



**Testimony of Kevin Borrup, Executive Director of the Injury Prevention Center
at Connecticut Children's
to the Appropriations Committee regarding
HB 6864, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2027, and
Making Appropriations Therefor.**

Friday, February 21, 2025

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the legislature's Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my support for the inclusion of Gun Violence Prevention funding in HB 6864, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2027, and Making Appropriations Therefor.

My name is Kevin Borrup, I serve as the Executive Director of the Injury Prevention Center at Connecticut Children's. Before commenting on this bill, I want to provide some background about our organization. Connecticut Children's is a nationally recognized, 205-bed not-for-profit children's health system driving innovation in pediatrics. With over 3,200 employees and more than 1,300 pediatric experts on our medical staff, we are the only health system in the state dedicated exclusively to the care of children. While we provide access to the most specialized pediatric care, we also know that only about 10% of children's overall health and wellbeing is determined by the access to and quality of the health care services they receive. For this reason, our Office for Community Child Health works to improve the wide variety of factors that influence a child's health, such as housing, transportation, food and nutrition, family support services, and community safety. Within the Office, the Injury Prevention Center's focus is to keep kids safe and injury free.

In 2023, the Connecticut Department of Public Health first began using allocated funds to support 8 community violence intervention programs. In 2024, they added a second round of funding to support 10 additional community violence intervention programs. These 18 programs support youth and adults around the state and I would like to take a moment to talk about the agencies and communities impacted. I am here today to talk about these programs because the Injury Prevention Center has worked over the last two years to coordinate the implementation of this support in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Public Health. As a result of having this role, I have come to know the good works of these programs. These programs that I will briefly describe are varied ranging from violence interruption work and supporting justice-involved people to school-based programs and programs that address basic needs and support the development of critical social-emotional skills.

Here in Hartford:

- Hartford Communities That Care is strengthening and expanding the network of violence prevention professionals in Connecticut through providing Violence Prevention Professional certification training and ongoing technical assistance.
- Brother Carl Hardrick Institute's Youth Empowerment Program supports high school students in Hartford with school-based mentoring, positive youth development programming, and building relationships with students' families.
- Roca uses grant funding to provide young women in Hartford – ages 14-24 who are at high risk of experiencing or participating in violence – with education engagement, employment readiness training, parenting and life skills programming, Cognitive Behavioral Theory, and intentional, transformative relationships with Outreach Workers.

- The City of Hartford's Office of Violence Prevention is conducting an environmental scan of community violence prevention and intervention services in Hartford, and creating a virtual resource guide and data dashboard to increase access to services for victims of violence.
- The Justice Education Center, in partnership with Community Renewal Team and Auerfarm, recently graduated their second cohort of Project Moo, an initiative that gives youth ages 9-14 from Hartford opportunities to develop resilience, empathy, and other social-emotional skills alongside their peers on a farm in Bloomfield, CT.
- Advancing Connecticut Together addresses community connectedness and mental well-being in Hartford by providing free yoga classes, mindfulness workshops, and conflict resolutions for Hartford residents.
- COMPASS Youth Collaborative uses funding to support a Crisis Specialist who meets with youth and young adult victims of gun violence while they are in the hospital to address their basic needs, ongoing wound care and mental health support once they are discharged, and connection to any other services they or their family might need in their healing journey.

In New Haven:

- CT Violence Intervention and Prevention (CTVIP) is implementing MakeHerSpace, an afterschool and summer program with 7th and 8th grade girls in New Haven most at risk for experiencing or using violence in their own lives. The program focuses on self-esteem, empowerment, and building concrete skills for future entrepreneurial endeavors.
- 4-CT partners with trust violence intervention programs in New Haven and Hartford to provide direct cash assistance to people affected by violence. Participants also receive case management and wraparound support services from 4-CT's partners.
- Urban Community Alliance is growing their services to youth and young adults, including through their Veterans Empowering Teens Through Service (VETTS) program. Participants in the program receive case management, pro-social activities, and other violence prevention services.
- Clifford Beers Community Care Center is using funding to expand violence prevention and prosocial recreational programming through Farnam House for youth and young adults in New Haven. These programs support youth and families on weekends and during school vacations, and seek to strengthen parent-child relationships and connect families to resources.
- Swords to Plowshares Northeast is using funding to expand the number of internships they offer to at-risk youth across the state. These internships include learning about gun violence and violence prevention, gaining practical skills such as blacksmithing (through turning gun parts into garden tools), and receiving support around basic needs.

In Bridgeport:

- LifeBridge Community Services is piloting a new program in Bridgeport high schools to train staff on trauma and the Community Resiliency Model, and to provide social-emotional learning programming and access to mental health services for high school students.
- Greater Bridgeport Area Prevention Program (GBAPP) has expanded their Teen Fathers Program to reach more young fathers, including many re-entering the Bridgeport community after being incarcerated; participants build parenting skills, receive comprehensive case management, and strengthen their familial relationships. GBAPP has also begun screening young dads for exposure to gun violence.
- Hang Time is using grant funding to expand their existing programs designed to prevent recidivism and youth crime in Bridgeport; Hang Time and Her Time are group peer-support programs to build community and re-integration skills among formerly-incarcerated people, and CHOICES is a mentorship program for high school athletes in violence-affected communities.
- Catalyst CT is expanding StreetSafe Bridgeport, their youth and community outreach and crisis response program. With this funding, StreetSafe Bridgeport is conducting more outreach, providing basic necessities and emergency relief to victims of violence and their families, and delivering trainings

on crisis response topics, including Narcan administration, QPR suicide prevention, and Stop the Bleed.

In New London and Stamford:

- Ledge Light Health District is using grant funding to support a Community Health Worker and a team of Community Ambassadors in New London who work with community members to reach their individual health goals, and who are learning more about the specific drivers of violence in New London. In addition to holding community conversations and circles in the wake of gunfire in neighborhoods, Ledge Light also offers regular Brothers Brunches, which give men space to talk about trauma, strengthen their parenting skills, and improve their interpersonal relationships.
- Stamford Police Department, in collaboration with Liberation Programs and Domus, is using grant funding to provide an anti-violence class and access to mentors for youth involved in the Police Activity League and the Juvenile Review Board.

While the State of Connecticut has wisely invested in this work, this support is now needed more than ever. In the last two years, Connecticut's major cities have seen a decline in shootings and firearm deaths. The credit for these results is shared by many from law enforcement and public health to social services. However, without continued support for these critical community services, we cannot expect to see continued reductions in firearm violence in the State. Without State support, many of these programs will simply be unable to continue.

As the Executive Director of the Injury Prevention Center at Connecticut Children's I wish to convey my strong support of the inclusion of Gun Violence Prevention funding in this bill. This funding will provide critical supports to people-serving agencies and organizations across the State and serve to support safety for everyone in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Christian Petersen, Connecticut Children's Government Relations Manager at cpetersen@connecticutchildrens.org.