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FROM PAIN TO PROGRESS: CONFRONTING THE STRUGGLE ON THE FRONT LINES OF AMERICA'S GUN VIOLENCE CRISIS

HOW THE U.S. CAN PROVIDE A NATIONWIDE STRATEGY TO
BUILD SAFER COMMUNITIES AND SAVE LIVES

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“I saw my first gun before I even knew my age. I grew up dynamic. I never felt poor, of course I was hungry sometimes. I heard about people being shot and things like that. We lived in uptown DC- just 2.6 miles from the White House- but I never knew it was so close that I could walk there. When I turned 10 years old, my mom was shot at age 25. A week after not knowing where my mom was, a teacher from school sat me down and told us she was in the hospital.”¹

Tia Bell, the T.R.I.G.G.E.R Project

Gun violence in the U.S. is a human rights crisis. A staggering number of people are killed or injured by gun violence every year. Killing an average of 109 people each day, gun violence is the third leading cause of death among U.S. youth ages 15-24 and the fourth leading cause of death for children ages 10-14.² Gun violence disproportionately affects Black and brown communities nationwide. According to government data, more than half of all gun homicides in the U.S. in 2019 were Black men.³ Despite making up just 14.7% of the U.S. population, Black people in the U.S. represented almost 60% of all gun homicide deaths in 2019.⁴ The U.S. has both the highest absolute and highest per capita rates of gun ownership in the world, with guns easily accessible by those most likely to misuse them.⁵ According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2019 the most recent government data this is available, nearly 40,000 people died as a result of gun violence, including in over 400 mass shootings.⁶

Black and brown communities urgently require increased support for gun violence intervention and prevention programs, focused on interrupting cycles of violence, and increased funding for direct services including mentorship to individuals at high risk of engaging in gun violence. These types of cost-effective programs have proven to be highly effective at reducing gun violence and saving lives.

As gun violence rates continue to rise, only eight U.S. states have passed measures to support evidence-based violence prevention and intervention programs. In 2017, only five states funded and supported evidence-based urban violence prevention and intervention programs. Three of those states—Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York—have had remarkable success cutting gun violence rates. For example, in Massachusetts, one of the nation’s leaders when it comes to investing in urban gun violence reduction, gun homicide rates fell by 35% from 2010 to 2015, while nationally gun homicide rates actually increased 14% in that same period.⁷ By 2020, just three more states passed measures to support gun violence intervention programs including Virginia, which became the eighth state in the country to use state money to support community-based prevention efforts.⁸

Gun homicides in the U.S. disproportionately impact Black and brown communities, with African American men being ten times more likely to be the victims of gun homicides than white American men and gun homicides being the **leading cause of death** among Black men ages 15–34, and the third-leading cause of death for Hispanic men in the same age range.⁹ Government-imposed lockdowns to stem the COVID-19 pandemic have created a nationwide crisis impacting **food access, health care access, lost wages, and increased anxiety about public and personal safety**. The causes of gun violence in Black and brown communities are multi-faceted and there are deep-seated issues around poverty, discrimination, and economic, social and cultural rights which may be amplified with the recent increased number of firearms, concerns about safety and limited access to physical and mental health care in the wake of this pandemic.¹⁰ In cities across the U.S., homicides have spiked as COVID-19 rages on, and already limited resources and funding for violence intervention programs are even more strained due to the pandemic.¹¹ According to the CDC there were 39,707 gun-related deaths in 2019, and the Gun Violence Archive recently published data in May 2021, indicating that the number of gun-related deaths for 2020 had risen to a staggering 43,553.¹²

GUN VIOLENCE BY THE NUMBERS 2020

TOTAL NUMBER OF GV DEATHS—ALL CAUSES	43,553
HOMICIDE/MURDER/UNINTENTIONAL/DGU <small>(DEFENSIVE GUN USE)</small>	19,397
SUICIDE	24,156

TOTAL NUMBER OF INJURIES	39,446
MASS SHOOTINGS	610
MASS MURDERS	21

NUMBER OF CHILDREN (AGE 0-11)	
KILLED	299
INJURED	697

NUMBER OF TEENS (AGE 12-17)	
KILLED	1,074
INJURED	3,061

SOURCE: <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>¹³

U.S. President Joe Biden has taken steps within his executive power to call for funding to support community violence intervention programs. He is specifically calling for state and local governments to utilize funds from the American Rescue Plan to support gun violence prevention programs and he is requesting \$5 billion in funding to be allocated as part of his American Jobs Plan. Without Congressional action, however, resources and appropriations cannot be secured.¹⁴ The global community has repeatedly expressed its concern over rampant gun violence in the U.S. and its impact on the human rights of those in affected communities. In its most recent human rights review by the United Nations, the U.S. received a number of recommendations to address gun violence and its disproportionate effect on members of racial and ethnic minorities¹⁵ and to strengthen legislation with a view towards eliminating racial injustice and killings resulting from gun violence.¹⁶

With sustained investment in gun violence intervention programs, combined with a national comprehensive strategy to reduce gun violence, particularly in Black and brown communities, the U.S. can make inroads to reducing gun violence in all communities. Such progress would ensure that everyone has the right to live free from the threat of gun violence. Evidence indicates that the 2020 gun-related injury and death tolls in the U.S. have been the highest in decades.¹⁷ As such, the country has an obligation to take action to invest in communities ravaged by gun violence and to make efforts to prevent gun violence while protecting the lives and safety of all individuals.¹⁸

Amnesty International USA is calling for Congress to authorize at least **\$625 million in annual investment for eight years (\$5 billion over the next eight years)** to effective violence intervention programs that provide group violence and hospital-based interventions along with evidence-based street outreach programs, all of which have all proved integral to reducing gun violence in communities.

It is imperative that Congress and state and local governments heed the call to use COVID-19 relief funding and/or pass the Break the Cycle of Violence Act in a timely manner to address the disparate impact of gun violence on Black and brown communities. This problem that has only worsened over the past two years as the nation struggled with responding to the pandemic. For a full set of recommendations on the U.S. obligations to address gun violence and its impact on human rights, please see *In the Line of Fire: Human Rights and the U.S. Gun Violence Crisis*.¹⁹



KEY FINDINGS

Gun violence in the U.S. is a human rights crisis and disproportionately impacts Black and brown communities:

- Gun homicides are the **LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH** among Black men ages 15–34 and the third-leading cause of death for Hispanic men and boys in the same age range.²⁰
- Black Males in the U.S. are **TEN TIMES** more likely to be the victims of gun homicides than white males.²¹
- In 2019, **14,414 PEOPLE** died from gun homicides in the U.S. More than half (59%)- 8607 - of gun homicide deaths were Blacks.²² Black Americans represent just 14.7% of the U.S. population.²³

Homicides are increasing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the most recent data from the CDC there were **39,707 GUN-RELATED DEATHS** in 2019, just before the start of the pandemic.²⁴ The Gun Violence Archive published more recent data, indicating that the number of gun-related deaths in 2020 had risen to a staggering **43,553**.²⁵ In 2019, **14,414 PEOPLE** died from gun homicides in the U.S. according to the CDC. In 2020, gun homicides increased to 19,397 according to data published by The Gun Violence Archive.²⁶

Evidence-based Community Violence Prevention Programs have been proven to reduce gun violence and save lives.

For example, in Massachusetts, gun homicide rates **FELL BY 35%** from 2010 to 2015, while nationally gun homicide rates increased 14% in that same period.²⁷

Despite growing numbers of gun-related deaths and injuries, the U.S. has failed to implement even a basic system for the regulation of firearms...

Nor has it provided those most impacted by gun violence – often Black and brown communities with high rates of firearm homicide – with the sustained funding they need to address shootings in their communities. **ONLY EIGHT U.S. STATES** have passed measures to support evidence-based violence prevention and intervention programs.

It is impossible to place a dollar amount on a person's life or the cost of that loss to their families, communities, and loved ones, and yet the astronomical financial impact of gun violence on U.S. society cannot be overlooked.

