

Gov. Pritzker Declares Gun Violence A Public Health Crisis, Pledges \$250 Million Investment For Hardest Hit Communities

November 1 2021 3:15 PM



CHICAGO – Joined by legislators, stakeholders, and community leaders, Governor JB Pritzker today declared gun violence a public health crisis and announced support for a \$250 million state investment over the next three years to implement the Reimagine Public Safety plan, a data-driven and community-based violence prevention initiative.

Stakeholders have been a driving force behind the plan to coordinate and maximize hundreds of millions of dollars in future funding. The state will begin issuing Notices of Funding Opportunities for qualified organizations before the end of 2021 with a goal of enabling work to be well underway before the summer of 2022.

“Every neighborhood and every home deserve to be free from violence, and the State of Illinois is making an unprecedented statewide investment in the pursuit of violence reduction through the Reimagine Public Safety Act,” said Governor JB Pritzker.

“Reimagine Public Safety is an evidence-based and data-driven approach focusing on violence prevention, youth development, and the provision of trauma-based services. And we are putting an unprecedented amount of dollars – \$250 million – on the ground to see it through.”

“There is no singular solution to ending violence in this state. We have to employ a multi-pronged approach based on equity and collaboration,” said Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton. “As head of the Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative and as a restorative justice practitioner, I’m proud that the Reimagine Public Safety Act embraces that approach. With this act, we are creating a comprehensive plan that will help us prevent violence in the first place by investing resources in historically overlooked communities and repairing the harm that perpetuates trauma that often leads to violence.”

“Government’s first duty is to center public safety by and for the people,” said State Senator Robert Peters (D-Chicago). “We must abandon the status quo because it continues to let us down and invest into the collective samaritan such as our Illinois communities and neighborhoods; and this plan will do just that. With this, we’re on a path away from decades of policies that have led us to this point, and towards providing vital, trauma informed services so no child, no parent, and no neighbor are left alone and isolated. This will be the beginning of creating and maintaining public safety for all and not a few.”

The new resources draw from federal and State funding, including \$50 million from the fiscal year 2022 state budget. The administration will work with members of the General Assembly on additional \$100 million appropriations in the budgets for fiscal years 2023 and 2024, building on the state’s existing anti-violence investments. The governor has more than doubled violence prevention funding since taking office, with

the state now appropriating \$507 million for violence prevention, diversion, and youth employment programs in FY22, including \$125 million in funds made available from the American Rescue Plan Act.

“As our communities look to resolve the issue of violence, it has become clear that we need to reimagine our approach to public safety,” said Rep. Justin Slaughter (D-Chicago). “While we need to continue supporting good law enforcement with all the resources they need, we also need to support the neighborhood organizations that are stepping forward to keep kids safe and de-escalate violent environments. The Reimagine Public Safety Act will accomplish this with real resources and action.”

The Reimagine Public Safety Act (RPSA), sponsored by Senator Robert Peters and Representative Justin Slaughter, establishes the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention (OFPV) to focus on reducing firearm violence in communities with the highest rates of gun violence.

“Law enforcement alone can never be the sole answer to reducing violence in our communities,” said Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. “Violence reduction and intervention are critical components to the modern public safety landscape as well as our holistic approach to combating crime. I commend our State partners for making this investment, which will help residents both in Chicago and across Illinois feel that much safer in the communities they call home.”

“History will judge each of us on what we are doing today to stop the violence and bloodshed,” said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. “This new violence prevention plan is the result of a great deal of collaboration and coordination between the State of Illinois, Cook County and the City of Chicago. I am grateful to everyone involved at all levels of government for their commitment to prioritize this work.”

“This is a bipartisan investment in our communities to stem the surge in violence,” said Senate President Don Harmon (D-Oak Park). “I’m proud of the work my colleagues did to put this vital initiative together so that we can make a difference.”

"This violence prevention plan is so much more than just the \$250 million in community-based grants," said House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch (D-Westchester). "It is an evidence-based model that relies on collaboration between state agencies, academic organizations and our local violence prevention groups who know their communities best to achieve meaningful and lasting change the people of our state deserve."

