

THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN OHIO

A BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

ANNUAL
\$2.7+
BILLION

THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN OHIO

Gun violence in Ohio exacts a high physical, emotional, and financial toll on our families, friends, and neighbors. We often hear about the heartbreak and pain these shootings cause, but there is another aspect of the gun violence epidemic that doesn't receive as much attention: the overwhelming financial cost.

TALLYING THE NUMBERS

The more than 2,500 shootings that occur each year in Ohio are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses that can be directly measured, including **healthcare costs** (\$123 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$227 million per year), **employer costs** (\$16 million per year), and **lost income** (\$2.4 billion per year), the initial pricetag of gun violence in Ohio is **\$2.7 billion per year**. When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$4.6 billion) is considered, the estimate rises to **\$7.3 billion per year**. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Ohio, as it does not incorporate other significant, yet difficult-to-measure costs, including **lost business opportunities**, **lowered property values**, and **reductions in the tax base**.

A BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

Ohio's business community is severely impacted by the negative economic consequences of gun violence. Shootings engender fear in the affected neighborhood that keeps potential customers away, forces businesses to relocate or limit their hours of operation, and decreases foreign and local tourism.

In too many parts of the state, the number of shootings is moving in the wrong direction, trending toward violence and death. In 2016, the Cleveland area endured its deadliest year in more than a decade, with 139 gun homicides and more than 500 nonfatal shootings.



**TOTAL
DIRECTLY
MEASURABLE
COSTS
\$2.7
BILLION**

REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

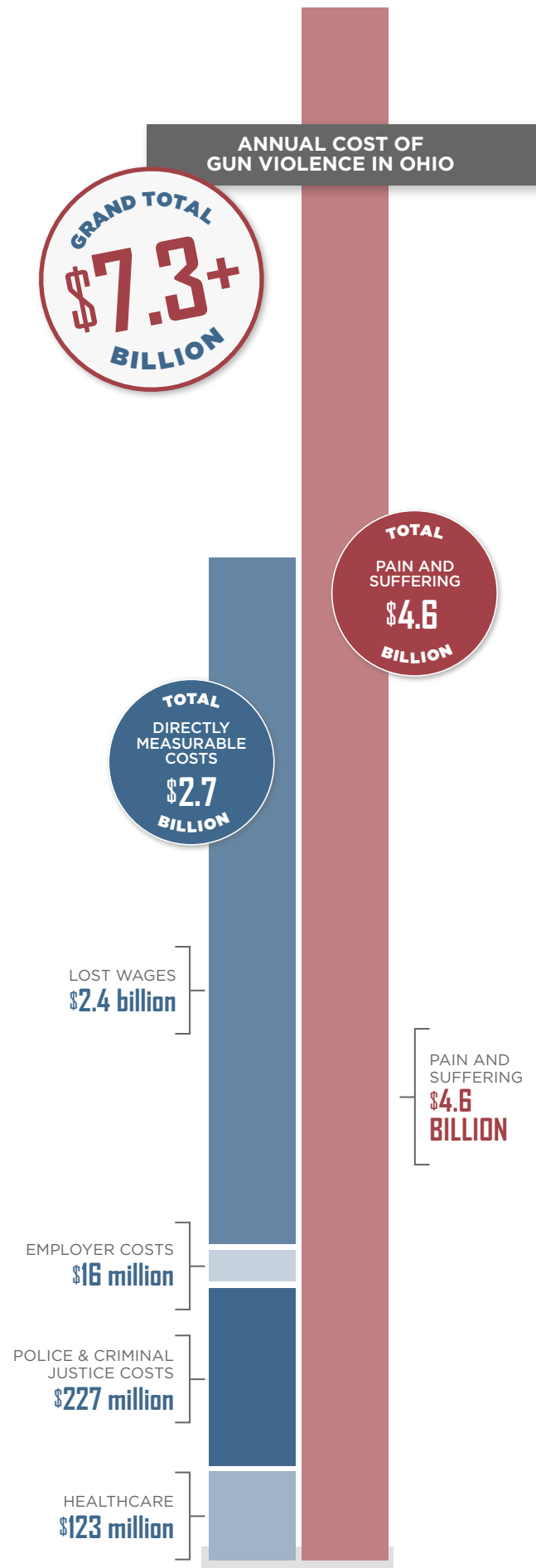
Gun violence trends are not moving in the right direction in Ohio. Last year was Cleveland's deadliest in a decade, and other communities have faced similarly deadly upticks. **However, we are far from powerless in the face of this epidemic: a number of proven solutions exist to reduce gun violence without limiting responsible gun ownership.**

The Economic Cost of Gun Violence in Ohio identifies two sets of solutions, each addressing a specific risk factor: **universal background checks for gun sales** and **community-level violence intervention programs**. The investment required to implement these lifesaving solutions is minuscule compared to the yearly cost of gun violence in Ohio.