According to a 2020 study by physicians and researchers, gun violence costs the U.S. health care system **\$170 BILLION PER YEAR**.²⁸ The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention estimates it would cost **\$670 MILLION PER YEAR**, or **\$5.36 BILLION OVER EIGHT YEARS** to fund sustained and adequate violence intervention programs in the 48 U.S. cities with the highest rates of violence.²⁹

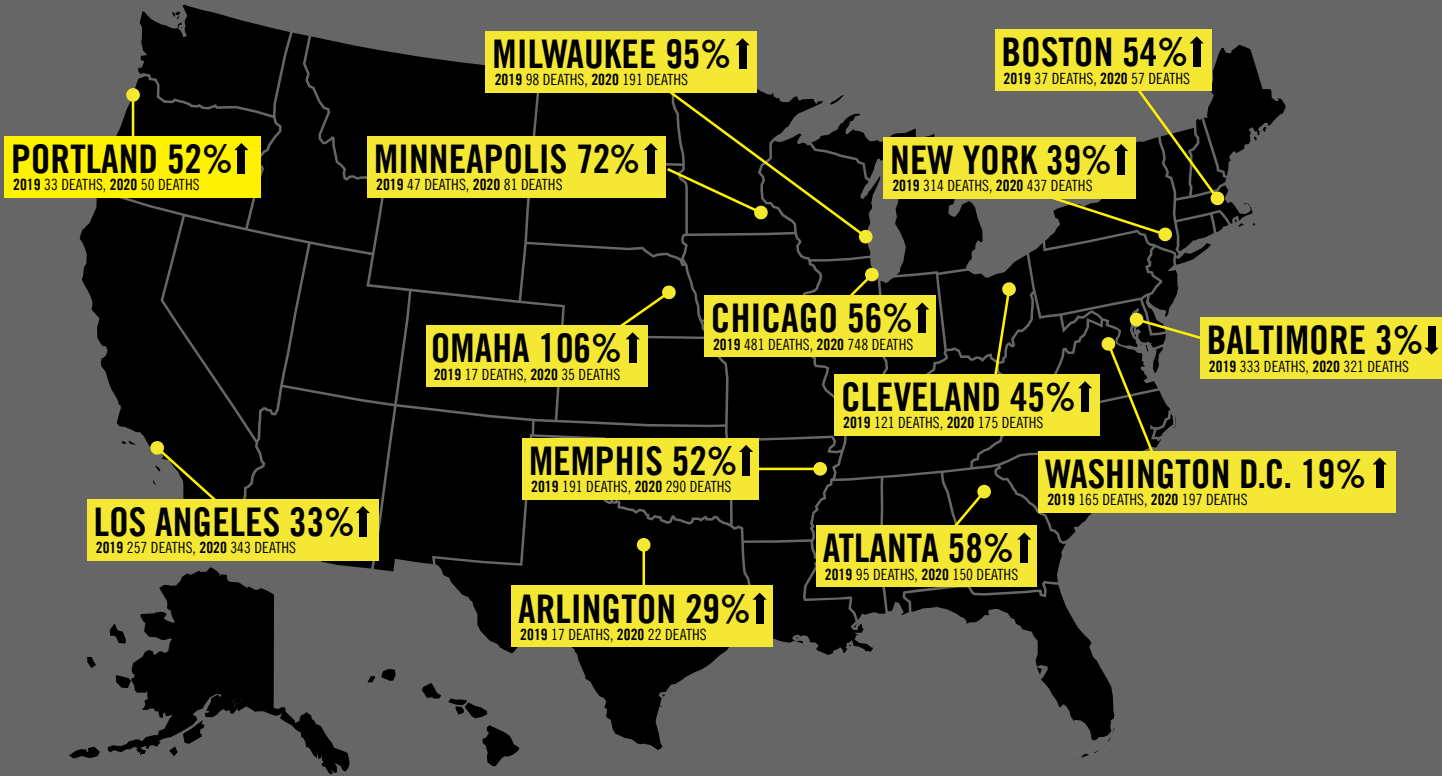
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- U.S. State and Local Governments should utilize funds from the American Rescue Plan to support gun violence prevention and intervention programs.
- The U.S. Congress should safeguard and pass the Biden Administration's proposed \$5 billion funding, as part of the American Jobs Bill to support gun violence prevention and intervention programs.
- The U.S. Congress must pass the Break the Cycle of Violence Bill which would allocate \$5 billion over the next eight years to community gun violence prevention and intervention programs that have proven effective in decreasing gun violence in communities where there are persistently high levels of firearm violence.
- The U.S. Administration should establish a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing gun violence, particularly in communities of color.

II. COVID-19 CREATED A SPIKE IN SHOOTINGS NATIONWIDE, IMPACTING ALREADY MARGINALIZED BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITIES

GUN VIOLENCE BY THE NUMBERS 2020

SOURCE: Jeff Asher @ Crimalytics
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Z9b5mlwztAwmEHJW7Q5DHmJS14-Rs7XIXOt33AI_rDw/edit#gid=1757262194



Tackling entrenched community-wide firearm violence is a complex problem. Black and brown communities have been forced to endure a long and complicated history of disadvantage and marginalization in the U.S., which contributes to the disparate impact of firearm homicides. These shootings are a product of the laws, policies, and institutional structures that contribute to a system where every individual's life is not valued equally. Racial bias in the U.S. criminal justice system, overincarceration of Black and brown communities, lack of investment in and access to basic services including health care, education, food, housing, and employment all contribute to firearm violence and must be addressed and reformed.

Community-level firearm violence in the U.S. disproportionately impacts communities of color, particularly young Black men. Firearm homicide is the leading cause of death for Black men and boys ages 15-34 and the third-leading cause of death for Hispanic men and boys in the same age range. Urban centers are largely populated by communities whose neighborhoods frequently lack economic opportunity and access to services and where young people can feel the need to protect themselves by carrying a firearm due to the persistent and unaddressed presence of gun violence.

“I ended up finishing college and getting a Masters in youth development. And that education and the skills I learned allowed me to come back to D.C.- to my community and say- Hey- we are like this for a reason. We need to invest in our communities. How do you expect to see a flower grow if the soil is not rich?”³⁰

Tia Bell, the T.R.I.G.G.E.R. Project

Patterns of persistent firearm violence in communities can result in decreased access to basic services - such as health care, housing, and education - leading to entrenched deprivation. At the same time, firearm violence also causes a range of health problems throughout the affected community. Victims of firearm violence and their families often lack access to adequate psychological and physical care and proper follow up to address these issues, which the government should be providing. This could range from long-term medical and financial support for those with physical and psychological disabilities caused by firearm violence, to the provision of counseling for those traumatized by the effects of firearm violence on themselves, their friends, family and wider community.

III. EVIDENCE BASED GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS CAN SAVE LIVES

Evidence-based community-led gun violence solutions exist- but they are not being funded and prioritized. Communities require increased support for gun violence intervention and prevention programs, focused on interrupting cycles of violence, and increased funding for direct services including mentorship to individuals at high risk of engaging in gun violence. These types of cost-effective programs have proven to be highly effective at reducing gun violence and saving lives. Further, taking these critical steps to reduce and prevent firearm homicides is not only good for communities, but it will also decrease the economic burden on the U.S. health care and criminal justice systems, quickly paying dividends for taxpayers and communities alike. With sustained investment in these programs, combined with a national comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing gun violence, particularly in Black and brown communities, the U.S. can make inroads to reducing gun violence in all communities.

Research indicates that sustained funding for evidence-based projects, tailored for specific local contexts, and working in partnership with the affected communities, can achieve significant and long-lasting reductions in firearm violence. A number of federal and state-funded violence intervention and reduction programs, and accompanying strategies, have proven effective in decreasing gun violence in communities.

“It’s in the interest of our economy to tackle the issue of gun violence head-on and end the carnage plaguing so many cities. Americans should not be left footing the bill because Congress lacks the courage and resolve to implement strategies that will save lives and keep our streets safe.”³¹

Senator Cory Booker

Examples of Community-Based Violence Intervention Programs

OPERATION CEASEFIRE MODEL: Works with community members, local officials, law enforcement and direct service providers to identify a small group of individuals most at risk of being involved in gun violence. They are invited to in-person meetings where specific benefits and direct services are offered in return for agreeing not to engage further in gun-related activity.

