

**Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**The Gun Violence Epidemic: A Public Health Crisis Hearing**  
**November 28, 2023**  
**Questions for the Record**  
**Senator Amy Klobuchar**

For Vaughn Bryant, Executive Director of Metropolitan Peace Initiatives

You previously testified that in areas where community outreach organizations have operated violence prevention programs, trends of violent crimes have reversed and started to decrease. That's why I have long supported efforts to increase federal support for evidence-based community violence intervention programs, which work to combat gun violence in cities across America including in Minneapolis.

- **As executive director of Metropolitan Peace Initiatives, how does your program and programs like it address the root causes of gun violence?**

Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI) and its Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P) community violence intervention model, as well as similar prototypes nationwide, address the root causes of violence in three ways:

1. By providing a sustainable and scalable direct service model that is collaborative, hyperlocal, restorative, trauma-informed, and based on the principles of Kingian nonviolence. We offer a menu of holistic service offerings for individuals at highest risk of being victims of gun violence. The services that address root causes, such as poverty, income inequality, poor education, housing instability, lack of affordable health care, exposure to violence and poor mental health include:
  - a. **Intervention by trained street outreach workers** who 1) engage individuals with a high likelihood of shooting or being shot and 2) create peace and non-aggression agreements which gives room for prosocial activities
  - b. **Case management services** to address any social determinants of health
  - c. **Victim services** to provide supports and safety planning for victims of gun violence and their families
  - d. **Community-based events** aimed at building community safety and solidarity. CP4P community-based events are called "Light in the Night."
  - e. **Behavioral Health Services** that, through a culturally responsive and trauma-informed lens, offer counseling and health services that provide individuals a pathway towards developing their strengths, and opportunities to maximize mental health stability for themselves and their families

- f. **Workforce Development** that, through job readiness training and industry-recognized training and certification, provides unemployed and underemployed individuals the opportunity to prepare for and attain meaningful and sustainable employment
  - g. Individualized **legal aid services** which offer members of Chicago's most underserved communities access to quality civil legal services within their own communities. CP4P's legal aid program is known as Justice Corps.
2. By building a civilian workforce for public safety by providing specialized training in the fields of street outreach, case management, and victim services, through our highly-acclaimed, multi-disciplinary training facility, known as the Metropolitan Peace Academy.
  3. By developing a community-driven public policy apparatus tasked to diffuse and dismantle systemic barriers – poverty, income inequality, housing instability and lack of educational or employment access – that exacerbate symptomatic outcomes. These issues preclude under-resourced communities of color from access and achieving optimal outcomes. Community healing and restoration requires consistent legislation and scalable budget line investment into anti-inflammatory approaches (community-based programming) in the short-term as much as it does reconstructive surgery over the long term (public policy).
- **How have community-based intervention programs been effective at keeping communities safe, including by reducing gun violence?**

Community-based intervention programs have been effective at keeping communities safe, including by reducing gun violence, using a myriad of approaches, including:

1. **Deploying Street Outreach Workers (SOWs):** SOWs actively work in “the streets” to engage individuals who are at immediate or high risk of either being victims or perpetrators of violence. Outreach staff are credible messengers who engage with these individuals in a variety of settings, including parks, homes, street corners, community centers, schools, hospitals, or any place these at-risk individuals frequent. Outreach staff build trusting relationships with high-risk individuals so that they can mediate existing and potential conflicts to prevent incidents of violence and promote peace.

Outreach and support staff serve as connectors to services and as supporters to high-risk individuals and their families. Services can include, but are not limited to, healthcare and mental health treatment, housing, substance abuse disorder treatment, and employment assistance. These services enable individuals to live a life free of violence and as a positive contributor to their families and communities. Outreach efforts are typically conducted in the afternoons/evenings and late at night when violence is most prevalent.

Some key outreach activities include:

- Community engagement.
  - Engaging and support individuals, families, and groups at high risk of violence.
  - Responding to critical incidents, such as shootings and homicides, to de-escalate tension.
  - Supporting victims and their families.
  - Conducting proactive peace building activities.
  - Mediating and resolve conflicts between street groups.
  - Making referrals for services and support.
2. **Community-based task forces:** Establishing community-based task forces composed of individuals from the impacted communities. These task forces have a say in the development, implementation, and evaluation of community violence intervention initiatives.
  3. **Community-led initiatives:** Supporting and funding community-led initiatives that provide education and resources to prevent violence. These initiatives include programs that teach conflict resolution skills, launch mentorship programs, and offer job training and placement.
  4. **Restorative justice programs:** Implementing restorative justice programs that focus on healing and reconciliation rather than punishment. These programs involve the impacted community in the decision-making process and prioritize the needs of victims.
  5. **Police-community partnerships:** Codifying the professional understanding between law enforcement and community violence intervention. The goals are to improve understanding of our respective roles in the community, define appropriate knowledge sharing and establish shooting incident notification to CVI organization.
  6. **Funding community-based organizations:** Providing funding for community-based organizations performing direct service, frontline, violence prevention and intervention services. These organizations are often better equipped to understand the needs of the community and can provide tailored support. MPI works together with local organizations to train the local CVI workforce and create career pathways for continued upward mobility for community residents in the field.
  7. **Trauma-informed care:** Providing trauma-informed care for victims of violence as well as gun violence intervention career professionals. This self-care approach recognizes that victims of violence often experience trauma and provides support that takes this into account.

Since the start of CP4P in July of 2017, member organizations have provided nearly 200,000 direct services to 5,516 participants most acutely affected by gun violence in 69 of Chicago's 77 community areas. Leading research by Northwestern University's Center for Neighborhood Engaged Research and Science (CORNERS) estimates that between July of 2017 and December

of 2021, a time of rising violent crime in Chicago and the country, communities where CP4P was operating saw statistically significant, favorable changes in rates of homicides and non-fatal shootings compared to areas without CP4P. CP4P's work resulted in 383 fewer homicides and non-fatal shootings than would have been expected without CP4P. CP4P's street outreach efforts are making communities safer and saving lives. Federal funding plays a critical role in enabling comprehensive, effective, and sustainable community violence intervention programs.

- **How are investments in these programs offset by savings down the road?**

The University of Chicago Crime Lab estimates the economic cost of gun violence in Chicago to be more than \$4.5-5 billion per year. Measurable costs to the city include healthcare, criminal and legal expenses. The economic impact on the culture and emotional health of the city, however, are immeasurable. A leading consulting firm estimates that every dollar invested in CVI can generate nearly \$20 in returns through lower criminal justice costs, greater economic opportunity and increased tax revenues. That's an estimated cost savings of more than \$90-100 billion per year.