ABOUT US

Led by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and Navy combat veteran and retired NASA astronaut Captain Mark Kelly, Americans for Responsible Solutions and the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence are committed to advancing commonsense change that makes communities safer from gun violence. Operating out of offices in Washington DC, San Francisco, and New York, our staff partners with lawmakers and advocates to craft and enact the smart gun laws that save lives. We provide expertise in firearms litigation, lead grassroots coalitions, and educate the public on the proven solutions to America's gun violence epidemic.

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INTRODUCTION

It's no secret that the United States suffers from an appalling gun violence crisis—and that Ohio is far from immune to these horrific tragedies.

In fact, the state is emblematic of this uniquely American epidemic. We lose an average of 1,200 Ohioans to gun violence every year—that's more than three people a day—alongside an even greater number of nonfatal shootings.¹

In 2015 alone, Ohio's final tally for shootings comprised 484 gun homicides, 861 gun suicides,² and more than 1,500 gun-related injuries, many of them life-altering, all of them preventable.³ Ohio has the 24th highest number of gun deaths per capita among the states, with a rate of 11.9 gun deaths per 100,000 residents⁴—four times higher than Massachusetts and 10 times higher than developed nations like Canada, France, and Germany.⁵

In too many parts of the state, the number of shootings is moving in the wrong direction, trending toward violence and death. **In 2016, the Cleveland area endured its deadliest year in more than a decade, with 139 gun homicides and more than 500 nonfatal shootings.**⁶ Guns also fuel domestic violence, where women are disproportionately victimized: half of Ohio's domestic violence homicides are committed with a firearm.⁷

Gun violence exacts an extreme physical, emotional, and financial toll on our families and communities. We often hear stories about the heartbreak and crippling physical pain shootings leave in their wake. But another aspect of the gun violence epidemic in Ohio doesn't receive nearly as much attention, even though it's one of the few areas of this crisis that can be objectively quantified: the tremendous financial cost gun violence inflicts.

GUN VIOLENCE IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

Ohio's business community is severely impacted by the negative economic consequences of gun violence. Shootings engender fear in the affected neighborhood that in turn keeps potential customers away, forces businesses to relocate or limit hours of operation, and decreases foreign and local tourism. Earlier this year, a neighborhood on Cleveland's east side saw multiple shootings during a 24-hour period that left four dead and five wounded—including an unsuspecting art teacher who was caught in the crossfire.⁸ Residents who may have otherwise been frequenting local businesses were blocked by police tape. Shootings like this are all too common—especially in underserved areas of our cities—making it far more difficult to attract much-needed business activity and investment in afflicted neighborhoods.

TALLYING THE NUMBERS

The more than 2,500 (and rising) shootings every year in Ohio are a major drain on the state's economy.

In 2015 alone, the pricetag of gun violence in Ohio was more than \$2.7 billion.⁹ This figure includes:

Healthcare Costs	\$123 million	Costs to Employers	\$16 million
Police and Criminal Justice Expenses	\$227 million	Lost income	\$2.4 billion

When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering—\$4.6 billion—is added to the equation, **the cost of gun violence in Ohio for 2015 rises to \$7.3 billion per year.** While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence because it doesn't include significant, yet difficult-to-measure costs, such as lost business opportunities, lowered property values, and the cost of security measures.

Due to the nature of gun violence, taxpayers are forced to directly shoulder a large amount of the overall cost—in Ohio, more than \$540 million in 2015. This is because:

- Up to 85% of gunshot victims are either uninsured or on some form of state-funded insurance.
- Law enforcement efforts are funded entirely by taxpayer dollars.
- Shootings have a negative impact on overall tax revenues.

Eliminating gun violence is a sound financial investment, and research confirms that reducing shootings improves local economies. A 2016 Urban Institute study of gun violence in Minneapolis, MN, found that just one fewer gun homicide correlated with the creation of 80 new jobs and an additional \$9.4 million in sales across *all* city businesses the following year.¹⁰

Working to cut the number of shootings in the state isn't just the right thing to do—it's an economic imperative.