CURE VIOLENCE MODEL: Uses a public health framework to assess gun violence – treating gun violence like an epidemic – by focusing on the way violence is spread from person to person and interrupting cycles of violence proactively, including offering rehabilitation opportunities.

HOSPITAL-BASED INTERVENTION: These interventions work with patients admitted to the hospital for gunshot wounds – particularly those who are repeat admissions – based on the premise that they may be at high risk of being victims or perpetrators of future gun violence and are likely to be open to modifying their behaviors. With adequate support, connection to direct services, and counseling, these patients leave the hospital with a tailored plan for alternatives to gun violence.

ADVANCE PEACE (RICHMOND FELLOWSHIP MODEL): This model combines various of the above strategies and adds an 18-month fellowship programs for potential shooters. It was created by the Office of Neighborhood Safety in Richmond, CA, independent from the police department and works collaboratively with the police in the initial phases of identifying high risk individuals for targeted outreach and support. It provides a comprehensive plan for participants including connection with social services, treatment, counseling, educational and professional development training and financial incentives.



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How Violence Intervention Programs Can Change Lives: A spotlight on the ROCA Program in Baltimore:



Roca is a separate model of gun violence intervention, focusing on a behavioral health. It focuses on addressing the trauma while meeting the needs of the young person. When we look at the youth in our communities- we know they have experienced trauma. And when the brain is so highly traumatized- the neuro pathways start to shut down. Cognitive Behavioral Theory discusses this- there is the fight, flight or freeze response. But we try to teach them the seven steps to training their minds to react differently:

- 1 FLEX YOUR THINKING
- 2 ACTION YOUR VALUES
- 3 BE PRESENT
- 4 STICK WITH IT
- 5 MOVE IT
- 6 LABEL YOUR FEELINGS
- 7 SOLVE IT

We try to illustrate that things aren't always the way they appear- that's what we mean by flex your thinking. There is what you think, then what you feel, and finally what you do. They are separate but related steps, and we try to put intersections between them, so that these young people stop and think before they feel and act. A lot of our guys don't know how to have feelings. We are taught from a young age: "You better not have no feelings. You can put your feelings in your pocket." We have been taught all of these unhealthy things- we have been taught to normalize things that are abnormal.

We just want to teach these individuals the 7 steps, the skills that keep them alive long enough to make better decisions. The importance of our work – like in any other field- is about building relationships with people that are strong enough to challenge the negative things in their life.³²

James Timpson, ROCA Baltimore

EFFECTIVENESS OF EVIDENCE-BASED GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS:

The Group Violence Intervention (GVI) strategy is a form of problem-oriented policing (as opposed to traditional “incident-driven” policing). It was first used in the enormously successful Operation Ceasefire in Boston in the mid-1990s, where it was associated with a

61% REDUCTION IN YOUTH HOMICIDE.³³

The program has now been implemented in a wide variety of American cities, with consistently impressive results. An analysis of more than twenty GVI programs showed a significant reduction in firearm violence.³⁴ The most successful of these programs have reduced violent crime in cities by an average of 30% and improved relations between law enforcement officers and the neighborhoods they serve. The GVI model has a remarkably strong track record: a documented association with homicide reductions of between 30% and 60%.³⁵

An example of Hospital Based Violence Intervention Programs is the San Francisco Wraparound Project, first introduced in 2005. In its first six years of operation, the Wraparound Project was associated with

A FOURFOLD DECREASE IN INJURY RECIDIVISM

(re-injury from gun-shot wounds) rates. Moreover, studies have shown that this form of intervention saves hospitals money by preventing future injuries, both for the patient and for anyone the patient may have considered retaliating against.³⁸

A study of Cure Violence in Chicago found that its implementation in several targeted districts was associated with a

38% GREATER DECREASE IN HOMICIDES AND A 15% GREATER DECREASE IN SHOOTINGS

compared to districts that did not receive the intervention.³⁶ A 2018 evaluation of Philadelphia’s Cure Violence Program found that shootings decreased significantly, compared to other matched comparison areas.³⁷

Youth Summer employment programs and opportunities for impacted communities have contributed to reduced violent crimes and gun violence in various cities. A study of youth summer employment programs in Chicago demonstrated decreased violence among youth participants.³⁹ Advance Peace, created by the Office of Neighborhood Safety in Richmond, CA where there was a

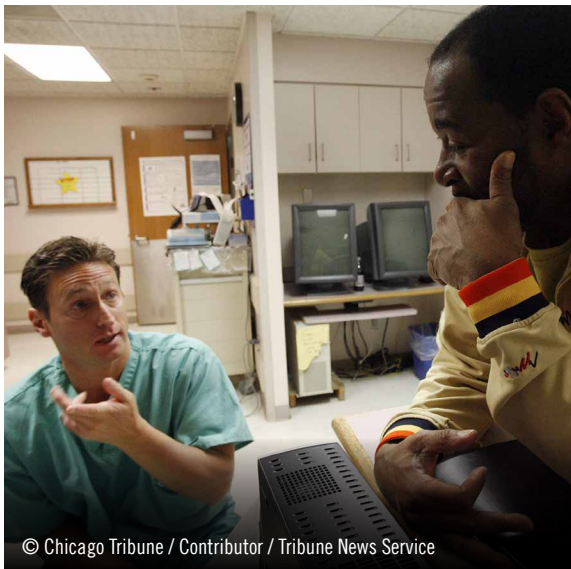
66% DECREASE IN FIREARM ASSAULTS CAUSING INJURY OR DEATH

between 2010-2017, through implementation of the program.⁴⁰

As of 2017, only five states fund and support evidence-based urban violence prevention and intervention programs. Three of those states—Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York—have had remarkable success cutting gun violence rates. For example,

IN MASSACHUSETTS, ONE OF THE NATION’S LEADERS WHEN IT COMES TO INVESTING IN URBAN GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION, GUN HOMICIDE RATES FELL BY 35% FROM 2010 TO 2015,

while nationally gun homicide rates actually increased 14% in that same period.⁴¹ By 2020, three more states passed measures to support gun violence intervention programs including Virginia, which became the eighth state in the country to use state money to support community-based prevention efforts.⁴²



“I mean you have to have a heart for justice and a heart for peace – to do this work. Because it is really hard. But the concept is that we are working with teens and I wanted to do it because I grew up in this neighborhood. I knew the challenges they face.”⁴³

Lamar Johnson, BRAVE Chicago

It is important to note that community advocates, street outreach workers, violence interrupters, program managers, directors and participants indicated that violence reduction initiatives are most effective when members from impacted communities, many of whom have been perpetrators and/or victims of gun violence themselves, are involved in the development and implementation of programs.

That is why Amnesty International USA is calling for Congress to authorize at least **\$625 million in annual investment for eight years (\$5 billion over the next eight years)** to effective violence intervention programs that provide group violence and hospital-based interventions along with evidence-based street outreach programs, all of which have all proved integral to reducing gun violence in communities.

By focusing efforts on a concentrated group and engaging community members in providing direct services and mentorship to individuals at higher risk of engaging in gun violence, many cities have made significant progress to reducing violence and creating safe communities. Importantly, the design and implementation of these programs must include human rights safeguards including the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to privacy, and the right to due process.

Unfortunately, despite the significant success of these programs, both a lack of funding and political will have prevented the kind of long-term, consistent implementation these programs need to thrive. Even in cases where the models have drastically reduced gun violence, community leaders face challenges in maintaining them, sometimes leading to a devastating reversal of the program's gains, and a return to previous higher levels of gun violence.

“The Cleveland Peace Alliance program is key. The community don’t trust the police. They just don’t. So, they look at us- where we aren’t the police- we are there for them. I have a lot of friends in both the community (and law enforcement) who are detectives. I try to help the detectives because I know them, and I want to help the community. It calms the community down that we aren’t the police- but it is also important that we get info to them (police) to help them (the community) be safer. People know they can call me and tell me things about a shooting- because they don’t want to be afraid to walk to the store. I give my card out at the scene – and a lot of folks call me later. No one will talk to you in front of everyone.”⁴⁴

Mar’yum Patterson, Cleveland Health Alliance

Risking Their Lives to Stop Gun Violence in Their Communities with Little or No Government Support

Investment, training, and support for culturally appropriate violence prevention workers with lived experience in impacted communities have proven successful in cities across the U.S. A lack of political will, however, has resulted in many advocates and community leaders working with limited or no resources.

