

Questions for the record from Senator Charles E. Grassley
Hearing on "Protecting America's Children from Gun Violence"

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1. You have survived a very tough crime environment in Chicago. In 2017, Chicago introduced controversial bail reform policies which prohibited cash bail requirements in most instances. A University of Utah study revealed Chicago experienced a 33 percent increase in defendants that committed violent offenses after being released under the new bail rules. How is the release of these criminals who are committing additional crimes after their release and failing to appear to their court hearings impacting your community?

The release of these defendants does not directly correlate with the increase in crime, considering that there is no definite research that shows that they continue to commit these crimes. Defendants that benefitted from that bail reform were not all violent offenders. Research in 2020 by Loyola University found two things: no dramatic increase of defendants released pre-trial (from 77% to 81), and the probability of that defendant committing another violent crime remained at 17%. Not only has this reform failed to make a massive difference in those released individuals, but it has also not contributed to any additional crimes committed. The Chicago Police Department has claimed to have spent countless times arresting individuals for violent crimes, including gun violence; however, the gun violence rates continue to surge.

So, to Mr. Grassley's question, the release of those individuals has not directly affected my community as his question insinuates, but it has, however, released a significant burden from low-income families that cannot afford to bail their families from jail because of petty crimes. In addition, the problem of missing court hearings is not necessarily "noncompliance" but, in truth, has a lot to do with African American men's historical treatment in the justice system.

Just imagine if you were an African American male going before a predominantly white judge & jury with a public defender that does not care enough to plead an adequate case, and this is your third offense within the last three years. You are trying to provide for your family, and going to jail does not quite fit within that agenda. Would you comply knowing that you would be convicted with an unfair ruling and sentence? If so, then you must be expecting a miracle. If not, then welcome to the reality of being an African American male in the justice system.

2. Like many major metro cities within the United States, Chicago is suffering from a spike in violent crime; however, in Chicago this spike is especially pronounced. The Cook County State's Attorney has implemented policies including a policy of not charging gang members who commit shootings of other gang members under a theory of mutual

combat. How has this failure to prosecute gang members who are arrested for firearms and crimes of violence violations impacted you and the citizens of Chicago?

In terms of my community's welfare, we are suffering; however, this is not primarily due to the policies implemented by Kim Fox, Cook County State's Attorney. Chicago has struggled with the dramatic increase in gun violence over the past ten years. Think about cities where the prevalence of gangs is obsolete compared to Chicago, yet they still have trouble with crime and violence. My community's disenfranchisement is a multifaceted issue, and the failure to prosecute gang members lies nowhere near the primary reason.

Gun control issues are always pointed back toward the gangs, but the question should be, where are these people getting the guns? Many Chicago urban residents have expressed how crates filled with automatic weapons were mysteriously placed into their neighborhoods without any trace or thought of their origin. How can residents be sure that these weapons were not placed in their communities as bait to tempt them into crime? Why hasn't the government worked hard to ensure that the importation of these guns is ceased? If the Chicago Police Department has worked extensively to fix this problem and get the guns off the street, and "gang members" do not have the resources to purchase them legally, where are the guns coming from? The point is that Illinois has "strict" gun laws in place, but they are still raging through our communities due to the national failure of strict gun laws.

My community has only been impacted by the one that has failed to preserve young people's lives and acts promptly to ensure that their safety is prioritized.