

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Senator Schumer, and Representative McCarthy:

As mayors committed to the safety and health of our cities, we believe your leadership and service is vital in responding to the current unprecedented public health crisis facing our nation: the COVID-19 pandemic. As our communities rally and respond to combat this new enemy, they also continue to face a familiar threat: the epidemic of gun violence.

While combating the virus is a top priority, gun violence and gun deaths continue to claim lives and devastate communities. Despite social distancing and stay at home orders, gun violence rates remain persistently high in cities, disproportionately impacting black and brown communities who are also among the most vulnerable to COVID-19. Chicago had its [most violent day of 2020](#) during this pandemic, with 21 people shot, seven killed, and in Cincinnati, [homicides are up 91%](#) compared to this time last year. Our emergency resources are dedicated to protecting public health and safety, [but we do not have enough health care resources](#) to fight both these battles. We need our health care resources to combat COVID-19, and we need specific resources to tackle gun violence and support the frontline workers and organizations who are already working to do so.

As detailed below, we respectfully request:

- Direct federal aid to cities and vulnerable communities threatened by looming budget cuts;
- Emergency funding to protect and sustain community-based violence intervention programs in cities most impacted by community violence; and
- Funding reassurance and broader qualification requirements for the Paycheck Protection Program to support existing violence intervention organizations.

Many cities have developed effective models for lifesaving violence intervention initiatives. Research shows that violence is a cycle: being shot, being shot at, or witnessing a shooting doubles the probability that a young person will commit an act of violence in the next two years. What is critical, research shows, is to find a way to break that

cycle. One of the most effective ways is through violence interruption and targeted outreach. Professional violence interrupters and outreach workers are highly trained to [disrupt cycles of retaliatory violence](#): focusing on people at highest risk of becoming involved with or victims of violence, they connect individuals with direct support services like conflict mediation, case management, trauma-informed mentoring, cognitive behavioral therapy, employment training, and access to basic necessities. These programs work. In Oakland, California, for example, annual shootings and homicides [decreased by nearly 50% over six years](#) by incorporating violence intervention into a citywide response to violent crime.

Violence interrupters and outreach workers focused on community members at highest risk have emerged as a frontline public health resource in the fight against the twin public health crises of community violence and COVID-19, especially in underserved communities that are disproportionately victimized by both of these threats. At a time when resources everywhere are strained, it is critical that this capacity be sustained and bolstered. We know from past experiences that reliable funding streams are essential to the success of violence intervention programs, and when those streams run dry, rates of violence increase: in Illinois, for example, effective state-funded violence intervention programs suffered funding lapses in 2007, 2011, and 2015. Each of those funding lapses [corresponded with significant increases in rates of violence](#) in Chicago, which receded only once funding was restored. As the COVID-19 pandemic depletes our budgetary resources, many cities may be unable to sustain these lifesaving community-based interventions. To help keep violence interrupters on the job, keep the peace, and protect lives in our communities, we write to request that federal emergency funding measures include funding dedicated specifically toward sustaining community-based violence intervention initiatives in communities most impacted by shootings and community violence, as well as direct emergency aid to cities battling these twin challenges.

Similarly, while the CARES Act's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) has provided temporary lifelines to some small businesses and nonprofits across the country, it has fallen short for many nonprofits, including community-based violence prevention organizations who have been shut out due to their affiliation with larger nonprofit "fiscal sponsors." As a result, these small organizations are struggling to remain afloat as their services remain in high demand. We ask that you ensure funding remains available for the PPP and broaden the universe of eligible applicants to ensure that smaller nonprofits associated with fiscal sponsors can access these emergency loans.

We cannot afford to keep our cities safe alone—we are truly in this together. With your assistance, we can ensure no one is left behind, and that our communities emerge from this pandemic stronger than ever. Thank you for taking these requests into consideration.

Signed,

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Los Angeles, California

Mayor Libby Schaaf
Oakland, California

Mayor Tom Butt
Richmond, California

Mayor Michael Tubbs
Stockton, California

Mayor Justin Elicker
New Haven, Connecticut

Mayor Bernard Young
Baltimore, Maryland

Mayor Robert Eastern
East St. Louis, Illinois

Mayor Ras Baraka
Newark, New Jersey

Mayor W. Reed Gusciora
Trenton, New Jersey

Mayor Mary Ann Baldwin
Raleigh, North Carolina

Mayor Bill Peduto
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Mayor Jenny Durkan
Seattle, Washington

Mayor Michael Hancock
Denver, Colorado

Mayor Jacob Frey
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mayor Steven M. Fulop
Jersey City, New Jersey

Mayor Andre Sayegh
Paterson, New Jersey

Mayor Tim Keller
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Mayor Jim Kinney
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mayor Levar Stoney
Richmond, Virginia

Mayor Tom Barrett
Milwaukee, Wisconsin