“Our after-school program is a nonprofit- we run it through the church- and the funding comes mostly from private donors. The majority of the city’s budget goes to law enforcement- and that’s not just Chicago- that’s most cities. We’ve met with mayors’ administrations so many times- and presented our case- but they don’t give us funding. The whole system is so broken- because the focus is on the criminal justice system. If someone is addicted to drugs, they go to jail before they go to the hospital to get treatment. It’s the mindset.”⁴⁵

Lamar Johnson, BRAVE Chicago

“With the T.R.I.G.G.E.R. Project- I work with kids from 8 -26 years old. The eight-year-old- he’s already lost ten people in his life to gun violence in D.C. Everyone on my staff is a volunteer. Tiff is my partner- she handles everything we do with the government because she has connections there. Tiff’s nephew is leading our Youth Advisory Board, KT is the counselor, trauma-informed questions, Jacob is the videographer, Ronnie does our design and social media, and Crook is our artist and therapist.”⁴⁶

Tia Bell, the T.R.I.G.G.E.R. Project

“Safe Streets Baltimore is based on the Cure Violence model- that violence is a public health issue and an epidemic, and the solutions should be tailored accordingly. But the problem was that Safe Streets never had the support structures and services in place to be successful. They had us out there doing violence intervention and mediating disputes – but what comes next? We needed the city’s support. We needed housing for people in danger, safety measures, health and trauma support. If I have a guy who is in danger- I need to move him temporarily- I need to be able to without all the red tape of the city. I need the city to support the efforts to reduce violence because I’m risking my life to save his life. I mean with Safe Streets- there was no mental health support- not even for the staff. The quality and upkeep of the worker was not a priority. The pay was terrible, benefits lacking. Each site had a budget of \$500,000 at the time- we needed at least a million. We needed professional training, training for the youth, therapists, etc. One of the first things I did as a Site Director was to get training for the staff. I asked my boss for \$10,000 for mediation training. Because mediation is a job, it is a career- and you cannot expect people to just know what to do.”⁴⁷

James Timpson, ROCA Baltimore



Despite the success and numerous available models for these programs, lack of funding and lack of political will have prevented the kind of long-term consistent implementation these programs need. Even in cases where the models have drastically reduced gun violence, community leaders face challenges in maintaining them, sometimes leading to a devastating reversal of the program's gains, and a return to previous higher levels of gun violence.

It should be noted that greater research and more detailed evaluations of existing group-violence intervention models are critical in assessing potential challenges and gauging success. While the implementation of evidence-based group violence intervention models has decreased gun violence in certain cities such as Oakland, California; New Haven, Connecticut; and New York, New York, they have not always been successful. In Baltimore, Maryland, for example, the implementation of Ceasefire in 2014, proved unsuccessful in reducing gun violence. The failures were attributed to a lack of adequate resources for program participants, staff turnover and tensions between community and law enforcement officials.

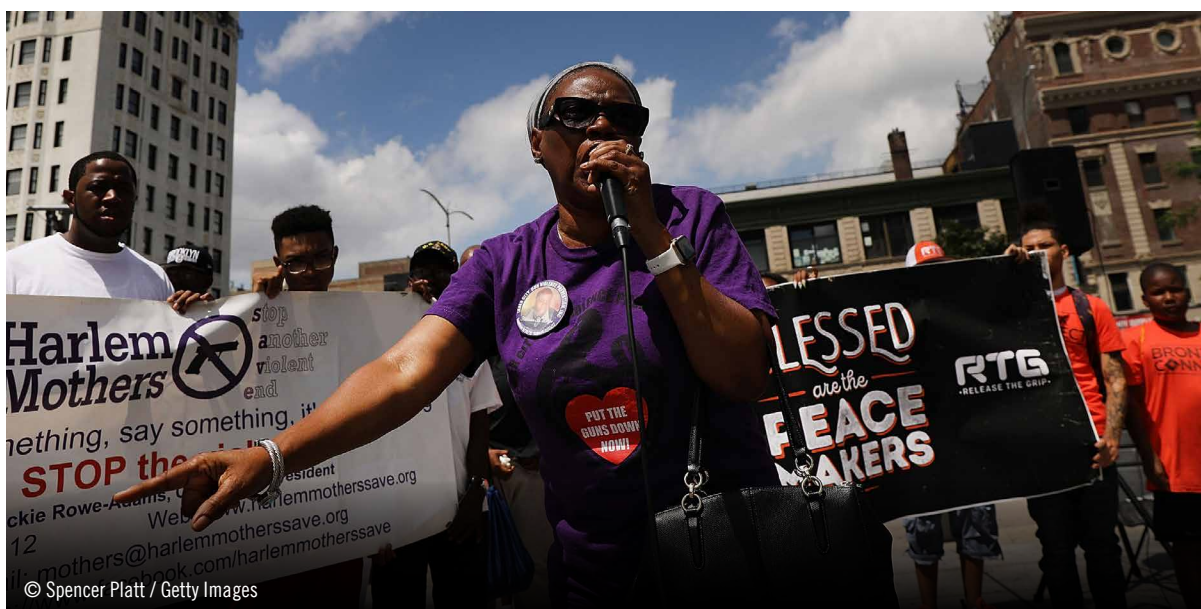
By focusing efforts on a concentrated group of perpetrators and victims – engaging community members, offering support, direct services and mentorship to individuals at high risk for engaging in gun violence – several cities have provided alternatives to violence. Most importantly, they have been able to combat and reduce gun violence while simultaneously providing life-altering opportunities for individuals living in high-crime neighborhoods. It is critical that states and localities implementing violence intervention programs do so with an eye toward reducing rates of incarceration for Black and brown communities. Implementing evidence-based violence reduction programs in communities where there is a persistently high level of firearm violence should include active engagement and partnership with all relevant stakeholders. Such stakeholders include local authorities and those providing health and education services, law enforcement, civil society, local businesses and community leaders. Additionally, it is important to have a regular evaluation of impact, and a commitment to consistent, stable funding for firearm violence reduction/prevention.

Although widely supported, some advocates fear that data gathered through these types of programs that target individuals most at-risk of being involved with gun violence could also be used by law enforcement officials to target these individuals through data-driven policing, and for other types of law enforcement, including involvement in gangs. As such, the design and implementation of these programs must include human rights safeguards including the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to privacy and the right to due process.

IV. COST OF GUN VIOLENCE VS. COST OF INVESTING IN PREVENTION & INTERVENTION

WHAT IS THE ACTUAL COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN THE U.S.?

Numerous research studies have been conducted to assess the annual cost of gun violence in the U.S. No dollar amount could cover the loss of a loved one lost to gun violence, but the expenses associated with gun violence reveal the astronomical cost of this crisis on U.S. society. Examining the financial impact of gun violence in the U.S. from various perspectives demonstrates that the cost of dealing with the aftermath of shootings far exceeds the cost of investing in violence prevention efforts aimed at reducing injury and death. Everyone has the right to live free from the threat of gun violence and the U.S. should be addressing this human rights crisis by fulfilling its obligations to prevent firearm violence through (i) Restricting access to firearms especially by those most at risk of misusing them; and (ii) Taking effective steps to put in place and implement violence reduction or protection measures where firearms misuse persists.



