WELCOME TO THE JUNE 2021 POLICY DIGEST!

Every month you will find the latest on what’s going on in the policy world, important bills to watch, and how to get involved to support policy to end gun violence in communities of color.

During the month of May we celebrated Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month! On our monthly Building Community call we highlighted and heard from Asian & AAPI leaders in the gun violence prevention movement. In case you missed it, you can find a link to the recording here.

Be sure to join us for our June Building Community call on June 29, 2021 where we will uplift LGBTQ+ leaders during Pride month! You can RSVP here.

UPCOMING EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

LET’S CELEBRATE!

SAVE THE DATE: OUR FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

This year marks the five year anniversary of The Community Justice Action Fund’s founding! Please save the date for our upcoming five-year anniversary celebration on June 30, 2021 at 3:00 pm ET! RSVP here.

FUND PEACE CAMPAIGN PRESENTS:

Fund Peace Summits: This year we worked with partners to build a large campaign composed of local leaders, activists, service providers and survivors from Black and brown communities demanding that leaders “Fund Peace” by investing in community violence intervention and prevention efforts. This month we kicked off the weekly Fund Peace Summits to uplift local voices in this effort. Shout out to famous rapper Bun B for attending our Houston event! You can learn more about this campaign at www.fundpeacenow.com.

INVEST IN US COALITION:

We organized a robust coalition of national advocacy groups to push for federal funding to address gun violence. Since it’s beginning, we’ve achieved HISTORIC executive actions from President Joe Biden and are focused on getting Congress to step up to push for federal funding. Learn more about the coalition at www.investinuscoalition.org!
POLICY TRENDS

GUN VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE
Several states and municipalities around the country are commemorating annual acknowledgments of gun violence, declaring June as Gun Violence Awareness Month and/or recognizing June 4 as Gun Violence Awareness Day.

IMPORTANCE OF FUNDING CONTINUES TO GAIN MOMENTUM
Public officials at the local, state, and federal levels are helping to lead the charge for funding community-based violence prevention. Congresswomen Robin Kelly (IL) and Lucy McBath (GA) in the House, and Senator Tammy Duckworth (IL) and Chris Van Hollen in the Senate (MD) are championing increased appropriations for violence prevention through programs in the Justice Department, and Health and Human Services. States around the country are considering and/or passing funding legislation, and governors are including violence prevention in their budget proposals. The Biden Administration delivered federal guidance from the Department of Treasury that community violence prevention efforts should be a priority usage of COVID relief funding. The political momentum is shifting toward community-based violence prevention, but much more work remains to get real dollars to frontline violence prevention professionals!

FEDERAL UPDATES

FEDERAL BILLS
The Bipartisan Solution to Cyclical Violence Act of 2021 is making its way through Congress. HR 1260, authored by Representative Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD) and Representative Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), passed the House on May 12. The bill establishes a grant program for hospital-based violence intervention and prevention. Our partners at the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI) are key leaders on this important legislation.
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ) INITIATIVE

On May 26, 2021, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland announced a new effort under the DOJ to provide protection to communities following the recent rise in violent crimes.

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES INCLUDE:

- BUILDING TRUST AND EARN LEGITIMACY
- INVEST IN PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS
- TARGET ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS AND PRIORITIES
- MEASURE RESULTS

Take a look at the press release here to learn more about this new strategy!

Following President Biden’s Executive Action announcements on April 9, 2021, which called on federal agencies to support community violence intervention (CVI) strategies to reduce gun violence and other violent crime, the DOJ has released a fact sheet that highlights all the available grant opportunities and resources. Click here to see how the DOJ is supporting safer communities.

APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Tammy Duckworth (IL) is supporting the appropriations increase for community-based violence prevention that CJAF is advocating for as part of the Invest in Us coalition and Fund Peace campaign. A “Dear colleague” letter is being circulated, which is used to get support for an issue from fellow Senators. The letter explicitly addresses the underfunding of community-based violence prevention, and calls for funding a new coordinated Community Violence Intervention Initiative, with $100 million each for the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). It also includes an additional $10 million at HHS for a violence prevention resource center, and $50 million for violence prevention research.

PRESIDENT BIDEN’S BUDGET

The Biden Administration released its FY2022 Budget at the end of May. Highlights of the budget include $200 million in discretionary funds between the Justice Department and Health and Human Services for a new Community Violence Intervention initiative intended to support local efforts. Additionally, the full budget requests $2.1 billion for the Justice Department to address gun violence through investments and enforcement, including $1.6 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) signed by President Biden is a $1.3 trillion dollar stimulus bill which allocates funding to states across the country to support Corona-virus related relief. The U.S. Department of Treasury has released guidance on how states can distribute this funding. One section on the guidance states that:

“Eligible [funding] services include: Addressing health disparities and the social determinants of health, through funding for community health workers, public benefits navigators, remediation of lead hazards, and community violence intervention programs”.

