

CAGV Legislative Brief

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CT
Against
Gun
Violence

Creation of a Permanent Commission to Reduce Community Gun Violence

The commission would be tasked with implementing evidence-based, community-centric, programs and strategies to reduce gun violence. Dedicated resources and multi-disciplinary expertise would bring the focus and attention needed to address the magnitude of Connecticut's community violence problem by addressing the following:

- Identify, assess the efficacy of and coordinate current violence prevention programs.
- Secure state, federal and other sources of funding.
- Guide program implementation and monitor them to ensure objectives are met.
- Create policy recommendations where existing programs fall short of needs.

The commission would include community leaders, representatives from law enforcement, executive branch agencies, urban policy experts, public health experts, and gun violence prevention advocates.

Why is a permanent commission being proposed?

While Connecticut has the fifth lowest rate of gun deaths in the nation, we still have an unacceptably high level of gun homicide. Although the number of deaths has come down substantially since the [1990s](#) there were 72 gun homicides in 2019, on average more than one a week. The deaths are concentrated in our largest cities: gun homicides in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven accounted for two-thirds of 2019 statewide gun homicides.

The victims of gun violence are disproportionately people of color.ⁱ 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 account 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.ⁱⁱ

Beyond the loss of life, gun violence has a tremendous economic cost.ⁱⁱⁱ It's estimated that the total direct cost to Connecticut taxpayers of all forms of gun violence is \$90 million. The directly measurable costs, including lost income, are estimated at \$430 million, and the total societal cost brings the total to \$1.2 billion.

States around the country have adopted similar standing commissions to address community violence.

In 2019 the California Violence Intervention and Prevention ([CalVIP](#)) Grant Program was established by the legislature to appropriate \$30 million to cities and community-based organizations with the purpose of reducing homicide, shootings and aggravated assault through evidence-based initiatives.

In Massachusetts, the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative ([SSYI](#)) is a standing program to fund ongoing efforts that focus on reducing violence among high-risk youth. Funding has ranged from \$4.5 million to \$11.4 million since it began in 2012. Cities where SSYI funded

programs operate have seen a reduction of more than 5 violent crime victims per 100,000 residents, representing nearly 1,000 victimizations prevented over a three-year period from 2011-2013.

In 2018 the Maryland legislature established the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program ([VIPP](#)) with \$4 million of seed money. In consultation with the VIPP Advisory Board, the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention administers the program to provide competitive grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations to fund evidence-based health programs or evidence-informed health programs.

How do we know a permanent commission will have an impact?

Community-based solutions can prevent gun violence. In Connecticut, the clearest example comes from Project Longevity, the group violence intervention (GVI) strategy that has led to reduced gun violence rates where the program operates. A 2015 Yale study^{iv} concluded that the program was associated with a monthly reduction of five group-member involved shootings and homicides.

The challenge, however, has been securing adequate and protected levels of funding for programs such as Project Longevity, which would save lives and based on the available data, result in a net savings to Connecticut taxpayers. There are a large number of crisis intervention and prevention programs that have the potential to reduce community violence. Having a permanent commission to identify and assess the efficacy of these programs, secure funding, and ensure goals are being met is needed to address the unacceptable levels of violence in our urban communities.

ⁱ Center for American Progress, [Connecticut Gun Violence](#), Nov 2019.

ⁱⁱ Giffords Law Center, [The Economic Cost of Gun Violence in Connecticut](#).

ⁱⁱⁱ Giffords Law Center, [The Economic Cost of Gun Violence in Connecticut](#).

^{iv} Yale University Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Evaluating the Effect of Project Longevity on Group-Involved Shootings and Homicides in New Haven, CT, October 2015