COST OF GUN VIOLENCE

Annual Cost of Gun Violence for U.S. Hospitals and Health Care Systems:

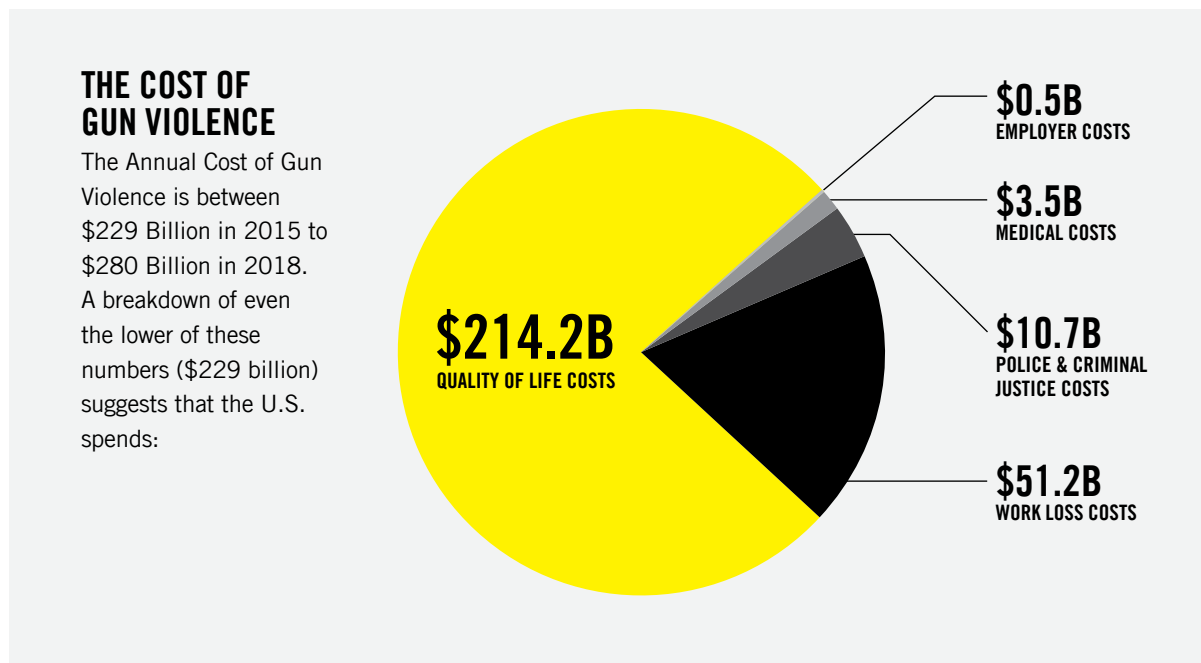
According to a 2020 study by physicians and researchers, gun violence costs the U.S. health care system \$170 billion per year, with \$16 billion for operations alone.⁴⁸ The researchers used the National Inpatient Sample (NIS) to identify all hospital admissions for gunshot wounds (GSW) from 2005 through 2016. They then examined the 262,098 victims who required at least one major operation, rather than including all adult gunshot wound victims admitted to the hospital.⁴⁹

Annual Economic Cost of Gun Violence in the U.S.- Costs to Government and Costs to Society:

A 2018 report by Everytown for Gun Safety in collaboration with Ted Miller, a researcher at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), deduced that gun violence costs the U.S. \$280 billion per year.⁵⁰ Building on research and data from his 2015 study, lead health economist researcher Ted Miller utilized CDC data on gun-related injuries and deaths and adjusted cost per injury or death data to reflect age, sex and injury severity of the impacted individual. Taking the number of gun-related injuries and deaths, multiplied by the cost of those injuries, Miller arrived at the \$280 billion total annual cost of gun violence in the U.S.⁵¹

Annual Direct and Indirect Costs of Gun Violence in the U.S.:

A 2015 study by journalists at Mother Jones and Ted Miller, a researcher at Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) estimates direct and indirect costs of gun violence per year in the U.S. at \$229 billion.⁵² Analyzing 2012 data on gun violence injuries and deaths, the research indicated that the direct costs of gun violence account for \$8.6 billion, with over half of them being prison costs. The indirect costs of gun violence account for about \$221 billion, with over half of them being the costs relating to the impacts on the quality of life of the victims. Quality of life lost represents the present value of what was lost because of a life cut short or a person who was permanently disabled by gun violence. As a result, fatal injuries account for most of the quality-of-life lost.⁵³

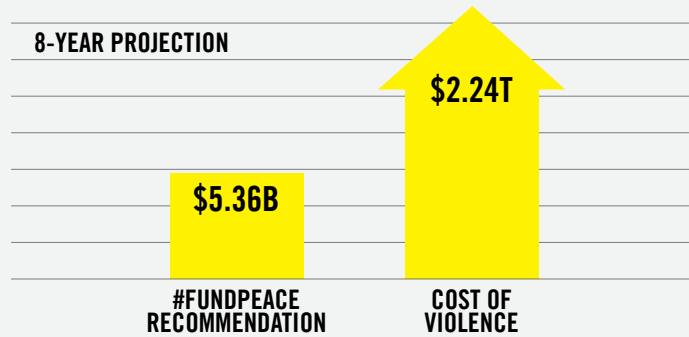


INVESTING IN SOLUTIONS: HOW MUCH WILL IT TAKE?

According to the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention, it would cost an estimated **\$670 million per year or \$5.36 billion over eight years** to fund sustained and adequate violence intervention programs in the 48 U.S. cities with the highest rates of violence.⁵⁴

THE INVESTMENT

A **\$5.36B** investment would help cities to scale comprehensive approaches to community violence. This is a fraction of the total cost of violence.



THE RATIONALE

To arrive at the **\$5.36B** estimated investment, we first calculate the medical costs associated with an intensive care hospitalization due to a firearm injury assault, **\$43,200**. To be sure, violent injuries have much broader societal costs across many sectors, so this is a very conservative estimate of cost to taxpayers. From there, we extrapolate using the number of homicides to arrive at the following:

TOTAL COMMUNITY VIOLENCE FUND =
\$43,200 X TOTAL ANNUAL U.S. HOMICIDES (3-YEAR AVERAGE, 19,234 DEATHS)

We further create a proportionate distribution of the fund that corresponds to higher rates of violence in larger cities. Of note, “floor funding” refers to a statistical adjustment that must exist for areas with low rates of violence over large geographic areas.

$$\frac{\text{STATE TOTAL HOMICIDES (3 YEAR AVERAGE)}}{\text{FEDERAL ADJUSTED TOTAL HOMICIDES (3 YEAR AVERAGE)}} \times \text{TOTAL COMMUNITY VIOLENCE FUND MINUS FLOOR FUNDING}$$

TOTAL ANNUAL COST: \$669,619,844
TOTAL EIGHT-YEAR COST: \$5,356,959,000

SOURCE: <https://www.thehavi.org/new-blog/a-bold-plan-for-536b-federal-investment-in-violence-intervention>

While the loss of life caused by gun violence is staggering and must be addressed, the economic costs for communities and taxpayers is astounding. Knowing that proven solutions exist, and that the estimated cost of these solutions is less than the cost expended dealing with the devastation and loss of lives, the U.S. must take action.

“The thing is- legislation won’t solve our issue- investment will. Racism, systemic oppression- America will have to invest in its communities and in programs like BRAVE to make real change. We are important because these kids are in high school and they are either going to be a perpetrator of gun violence or a victim or both. They will either be behind a gun or in front of it- or both. Programs like BRAVE are critical because we are there with them- we are in their faces and we give them a chance to see more.”⁵⁵

Lamar Johnson, BRAVE Chicago



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V. ON THE FRONT LINES OF GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION



[HEROES.AMNESTYUSA.ORG](https://www.heroes.amnestyusa.org)

[#HEROESNEEDYOU](https://twitter.com/HEROESNEEDYOU)



LAMAR

JOHNSON

***VIOLENCE PREVENTION COORDINATOR,
BRAVE CHICAGO***

“Growing up in this neighborhood I was exposed to gangs and drugs- it was part of our everyday reality. I played sports – baseball and track and I did a lot of extracurricular activities- so it helped keep me out of trouble.

Kids choose their lifestyle because they don't have money- they do what they need to survive. In many cases they have no hope- they don't have a strong family structure, so they turn to the streets for it. Luckily for me- and it is luck- the only reason – I'm lucky – is- I didn't get caught. I did just enough to not be consumed by it- gangs/shootings that is- but I had other things to focus on.