Ohio cannot afford to ignore the gun violence wreaking havoc on our communities, especially when the cost of proven solutions to this problem pales in comparison to the cost of the problem itself.

Working to cut the number of shootings in the state isn't just the right thing to do—it's an economic imperative.

UNDERSTANDING THE COSTS

Beyond the human tragedy gun violence leaves in its wake, shootings generate a series of economic costs that begin to compound the instant the trigger is pulled.

HEALTHCARE

When a person is shot, a response from the medical system is almost always necessary. According to estimates developed by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) and relied on by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each gun-related death generates approximately \$49,164 in medical expenses.

Medical care and treatment costs are even higher for nonfatal shootings that require hospitalization—\$63,289—because such injuries often entail considerable post-release treatment, including physical therapy and prescription medications that generate tens of thousands of dollars in additional expenses.

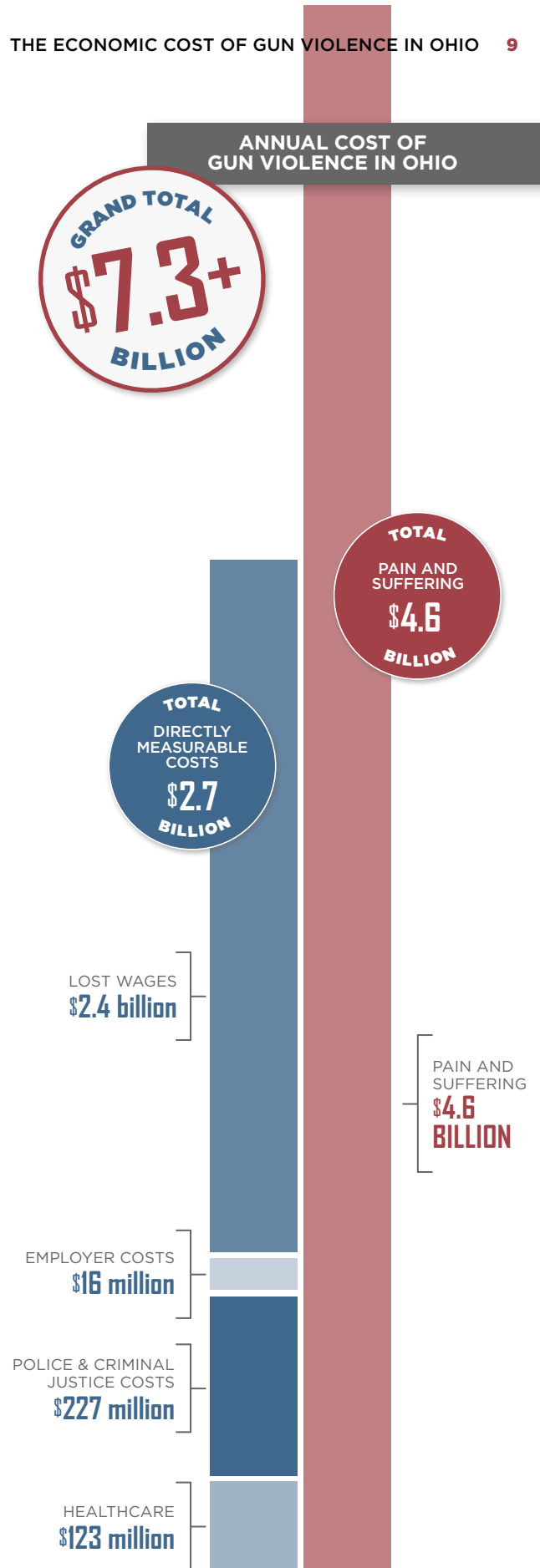
In 2015 alone, gun-related injuries and deaths cost Ohio more than \$123 million in healthcare expenses.

POLICE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

A single incident of interpersonal gun violence requires an extensive police investigation. If a suspect is arrested, there are steep costs associated with bringing that person to justice, including the trial process and, if a conviction is obtained, prolonged incarceration. So while the victim of a shooting is receiving expensive medical treatment, the perpetrator is also receiving costly attention from the criminal justice system, generating a massive bill—a bill covered largely by taxpayers.

According to estimates by PIRE, the average cost of a police investigation and related criminal justice expenses for a fatal shooting is \$439,217.13.

