

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

My name is Linda Scacco and I am from West Hartford. I am a licensed clinical psychologist as well as the co-chair of the Social Justice Ministry of the Universalist Church of West Hartford. I also teach undergraduates at the University of Hartford.

I am writing 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.

I am a strong advocate for gun violence prevention. Three years ago, I lost 3 members of my family to gun violence. My 56 year old cousin, his 21 year old daughter and her infant child were murdered senselessly by a man with mental health problems who had easy access to a gun. This senseless tragedy, along with countless others across this state, including the tragedy of Sandy Hook Elementary School and the ongoing violence in our cities, have had a significant impact on so many families in CT. I also see many students in my classes who have witnessed and experienced gun violence in their own family and friend circles. As a psychology I know that the long- term psychological impact of violence on individuals and families is tremendous.

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.

Programs like Project Longevity have been demonstrated to reduce group-involved gun violence around the country, and here in Connecticut. 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.

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. We need to have a proactive approach to solving these challenges.

In 2020 gun homicides increased 50% in Connecticut compared to 2019. We must invest more in reducing community gun violence using proven programs like Project Longevity.

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,

Linda Scacco, Ph.D. West Hartford, CT

