

# **Durbin Delivers Opening Statement During Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing On Gun Violence As A Public Health Crisis**

November 28 2023 10:35 AM



WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, today delivered an opening statement during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing entitled “The Gun Violence Epidemic: A Public Health Crisis.” The hearing features expert testimony on gun violence as a crucial public health issue and specific public health initiatives that have recently shown promise in reducing gun violence, such as Chair Durbin’s [Chicago HEAL Initiative](#). In 2022, there were more than 48,000 firearm-related deaths in the United States. More than half of firearm-

related deaths were suicides, and more than four out of every 10 were homicides. Guns are now the number one cause of death for American kids and teens.

The hearing continues Durbin's and the Committee's efforts to curb the gun violence epidemic. Last summer, the Senate [passed](#) and President Biden signed into law the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*, the most significant gun violence prevention reform in nearly three decades. Since, Durbin held a full committee [hearing](#) on public safety and gun safety laws in a post-*Bruen* America, [filed](#) an amicus brief in opposition to legal challenges in *U.S. v. Rahimi*, and introduced [legislation](#) to curb firearms trafficking enabled by weak American gun laws, among other efforts.

### Key Quotes:

“Today, the Committee will hear from public health experts who have been on the frontlines of the gun violence epidemic. They understand the pain of a loved one whose family member has been taken away too soon by the pull of a trigger and they have seen the aftermath of bullets tearing through bone like it's tissue paper.”

“Chicago faces the same challenges as many other cities and towns. In fact, many rural areas have even higher rates of gun violence than the urban areas that are often highlighted on the news. Across the country, gun violence is a public health epidemic, plain and simple.”

“Collecting data, identifying trends, developing strategies to prevent harm, reducing risk, and sharing these practices—this is how we combat an epidemic. It's worked in the past. We used the same public health approach to dramatically cut automobile fatalities—we still drive where we need to go, but we have seat belts and speed limits that get us there alive. Public health experts are already working to address gun violence in real-time.”

“In Chicago, I heard from doctors who were sick of treating gunshot victims on the operating table—they wanted to prevent the gruesome injuries from happening in the first place. So, in 2018, I brought together the CEOs of the 10 largest hospitals serving Chicago to understand what they were doing in the neighborhoods surrounding their hospitals and how we could do more.”

“We formed the Chicago HEAL Initiative, which has emerged as a national exemplar of how hospitals can collaborate and reach outside their walls to prevent gun violence. These hospitals have increased local hiring by 84 percent in the past four years. They've opened 24 school-based health clinics to serve 11,000 students and are training nearly 4,000 local students for careers in health care.”

“Most importantly, these hospitals aren’t just stitching up physical injuries, they are addressing the emotional scars of their patients. Through counseling and case management to prevent retaliation and promote successful recovery, just two percent of over 8,000 participating patients at the University of Chicago have returned to the hospital. Without these programs, 45 percent of patients with a gunshot wound are likely to return within five years with another one.”

“Similar steps are underway across the country to use this strategy, which is known as community violence intervention, or CVI. CVI uses trusted community figures to engage with individuals at high risk of perpetrating or being victims of violence. They work to interrupt acts of violence before they happen and connect people with treatment and tools that decrease the risk of future violence.”

“It’s time for us to build on the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*—and ongoing efforts that are working in red and blue states—and join together to create real change for the American people when it comes to the public health crisis of gun violence.”

Video of Durbin’s opening statement is available [here](#).

Audio of Durbin’s opening statement is available [here](#).