

Proposed Resolution in Support of Community-Based Violence Intervention (CVI) Programs

Issue: The United States faces an epidemic of gun violence every year with gun violence representing the leading cause of death among teens and adolescents. The United States has seen year-after-year increases in the number of deaths and injuries from firearms for over a decade. Community-Based Violence Intervention Programs throughout the country are having a real impact in bringing those numbers down. In communities such as Lake County (IL), Baltimore (MD), Richmond (CA), and Philadelphia (PA) firearm homicides have dramatically fallen after the introduction of these programs. These programs have proven successful in reducing gun violence and violent crime more broadly in communities over the past two decades—in some communities by as much as 60 percent.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to increase financial support for measures that maximize the ability of counties to develop and support community-based violence intervention programs addressing the root causes of gun crimes. NACo encourages federal legislative action to continue the work started under the bipartisan Safer Communities Act which included \$250 million in dedicated funding for evidence-informed, community-based violence intervention programs that have been proven to reduce gun violence in the most affected communities using a public health approach.

Background: In Lake County, Illinois the State's Attorney has initiated an office of violence prevention called the Gun Violence Prevention Initiative (GVPI) out of his office and has shown dramatic success toward reducing gun violence between 2022 through 2024. The GVPI uses community partnerships, evidence-based practices, and a trauma-informed approaches to understand and then respond to the inter-related factors that lead to gun violence within both the individual and the community addressing the root causes of gun violence. This work throughout the country is led by impacted individuals who are credible messengers in their communities engaging in youth mentoring, prosocial anti-gang programming, mediating disputes, and providing other important services to those at the highest risk of gun violence whether as offender or victim.

Supported largely by ARPA funds at the County, State, Federal level and through Department of Justice funding supported by the Safer Communities Act, this initiative is just one of many that proves these programs work. Between 2022 and 2024, firearm homicides decreased 61% in the areas where the GVPI works most intensely. Also, shootings that led to non-fatal injuries dropped 63% in the same areas. Significantly, firearm fatalities only dropped 12% over this same period throughout the U.S. In Lake County and many areas around the country these programs have buy in with law enforcement, prosecutors, and the community and are just another important tool in the prevention of gun violence.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: This policy change would not only save countless lives, but it is estimated that for every dollar invested in a CVI program, a community can save up to forty-one dollars. The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform calculates that the unit cost of a single gun-related homicide is just over \$1.2 million, while the average cost, or the cost per homicide, is approximately \$625,000. This means that, on average, the total direct cost of gun-related homicides in the United States is more than \$8.7 billion each year while non-fatal injury shootings cost an annual total of \$11.7 billion. Combined, the total cost of gun homicides and non-fatal shootings is over \$20 billion per year.

Sponsor(s): Mary Ross Cunningham, Vice-Chair, Lake County Board, Lake County, Ill.