Criminal justice expenses include salaries and benefits for public officials such as judges, prosecutors, and public defenders, as well as the cost of incarceration, which in a federal facility averages more than \$30,000 per year for each inmate.¹¹ Since many nonfatal shootings result in



shorter sentences or do not end with the apprehension of a suspect, criminal justice costs associated with a single nonfatal shooting are much lower: an estimated \$8,391.

In 2015 alone, gun violence cost Ohio more than \$227 million in police and criminal justice expenses.

EMPLOYER COSTS

Another directly measurable expense of gun violence is the cost to employers of covering for employees who are unable to work, temporarily or permanently, due to serious injury or death. A business owner may have to pay for temporary workers, overtime, and additional training for current employees to fill in for an absent colleague who was the victim or the relative of a victim of gun violence. In the case of death or debilitating injury, the employer will have to bear the costs of locating, hiring, and training a replacement.

The PIRE cost-of-injury model estimates that a single, nonfatal shooting requiring hospitalization costs employers an average of \$2,500, while a fatal shooting costs employers \$10,000 per incident.

In 2015 alone, shootings cost Ohio \$16 million in direct employer costs.

LOST WAGES

Lost wages are the value of the income gunshot victims could have earned had they not been killed or forced to stop working due to a serious injury. According to data derived from the PIRE cost-of-injury model, the average value of lost work for a single fatal shooting is \$1,742,722, while for a nonfatal shooting requiring hospitalization the figure is \$81,559 per incident.

In 2015 alone, gun-related attacks, accidents, and suicides cost Ohio residents more than \$2.4 billion in lost wages.

PAIN AND SUFFERING

Shootings dramatically decrease the quality of life for gun violence survivors and for the families and friends of victims. These losses are difficult to quantify, since the value of human life is priceless, but models have been developed that attempt to place a monetary value on the deaths and injuries caused by gun violence.

Economists from PIRE estimate that a single nonfatal firearm injury requiring hospitalization is associated with a \$327,747 decrease in quality of life due to pain and suffering, while the economic cost associated with a single firearm death is \$3.4 million.

In 2015 alone, the pain and suffering caused by gun violence cost Ohio \$4.6 billion.

LOST BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

A shooting is a terrifying event. One of the most burdensome consequences of gun violence is the fear it unleashes, which impacts business opportunities. For example, Daniel Hamermesh, an economist at the University of Texas, has shown that each additional homicide in a city causes an annual loss of

between \$293,000 and \$732,000 because people become afraid to work nights and evenings.¹² In addition, economists estimate that every homicide reduces a city's population by 70 people, which has the effect of shrinking the tax base and undermining economic growth.¹³

While a comprehensive model for measuring lost business opportunity has not been developed, it undoubtedly adds a significant cost to the already staggering pricetag of gun violence in Ohio.

DIMINISHED PROPERTY VALUES

Finally, shootings have a direct impact on property values. A 2012 study by economists working with the Center for American Progress found that significant gains in property values consistently follow homicide reductions within particular zip codes. Specifically, the study found that a 10% decrease in homicides caused a 0.83% increase in property prices during the next year, while a 25% reduction yielded a 2.1% increase in property values.¹⁴

While the exact total of diminished property values has yet to be accounted for, there's no question that lowered property values contribute to the overwhelming cost of gun violence in Ohio.

GUN VIOLENCE COSTS OHIO MORE THAN \$7.3 BILLION EACH YEAR

Gun violence costs Ohio's economy an estimated \$7.3 billion each year, over and above the human loss that occurs with so many of these tragedies. Eliminating gun violence through sound policymaking is a strategy to protect public safety, in the meantime improving the fiscal health of the state and its taxpayers by reducing costs associated with shootings.

**TURNING PAIN
INTO ACTION**



The tools are available—state lawmakers have the ability to reduce the toll gun violence has on communities across Ohio.

When we lose family, friends, or neighbors to gun violence, we feel tremendous pain. When we read about an innocent bystander who will never walk again because of a stray bullet, we are rightly outraged. But gun violence doesn't only shake us emotionally and morally—it also imposes enormous financial costs and generates a vicious cycle of fear and flight that damages our economy.

The good news is this cycle can be reversed. Proven solutions exist to reduce gun violence in our communities while respecting law-abiding, responsible gun owners. These include smart gun laws like universal background checks and community-based violence intervention strategies that work directly with the individuals and neighborhoods most at risk of gun violence.

UNIVERSAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

Ohio consistently earns a “D” on the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence’s annual *Gun Law State Scorecard* due to its weak gun laws, which, thanks to a concerted effort by the corporate gun lobby, have been growing even weaker in recent years.¹⁵ Given Ohio’s high gun death rate, it’s clear that the citizens of Ohio are paying a steep price for lax gun policies. The fastest way for Ohio to start making the grade and saving lives is to implement universal background checks, which will help keep guns from falling into dangerous hands.

GUN LAW STATE SCORECARD: OHIO

The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence analyzes all 50 states’ gun law grades in its annual *Gun Law State Scorecard*. This is how Ohio’s gun laws ranked in 2016:

OHIO GUN LAW GRADE: D

GUN DEATH RATE: 11.9
(per 100,000)

GUN DEATH RANK: 26
(of 50)

In 2016, Ohio enacted a law allowing concealed guns in daycares, airport terminals, and vehicles on elementary school grounds. The law also allows guns on college and university campuses and prohibits businesses from disallowing firearms in vehicles in parking areas. Ohio does not require background checks on private sales or allow local governments to pass gun laws.

To learn more about Ohio’s gun law grade and how it compares to other states, visit gunlawscorecard.org.

Currently, Ohio does not require any background check whatsoever to purchase a gun in a private sale or transfer, making it shamefully easy for individuals with serious criminal records or histories of severe mental illness—people prohibited from possessing a gun under federal law—to obtain firearms and use them to hurt people.¹⁶

Research shows that background checks are strongly associated with lower rates of gun homicide and suicide. Not surprisingly, in the 19 states with universal background checks, levels of domestic violence-related shootings, shootings of police officers, and illegal gun trafficking are all significantly lower than in states that fail to regulate private gun sales.¹⁷

Right now, Ohio is like an airport where there are two security lines: one with a metal detector and one without—and would-be shooters can simply choose the line they prefer. Relying on the honor system when it comes to buying guns costs far too many lives, as well as billions of dollars every year. We owe it to the citizens of Ohio to close this glaring, deadly gap in state law and pass universal background checks immediately.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL SOLUTIONS

Interpersonal shootings disproportionately involve young men of color living in underserved neighborhoods, so any effective violence intervention strategy must focus attention and resources on this at-risk population. Fortunately, several highly effective strategies have been shown to dramatically reduce violence levels when properly funded and faithfully implemented.

CURE VIOLENCE

Cure Violence is a public health strategy that treats gun violence as a communicable disease and works to interrupt its transmission among community members. The Cure Violence model employs “Violence Interrupters,” individuals who understand the dynamics of the streets and are able to connect with those who are most at-risk to commit or become the victims of gun violence. Violence Interrupters use their position of respect in the community to mediate conflicts and defuse potentially dangerous situations before they become violent.

At the same time, Cure Violence employs outreach workers, who attempt to connect the most at-risk individuals with badly needed social services. All of this occurs while a norm-changing campaign takes place to send the message that violence will no longer be tolerated by the community.

UNIVERSAL BACKGROUND CHECKS SAVE LIVES

A study found that Connecticut’s implementation of universal background checks in 1995 was associated with a 40% reduction in the state’s firearm homicide rate during the first 10 years.¹⁸ Conversely, Missouri’s repeal of its universal background check requirement in 2007 was associated with a 25% increase in firearm homicides.¹⁹

Universal background checks were associated with a 40% reduction in the Connecticut’s firearm homicide rate over a single decade.

Missouri’s repeal of universal background checks was associated with a 25% increase in firearm homicides.

A 2014 study of Cure Violence in Chicago found that its implementation in several targeted districts was associated with a 31% decrease in homicides, a 7% reduction in total violent crime, and a 19% decrease in shootings.²⁰ Given the extremely high costs of a single shooting incident and the relatively low overhead of operating a Cure Violence site, this is a violence prevention strategy that saves lives and taxpayer money. More information is available at cureviolence.org.

GROUP VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

Group Violence Intervention (GVI) is partnership between law enforcement, social service providers, and community members that first identifies those most likely to be involved in gun violence, and then brings them together in small groups for a “call-in”—an in-person meeting in which partnership members convey a strong message that the shooting must stop. Social services are offered to those in need and law enforcement officers also make clear that enforcement actions will be taken against the next group responsible for future violence.

GVI was first used in the enormously successful Operation Ceasefire in Boston in the mid-1990s, where it was associated with a 61% reduction in youth homicide. The program has now been implemented in a wide variety of American cities, with consistently impressive results.²¹ More information is available at nnscommunities.org.