The kids are the ones that came up with what BRAVE stands for. They said- it should stand for Bold Resistance Against Violence Everywhere. It started in 2012- with the first class of kids- about 15 of them. The concept is that we are working with teens and I wanted to do it because I grew up in this neighborhood. I knew the challenges they face.

The goal of BRAVE is: what can teenagers say and do to promote peace.

[After Parkland] We sat on the floor of Emma's (Emma Gonzalez) house- and just talked. As a high school senior Emma survived the February 2018 Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, and in response co-founded the gun-control advocacy group Never Again MSD. “You see- it was normal to us- the violence and trauma of guns- so to see these Parkland (Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School) kids so shell-shocked was strange. We were literally seeing the privilege being knocked off of them. But the unique part about those teens – what they are doing- it is what adults should be doing--- they weren't afraid to talk about race and socio-economic differences.”

That's where human rights come in—whether it is Chicago and gun violence in our neighborhoods or mass shootings in a suburb- it is about gun violence. It is about trying to stay alive. Parkland put America at a vulnerable place. And they had to watch. And the great thing about teenagers- the reason I like working with them- is that they have no filter. They deserve to have a platform because they are living it. They are living the struggle- and that is what inspires me. I mean- these kids- they teach me, they keep me going when I feel hopeless. I want them to see that there is a world outside their environment, and they can be a part of it- they can be more.”



MAR'YUM

PATTERSON

**HOSPITAL TRAUMA LIAISON,
CLEVELAND HEALTH ALLIANCE**

"A lot of people don't know what we do and the intensity of the work and its value. I'm from Glenville- in Cleveland, OH. I grew up here- and it was a wonderful place to grow up. I excelled in school- I was a great student- but at 15 years old- I got pregnant with my son. My teachers were amazing and so supportive. I think they knew I was a good student, and they didn't want to lose me- or for me to drop out. So they offered to babysit anytime. I had a good strong family- so I didn't need to use their help that much- but it inspired me and welcomed me to keep going. The love that they poured into me- and they weren't even my family- well I wanted to give it back to the community.

It started with helping my kids' friends- I would try to talk to them and lead them in the right direction. I was very careful with my kids. I was the mom of the neighborhood. I became a support system for the kids. When kids got in trouble, I helped them. I taught them. I helped them access resources, education- I taught the kids how to interact with the police, etc. A lot of these kids- they have no family support, or they live with very elderly relatives who can't help them.

In 2016, I started as an Outreach Worker for the Cleveland Health Alliance. We dealt with youth from ages 13-30- we gave them access to social workers, case management, hospital, safe passages to school (we are outside of hot spots for six schools), court-involved- juvenile and first offenders -we help them to have a different life- go to court with them in hopes of getting it thrown out- we just want to give them a second chance at life.

You can't help one person - you have to help the whole household. You have to help the whole community. That's how Cleveland Peace Alliance is successful.

We work to support in a holistic way, where we are trying to support the survivor and the whole community – so we can save lives. For me- this is personal. I have nine friends- close friends- people I talk to everyday that have lost their children to gun violence. Two of them have lost both of their children. My son has been caught in the crossfire before- but luckily he is still here- so you know- everyday I wake up and I just pray I can save a life."



TIA

BELL

**FOUNDER, THE T.R.I.G.G.E.R. PROJECT
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

The T.R.I.G.G.E.R. Project started because I represented 4Youth (my organization) on a community-based solutions panel for the Annual Gun Violence Prevention Conference in Washington, D.C. in 2019. I didn't know it was a national movement. I didn't know that there were all these well-established organizations and all this money working on gun violence - I had no idea. Greg Jackson from Community Justice Action Fund asked me to run this panel and I made everyone do the same games I did with my kids- to center people in my type of violence. I was representing community-based solutions- but then I realized I'm the only person from D.C. at the whole conference! I couldn't believe it. How could we be having a conference on gun violence in a city with such high rates and have no impacted individuals from communities.

Driving home from the conference I was passing all of the places my friends died- where they were shot and killed- and I was getting so mad. No one represented gun violence from my point of view. I had a dream that night that I was the shooter and no one recognized me- I was walking through a gentrified place and no one saw me and then I saw a gun and I picked it up and then everyone saw me. T.R.I.G.G.E.R. stands for True Reasons I Grab a Gun Evolves from Risk.

***That's how T.R.I.G.G.E.R. started—
out of a feeling—lack of representation—
the struggle and neglect of our communities.***

Literally- we got a trigger finger and now with so much gun violence all over the country- we all know what it feels like to lose a child- Black and white. People always talk about senseless gun violence- but I don't like to say senseless violence. There is no senseless violence because it makes sense to that person - it's not right, but to them it is justified. And It's not just a Black people problem. There are so many layers to this monster- but we need to include impacted people to solve the problem. We need to understand what's happening in our communities. T.R.I.G.G.E.R. is really about the intersectionality of gun violence, public health, social justice and youth development. It helps parents see the T.R.I.G.G.E.R. evolution - and the need for intense intentionality of youth development.



JAMES

TIMPSON

***DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
AND SAFETY, ROCA BALTIMORE***

I think there is a level of trauma in Baltimore that is unmatched. It is like a war-torn country. Our communities haven't gotten the support they need to stem the tide of violence. The city hasn't ever really made a commitment. I worked hand-in-hand with Dante Barksdale at ROCA Baltimore - he was one of my best friends and an incredible person. We were like a dynamic duo. We talked a lot about how we would change things, and our commitment to this work. Earlier this year, Jan. 17, 2021, he was shot and killed in the streets. Dante was murdered while mediating a dispute- the police haven't made any arrests yet. It's the reason I still do this work. For me, this work is way more personal than it ever was before. I'm trying to save lives.

I want to see change and sustainability.

I want to see a community where young men

***of color are thinking. Now is the time to confront
difficult situations.***

We deal with a limited population - only 200 kids. In the time since COVID started, I've lost 12-13 of my kids in the program- they were shot dead. And 15-20 were shot but survived. It's alarming how many people we are losing. The burden of this work is really heavy and I want these kids to know it is OUR privilege to work with THEM- not for them to work with us. We want these youth to know that change is possible. We want them to believe this.

I think about all of the inequities, disparities, lack of diversity and how this impacts our communities. American has to wake up. Because we are dealing with a forgotten population. People are quick to ostracize but they don't think about why they got there. How did this young person get to the point where they feel comfortable doing this? What is the trauma that led to this?

I know we have to keep going and while the money trickles down from these federal and state programs and initiatives- we have to keep the infrastructure going. I really feel that the way I can honor Dante's legacy is by continuing this work. I never want to let his legacy die.

VI. GUN VIOLENCE IS A HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN THE U.S. WITH BLACK & BROWN COMMUNITIES BEING DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED

The U.S. has either signed or ratified several international human rights conventions that guarantee human rights impacted by gun violence and firearm-related injuries and deaths, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The U.S., therefore, has a legal obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights set out in these treaties and to exercise due diligence by taking measures to combat actual or foreseeable threats to these rights, including the right to life. In the context of firearms, this obligation also includes reducing and preventing violent acts against individuals and communities, addressing discriminatory violence, violence against children, gender-based violence, and the use of firearms in suicides, unintentional and accidental deaths. The U.S. is obliged to exercise due diligence to prevent, punish, investigate and redress harm caused by private individuals and should pay particular attention to those most at risk, be they individuals or marginalized communities.

“Gun violence is inherently tied to human rights because as a human being you deserve respect and acknowledgement and to be seen. Anything that creates trauma, abuse, and inequity- it is a human rights issue- and gun violence does that. It touches everyone.”⁵⁶

Lamar Johnson, BRAVE Chicago

Persistent gun violence in the United States is denying people their human rights including their right to live, the right to security of person, and the right to be free from discrimination. The U.S. must do more. As the United Nations Human Rights Committee has affirmed, “The state has a duty to actively prioritize marginalized communities who face the biggest obstacles to realizing the full spectrum of their rights. When a state fails to act with sufficient due diligence in preventing or responding to gun violence, this can violate an individual’s right to equality before the law.”⁵⁷

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination highlighted the issue of gun violence in their reports on U.S. human rights compliance.⁵⁸ They remain concerned at the increasing numbers of gun-related deaths and injuries in the U.S. and the disparate impact on racial and ethnic minorities. Both committees noted that the U.S. government’s failure to curb gun violence constitutes a violation of the rights to life and to non-discrimination under international law. Gun violence also undermines the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to health and the right to education.⁵⁹

The full enjoyment of all human rights requires a holistic approach which looks not just at individual violations but at patterns of violations embedded in specific socio-economic realities. The U.S. has a duty to ensure that it does not discriminate on any of the grounds protected by international law and that it takes measures to remedy the legacy of discrimination and ensure that rights are enjoyed equally by everyone. This includes actively prioritizing marginalized communities in order to remove obstacles to their realizing the full spectrum of rights.

