

Invest in Violence Interrupters

For decades policymakers have debated how to address the epidemic of violence inflicting the United States. Regrettably, decision-makers have viewed violence as an independent problem as opposed to an outcome of larger societal harms.

Traditionally, localities have responded to community-level violence by increasing the presence of a militarized police force. This solution has repeatedly failed, sometimes with fatal consequences that compound trauma and heighten violence. Historical trauma and economic disinvestment are often the root causes of violence. Addressing these issues is necessary to make communities safer.

A new solution led by communities offers a way forward: violence interrupter programs.

Violence interrupters help mitigate violence before it happens by:

- » Encouraging dialogue and averting violent, sometimes deadly, conflict.
- » Coaching and assisting people in accessing social services.
- » 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' connections to their communities and experience with the justice system makes them credible and effective at their work. For example, in 2019, the violence interrupters in Baltimore's Cherry Hill neighborhood facilitated 365 days without a single shooting.¹ In 2018, violence interrupters in Chicago reduced shootings by 67% in its first year of operating.²

Provide at least \$20 million in federal funding for violence interrupters in the upcoming year's spending bill.

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¹ Oxenden, McKenna. "Cherry Hill Saw 395 Days without a Homicide. after Three This Week, Neighborhood Looks to Rebound." Baltimore Sun, 14 Feb. 2020, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-cherry-hill-violence-20200214-anbkiloc5nd5bn44d46ujhlipi-story.html>.

² Tools of Change. "Cure Violence." Oct. 2018, <https://toolsofchange.com/userfiles/Cure%20ViolenceV3.pdf>.