“As we work together to solve the root causes of violence, several on-the-ground organizations are doing the hard, life-risking work to actively disrupt conflict and put

people on a better pathway in life,” said House Majority Leader Greg Harris (D-Chicago). “That works requires time, effort and money, and I am glad the state is making these direct investments into the people who literally save lives day in and day out.”

“This measure is a bold response to the challenges our communities face,” said State Senator Elgie R. Sims, Jr. (D-Chicago). “When we talk about reimagining public safety, we are talking about ensuring communities, especially historically marginalized communities, have access to the resources needed to address critical social problems. Many people think of a police response when they hear public safety, but reimagining public safety requires more than that. This funding will help to better develop healthy partnerships between community members and advocates, police, government officials, and social service providers to critically tackle the violence that exists within our communities.”

Additionally, the Governor issued Executive Order 2021-29, declaring gun violence a public health crisis and launching a comprehensive, statewide approach to reducing gun violence and establishing the Reimagine program. The Executive Order requires relevant state agencies to work with the new Office of Firearm Violence Prevention (OFVP) to address the systemic causes of firearm violence and to develop trauma-informed and equity-based strategies.

The overall violence prevention approach includes four key elements:

- High-risk youth intervention programs that have been proven to reduce involvement in the criminal or juvenile justice system, referrals of teens into therapeutic programs that address trauma recovery and other mental health services.
- Violence prevention services, including street-based violence interruption work, emotional or trauma related therapy, housing, employment, job training/placement, family engagement, and wrap-around support services.
- Youth development programs, including after school and summer programming to increase school attendance and school performance, reduce criminal justice system involvement, and build social-emotional persistence and intelligence.
- Trauma recovery services for young people, funded by Medicaid, designed and implemented by the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, to address trauma recovery from chronic exposure to firearm violence. A team-based model of care will include case management and school support services, group and individual therapy, and evidence-based family systems interventions.

\$250 Million in Community-Based Grants

In the coming weeks, the OFVP will announce competitive funding opportunities for grants focused on technical assistance for violence prevention and youth development and intervention. Fifty million dollars in funding has been budgeted for the remainder of the state's fiscal year 22, and \$100 million for each of the subsequent two fiscal years will be requested.

ICJIA and IDHS have launched technical assistance and training opportunities for community organizations across the state to apply for funding that will help address factors that contribute to gun violence.

For information on available technical assistance and upcoming funding opportunities, visit the IDHS website at <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx>.

Office of Firearm Violence Prevention

Anti-violence funding will support the enactment of RPSA, which establishes the OFVP within the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to focus on reducing firearm deaths and injuries in communities with the most gun violence.

The office will be led by Chris Patterson, who was appointed by Governor Pritzker as Assistant Secretary for Violence Prevention at IDHS. Chris has been working and leading successful, grassroots firearm violence prevention efforts for more than a decade.

“The Governor’s Reimagine Safety Plan is the next step to address violence prevention across the state. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted Black and brown communities, and during this time firearm violence has also increased and is devastating these communities further. The Reimagine Plan will invest in these neighborhoods and regions to address the immediate and long-term causes of firearm violence,” said Grace B. Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services.

To develop sound recommendations on reducing incidents of gun violence, the OFVP is required to identify and work with violence prevention conveners in Chicago neighborhoods with the highest rates of violence. In areas outside of Chicago, the OFVP will form community advisory groups designed to lower firearm injuries and deaths.

Community-Based Violence Prevention and Intervention Action Plans

The Reimagine Plan aligns with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's (ICJIA) recently published violence prevention plan, a statewide effort structured on evidence-based strategies and practices and focused on measuring incidents of gun violence across the state and analyzing indicators that can predict acts of violence.

ICJIA's researchers laid out five areas of focus to guide future prevention efforts:

1. Stop the violence, promote safety;
2. Support children, youth, and families;
3. Advance equity;
4. Support health; and,
5. Promote collaboration across state, municipal, and community-based agencies.

