

# GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN



## Full Policy

### The Issue

A teddy bear. Cartoon characters. These are the symbols of a joy-filled childhood. For Davell Gardiner Jr. they were the symbols of a family and city traumatized. On July 12, 2020, at the age of one, Davell's future was stolen by a stray bullet on a central Brooklyn playground. On October 22, 2020, Shyhiem McLean, a twenty-two year old Bed-Stuy resident, was shot twice in the chest while in a bodega at 4:30 in the afternoon just steps from his home. The family has not only spoken out about Shyhiem's death, it has sounded the alarm and mounted public demands for a real response to one of the two interrelated health crises that face New Yorkers: COVID-19 and gun violence. COVID-19 has hit this city hard. Yet, Black, Latino and many Asian and Native American people and communities have been hit hardest thanks to the cost of housing that drives over-crowding and the fact that residents of these communities are far more likely to be essential workers and have pre-existing conditions. They have also been hardest hit economically, losing jobs hours and wages, driving stress, trauma and hunger. Black and Latino New Yorkers experienced two to three times the rate of COVID related deaths and hardest hit with respect to unemployment, hunger and eviction. Families of gun violence victims have called for investments in their communities to treat the underlying conditions that produce this particular pandemic. The family of Shyhiem McLean have called for investments in education, jobs and trauma-informed services. Their demands are reinforced by the research. Recent research has shown that gun violence is driven by a lack of social mobility, also called "the social determinants of health." Now, and unsurprisingly, gun violence is at an estimated 5-year high. Gun violence is a problem the city must face even though it is not a problem impacting every neighborhood equally. The neighborhoods struggling most are Bed Stuy, The Southwest Bronx (Concourse, Highbridge), Mott Haven/Port Morris, East New York/Cypress Hills, East Flatbush and that is precisely because they have the greatest economic pain from COVID and the least social mobility. We must recognize gun violence for what it is, a public health crisis built on the failure to address racial inequity. This means we can fix what ails us. We have innovative and effective violence interruption programs in communities. And we have other community-based services providers, community and faith leaders and engaged residents who have experience, relationships, ideas and know-how. Families of gun violence victims have found ways to invest in solutions. In addition to the family of Shyhiem McLean, for example, the family of Melquain Jatelle

Anderson, gunned down at a Brooklyn bus stop in 2017, formed a foundation to mentor young people, provide a scholarship for young people impacted by gun violence and other civic work. We must pull that know-how together and support its effectiveness. We can meet the moment with a holistic, innovative, multi-pronged, neighborhood-driven approach that addresses the underlying drivers of gun violence by investing in community well-being, power and social mobility while building trust among communities and individuals most affected. We must invite residents of impacted communities to participate in the development of solutions that work. We must commit to democratic, community-based participation in developing and implementing gun violence solutions—including an examination of what initiatives and innovations are working as well as what additional investments, strategies and partnerships will contribute to a meaningful change in the conditions that drive gun violence. Therefore, we must:

- Empower and support communities who have been directly impacted to point to innovative and targeted solutions to gun violence that reflect their local conditions and experiences;
- Recognize that gun violence is linked to a lack of educational and employment opportunities and increase access to these opportunities;
- Launch and expand evidence-based therapeutic supportive programs to reduce gun violence;
- Commit to real and effective public safety efforts that get guns off the streets.

## The Stakes

While overall crime rates in NYC have dropped slightly during the pandemic, the number of shootings has noticeably increased in 2020. As of October 11, the number of people hit by bullets has nearly doubled compared to the same period as last year, while the number of killings has reached 354, up 90 compared to the same period last year. This summer was one of the most violent in recent memory, with statistics indicating over 242 shootings occurred in the month of August alone, and almost 800 in the summer period from Memorial Day to Labor Day. While mass shootings garner the most public attention, gun violence happens every day in communities in New York City. These pockets of violence threaten the safety, health, and economies of impacted communities.

## A Plan to End Gun Violence

As Mayor, Maya Wiley will launch a layered, multi-faceted gun violence reduction plan: **1. Empower and Support Impacted Communities to Create Innovative Solutions to Gun Violence** People are experts in their own experiences, and no one knows the needs of a community better than that community. We must leverage the expertise and knowledge of impacted communities that have experienced and continue to experience gun violence on how to prevent this violence, how to address the trauma that arises from it, and how to build strong and resilient communities. It also ensures that the City leverages what exists in different neighborhoods and builds from the bottom up. In order to elevate this community-based expertise and these solutions, we will:

- Lead the nation in establishing a Participatory Justice Fund so those closest to the problem can identify and implement innovative solutions to reduce gun violence by investing in existing and impactful community based work, as well as identifying and supporting additional solutions needed. We will create an \$18 million participatory justice process in communities struggling to stem gun violence. Akin to participatory budgeting, the participatory justice fund would allocate funds to communities identified by their rates of gun violence and support a democratic process to support existing and new programs that have proven track records or promising evaluation. This process will also allow impacted communities to identify and develop proposals to reduce gun violence—transforming potential perpetrators into community investors and shareholders of public safety. These proposals may include efforts that have had success including partnering with on-the-ground leaders to negotiate shooting truce/ceasefires, coordinating existing city resources to provide job training and relocation.
- This fund will be established with money redirected from the NYPD budget.

