

April 25, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

As organizations committed to ensuring that all communities can prosper and thrive free from violence, we strongly urge you to provide **at least \$250 million for a new Community Violence Intervention Initiative (CVI) at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the FY 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education & Related Agencies Appropriations bill.** This critical investment proposed in the President's budget will allow CDC to fund up to 75 cities and communities facing the highest burdens of violence to establish a collaborative, community driven public health approach to reduce and prevent community violence.

All communities experience differing forms and levels of violence with serious and lasting effects on physical and mental health, and social wellbeing. Yet communities of color and other communities that have been marginalized by structural racism and other systemic barriers suffer higher rates of violence, including homicides and non-fatal shootings.¹ According to the CDC, homicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 10-24 and the leading cause of death for non-Hispanic Black or African American youth.²

Rates of violence are increasing in many communities across the country. This is in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic,³ which exacerbated existing structural inequities and the risk factors for violence, including prolonged periods of social isolation, loss of employment and financial stability, and lack of access to protective community programs and institutions. It is also due in part to the lack of comprehensive community-based initiatives to prevent violence. As with so many public health challenges, we often fail to invest in prevention, but rather spend money on the aftermath of violence. The CVI initiative is an opportunity to change that.

Importantly, community violence is preventable, not inevitable. Communities can be made safer when we understand the events that have led to present conditions and act on this knowledge by implementing policies and practices that address the root causes of violence, using the proven tools of public health. A public health approach relies on local data to develop comprehensive strategies that are specifically designed to influence the

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Community Violence Prevention: Overview. Available at: [Community Violence Prevention | Violence Prevention Injury Center | CDC](#). Accessed March 31, 2022.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Preventing Youth Violence: Fast Facts. Available at: [Preventing Youth Violence | Violence Prevention Injury Center | CDC](#) Accessed April 4, 2022.

³ Neufeld, M. Y., Poulson, M., Stolarski, A. E., Dunnington, C., Burke, P. A., & Allee, L. (2021). Amplifying inequity: The compounding impact of COVID-19 and violence. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 113(5), 528–530. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnma.2021.04.003>

conditions that create safety and decrease the risk of violence in each community. A public health approach is collaborative and community-driven, bringing together community members most impacted by violence with different sectors—including healthcare, public health, schools, parks, housing, law enforcement, social services, local businesses, and others—to collectively implement strategies based on the priorities and needs of each community.

By establishing this new Community Violence Intervention Initiative, the CDC can build on their 20 years of evidence-based violence prevention efforts. Funds will support scaling up existing community violence prevention efforts and implementing and evaluating evidence-based and evidence-informed community violence prevention strategies. Communities will select strategies based on their needs and priorities, including but not limited to hospital-based interventions and street outreach, which have been shown to have positive impacts, and may also include other place-based approaches, and provision of trauma-informed screening and treatments, among others.

To support selected communities, CDC will also fund community-based organizations that have expertise in partnering with those most impacted by violence to provide training and technical assistance. CDC will devote resources to build the capacity of the violence prevention workforce by dedicating funds for staffing support and workforce development activities. And CDC will also expand their research and evaluation investments to further build the evidence base for preventing violence in communities experiencing the greatest burden, and to reduce the racial, ethnic, and economic inequities that characterize such violence across our country. These awards will address critical, real world research gaps to enhance what is known about what works to prevent community violence.

We recognize and appreciate that Congress included \$50 million in Community Violence Intervention funding for the Department of Justice in the FY 2022 Omnibus spending bill. However, while these initial funds for the DOJ are necessary, in isolation they are not sufficient to move the needle in communities and they do not constitute the full elements of a public health approach. By also providing CVI funding through the CDC, critical partnerships can continue to build between community, health leaders, and law enforcement. That is exactly what public health and community leaders bring to the table in this space – they can get into rooms that law enforcement alone cannot, and they can start to bridge those gaps. This is an example of where a both/and approach is needed – both agencies have a role to play and must be sufficiently funded to work together for the good of the community.

Public health strategies for preventing violence are achievable and necessary for all of us to flourish. By making investments in public health strategies within communities most impacted by violence, cities and communities can work across sectors to shift from an over-reliance on the criminal legal system to reimagining and finally realizing community safety. **The undersigned 40 groups strongly urge you to prioritize at least \$250 million for a new Community Violence Intervention Initiative at the CDC as part of FY 2023 appropriations.** Please contact Sana Chehimi at Prevention Institute at sana@preventioninstitute.org or 510-681-3534 with any questions.

Sincerely,

After-School All-Stars
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
Association of American Medical Colleges

Big Cities Health Coalition
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Center for American Progress
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Communities In Schools
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)
Families USA
Futures Without Violence
Healthy Teen Network
International Association of Forensic Nurses
Kids and Car Safety
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National League for Nursing
National League of Cities (NLC)
National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives
National PTA
National Recreation and Parks Association
Prevention Institute
Public Health Advocates
Public Health Institute
Public Health-Seattle & King County
RYSE
Safe States Alliance
Scrubs Addressing the Firearm Epidemic, Inc. (SAFE)
Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research
Society for Prevention Research
Society for Public Health Education
Southern Nevada Health District
The American College of Preventive Medicine
The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
YMCA of the USA