The ICJIA violence prevention plan, the Reimagine Plan, and today's Executive Order build on existing state and federally funded youth jobs programs, career-training efforts, and the first of its kind Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) initiative. Through R3, ICJIA has devoted tens of millions of dollars of revenue from adult-use cannabis sales into equity and community-based programs across Illinois.

"ICJIA released the Statewide Violence Prevention Plan in September which supports the administration's goals of breaking the cycles of violence caused by years of failed criminal justice policies and economic disinvestment in Black and Brown communities," said Acting ICJIA Executive Director Delrice Adams. "Developed in collaboration with over 130 community violence prevention stakeholders and seven state agencies, the plan aligns with the Reimagine Public Safety Act by providing a coordinated strategy to reduce gun violence across the state."

Executive Order 2021-29

Governor Pritzker issued Executive Order 2021-29 to support IDHS in its implementation of the RPSA, a critical component of the violence prevention plan. The newly formed OFVP, established by the act, will coordinate with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), ICJIA, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), and other relevant state agencies to establish a public health approach to reducing gun violence.

"Because gun violence is one of the leading causes of premature death in Illinois and the United States, it is a critical public health issue," said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. "Last year, approximately 1 of every 3 deaths in Illinois among those aged 15-24 years

involved a gun. While gun violence affects people of all ages and races, it has a disproportionate impact on young adults, males, and racial/ethnic minorities. We must all work together to identify the roots of gun violence and what role each of us play in ending it. Gun violence is not inevitable; it is preventable.”

“Firearm violence is devastating to communities and individuals long after acts of violence occur,” Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Director Theresa Eagleson said. “Offering trauma recovery services with individual case management and therapy to young people who have been continuously exposed to violence is an essential step in the healing process and is in line with the Department’s efforts to address the social determinants of health.”

RPSA requires HFS to submit a State Plan Amendment to Illinois’ Medicaid program that could result in federal matching reimbursement for some of these services.

Further advancing the Pritzker administration’s work to reduce violence across the state, last month the Illinois State Police (ISP) announced a significant increase in its gun license revocation efforts as part of its larger work to rebuild the Firearms Services Bureau with a focus on public safety.

Since 2019, ISP’s Division of Criminal Investigation has conducted more than 450 firearms enforcement details, with over 1,300 prohibited persons brought into compliance and over 10,000 firearms dispositions accounted for.

“Chicago needs real solutions to the violence and health disparities that plague our communities. The state’s response will provide much needed support and resources to people who will benefit the most,” said Yolanda Fields, Executive Director of Breakthrough Urban Ministries.

“Little Village, like the rest of Chicago, has seen unsurmountable levels of violence these last two years. The comprehensive nature of the Reimagine Public Safety Act means a significant new investment in youth development, behavioral health, street outreach, and all the elements we believe contribute to meaningful change,” said Katya Nuques, Executive Director of Enlace Chicago. “Enlace Chicago as a member of CP4P is super excited about the collaborative efforts that led us to this exciting moment!”

“The Governor’s Reimagine Plan gets it right by honoring the voices and activism of so many who have been on the front lines of this issue for decades. It goes beyond any comprehensive efforts to address gun violence in Illinois by recognizing the historical trauma, institutional failures and persistent gross inequalities that have fueled gun

violence in our state must be addressed holistically alongside sustained community-led efforts and programming that are truly healing and unapologetically reparative,” said Rami Nashashibi, CEO of IMAN.

“We applaud the Pritzker administration for its commitment to address the most pressing public health challenge we face, gun violence,” said Vaughn Bryant, Executive Director of Metropolitan Peace Initiatives. “Our CP4P collaborative along with many others, look forward to working with the new Office of Firearm Violence Prevention to support local organizations serving citizens living in our most vulnerable communities.”

To view the executive order, click [here](#). More information about the Violence Prevention Plan is available on ICJIA’s [website](#).