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**Testimony By: Clark County Commissioner Dave Sturdevant  
Presented To: Committee On Education And Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives**

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Clark County took advantage of a unique opportunity in 1990 when the Washington State Legislature authorized the Criminal Justice Act during a special session. The principal focus of the Act was to provide financial assistance to counties and cities for funding their criminal justice systems. In our community we decided to use this opportunity to take a fresh look at problems affecting young people and to begin a new approach through a three-year project called the Special Intervention Program (SIP).

In developing the program - almost two years ago - we focused on some specific areas of particular concern:

- \* We were concerned about the increasing rate of serious crimes being committed by juveniles.
- \* There was growing alarm about gang activities and gang-related crimes.
- \* More and more of our young people were abusing drugs.
- \* But with problems escalating for youth, the fact remained that the adults in the criminal justice system were using significantly more of the available resources.

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**and Labor/U.S. House of**  
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We began to explore developing a program that would impact "at-risk youth." Our goal was to work with first-time offenders to keep them from breaking the law again and to ultimately keep them from growing up to be adult offenders. With jail overcrowding becoming more and more an issue, we believed that early intervention could have an impact on future jail population statistics. We felt that with SIP we could keep more than a few offenders from progressing in their professions.

In putting SIP together, we believed it was important to increase cooperation among juvenile justice providers, social services agencies, public education and law enforcement.

After about two years, SIP is enjoying positive feedback from the community---especially from the young people and families it serves. As one of the Commissioners who initially authorized the program I can say that I'm proud of SIP's progress and that it makes sense for us to work to find the necessary funds to keep it running. This program reflects citizen concern for our young people, and, what may be the greatest single concern of the Clark County community, the safety and protection of life and property.

Joining me here today are two people who are directly responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Special Intervention Program. Ernie Veach-White works in the County Juvenile Department where he manages SIP. Marty Hollaway is a detective with the Vancouver Police Department. Marty is assigned to Vancouver middle and high schools where he works directly with at-risk kids. Marty and Ernie are the experts and I know they have a lot to say to you about the Special Intervention Program and the needs of Clark County young people.

Thank you for extending us the opportunity to address the committee. I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.