



**ERIE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**  
**NEWS RELEASE**  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY JOHN J. FLYNN**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 13, 2019**

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY HOSTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TO  
EDUCATE YOUTH ON GUN VIOLENCE IMPACT**

***Buffalo Public School Students Attended a Panel Discussion on the Consequences  
of Involvement with Gang Activity & the Criminal Justice System***

BUFFALO - Erie County District Attorney John J. Flynn, in collaboration with the Buffalo Police Department, Buffalo Public Schools and Say Yes Buffalo, hosted the first "Community Conversation Regarding Gun Violence" at Bennett Community School Campus. The program is an open dialogue about the impact and long-lasting consequences that gun violence and gang activity has on our youth and their future. The program hopes to encourage students to continue with their academic pursuits and other ambitions in an effort to deter them from a criminal lifestyle.

District Attorney Flynn provided the opening remarks followed by a video from **Lorenzo Alexander of the Buffalo Bills** who showed his support for the program and encouraged the students in attendance to pursue their dreams. The panelists included: **Arlee Daniels**, program coordinator for Stop the Violence Coalition, **Dr. Fred Gelsey**, a father who lost his son due to gang violence, **Buffalo Police Officer Mark Hamilton**, community police officer, and **Eric Rawls**, founder of IM Livin B. Rawls is a former Buffalo resident who was gang-associated. He has since changed his life to become a successful entrepreneur with the founding of his successful clothing company, IM Livin B. The panel was moderated by **Assistant District Attorney Justin Caldwell** of the DA's Buffalo City Court Bureau.

In an effort to combat gun violence in the City of Buffalo, District Attorney Flynn is seeking new, innovative and proactive ways to prevent crime. Too often, prosecutors in the Erie County District Attorney's Office see a young person lost to the criminal justice system or killed because of gun violence and other crimes. DA Flynn believes that this panel of community leaders, each of whom have a unique perspective on the detrimental effects of gun violence and gang involvement, will be an effective and relatable means to educating our youth and preventing violence.

The Erie County DA's Office was awarded funding through the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) grant administered by the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services to pilot this program. The panel organized in conjunction with Buffalo Public Schools, featured community leaders who discussed the

impact that gun violence has had on their lives. Each panelist brought a different perspective for the audience to consider. The purpose of the panel was to discuss the risks of gang interaction and the consequences of the criminal justice system in an effort to dissuade young people from entering a life of crime and possibly falling victim to violence on the streets.

“The traditional role of the District Attorney’s Office is to be reactive to crimes that happen in our communities. I want to take a more proactive approach and work to prevent crimes before they happen,” said **Erie County District Attorney John Flynn**. I believe that children are our future, and if we can get a message to them at an early age that a life of crime has serious, even deadly consequences, I hope we can put an end to the violence.”

The Erie County District Attorney’s Office plans to organize more anti-violence panel discussions with partner agencies in the future.

###