

Testimony against cuts to Project Longevity in HB-6439 budget bill.

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, ranking members Miner and France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee

My name is Karen Edwards. I am from Stamford. I am a retired physician and public health professional and I am a member of CT Against Gun Violence.

I am testifying in support of fully funding the Project Longevity program as included in the Office of Policy and Management budget.

Gun violence is a leading cause of preventable death and injury among children, teens and adults. Gun violence disproportionately effects people from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The best strategies to decrease gun violence are based on high quality research evidence. As a physician and public health professional I support the model used by Project Longevity because it is based on good research evidence, such as that presented in a 2015 working paper from Yale's Institute for Social and Policy Studies. The Project uses messaging from a consortium of law enforcement, social workers and community members targeted to members of violent street groups. The messages communicate that future violence will not be tolerated while also offering tangible help to those who want it.

To be successful, Project Longevity needs funding to pay for the social services that help high-risk individuals escape from cycles of violence. According to the Giffords Law Center, gun violence is estimated to directly cost Connecticut taxpayers at least \$90 million annually. Investing more in community-based violence prevention programs would not only save lives and reduce the trauma inflicted on these communities, it would save money for taxpayers.

While fully funding Project Longevity is important, I believe the State also needs to invest more in preventing community gun violence that disproportionately impacts Black and brown communities in Connecticut. That is why I'm also asking you to support a state-level grant-making authority with dedicated funding along the lines proposed by CT Against Gun Violence. It would deliver reliable funding to other types of community-based gun violence prevention programs like those operated by the Compass Youth Collaborative and Hartford Communities that Care in Hartford, the CT Violence Intervention Program in New Haven and StreetSafe in Bridgeport, to name just a few.

I support more funding for gun violence prevention programs, and urge you to fully fund the Office of Policy and Management budget for Project Longevity. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Karen Edwards MD MPH
Stamford CT
2/19/21