Cincinnati’s Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) implemented the GVI strategy in 2007, but funding has not been consistent over time. In order to effectively combat gun violence, Ohio’s leaders should commit to adopting this strategy in all major cities and work to ensure that adequate funding is available from both the public and private sectors. This smart investment in community safety would be a drop in the bucket compared to the overwhelming cost inflicted by gun violence.

More information on the most effective violence intervention programs is available in the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence’s recent report, *Healing Communities in Crisis*, which can be found at smartgunlaws.org/healing-communities.

OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Cities that centralize and strategically coordinate the planning of comprehensive violence prevention and intervention services have seen impressive results. Richmond, California, for example, created an independent city agency in 2007, the Office of Neighborhood Safety, to specifically address extremely high rates of gun violence.

By 2014, with a strategy that included street outreach, police reforms emphasizing police-community relations, and the implementation of an innovative mentoring program for those most at-risk of participating in violence,²² Richmond’s gun homicide rate had declined by more than 70%.²³ Much more information on this approach is available at advancepeace.org.

**MOVING
FORWARD,
TOGETHER**

The thousands of gun-related deaths and injuries Ohioans endure each year are a human tragedy—they're also terrible for the economy.

Between healthcare costs, police and criminal justice expenses, employer costs, and lost wages, gun violence in 2015 alone cost Ohio more than \$2.7 billion. When pain and suffering is factored in, the cost was more than \$7.3 billion for a single year. Clearly, there's not just a moral imperative, but also a financial obligation to address this epidemic.

The business community of Ohio has a critical role to play in the fight against gun violence. Lifesaving policies like universal background checks will only become the law of the land when strong voices from all ends of the political spectrum speak out to tell our leaders that reducing gun violence and respecting Second Amendment rights aren't mutually exclusive goals. Members of the business community are in a unique position to help Ohio legislators understand that gun violence is a problem we can't afford to ignore. Reducing gun violence rates just 10% would generate enormous economic benefits for taxpayers and business owners alike.

In addition to policy reforms, properly funding on-the-ground violence intervention programs must also be part of the solution. There is an incredible opportunity for the business communities of cities like Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus to step up to provide organizational and financial resources to help expand and sustain evidence-based intervention programs. Due to the extreme cost of gun violence, investments in effective strategies like Cure Violence and Group Violence Intervention are all but certain to yield impressive returns.

When it comes to saving lives from gun violence, we know what works—what we need is advocacy and support for the implementation of these solutions. We simply cannot afford to maintain the status quo in the face of this costly, destructive epidemic. Change will require the effort of many different segments of our society. All of us, including the business community of Ohio, must work together to fight for a safer future.

GET INVOLVED

americansforresponsiblesolutions.org/OH

METHODOLOGY

To calculate the annual cost of gun violence in Ohio, we focused on 2015, the latest year for which comprehensive, reliable data about gun deaths and injuries is available.

FIREARM INJURY DATA

Fatal firearm injury data in Ohio during 2015 came from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports, available to the public at www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html.

Like many states, comprehensive nonfatal firearm injury data is not readily available in Ohio. As a result, nonfatal firearm injury data was calculated using a combination of police and hospital data for Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus in 2015. Since only three cities were used in this calculation, it is an underestimate of the true number of nonfatal shootings—the full cost is even more staggering.

COST OF GUN VIOLENCE CALCULATIONS

Estimates of the cost of gun violence in Ohio in 2015 were created using data on fatal and non-fatal firearm injuries and a model of the cost of gun violence published in 2012 by economists at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). This model can be found at www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf.

PIRE Researchers estimated a variety of costs associated with each gun injury, making adjustments based on whether the injury in question was a fatal injury, a non-fatal injury requiring hospitalization, or a non-fatal injury only requiring emergency department treatment. The PIRE cost estimates were adjusted to account for inflation.

LEARN MORE

Americans for Responsible Solutions and The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence

responsiblesolutions.org

smartgunlaws.org

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ABOUT **AMERICANS FOR RESPONSIBLE SOLUTIONS** & **THE LAW CENTER TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE**

Led by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and Navy combat veteran and retired NASA astronaut Captain Mark Kelly, Americans for Responsible Solutions and the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence are committed to advancing commonsense change that makes communities safer from gun violence. Operating out of offices in Washington DC, San Francisco, and New York, our staff partners with lawmakers and advocates to craft and enact the smart gun laws that save lives. We provide expertise in firearms litigation, lead grassroots coalitions, and educate the public on the proven solutions to America's gun violence epidemic.

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