“For too long, the way the U.S. government has addressed the issue of gun violence has been negligent at best, and disastrous, at worst. Gun violence remains one of the primary issues threatening the human rights of communities across this country.”⁶⁰

Bob Goodfellow, Acting Executive Director of Amnesty International USA

Thus, the failure to establish a comprehensive, meaningful and working system of firearm regulations is a breach of the U.S.’ obligations under international human rights law.

The consequences of this breach are both obvious and catastrophic, but they are not irreversible. The U.S. should act proactively to promote and protect human rights by implementing a system of laws which work adequately to restrict access to firearms to those most at risk of abusing them and by taking effective steps to put in place and implement violence reduction or protection measures where gun violence persists. In its March 2021 response to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of the U.S.’s human rights record, the U.S. accepted recommendations to work towards limiting armed violent crimes by regulating possession and use of firearms and reducing gun violence and gun-related deaths and injuries, which disproportionately affect members of racial and ethnic minorities.⁶¹ Throughout the UPR process, numerous member states and civil society organizations expressed concern regarding the human rights impact of gun violence and recommended that the U.S. take action to address gun violence and its disproportionate impact on certain communities.⁶²

“The U.S. should take necessary measures to reduce gun violence, [we are] concerned at the large number of gun-related deaths and injuries, which disproportionately affect members of racial and ethnic minorities.”⁶³

Iceland, UN Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review



“The U.S. should strengthen legislation with a view to eliminating racial injustice and killings resulting from gun violence”⁶⁴

India, UN Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review

VII. OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

While U.S. President Joe Biden has taken steps within his executive power to call for funding to support community violence intervention programs as part of the American Rescue Plan and has also proposed funding as part of his American Jobs Plan, without Congressional action and the will of state and local legislators, resources and appropriations cannot be secured.⁶⁵

HOW STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN FUND GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS THROUGH THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened structural inequities both through the spread of a deadly virus and increased rates of gun violence in many cities across the U.S.⁶⁶ For some Black and brown communities these two public health crises amplified existing challenges like disparate access to health care and resources, underinvestment in urban areas, poverty, access to education, among others.

On March 12, 2021, U.S. President Joe Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) into law. The ARP authorizes \$130 billion in funding for local and state governments to help them recover from the economic toll of the pandemic.⁶⁷ The ARP allows state and local governments the flexibility to spend Rescue funds (a) in response to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts, including support to nonprofit organizations, and (b) for costs related to premium pay for essential workers during COVID-19.⁶⁸ State and local governments should use ARP funds to support gun violence prevention programs because increased gun violence and its disparate impact on Black and brown communities are tied to the pandemic and to the critical violence intervention workers working on the front lines to keep people safe from gun violence.

Through advocacy efforts and action, cities across the U.S. have begun using COVID-relief funding to supplement violence intervention programs and to address increasing gun violence. Columbus, Ohio, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Chicago, Illinois and Grand Rapids, Michigan are examples of municipalities that invested 2020 federal relief funding in impacted communities.⁶⁹ It is critical that as ARP funding gets released, state and local governments follow the lead of cities like Akron, Ohio, and Atlanta, Georgia, and find ways to support communities most impacted by COVID-19 and its companion virus- gun violence.⁷⁰ The U.S. has a duty to protect people's human rights to live and to feel safe from gun violence and discrimination. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the types of gun violence- like gun homicides- that evidence-based strategies address. Interventions that support social and mental well-being and that are supported by local impacted communities, adequately funded and sustained over time can reduce gun violence while changing lives.⁷¹ State and local governments should waste no time in utilizing rescue funds to support these programs and provide much needed relief and support for impacted communities.

A. Federal Funding for Violence Intervention Through the American Jobs Plan

On March 31, 2021, President Joe Biden announced his intention to include \$5 billion for gun violence prevention programs in the American Jobs Plan.⁷² In the months and years prior to the President's announcement, gun violence intervention advocates from Black and brown communities have been pushing for increased funding for those hit by the dual pandemic of gun violence and COVID-19.⁷³ In their open letter, the groups requested an investment of \$5.36 billion in violence intervention.⁷⁴ The number is based on a calculation of cost for hospitalization due to firearm injury multiplied by the estimated total of annual U.S. gun homicides, resulting in \$827 million per year over eight years which would amount to \$6.6 billion. By focusing on the top 48 cities with the largest number of absolute homicides and the largest rates of violence per capita, the number could be slightly reduced to \$5.36 billion in funding for violence intervention in the most impacted communities.⁷⁵

The Biden Administration's proposed \$5 billion funding represents an unprecedented commitment to violence intervention and reduction. The funding would support evidence-based violence intervention programs that treat gun violence as a public health issue. Such programs focus on holistic approaches to healing communities most impacted by economic insecurity, chronic trauma, structural inequities and to helping those disproportionately impacted by gun homicides. As the American Jobs Bill makes its way through Congress, it will be critical for gun violence prevention advocates to remain vigilant in safeguarding this vital funding. Every person, regardless of where they live, has the human right to live, to feel safe and to be free from discrimination. By calling for funding for communities whose rights are being violated, the Biden Administration is taking the first steps to address the human rights crisis of gun violence in the U.S., and the well-documented disproportionate impact of gun homicides on Black and brown communities, particularly young Black and Hispanic men.⁷⁶



“We welcome President Biden’s renewed efforts to ensure the right to live free from gun violence by funding vital community intervention programs. These actions will save many lives, especially those in Black and brown communities. We stand with the president and urge lawmakers in Congress to work with us to do more to make gun safety a reality for all. It’s been 25 years since the federal government has passed a gun safety law. These actions are in line with the demands of Amnesty International USA, gun safety activists and survivors, especially those who have repeatedly called for more funding for violence interruption programs. We are calling on the Senate to pass the Break the Cycle Act, which would support on-the-ground groups working to keep communities safe from gun violence.”

*Ernest Coverson, Ending Gun Violence
Campaign Manager, Amnesty International USA*

“Often when we talk about gun violence, the discussion focuses on deadly mass shootings, but in my neighborhood in Newark and urban cities across the country people are experiencing this on a daily basis. The epidemic of everyday gun violence that is ravaging our urban communities has been overlooked for too long, even as many neighborhoods have gun injury rates similar to warzones. It’s going to take bold, innovative, and smart ideas to tackle this challenge and keep our cities safe. This means investing federal resources in community-based violence intervention and prevention programs, which have been proven to reduce gun violence. It’s time we take action, confront this crisis, and implement solutions that work.”⁷⁷

Senator Cory Booker

B. Solutions that work, Policies that can change lives: The Break the Cycle of Violence Act

The Break the Cycle of Violence Act (S. _____, H. R. _____)⁷⁸ would authorize \$625 million in annual investment (\$5 billion over eight years) for effective violence intervention programs. The formula behind Break the Cycle of Violence Act’s federal funding for violence intervention grants follows the same methodology and rationale as was presented to President Biden in advance of his announcement regarding allocation of funding for violence intervention programs. It represents the amount of estimated funding it would cost to treat a gun violence injury multiplied by the average annual gun homicides in the U.S. and then targets the funding around the 48 U.S. cities with the worst rates of violence.⁷⁹ Investment in lifesaving, tailored, public health-based, and holistic violence intervention programs for those communities most impacted by gun violence, can save lives and address trauma in highly impacted areas. By supporting funding that invests in communities, the Break the Cycle of Violence bill represents a solution that would work towards addressing the U.S. obligation to protect people’s human rights to live, to feel safe, and to be free from discrimination.

