Invest in Violence Interrupters

For decades, policymakers have debated how to address the epidemic of gun violence affecting communities across the United States. Traditionally, localities have responded to community-level violence by increasing the presence of a militarized police force. This approach has repeatedly failed, with sometimes fatal consequences that compound trauma and increase the likelihood of future violence.

As a Quaker organization, we seek communities where every person’s potential may be fulfilled. We believe the best and most durable solutions to gun violence emerge when we address its root causes, including racial inequities and historical disinvestment, and partner with local experts to disrupt and resolve conflict.

Community violence interventions (CVI), such as violence interrupter programs, are one such solution. These initiatives focus on reducing homicides and shootings by establishing relationships with people at the center of gun violence in our communities.

Violence interrupters help mitigate violence before it happens by:

» Encouraging dialogue and averting violent conflict.
» Coaching and assisting people in accessing social services.
» Helping individuals acquire critical documents to access employment and housing, such as state IDs, birth certificates, and social security cards.
» Connecting individuals with mental health resources.
» Building trust and community connections by visiting school grounds and potential violent hotspots.
» Organizing local events to spread the message of nonviolence.

The impact of these programs is palpable in the communities where they operate. A new study by the Center for Gun Violence Solutions of Johns Hopkins University revealed that Safe Streets—a violence interrupter program in Maryland—reduced homicides and nonfatal shootings overall from 2007 to 2022 in Baltimore. It reduced such shootings by as much as 32% in some sites.

These programs exemplify how community violence intervention initiatives are working to build safer communities. To sustain this life-saving work, Congress should invest at least $55 million in the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) program in the FY2024 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

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