

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

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.

While Connecticut has the sixth lowest rate of gun deaths in the nation, we still have an unacceptably high level of gun homicide. Gun homicide and injury disproportionately affects communities of color in our largest cities. The victims of gun violence in Connecticut are disproportionately people of color. Approximately 56% of the state's gun homicide victims are black; however, only 10% of the state's population is black. While accounting for about 14% of Connecticut's population. Latinx accounts for approximately 23% of gun homicide victims. Young black men in Connecticut are almost 39 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than white men. If we want to achieve racial justice, we must make people safe in the communities where they live. To do so requires funding programs like Project Longevity that have proven track records of reducing gun violence.

The Project Longevity model which is a Group Violence Intervention (GVI) strategy, also referred to as Focused Deterrence or Ceasefire, has been studied for years and has been proven effective through evidence derived from more than 60 peer reviewed studies. Project Longevity has been cited as an impactful model by the Giffords Law Center, Yale University, and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

According to reports from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, homicides in New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport dropped from 75 in 2011 to 31 in 2016, a reduction of more than 50 percent. Statewide, gun homicides in Connecticut fell by 16 percent from 2010-2015 compared to a 14 percent rise nationally.

Project Longevity in New Haven was associated with a reduction of nearly five group member involved shootings and homicides per month, according to a Yale, University of Texas study; [Evaluating the Effect of Project Longevity on Group-Involved Shootings and Homicides in New Haven, Connecticut \(2016\)](#)

The Giffords Law Center estimates the directly measurable costs of gun violence to be more than \$400 million annually. In total, including the cost of pain and suffering, it's estimated that the annual cost of gun violence in Connecticut is a staggering \$1.2 billion. That's 5% of the governor's [proposed](#) annual budget, just on the cost of gun violence!

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.

While fully funding Project Longevity is important, the State also needs to invest more in preventing community gun violence that disproportionately impacts Black and brown communities in Connecticut. GVI strategies are most effective when they are working with community-based programs. That is why we are asking you to support a state-level grant-making authority with dedicated funding; with particular focus on Community-based intervention, Hospital-based intervention, and Focused Deterrence models. 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. Other such community programs like reentry programs and community

The objective of the *Connecticut Initiative to Prevent Community Gun Violence* is to establish a grant-making authority within our state government tasked with funding and implementing evidence-based, community-centric, programs and strategies to reduce street-level gun violence in Connecticut's larger urban centers. The CT Initiative would:

- Determine community-level needs by engaging with community leaders, executive branch agencies, urban and public health policy experts, gun violence prevention advocacy organizations and others with a stake in the health of Connecticut's urban centers.
- Establish grant criteria and eligibility, and secure state, federal and other monies to provide stable funding to supported programs.
- Award grants, guide implementation, offer technical expertise and monitor programs to ensure objectives are met.
- Identify, study, and assess the efficacy of potential community-based violence prevention and intervention programs.
- Create policy recommendations where existing programs fall short of needs.

An advisory council or similar entity should be established to provide strategic guidance, accountability and ensure that legislative, executive and community stakeholders have a voice in operation of the Initiative.

This type of strategy, to invest in community-based solutions to gun violence has been successfully implemented in states like California, Maryland, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. These states have invested millions of dollars into preventing community gun violence. Unfortunately, Project Longevity is currently the only dedicated gun violence prevention strategy that is funded by the State. More must be done, and CT must once again lead on this issue, by increasing its commitment to these communities, and funding evidence-based solutions to reducing gun violence.

Investing more in community-based violence prevention programs would not only save lives and reduce the trauma inflicted on these communities, but it would also save money for taxpayers, by reducing the staggering cost of 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. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy Stein
Executive Director
CT Against Gun Violence