The grants would be used to implement the following violence reduction initiatives:

- **Hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIP)** that provide intensive counseling, peer support, case management, mediation, and social services to patients recovering from gunshot wounds and other violent injuries. Research has shown that violently injured patients are at high risk of retaliating with violence themselves and being revictimized by violence in the near future. Evaluations of HVIPs have found that patients who received HVIP services were four times less likely to be convicted of a violent crime and roughly four times less likely to be subsequently reinjured by violence than patients who did not receive HVIP services.
- **Evidence-based street outreach programs** that treat gun violence as a communicable disease and work to interrupt its transmission among community members. These public health-centered initiatives use street outreach workers to build relationships with high-risk individuals in their communities and connect them with intensive counseling, mediation, peer support, and social services in order to reduce their risk of violence with minimal police involvement. Evaluations have found that these programs are associated with significant reductions in gun violence, with some sites reporting up to 70 percent reductions in homicides or assaults.
- **Group violence intervention strategies (GVI)**, which are a form of problem-oriented policing that provides targeted social services and support to individuals at highest risk for involvement in community violence, and a process for community members to voice a clear demand for the violence to stop. This strategy also communicates that there will be swift accountability for those who continue to perpetrate violence. This approach coordinates law enforcement, service providers, and community engagement efforts to reduce violence among a small, identifiable segment of the population that is responsible for the vast majority of gun violence in most cities.

“The urgency of this crisis demands action, and I am grateful that the Biden-Harris Administration is focusing their efforts on evidence-based community violence interventions, like those in my Break the Cycle of Violence Act. We know that community-based violence intervention and prevention programs are proven to work and will save lives. This crisis also demands action from Congress—to pass the Break the Cycle of Violence Act. We cannot wait any longer to end this national nightmare. There are proven, evidenced-based steps we can take that will save lives and it is time to act.”⁸⁰

Senator Cory Booker

Congress must commit at least \$5 billion over the next eight years to gun violence prevention programs. Communities require increased support for gun violence intervention and prevention programs, focused on interrupting cycles of violence, and increased funding for direct services including mentorship to individuals at high risk of engaging in gun violence. These types of cost-effective programs have proven to be highly effective at reducing gun violence and saving lives. Further, taking these critical steps to reduce and prevent firearm homicides will decrease the economic burden on our health care and criminal justice systems, quickly paying dividends for taxpayers and communities. With sustained investment into these programs, combined with a national comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing gun violence, particularly in communities of color, the U.S. can make inroads to reducing gun violence in all communities.



VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International USA believes that the U.S. has a duty to take positive action to address gun violence, especially where models exist that could reduce it while making a long term and life-changing impact on systemically disenfranchised communities.

TO DO THIS CONGRESS SHOULD:

- **U.S. State and Local Governments should utilize funds from the American Rescue Plan** to support gun violence prevention programs because increased gun violence and its disparate impact on Black and brown communities are tied to the pandemic and to the critical violence intervention workers working on the front lines to keep people safe from gun violence.
- **The U.S. Congress should safeguard and pass the Biden Administration's proposed \$5 billion funding, as part of the American Jobs Bill.** The funding will support evidence-based violence intervention programs that treat gun violence as a public health issue and focus on holistic approaches to healing communities most impacted by economic insecurity, chronic trauma, structural inequities and those disproportionately impacted by gun homicides.
- **The U.S. Congress must pass the Break the Cycle of Violence Bill** which would allocate \$5 billion over the next eight years to community gun violence prevention and intervention programs that have proven effective in decreasing gun violence in communities where there are persistently high levels of firearm violence.
 - This funding should include funding for competitive grant programs to cities that develop effective, prevention-oriented violence reduction initiatives focused on young people at highest risk for violence and funding for grants that support the creation or expansion of hospital-based violence reduction initiatives with a focus on young people at highest risk for violence.
- **The U.S. Administration should establish a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing gun violence, particularly in Black and brown communities.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
[HEROES.AMNESTYUSA.ORG](https://www.heroes.amnestyusa.org)**

¹Amnesty International USA Interview with Tia Bell, April 28, 2021.

²Analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Injury prevention & control; Data statistics (WISQARS), Ten Leading Causes of Death United States 2019 (Age 10-14 homicide, with 74% being firearm-related; age 15-24 homicide, with 90% being firearm-related), accessible at: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html>.

³Analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Injury prevention & control; Data statistics (WISQARS), Fatal Injury Reports, accessible at: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html> (Firearm Homicide Deaths in 2019 (all races, all ages): 14,414; Black Men: 7685).

⁴Analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Injury prevention & control; Data statistics (WISQARS), Fatal Injury Reports, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html> (Firearm Homicide Deaths in 2019 (all races, all ages): 14,414; Whites: 5367, Blacks: 8607, Black Men: 7685. Black population represents 59.6% of all firearm homicides).

⁵*In the Line of Fire: Human Rights and the U.S. Gun Violence Crisis*, Amnesty International USA, (Sept. 2018), https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Gun-Report-Full_16.pdf.

⁶www.gunviolencearchive.org.

⁷<https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/investing-intervention-critical-role-state-level-support-breaking-cycle-urban-gun-violence/>.

⁸Champe Barton, *Virginia Is the Latest State to Fund Local Gun Violence Prevention*, The Trace (March 13, 2020), <https://www.thetrace.org/2020/03/virginia-is-the-latest-state-to-fund-local-gun-violence-prevention/>.

⁹Analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Injury prevention & control; Data statistics (WISQARS), Fatal Injury Reports, accessible at: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html> (Firearm Homicide Deaths in 2019 (all races, all ages): 14,414; White Males: 4103 (Crude rate 34.34), Black Men: 7685 (Crude rate 3.25)); see also Leading Cause of Death Report 2019, accessible at <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html>, (Black Males Age 15-34, Homicide leading cause of death, with firearm homicide representing 94.8 % of the deaths, and Hispanic Males Age 15-34, with 83% of homicides being firearm-related).

¹⁰*COVID-19 and Gun Violence, The Top Ten Ways the Pandemic Intersects with Gun Violence in the U.S.*, Amnesty International USA, accessible at: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/covid-19-and-gun-violence/>.

¹¹Cheryl Corley, *Massive 1-Year Rise In Homicide Rates Collided With The Pandemic In 2020*, NPR (Jan. 6, 2021), <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/06/953254623/massive-1-year-rise-in-homicide-rates-collided-with-the-pandemic-in-2020>; Horus Alas, *2020 a 'Perfect Storm' for Homicide Surge*, U.S. News and World Report (Feb. 4, 2021), <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2021-02-04/2020-homicide-rates-spike-amid-pandemic-police-protests>; Amir Vera, *Despite Covid-19 and stay-at-home orders, 2020 saw an increase in homicides across the US*, CNN (Jan. 1, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/01/us/homicides-2020-increase-coronavirus/index.html>.

¹²Gun Violence Archive Past Tolls 2020 Summary, accessible at: <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>.

¹³Gun Violence Archive began with the goal to provide a database of incidents of gun violence and gun crime. To that end they utilize automated queries, manual research through over 7,500 sources from local and state police, media, data aggregates, government and other sources daily. Each incident is verified by both initial researchers and secondary validation processes. Links to each incident are included in the incident report to provide further information on each incident for researchers, advocate groups, media and legislative interests. The incident reports provide a starting point for researchers, media and legislative interests to add texture to our raw data. Each incident is annotated to its associated cause -- murder/suicides, hate crimes, domestic violence, gang involvement, drug involvement, police action, robbery, defensive use, accidents, brandishing and nearly 120 other possible variables. This enables GVA to both provide aggregate numbers in near real time to improve the debate on gun violence by showing real numbers and to provide raw data for research to dig deeper into the subject. There is not just one type of gun violence or gun crime, there is not just one cause of gun violence or gun crime. GVA data will provide researchers, journalists, legislators, and other interested parties with information to better understand this subject. For more information on Gun Violence Archive methodology, visit: <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/methodology>.

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