

The Written Testimony of Dena J. King, Former Prosecutor
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary

Subcommittee on Oversight

“Victims of Violent Crime”

September 29, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Van Drew and the distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today’s hearing on “Victims of Violent Crime.”

This written testimony is provided to you through my personal capacity as a private citizen of this great community and based upon my professional experience.

My name is Dena King and I am an attorney. I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer because I wanted to help my community, serve justice and uphold the law. I spent 19 years, nearly two decades, as a prosecutor, serving as both a state and federal prosecutor. I started my legal career as a state prosecutor here in Mecklenburg County, where in addition to prosecuting crimes, I also worked in our Mental Health and Drug Courts. Within that role, I saw first-hand the intersection of mental health and substance abuse issues within our criminal justice system. These specialized treatment courts demonstrated exactly what long-term studies have shown, that these courts significantly reduce recidivism.

As a federal prosecutor, I was a member and leader of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) whereby through prosecutions I identified, disrupted and dismantled major organized crime, violent and drug trafficking organizations. It was through this initiative that I was able to prosecute some of our state’s most violent offenders, including members of a gang that were responsible for committing several murders in North Carolina. What I soon learned after the lead defendants were convicted of racketeering murder charges and sentenced to consecutive life sentences, that the victims of the crime, the family members of those murdered, still needed resources to help them cope long after the defendants were imprisoned. We need more support and funding for survivors and victims.

What I have learned as an attorney prosecuting cases across this state, from the mountains to the sea, is that crime occurs in every community. Crime of any kind is unacceptable. I implore Congress to work with state and local governments and provide funding to community based organizations to develop real solutions to address these problems. Solutions that address the specific needs of our communities as a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

Specifically here in Mecklenburg County, funding is needed to assist in increasing our prosecutor staffing levels, which continue to lag behind similar sized jurisdictions. The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys suggests that for a jurisdiction the size of Mecklenburg, we should have at least 144 state prosecutors. Instead, we have 62 state allocated positions and 22 additional funded positions by Mecklenburg County and the City, bringing that total to 84. The high caseload of the prosecutors here results in prosecutor turnover. The District Attorney's Office cannot continue to do more with less. They cannot do more prosecutions with less staff. They need more resources, more funding, and more staff.

During the last four years in my role as a federal prosecutor, it was my priority to reduce violent crime, remove illegal firearms from our streets and keep the people of the Western District of North Carolina safe. However, I recognized that my crime reduction efforts needed to extend beyond prosecutions. We cannot arrest or prosecute our way out of violent crime. That is why we need to be intentional about also incorporating violence prevention programs and intervention strategies, providing resources to community organizations and stakeholders to work with law enforcement and prosecutors in a shared commitment to making communities safer.

The fight against violent crime isn't a fight that any one of us in this room can win alone. We must join forces, elected officials, law enforcement, prosecutors, community organizations, advocates, mental health and substance abuse professionals, to support each other's work. Our joint forces are critical to our shared goal: to prevent tragedies and loss of life, to provide mental health and substance abuse resources to those in need, to hold offenders accountable, and to provide victims and survivors with the security and resources they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

To be clear, addressing and developing solutions for violent crime is a nonpartisan issue because everyone in this community deserves the right to live safely. In fact, everyone in this community deserves the right to live.

Thank you for holding this hearing. I look forward to your questions.