

February 20, 2021

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

My name is Peter Murchison and I live in Ridgefield.

I am testifying in opposition to the \$50K cut to Project Longevity as included in the Governor's proposed budget. I ask you to fully fund the program as it was passed in the FY 2020-2021 biennium budget, HB-6439.

The horror of gun violence in America is known to all of us who live in CT. I know it first hand since my nephew, Daniel Barden, was murdered in his first grade classroom at Sandy Hook Elementary School. I know the trauma. I see it in the eyes and hear it in the voices of my family all the time. For us, "It can't happen here" has become "It already happened here."

While school shootings get the most headlines, everyday community gun violence affects many more people, and this is the problem that Project Longevity (and frankly, also a number of other quality programs) successfully work on. They stop local gun violence and they do it in communities that most need the help and most usually are ignored. Please fully fund this project.

Gun violence does not just affect the person shot and their surviving families. When an entire community is plagued with gun violence, every person starts to feel like they could be next, introducing a level of anxiety that affects their health, their work, and, for school age children, affects their ability to concentrate and succeed in school. Experts liken this to PTSD. In this way, gun violence essentially handicaps an entire community.

So please fully fund Project Longevity. Moreover, please expand your thinking on this to fund additional programs. Programs like the Compass Youth Collaborative and Hartford Communities that Care in Hartford, the CT Violence Intervention Program in New Haven and StreetSafe in Bridgeport.

The best way to do this is to support a state-level grant-making authority with dedicated funding along the lines proposed by CT Against Gun Violence.

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.

Sincerely,

Peter Murchison
Ridgefield