



GHIAA

Greater Hartford
— Interfaith —
Action Alliance

ADVOCACY GUIDE: GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Budget Ask: \$20 million over two years (\$10 million per year)

ISSUE SUMMARY

In Connecticut, victims of gun violence are disproportionately people of color. While Black individuals make up only 10% of the state's total population, 56% of the state's gun homicide victims are Black. Latinx individuals represent 14% of the state population, yet make up 23% of gun homicide victims.

Young Black men are profoundly vulnerable, killed by guns at 39 times the rate that young white men are. When Connecticut's gun problem was centered in the suburbs, the state responded with overwhelming reform and financial support. It's time to direct resources to stop this epidemic that is killing young people of color in our cities.

In 2022, the State of Connecticut created a new Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention. This 22-member body is tasked with advising the Department of Public Health on best practices for gun violence prevention in our state. The Commission was allocated \$2.9 million to disburse throughout the state, but this is simply not enough. A report by the Commission concluded that \$10 million annually would be necessary to make a meaningful impact on this crisis.

The Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2024-25 allocated \$2.5 million per year (\$5 million over the biennium). This falls woefully short of the Commission's recommendation.

The Appropriations Committee budget added an additional \$6 million per year (\$12 million over the biennium), for a total of \$17 million over two years. This is closer to the total of \$20 million recommended by the Commission, but still insufficient. Appropriations also moved the funding from the Department of Public Health to a program overseen by the Judicial Department.

GHIAA calls on our leaders to increase funding in the budget to the Commission's recommended level of \$10 million per year (\$20 million over the biennium), to be disbursed to community-based organizations doing life-saving work on the ground in our major urban centers. GHIAA also calls for these funds to be moved back to Public Health and away from Judicial to ensure a proper data-driven, prevention-minded, health-and-safety oriented approach, rather than one of increased criminalization and incarceration. Lastly, the Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention should continue as an advisory board for the distribution of these funds.

TALKING POINTS TO USE WITH LEGISLATORS

- **The gun violence epidemic is killing our communities and perpetuating racial injustice.**
 - The zip code where a child grows up is an enormous factor in determining their life expectancy.
 - Every child, every family, every community deserves to be safe. Not only our whiter, more affluent suburban communities, but our urban communities of color, too.
 - Individuals of color are disproportionately more likely to be killed in gun homicides than white individuals. Young Black men are particularly vulnerable, killed by guns at 39 times the rate that young white men are. This inflicts generational trauma on families, neighborhoods, schools, and entire communities, with ripple effects we can only begin to measure.
- **Investing in prevention makes fiscal sense.**
 - In addition to costing lives and inflicting horrific trauma, gun violence is extremely expensive. A single gun homicide incurs an estimated \$488,000 in law enforcement and health care costs, while every non-fatal shooting costs \$71,000.¹
 - Gun deaths and injuries in Connecticut cost taxpayers an estimated \$60-90 million annually.^{2 3}
 - An annual investment of \$10 million toward prevention is wise fiscal policy, in addition to being the moral and humane thing to do. If each \$1 million were to prevent two deaths and one non-fatal shooting, it would more than pay for itself—not to mention the immeasurable benefits to the lives and wellbeing of the individuals and communities who are protected from needless suffering. Indeed, evidence-based community interventions in CT, MA, and NY have been shown to generate much greater impact and return on investment.⁴
- **Gun violence is a public health issue and should be funded accordingly.**
 - The Department of Public Health is already home to the Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention. Why reinvent the wheel by moving the funds to the Judicial Department?
 - The approach taken by Judicial-overseen programs will necessarily focus more on punitive consequences. This issue belongs under Public Health, where it can receive appropriate study and implementation to promote health and flourishing rather than putting more people (mostly young people of color) in prison.

¹ <https://giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Investing-in-Intervention-02.14.18.pdf>

² <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Gun-Violence-in-Connecticut-2.9.2021.pdf>

³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FFi8HVxvwuG5SIG8IWephepE6xll1bE5/view>

⁴ <https://giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Investing-in-Intervention-02.14.18.pdf>