

Hello my name is Barry Graubart and I am the Deputy Chapter Leader for the New York Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. I urge you to include S1049, Sen. Myrie's Community Violence Intervention Program Act in the FY 2022 budget.

We know that in New York, gun homicides disproportionately impact Black and brown families living in neighborhoods shaped by long-term underinvestment. Adequate funding is essential to providing robust, sustainable services to victims of gun violence. Local community-based organizations have been delivering these critical services for years, healing families and communities while preventing future gun violence. However, these local organizations are often under-resourced and require additional funding to expand and sustain their positive impact.

Federal VOCA funds are allocated to states, specifically to fund service providers that support victims of crime. Yet New York, like many other states, fails to utilize these funds effectively to support victims of gun violence, creating a widening gap between community needs and resources. There are multiple reasons for this gap.

VOCA funds are often granted to criminal justice agencies or agencies with close associations to the criminal justice system. This can be a barrier for victims seeking to access services. Nationally, victims who report the crime to the police receive services at a rate of 3 times that of those who do not.<sup>1</sup> In Black and brown neighborhoods, criminal justice agencies are often not the best channel to reach victims of gun violence.

Funding community-based organizations is the best way to increase access to services. Community-based organizations are small, often founded by a gun violence survivor and staffed only by volunteers. These organizations operate on a shoe-string budget and could increase their service provision and impact through increased funding.

A few things that we know about access to victims services:

On average, only 9% of victims of serious violent crimes receive assistance from a victim services agency<sup>2</sup>. Victims of serious intimate partner violence are 3 times more likely than those who were victimized by someone who they were not intimately involved with to receive services. Rural residents are more likely to receive services than those in urban areas.<sup>3</sup> In our Black and brown communities, we know that crime victims are less likely to report their crimes to police. As a result, we know that a large percentage of victims of serious crimes in these neighborhoods are not receiving the services they require. Instead, a patchwork of small community-based organizations try to fill the gaps where they can, but it's clearly not enough.

And what's the cost to this failure?

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn Langton, "Use of Victim Service Agencies by Victims of Serious Violent Crime, 1993-2009," (Bureau of Justice Statistics, August 2011), <https://bit.ly/2T0ulZk>.

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<sup>3</sup> Lynn Langton, "Use of Victim Service Agencies by Victims of Serious Violent Crime, 1993-2009," (Bureau of Justice Statistics, August 2011), <https://bit.ly/2T0ulZk>.

The data show that providing these services to victims of violent crimes ultimately serve to interrupt cycles of violence in communities. When an individual is victimized by or exposed to violence, the likelihood that they will be victimized again, resort to carrying a gun, or engage in retaliatory gun violence increases.<sup>4</sup> Studies show that individuals who have been shot or know someone who was shot, are more likely to report using a weapon on someone or threatening someone with a weapon than individuals who have no history of victimization.<sup>5</sup>

Using VOCA funds to resource community-based services to gun violence victims allow us to interrupt these cycles of violence, through violence interruption and street outreach programs. Moreover, providing key services to victims of gun violence, such as mental health care, legal advocacy and case management, enables victims, their families, and community to heal.<sup>6</sup>

And when we measure the cost in dollars, the return on investment is quite clear. Gun violence costs New York an estimated \$5.9 Billion per year, with more than \$300 million of that borne by taxpayers.<sup>7</sup> Tapping into VOCA funds to support gun violence victims, will make New Yorkers safer, while saving money.

In conclusion, VOCA victim assistance grants are a plentiful and largely untapped funding source for gun violence victim services, including hospital-based violence intervention programs, street outreach programs, and trauma recovery centers. States, cities, and community-based organizations have unique opportunities to drive VOCA victim assistance funding to these and other gun violence victim services. New York has struggled to utilize these funds due to unnecessary constraints which make it harder for community-based groups to participate. The CVIP bill, S1049 is an important step towards removing those constraints and delivering on the vision for gun violence prevention that we all strive for.

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<sup>4</sup> Melissa Tracy, Anthony A. Braga, and Andrew V. Papachristos, "The Transmission of Gun and Other Weapon-involved Violence within Social Networks," *Epidemiologic Reviews* 38, no. 1 (January 2016): 70-86; Ben Green, Thibaut Horel, and Andrew V. Papachristos, "Modeling Contagion through Social Networks to Explain and Predict Gunshot Violence in Chicago, 2006 to 2014," *JAMA Internal Medicine* 177, no. 3 (March 2017): 326-333.

<sup>5</sup> Melissa Tracy, Anthony A. Braga, and Andrew V. Papachristos, "The Transmission of Gun and Other Weapon-involved Violence within Social Networks," *Epidemiologic Reviews* 38, no. 1 (January 2016): 70-86

<sup>6</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, "A Fund for Healing: VOCA Grants for Violence Reduction," January 29, 2020, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/voca/>.

<sup>7</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, "EveryStat: New York," <https://maps.everytownresearch.org/everystat#NewYork>.