States and counties can use money from the American Rescue Plan to combat gun violence! You can view the city, state, and county ARP allocations here.

So, how do we ensure a portion of the ARP funds get dedicated to frontline organizations that are breaking the cycle of violence?

HERE’S WHAT’S BEEN GOING ON:

Through our Federal Invest In Us Coalition, Fund Peace campaign, and working with state partners, we’ve been calling on governors and local leaders to take action and commit funding.

SO FAR, WE’VE REQUESTED OVER $4 BILLION ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO BE ALLOCATED TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS.
STATES AND CITIES THAT ARE INVESTING IN US
STATES THAT NEED OUR SUPPORT TO INVEST IN US

NEW YORK
The Fund Peace Campaign is requesting 5% of ARP funds. We are in the process of circulating a sign-on letter to send to Governor Andrew Cuomo to showcase statewide support.

WISCONSIN
Wisconsin received less funding from the American Rescue Plan than expected. Due to the funding decrease, Governor Tony Evers is now revising the proposed spending plan. We partnered with the Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort (WAVE) to recruit organizations to sign on to a letter asking Governor Evers to allocate a percentage of ARP funds to community violence intervention and prevention programs. WAVE is a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to preventing gun violence, injuries, and deaths through education and advocacy.

MARYLAND
The Maryland Violence Prevention Coalition is calling on Governor Hogan to commit 2% of ARP funding to community based organizations. We’ve also sent out letters to County Executives requesting funding. This month kicked off the CJAF led advocacy effort to secure these funds and we need you! JOIN THE ACTION HERE AND DEMAND GOVERNOR HOGAN DEDICATES THE FUNDING. YOU CAN PHONE BANK, SEND EMAILS, AND TWEET!

MASSACHUSETTS
We’re partnering with the Massachusetts Gun Violence Coalition to create and implement an advocacy plan to call on Governor Baker to commit 7% of ARP funds. The coalition is now Planning a second event to amplify the request.

TEXAS
The Texas Invest In Us coalition is calling on the cities of Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston to allocate 2% of ARP funding to community based solutions. You can join us in fighting for these funds! CLICK HERE TO VOLUNTEER. To spread the word on the historic funding opportunities, we held a press conference on May 26th composed of youth activists, policy experts, and frontline workers to emphasize the importance of these funds. If you missed the press event you can view it here.
**MINNESOTA**

**SF 2361** would create a pilot program to address trauma from gun violence and would direct the commissioner of public health to provide resources on gun violence trauma to professionals working with impacted communities and individuals. It would support community-based violence prevention initiatives, including Project Life and the Minneapolis Group Violence Intervention. An appropriation of $100,000 is included in the bill language.

**COLORADO**

**HB 1299** which establishes the Office of Gun Violence Prevention within the Department of Public Health and Environment. The office would focus on increasing public awareness of gun safety and violence issues, addressing mental health and trauma, and collaborating with researchers to improve data and knowledge on gun violence. The bill would also appropriate $3 million for evidence-based violence prevention strategies.

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**TEXAS**

The Texas Legislature closed at the end of May. According to KERA, there were 4,671 bills introduced in the House and referred to committee this legislative session, but only 73 bills passed the House and Senate. The vast majority of bills never received a hearing, including **HB 1580** The Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Act, introduced in partnership with Representative Rosenthal. The bill will need to be introduced in the next legislative session in 2023, unless there is a special session to consider it in the interim.

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**WISCONSIN**

The city of Madison, Wisconsin is giving $225,000 to 8 community organizations to address and support the needs of low-income people and minorities who’ve faced violence.

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**CALIFORNIA**

**AB 1223** which places an excise tax on firearms and ammunition and called for the tax revenue to fund CalVIP, a coalition of organizations that are working to interrupt the cycle of violence in California, passed the Revenue and Taxation Committee and Appropriations Committee. However, they removed CalVIP as the designated recipient of the tax revenue.

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**CONNECTICUT**

**HB 5677** makes Medicaid funding available for community-based violence prevention. It also provides for training and certification of qualified violence prevention professionals. **HB 6034**, supports and expands Project Longevity, Connecticut’s statewide violence prevention initiative.

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**DELAWARE**

The General Assembly of the State of Delaware declared that gun violence is a public health crisis in **SCR 33**. Continuing on the path of action, the State Senate introduced **SCR 33**, which requests that the United States Congress approve Delaware's Community Project Fund which allocates funding to the Statewide Violence Reduction program, to be administered through the Delaware Criminal Justice Council.

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**NORTH CAROLINA**

We partnered with Bull City United to brief Governor Roy Cooper’s Crime Commission Task Force on the importance of evidence based solutions to ending gun violence. Governor Cooper also declared **June 4 as Gun Violence Awareness Day** in North Carolina.
Thanks for tuning into our June Policy Digest! Be sure to join us and take action as we fight for safer communities all across the nation. Get plugged in [HERE](#).