

STATEMENT BY DISTRICT ATTORNEY HILLAR C. MOORE, III
August 9, 2017

To The Baton Rouge Community:

For the past weeks, my phone has rung constantly with questions from the media concerning BRAVE contracts. To each of these calls, I have responded that I know very little about the details of BRAVE contracts as those financial matters have always been handled by the grant's fiscal agent, the Office of the Mayor-President. As one of the co-signers to the BRAVE grant, I welcome those calling for investigations into BRAVE spending. I firmly support each citizen's right to review how their funds are being spent. I am very concerned, however, that within the ringing of alarms and raising of concerns that some very significant things are being overlooked: BRAVE has been a success as lives have been saved and crime has been reduced.

Yes, our federal BRAVE grants are ending. This is something that has always been known and planned for. Sustainability has been our obligation under the federal grant since the first day we applied for the grant. I am now asking this parish to join me in finding ways to sustain what has truly been a remarkable and lives changing program.

For the past five years, since 2012, our parish has led the nation with a successful group violence reduction strategy known as BRAVE. A glowing evaluation was recently published (www.ebrda.org) but has been largely ignored. For our fourth year of effort, 2016, the evaluators reported a sustained 26% decrease in violent crime across our parish since we began this program in 2012. This success is well-known across the U.S. as other communities have visited with us to try to replicate what we have done. It is estimated that since BRAVE, 80 less people have died in Baton Rouge to violence and another 80 spared a life of incarceration. These numbers are significant.

We began BRAVE with a focus on young people associated with violent groups. We were the first in the nation to bring this methodology to youthful offenders. And, we have had some of the greatest successes in the nation with our approach. Since 2012, overall violent crime has dropped 26% while youth crime has dropped 25%. Today, my prosecutors in juvenile court deal with only 3000 cases of juvenile crime, instead of 4000 cases, annually. Just this reduction in juvenile crime alone will continue to have a great impact in reducing the amount of future crime that we will experience as a parish.

The young males that BRAVE seeks to identify and assist or incarcerate due to continuing violence are 900 times more likely to kill or be killed than any other male in the Baton Rouge community. While this is a group that you would not want your child, neighbor or friend associated with, we must recognize that these groups do exist. We would rather put a potential violator in school or a job and not in jail, if they accept our message and agree to take our help. This is more difficult than it would seem.

Every time someone is killed in Baton Rouge our entire community loses. There has been a failure somewhere along in the shooter's life, be it with parents, family, neighborhood,

education, poverty, criminal justice, or historical racial issues. In Louisiana and in Baton Rouge we are at the top of every list that you do not even want to be on. There are many reasons why we face the problems that we do. We look to the police and the criminal justice system to fix the problems that society has not addressed. In reality, none of us in the criminal justice system can solve our crime problems alone. Solutions can only come from the community and from our neighborhoods in conjunction with government, faith-based organizations, and law enforcement.

At its core, BRAVE is a community engagement effort. We first identify the problem, then we bring the community together to address the problem, and, finally, we involve the community in delivering solutions. In our case, in 2012, we hosted a meeting of law enforcement and faith-based leaders from across our parish, nearly 100 officers and pastors in all. With the leadership of the University of Cincinnati's Crime Institute, we reviewed 2 years of homicide data and identified our local drivers for each murder. We expected our drivers would involve drugs. We discovered that while drugs were a significant contributor, a greater contributor, more than 56%, was simply young people associated with violent groups.

As a person who has worked with our criminal justice system my entire career, I know that crime does not just happen – it emerges from inattention and neglect. We in Baton Rouge have significantly turned this around by investing significantly in BRAVE to address juvenile crime. It is because of this investment that Baton Rouge will continue to experience the benefit of a long term reduction of crime.

When you look at overall violent crime and property crime numbers, all the numbers (with the exception of a limited number of reported rapes) are significantly down from 2012. Like all cities, however, we also measure homicides. Homicides are very small numbers that have an outsized impact on how we feel about safety in our community. In 2016, we saw our parish's lowest number of homicides in years despite that year being very traumatic and painful for all of us. 2017 has been a horrible year so far for adult homicides, due in large part to acts of drug dealing and acts of domestic violence, with 56 murders so far. Equally distressing is that for each of these murders we can expect to incarcerate another 56 of our citizens for their natural life. Nationwide, each homicide is estimated to cost our community between \$1 million and \$8 million dollars - in police response costs, medical costs, lost wages, lost productivity, criminal justice costs, and prison incarceration costs. I know that Baton Rouge cannot afford to lose \$50-400 million annually. I also know the BRAVE troubleshooting and intervention model has worked in Baton Rouge just as it has worked everywhere that it has been employed systematically. I remain committed to applying the BRAVE model to reduce violent crime based upon whatever drivers of homicide we find: whether with juvenile offenders, with drug offenders, or with domestic violence offenders.

My focus will remain on keeping BRAVE, our anti-violence effort, successful and operating in Baton Rouge. We are fortunate to have others in our community, local business men and women as well as clergy and citizens, who share this focus. During the last few days I have received their calls letting me know that they are willing to help continue the BRAVE effort after the federal funds end. I am also hopeful that our congressional delegation in Washington will also continue working to redirect any unused BRAVE funds to Baton Rouge to assist in our effort to fight violent crime.

Why is keeping BRAVE going so important? Because our five years of data now shows that every day with BRAVE has given us a less violent day than before BRAVE. As a result of BRAVE, we have talked personally with almost every member of the 60 known violent groups that have operated in Baton Rouge. We have had some of the highest rates of initial acceptance in the nation by our youth of our message “put down your guns, on your own or with our assistance, or face targeted law enforcement.” Very significant for us today is that several of our most violent groups have been incarcerated and decimated. That is not to say that new groups will not continue to develop. But with our BRAVE experience, we now have in place the tools and personnel to track these groups and coordinate a law enforcement response to their activities.

From day one, we knew that our local community would have to bear responsibility for sustaining BRAVE when the grants ended. That day has come. We have planned for this day. More than one year ago we formed BRAVE INC, a private 501(c)(3) non-profit to sustain BRAVE and to raise money to run the BRAVE model without federal funds. This board is in place and now ready to take over the BRAVE program. Every agency that has been involved in BRAVE since its inception remains committed as a partner in our effort. The Sheriff, the Chief of Police, the Mayor-President, and all of our state and federal partners remain committed to ensuring the continued success of BRAVE.

I am proud to be a part of BRAVE and to have served with our law enforcement officers, faith-based clergy, service providers, and community leaders during the last five years of the BRAVE program. Much time and energy has been well spent in the hundreds of community engagement activities that our people have conducted, often donating their evenings and weekends, to reach out to the areas of our community that are most affected by violence.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'HCC' with a stylized flourish.