

July 26, 2017

The Honorable Martin Looney
President Pro Tempore
State Senate
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Len Fasano
Republican President Pro Tempore
State Senate
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Joe Aresimowicz
Speaker of the House
State House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Themis Klarides
Republican Minority Leader
State House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Looney, Senator Fasano, Speaker Aresimowicz, and Leader Klarides,

We write today to urge you to preserve current levels of funding of \$880,000 for Project Longevity, a unique program that has helped to reduce rates of gun violence in urban areas of Connecticut. This program has gained national attention for its impressive results, and is a national model of state-level support for evidence-based violence reduction strategies. We recognize the extremely challenging fiscal situation that Connecticut currently faces, but we believe that continuing to invest in this program is critical to both saving lives and preventing future costs to the community.

The Law Center was founded by lawyers after a mass shooting at a San Francisco law firm in 1993, and provides legal and technical assistance in support of gun violence prevention to federal, state, and local legislators nationwide. Americans for Responsible Solutions, founded by former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and her husband Captain Mark Kelly, finds commonsense solutions to gun violence in the United States. Together, we work with advocates and legislators across the country to promote policies that will build safer communities.

In recent years, we have carefully studied gun violence intervention strategies from around the country, culminating in the release of our comprehensive 2016 report, *Healing Communities in Crisis: Lifesaving Solutions to the Urban Gun Violence Epidemic*.ⁱ Based on this extensive research, we concluded that Group Violence Intervention (GVI) is one of the most effective existing strategies for addressing protracted problems of urban gun violence.ⁱⁱ

Project Longevity uses state dollars to fund the implementation of GVI in New Haven, Hartford, and Bridgeport—cities that together account for more than 70 percent of gun homicides in Connecticut.ⁱⁱⁱ The GVI model is based on the insight that, in city after city, an incredibly small segment of a given community is responsible for the vast majority of gun violence. These individuals are often affiliated with groups—loose social networks—that exist in a fluid state of competition and violent rivalry with other groups. In cities across the country, these groups “constitute less than 0.5% of a city’s population but are

consistently linked to 60% to 70% of the shootings and homicides.”^{iv}

The GVI strategy forms a partnership of community members, law enforcement, and social service providers that identifies the small population of those most at risk for involvement with violence and then communicates a powerful, in-person message that the violence must stop and that concerted law enforcement action will be taken against the next group responsible for violent crime. In recognition of the root causes of gun violence, social services are also offered and provided to willing participants. This “focused deterrence” strategy has led to meaningful reductions in violent crime in cities across the US, and is rated as “effective” by the National Institute of Justice—the highest available rating.^v

Since it was first launched in 2012, Project Longevity has had an impressive impact on violent crime in Connecticut. Gun-related homicides in the three Project Longevity cities have fallen more than 50% - from a combined 69 in 2011 to 32 in 2016. Moreover, group-related shootings, which are the central focus of the GVI strategy, fell by more than 60% between 2011 and 2016.

Results in New Haven, where Project Longevity has been in place the longest, have been particularly robust. In October 2015, a group of researchers from Yale University published a formal evaluation of the impact of the first 18 months of Project Longevity in New Haven, which showed a 21% decrease in total shootings per month, and an impressive 53% decrease in gang or group-related shootings per month that researchers found to be “directly attributable to” Project Longevity.^{vi} Using other Connecticut cities as a comparison, researchers found that “the observed decline in...shootings and homicides in New Haven is strongly associated with the timing and implementation of Longevity.”^{vii}

Given the enormous economic cost of gun violence—economists estimate that the direct economic costs associated with firearm assaults amount to \$488,000 per gun homicide, more than \$71,000 per non-fatal injury requiring hospitalization, and more than \$10,000 per injury treated in an emergency room—^{viii}our estimates suggest that Project Longevity has created significant economic savings for Connecticut in its first few years of operation.

