

Invest in Violence Interrupters

Neglected communities that suffer from low economic mobility often face disproportionate levels of violence. Traditionally, cities have responded to community-level violence by increasing the presence of a militarized police force. This solution has repeatedly failed with sometimes fatal consequences, compounding trauma and leading to more violence.

A new solution, one led by communities, offers a way forward: violence interrupter programs. Violence interrupters mitigate violence before it happens, eliminating the need for police intervention.

Violence interrupters help stem community-level violence by:

- » Coaching and assisting people in accessing social services.
- » Encouraging dialogue and averting violent, sometimes deadly, conflict.
- » Helping individuals attain key documents needed for employment and housing, such as state IDs, birth certificates, and social security cards.
- » Connecting individuals with mental health resources.
- » Building communal connections by visiting school grounds and potential hotspots for violence.
- » Organizing community events to spread the message of nonviolence.

Violence interrupters come from the communities they serve. Many have been previously incarcerated or involved with the criminal legal system and may have been deemed high-risk for violence in the past or have connections to people who are. This intimate understanding is the source of their credibility and efficacy.

Violence interrupter programs are experiencing a surge in popularity and success. The Cherry Hill neighborhood in Baltimore is a keen example. In 2021, Cherry Hill's violence interrupter program facilitated 365 days in the community without a single shooting. But program administrators worry about what could happen to funding for these programs in the future when interest wanes.

Please dedicate at least \$20 million in federal funding for violence interrupters in the FY2024 appropriations bill.

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