**2. Guarantee meaningful employment opportunities particularly for those at highest risk to be involved in gun violence.** Gun violence doesn't happen in a vacuum. New York City has the toughest gun laws of any in the country. Illegal guns still make it into the city thanks to a failure of federal gun reform measures. But research shows that gun violence is also a function of economic insecurity and distress in communities. This is particularly troubling as the COVID-19 pandemic induced economic crisis deepens, creating record unemployment, forcing businesses to shutter and creating an eviction crisis as so many residents can't keep up with rent payments. In order to address gun violence, we need a jobs plan. In the coming months, I will be introducing proposals aimed at getting New Yorkers back to work at good, well-paying and stable jobs. In order to address this issue for young people most at risk for gun violence, I will:

- **Create and expand priority placements for youth and young adults at risk in communities experiencing high rates of gun violence in existing workforce development and education programs.** An expert panel, working through the NYCETC suggested multiple reforms to produce more equity in jobs, education and training opportunities in it's report, [Recovery For All](#). Based on that report, we will leverage existing programs in a way targeted to the problem. This will include doubling the number of slots allocated to youth at risk of involvement with violence in the Summer Youth Employment Program, resulting in 10,000 slots designated for young people at highest risk of being involved in gun violence. We will ensure local outreach and referral networks and leverage the participatory justice initiative to better align with community-based strategies.

### **3. Expand Evidence-Based Public Health Violence Reduction Models**

- **Employ proven approaches** that marry the best evidence-based models with insights from practitioners in the field and people with lived experience to deliver effective strength-based therapeutic supports and connections to community resources for adults as well as middle school and high school aged youth and their families at heightened risk

of future justice system involvement or victimization. These models have been shown to reduce violent reoffending by 50%:

1. Matching programs to individuals with the highest risk and need
  2. Ensuring credible, trusted outreach staff from affected communities are responsible for program recruitment and provision;
  3. Programming includes well-implemented trauma-informed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and intensive mentorship;
  4. Programming includes stipend and/or other incentives such as trips, outings and cultural events;
  5. Excellence and 'relentless' outreach using motivational interviewing;
  6. Place-based programs operate in neighborhoods with investments in strong community networks and neighborhood nonprofits
- **Expand community-based violence interruption and hospital based violence interruption** (HVIP) to public health facilities with the largest share of assault and gunshot wound patients, targeting and interrupting cycles of violence and retaliation with shooting victims in the hospital and post-discharge when they are at their most vulnerable, allowing deeper engagement with mentors and credible messengers. Currently NYC has four HVIPs, at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, at Jacobi Hospital and Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx and at Harlem Hospital in Manhattan.

**We will pay for these expansions** through a combination of redirection of budget from NYPD and/or Department of Corrections; and savings from reduction in significant public hospital shooting costs; and funds from asset forfeiture. **4. Commit to Community Focused Public Safety Efforts** We cannot meaningfully talk about reducing and addressing gun violence until we grapple with the tragic conundrum that many times, especially in Black and Brown communities and especially among folks with disabilities, the only recourse people are given to respond to incidents of gun violence are police officers who too often make them less safe. We cannot watch another video of police killing an unarmed Black person. We cannot watch as police fail to deescalate a situation and it results in an unnecessary death. We cannot continue to watch state-sponsored violence and look to those same avenues for protection from violent crime. In order to prevent gun violence, we need to return the public back to public safety and commit to actions that genuinely keep people safe in our communities and in our schools and hold officers who abuse their power accountable, while focusing police resources in appropriate areas, like keeping guns out of our communities to begin with. We need to fix policing in this city, and we will soon be releasing my full policing plan, which will address this among many other issues. In order to ensure public safety efforts that prevent rather than exacerbate gun violence, we will:

- **Reform school safety efforts to be a holistic commitment to supporting the well-being of students rather than punitive and reactive measures.** School safety should be about creating a safe and healthy environment for students to thrive and for the school to be a safe environment for all who enter. Now that this function is moving to DOE, we have an opportunity to recenter it around a holistic approach to safety instead of an overreliance on discipline and police intervention. We will create student support teams that help identify students at risk who need support to manage trauma, bullying,

difficulties at home, learning differences and other conditions that can produce inappropriate and dangerous behaviors. We will expand school guidance counselors and social workers so that every school has these capacities on student support teams, along with teachers, administrators and School Safety Agents, whose position descriptions, training and role will be appropriate to a student support model. Behavioral issues will no longer be treated solely as problems to be resolved by School Safety Agents. This will create improved learning outcomes, reduce student-police conflict in schools and create safer and healthier school communities.

- **Launch Citywide Safe Corridors.** A disproportionate number of youth arrests – for fights and robberies in particular – occur in the hours right before and after school when youth are largely unsupervised (and in some places gathering in large numbers). Through the program, CBOs staff street routes from mass transport to high-need schools to provide an extra level of community/adult supervision and guidance focusing on potential hotspots for violence.
- **Expand Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) programs in schools.** CBT programs are not widely available in NYC DOE schools and programs despite the fact that they have been shown to reduce violent-crime arrests among youth by nearly 50% and boosted the high school graduation rates of participants by nearly 20%. DBT programs are specifically for students who have experienced trauma, and many students are not ready for CBT without first receiving DBT. We must increase access to these and other programs shown to be effective at encouraging mental health and reducing instances of gun violence.