

September 1, 2020

Law & Public Safety Committee

Christopher Smitherman-**Chair**

Committee Members

David Mann

Betsy Sunderman

Jan Michele Kearney

Greg Landsman

Re: Gun Violence

Cincinnati Black United Front members like everyone else want to live in a community free of gun violence, that's why its impossible to talk about this subject without talking about the Collaborative Agreement, but I digress, for now.

Issues:

Gun Violence is meant to imply that African Americans are indifferent to the thousands of young black men — and increasingly, black children and Black Women — who are slain every year by gun violence. It insinuates that black people accept killings by our own, and take to the streets only when white police officers are doing the killing. **Black** citizens have formed hundreds of such organizations to save the children, teens and adults so often caught up in world of gun violence.

As reported by “Everytown for Gun Safety” dated 6.16.2020

The US has seen the collision of two major public health crises: COVID-19 and gun violence. A comprehensive understanding of how this collision will affect Americans and the factors driving the increase in gun violence during the pandemic is still developing, but there are a few takeaways:

While millions of Americans rushed out to purchase new firearms in the middle of a global pandemic, thinking they were buying safety, research shows that they are in fact exposing themselves and their families to higher risks of suicide, homicide, unintentional shootings, and intimate partner violence.

Unprecedented increases in gun sales, combined with economic distress and social isolation due to COVID-19, are intensifying the country's long-standing gun violence crisis. The pandemic highlights the deadliness of weak gun purchase and access laws that allow firearms to fall into the wrong hands, and also sheds light on existing structural inequity. The coronavirus puts vulnerable populations, including women, children, and communities of color, at heightened risk. The lethal impact of these crises, though devastating, helps point the way to laws, policies, and programs that can keep people safe and healthy—now and on the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic. The collision of these two public health crises offers possibility amidst great loss.

Responses:

I believe gun violence should be viewed through the lens of trauma. (1) To unravel the trauma is a long-term, dynamic process; (2) trauma is inflected by lines of difference and inequality, including race, gender, and class; and (3) trauma operates as a micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level phenomenon.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention “says that suicide most often is the result of treatable mental health issues and is related to brain functions that affect decision-making and behavioral control. As with the homicide rate, the reasons behind suicide are more complicated than a single issue. “Life stresses combined with known risk factors, such as childhood trauma, substance use — or even chronic physical pain — can contribute” to someone taking their life, the AFSP said.

Similarly, [research has found](#) that many young black men — the group most likely to be perpetrators and victims of gun homicides — suffer from a condition similar to PTSD, brought on by repeated exposure to violence, extreme poverty, high unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse and other social ills that create *a sense of hopelessness.*, and its burden is anything but random.” With media focus on homicides — many local news outlets keep a running tally — suicide, which kills twice as many people, gets comparatively less coverage.

When white men respond to their life circumstances with gun violence, it’s treated as a public health problem, brought on by mental illness and stress. When black men do, it’s portrayed almost solely as a criminal issue, caused by lawlessness and moral failing.

Principals for Recommendations:

1. As the coronavirus has rolled across the country, its virulent impact has not been evenly felt. Black Americans are nearly twice as likely as white Americans to die from COVID-19. They are more than four times as likely to die from firearm homicide. City gun violence has persisted even amidst shelter-in-place orders. Systemic and structural discrimination against communities of color is resulting in these communities disproportionately experiencing the deadly effects of both public health crises.
2. These troubling findings point to the need for swift action on proven policies and programs that can keep families safe in these difficult times: close the Charleston loophole, reassert federal regulation over ghost guns, raise awareness of secure firearm storage practices, enact Extreme Risk laws, keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers, and increase funding for gun violence intervention programs, Everytown for Gun Safety.

Key Local Solutions: Collaborative Agreement

1. **Gun Violence Problem Solving Team.** CBUF has recommended that the Manager’s Advisory Group (MAG) establish a multi stakeholder problem-solving team around gun violence that will use the SARA model to address the problem.
2. That team will quickly be able to Scan to:
 - a. study the shooting data from Cincyinsights,
 - b. identify locations that host numerous shooting incidents
 - c. debrief with the violence intervention workers out on the street,
 - d. encourage ways to speak with victims and shooters to learn their fears and needs,
 - e. gather information nationally about best practices,

- f. study the effectiveness locally of CIRV, ShotSpotter, PIVOT
 - g. and develop a response that is properly tailored to our local community.
- 3. This team will analysis by focusing on all three sides of the crime triangle – location, victim, and perpetrator. This team will work with a deep commitment to seek out tactics **that respect the dignity of Black residents and end old patterns of racial oppression. The team must be led by citizens and not the police.**
- 4. Responses that focus on Location:
 - a. Cincyinsights provides facts about where and when shootings occur as well as demographics about victims
 - b. PIVOT is based on intensive stakeholder action at locations that host large numbers of shooting incidents. We have seen success with PIVOT, and it is likely that we should expand its use throughout the City.
 - c. PIVOT related actions must include economic empowerment remedies
- 5. Responses that focus on Victims and Perpetrators:
 - a. We believe that gun violence largely reflects the belief that many people in the community do not feel safe unless they have the means to protect themselves.
 - b. We need to reach this group first through means other than armed police
 - c. Let's meet with gun victims in a nonthreatening way learn their fears, needs and dreams
 - d. Let's be serious about offering services that will meet their needs. Those services must include economic empowerment sustained through time
 - e. Out of the Crossfire was based on communicating with gun violence victims and their families initially at the hospital. It never had the support it needed to be successful. It remains a promising model and an important access point since victims often become perpetrators
- 6. **Resources to Reduce Gun Violence.** CBUF believes that police resources must be reviewed to ensure that they are used on strategies that actually make the community safer and/or can be shifted to strategies that accomplish that goal. CBUF supports the Council resolution calling for a study of 911 responses. Hopefully that study will help ensure that the response fits the problems identified in the call. To the extent that study identifies resources that can be shifted to support strategies proposed by the gun violence problem solving team.

Submitted Respectfully,

Iris Roley

Cincinnati Black United Front, PM

Partner, Rosho Awards & Graphics