND TO THE 31ST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PREVENTING CRIME IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY.

I WANT TO THANK FLORIDA ATTORNEY GENERAL PAM BONDI FOR CHOOSING MIAMI-DADE AS THE HOST VENUE FOR THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE. I ALSO WANT TO THANK COMMISSIONER AUDREY EDMONSON FOR HER SUPPORT IN BRINGING THIS EVENT TO OUR COMMUNITY.

I MAY BE BIASED, BUT I THINK MIAMI-DADE IS THE PERFECT PLACE FOR THIS CONFERENCE. WE'RE THE MOST-POPULOUS COUNTY IN FLORIDA, AND THE 7TH. MOST POPULOUS IN THE UNITED STATES.

AND, AS SUCH, WE HAVE ONE OF THE LARGEST – AND IN MY OPINION, THE BEST – POLICE DEPARTMENTS IN THE NATION, HEADED BY THE BEST DIRECTOR IN THE NATION, JUAN PEREZ.

BUT AS EXCELLENT AS OUR POLICE DEPARTMENT IS, WITH THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY LIKE THE BODY-WORN CAMERAS WE BEGAN DEPLOYING LAST MONTH, AS WELL AS A NEW VEHICLE FLEET AND OTHER COMMUNITY-ORIENTED POLICING ENHANCEMENTS, WE KNOW THAT IT WILL TAKE THE INVOLVEMENT OF OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY TO PREVENT CRIME.

BECAUSE IT TAKES ALL OF US TO PROTECT ALL OF US.

A KEY CONCERN OF MINE, AND ALL OF US HERE TONIGHT, IS YOUTH VIOLENCE. IN MIAMI-DADE, CHILDREN KILLING OTHER CHILDREN IS A PROBLEM THAT AFFECTS EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US -- NOT JUST THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OF THOSE WHO'VE BEEN THE VICTIMS OF THESE SENSELESS CRIMES.

AND NOT JUST THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE THE HIGHEST NUMBERS OF SHOOTINGS ARE TAKING PLACE.

WE ARE ALL MIAMIANS AND WE MUST ALL WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT EVERY SINGLE MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY.

AND THAT'S WHY, YEARS AGO, WE STARTED THE JOINT ROUNDTABLE ON YOUTH SAFETY IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

BECAUSE LAW ENFORCEMENT, THE SCHOOL BOARD, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE COMMUNITY, NEEDED TO COME TOGETHER TO PUT A STOP TO THE VIOLENCE.

AND THAT'S ALSO WHY MY OFFICE HAS HOSTED, AND WILL CONTINUE TO HOST, MEETINGS WITH U.S. ATTORNEY WIFREDO FERRER AND OUR STATE ATTORNEY KATHERINE FERNANDEZ RUNDLE TO SHARE INFORMATION AND WORK TO APPREHEND THE INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE THREATENING THE SAFETY OF OUR COMMUNITY.

BUT WE ALSO KNOW THAT WE MUST ALL DO MORE TO KEEP US SAFE AND IDENTIFY AT-RISK YOUTH SO OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT CAN INTERVENE AND MENTOR THEM.

AND THAT'S WHY WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY, WHY WE WILL WORK CLOSELY TO REDUCE VIOLENCE FOR ALL MIAMIANS.

BECAUSE WE CAN'T JUST WAIT FOR CRIMES TO BE COMMITTED.

AMONG THE MANY PROGRAMS THAT I KNOW DEPUTY MAYOR RUSSELL BENFORD WILL DISCUSS IN MORE DEPTH TOMORROW – PROGRAMS THAT I WANT TO THANK OUR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR SUPPORTING -- MIAMI-DADE POLICE DIRECTOR PEREZ HAS STARTED AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM THAT'S NOT ONLY COMMUNITY-BASED, BUT ALSO HOME-BASED.

THIS PROGRAM WILL BRING MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES TO THE DOORSTEPS OF THOSE CHILDREN WHO NEED IT THE MOST: OUR AT-RISK JUVENILES.

MIAMI-DADE POLICE WILL FOCUS ON CERTAIN NEIGHBORHOODS WITHIN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY TO PROVIDE MENTORING AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS AIMED AT KEEPING OUR MOST VULNERABLE YOUTH AWAY FROM VIOLENCE.

ALSO OF NOTE, MIAMI-DADE'S JUVENILE SERVICES DEPARTMENT, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MORRIS COPELAND, IS FOCUSED ON COLLABORATING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT TO IDENTIFY THOSE YOUTH WHO HAVE THE HIGHEST RISK OF COMMITTING ADDITIONAL CRIMES, WHILE ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF THOSE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

DIRECTOR COPELAND AND HIS TEAM ARE ALSO WORKING ON PROVIDING TIMELY INTERVENTION BY UTILIZING FAMILY-ORIENTED SERVICES, AND EXPANDING AFTER-SCHOOL AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

DIRECTOR COPELAND IS ALSO COLLABORATING WITH PARKS DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR JACK KARDYS ON NEW INITIATIVES TO KEEP AT-RISK YOUTH INVOLVED IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.

THIS YEAR, MIAMI-DADE PARKS RECEIVED \$3 MILLION IN FUNDING TO CREATE "FIT 2 LEAD" -- WHICH IS A FREE AFTER-SCHOOL AND MENTORING PROGRAM FOR 400 AT-RISK CHILDREN AGES 12 TO 14. CHILDREN IN THIS PROGRAM PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES DESIGNED WITH F.I.U. AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI THAT INCLUDE LEADERSHIP,

CHARACTER BUILDING, SPORTS DEVELOPMENT, TUTORING AND HEALTHY LIVING.

AND IN COLLABORATION WITH VARIOUS COUNTY DEPARTMENTS, CAREERSOURCE SOUTH FLORIDA IS WORKING ON A SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

THE GOAL OF THE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE YOUTH BETWEEN THE AGES OF 14 AND 17 -- WHO RESIDE IN AREAS WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF YOUTH ARRESTS -- AN OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN WORK EXPERIENCE WHILE INCREASING EDUCATIONAL GROWTH AND LIFE SKILLS.

I WANT TO REITERATE THAT THE WORK THAT COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING CANNOT BE DONE IN A VACUUM. AND THAT'S WHY CONFERENCES LIKE THIS ARE SO IMPORTANT.

WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF CHILDREN.

WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH OUR COMMUNITIES, WITH OUR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, WITH OUR SCHOOL BOARDS, WITH

THE U.S. AND STATE ATTORNEY, AND OTHERS, TO PUT AN END TO THE VIOLENCE.

BECAUSE THE SAFETY OF EVERY CHILD, OF EVERY RESIDENT, OF OUR COMMUNITIES IS OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY.

SO, I ENCOURAGE EACH OF YOU TO BE FULLY ENGAGED IN THIS CONFERENCE AND THE MANY WORKSHOPS THAT WILL BE OFFERED THIS WEEK. WE CAN ALL LEARN FROM EACH OTHER, AND TOGETHER, WE CAN ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH MORE.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR TIME TONIGHT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU, AND MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND THE GREAT STATE OF FLORIDA!