

February 22, 2021

Testimony by Jonathan Perloe in support of funding Project Longevity/OPM

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

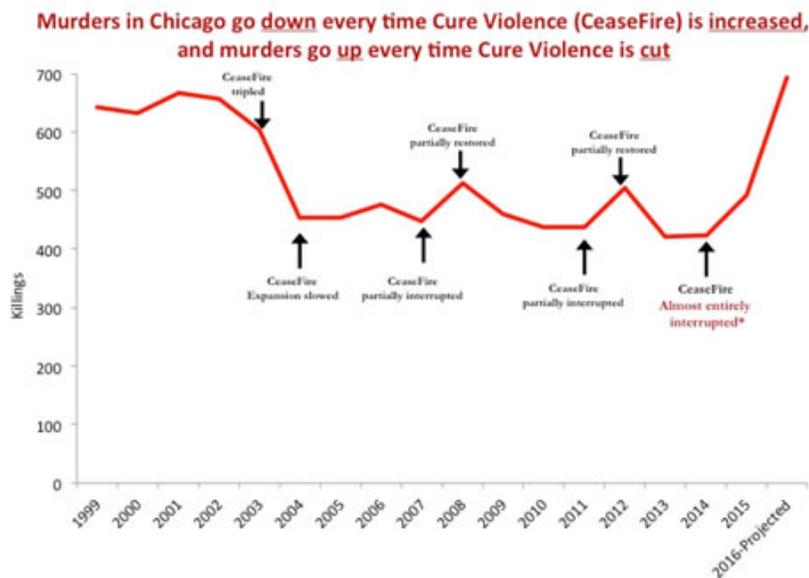
My name is Jonathan Perloe. I live in Cos Cob and I am the Director of Communications for CT Against Gun Violence.

I am testifying in opposition to the \$50K **cut** to Project Longevity as included in the Governor's proposed budget, compared to previous funding levels. I ask you to fully fund the program as it was passed in the FY 2020-2021 biennium budget, at \$998,750 per year. With a 50 percent increase in gun homicides in Connecticut from 2019 to 2020, this is no time to cut funding to violence prevention programs.

**Strong gun laws that keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people are necessary, but not sufficient for preventing gun violence.** That's why programs like Project Longevity are so important, as they operate to prevent conflict that leads to violence and offer alternatives to those most at risk of violence.

In Connecticut, as well as across the nation, the Operation Ceasefire model on which Project Longevity is based has been shown to reduce group-involved violence.

It can be difficult to measure the impact of program funding decisions. In this case, analysis of the Cure Violence intervention program in Chicago is instructive. The Cure Violence model is similar to Project Longevity in being a community-based violence prevention program that works directly with individuals at high risk of gun violence. Over a 15-year period from 1999-2015 Chicago repeatedly funded and cut their Cure Violence program. Each time funding was cut, murders increased; when funding was restored murders went down. The relationship is startling: as reported in the [Chicago Tribune](#), in 2016 only one of Chicago's 22 police districts recorded a decrease in shootings, it was the only district that maintained full program funding.



Source: [cureviolence.org](#) (from Chicago Police Department data)

Project Longevity has been shown to reduce group-involved gun violence. A [2015 study](#) conducted by Yale concluded that in New Haven, Project Longevity was associated with a reduction of five group-member involved shootings and homicides each month.

While funding Project Longevity is important, I believe the State needs to invest more in preventing community gun violence that disproportionately impacts communities of color in Connecticut. Connecticut needs to establish a state-level grant-making authority with dedicated funding along the lines proposed by CT Against Gun Violence's [Connecticut Initiative to Prevent Community Gun Violence](#).

Such an authority would secure and 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.

**The mechanism for doing more to fund community-based violence prevention programs may already exist.** The [Office of Injury Prevention](#) within the Dept of Public Health essentially has the legislative mandate to do exactly what is proposed by the CT Initiative. This is an excerpt from the DPH website:

The Office was established in 1993 under the statute, Sec. 19a-4I Office of Injury Prevention. **There shall be, within the department of public health and addiction services, an Office of Injury Prevention, whose purpose shall be to coordinate and expand prevention and control activities related to intentional and unintentional injuries.** The duties of said office shall include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) to serve as a data coordinator and analysis source of mortality and injury statistics for other state agencies; (2) to integrate an injury and violence prevention focus within the department of public health; (3) **to develop collaborative relationships with other state agencies and private and community organizations to establish programs promoting injury prevention, awareness and education to reduce automobile, motorcycle and bicycle injuries and interpersonal violence, including homicide, child abuse, youth violence, domestic violence, sexual assault and elderly abuse;** (4) to support the development of comprehensive community-based injury and violence prevention initiatives within cities and towns of the state; and (5) **to develop sources of funding to establish and continue programs** to promote prevention of intentional and unintentional injuries.

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.

If we want to achieve racial justice, we people must be safe in the communities where they live. To do so requires increasing our funding of programs like Project Longevity and other community-based programs that have proven track records of reducing gun violence. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Perloe  
Director of Communications  
CT Against Gun Violence