Based on the results of the Yale University evaluation, economic savings from reduced medical, law enforcement, and criminal justice costs in New Haven alone amount to approximately \$7 million annually.^{ix} These savings benefit taxpayers directly in the form of averted medical, law enforcement, and criminal justice expenses that would have been incurred by the state. Taking the yearly cost of Project Longevity into account, Connecticut taxpayers benefit from approximately \$5 million in net savings annually. In other words, for every taxpayer dollar spent on Project Longevity, nearly six taxpayer dollars are saved based on results achieved in New Haven alone.

Project Longevity is a public safety program that is achieving tangible results and ultimately saving Connecticut taxpayers millions of dollars in healthcare, law enforcement, and other costs. By investing directly in evidence-based violence

intervention programming, Connecticut is a national leader and Project Longevity provides a model for other states.

Given the importance of Project Longevity in reducing gun homicides in Connecticut communities, we strongly urge you to prioritize Project Longevity in the budget process and fully fund the program at \$880,000. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Mike McLively
Senior Staff Attorney
Director, Urban Gun Violence Initiative
Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence

Robin Lloyd
Director of Government Affairs
Americans for Responsible Solutions

cc: Members of the Connecticut General Assembly

ⁱ Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence and PICO National Network, *Healing Communities in Crisis: Lifesaving solutions to the Urban Gun Violence Epidemic* (Mar. 10, 2016), available at <http://smartgunlaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Healing-Communities-in-Crisis-4.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ In a report released last year, researchers working for the US Agency for International Development surveyed all available evidence regarding the efficacy of 30 different violence intervention strategies. Of the 30 strategies examined, GVI was one of only two interventions that “exhibited moderate to strong effects on crime and violence and were supported by substantial evidence.” Thomas Abt and Christopher Winship, “What Works in Reducing Community Violence: A Meta-Review and Field Study for the Northern Triangle,” Democracy International, Inc., February 2016, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/USAID-2016-What-Works-in-Reducing-Community-Violence-Final-Report.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Calculated between 2013 and 2015. “Focused Deterrence: Group Gun Violence by the Numbers,” Project Longevity, accessed Mar. 15, 2017, <http://www.project-longevity.org/copy-of-gun-violence-outcomes>; “Crime in the U.S.,” FBI: UCR, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s>.

^{iv} “Group Violence Intervention: An Implementation Guide,” National Network for Safe Communities, accessed Feb. 22, 2016, <http://nnscommunities.org/our-work/guides/group-violence-intervention/group-violence-intervention-an-implementation-guide>.

^v “Crime & Crime Prevention,” National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, accessed Feb. 22, 2016, <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/TopicDetails.aspx?ID=13>; see also “Community Crime Prevention Strategies,” US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, accessed Feb. 22, 2016, <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/TopicDetails.aspx?ID=10>.

^{vi} Michael Sierra-Arevalo, Yanick Charette, Andrew V. Papachristos, Evaluating the Effect of Project Longevity on Group-Involved Shootings and Homicides in New Haven, CT, Oct. 2015, http://isps.yale.edu/sites/default/files/publication/2015/10/sierra-arevalo_charette_papachristos_projectlongevityassessment_isps15-024_1.pdf.

^{vii} *Id.* at 20.

^{viii} “Societal Cost per Firearm Injury, United States, 2010,” Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, Dec. 2012, <http://www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf>. All costs have been adjusted to 2016 dollars; see also Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, *The Economic Cost of Gun Violence in Minnesota: A Business Case for Action*, Dec. 2016, http://smartgunlaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/The-Economic-Cost-of-Gun-Violence_FINAL.pdf.

^{ix} The monthly reduction of group-related shootings found in the Yale University study translates into roughly 55 fewer group-related shootings per year in New Haven alone. Nationally, 19% of assault-related shootings are fatal, 45% result in hospitalization, and 36% only require emergency department treatment. \$7,032,421 = (54.96 shootings * 18.8% * \$488,381) + (54.96 shootings * 45.1% * \$71,680) + (54.96 shootings * 36.1% * \$10,449).