April 12, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Murray and Baldwin, and Ranking Members Collins and Capito:

As public health and health-based organizations committed to ensuring that all communities are free from violence, and as safe and healthy as possible, we strongly urge you to include $268 million—with $250 million dedicated to the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Initiative—for Community and Youth Violence Prevention through the Division of Violence Prevention (DVP) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the FY 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This critical investment would allow the CDC to support actionable, proven community-driven public health strategies that can prevent and reduce violence in communities facing the highest burden of violence.

While all communities experience the long-lasting effects of violence on physical and mental health, and social wellbeing, communities of color are disproportionately impacted by community violence, including gun violence. According to recent analysis from the CDC, while the firearm homicide rate increased by 8.3% between 2020 and 2021—with rates highest for persons 25-44 across all racial and ethnic groups—non-Hispanic Black or African American persons continued to suffer from the highest firearm homicide rates in every age group.

Importantly, community violence is preventable, not inevitable, when we invest in a robust public health approach. Communities can be made safer by implementing policies and practices that address the root causes of violence through a public health approach. This approach relies on local community data to develop comprehensive strategies that are designed to contribute to community safety while decreasing and eliminating the risk factors for violence. It is also highly collaborative and driven by local needs, bringing together community members most impacted by violence with different sectors—including health care, public health, schools, parks, housing, law enforcement, social services, local businesses, faith-based institutions, and others—to collectively implement strategies based on the priorities and needs of each community.
Treating violence as a public health issue must include resourcing the CDC to build on their 20 years of evidence-based violence prevention efforts. Our recommended investment of $268 million for Community and Youth Violence Prevention, which includes a dedicated CVI investment, is an opportunity to begin to do just that. These funds will support the implementation and scale up of existing community violence prevention and intervention efforts. Funded communities will be able to select strategies based on their needs and priorities, including but not limited to hospital-based interventions and street outreach, which have already been shown to have positive impacts. For example, hospital-based violence prevention programs have shown promise in reducing the risk for violence among youth by reaching them during a “teachable moment.” CDC has a long history of partnering effectively with the health care sector and is therefore uniquely positioned to house and fund hospital-based violence intervention activities and research.

These funds also allow CDC to support selected communities by funding community-based organizations that have expertise in partnering with those most impacted by violence to provide training and technical assistance. These funds will allow CDC to expand on its strong track record of applying data to inform action through increased research and evaluation activities and enhanced data collection, to further build the evidence base for preventing violence in communities experiencing the greatest burden of violence.

We recognize and appreciate that Congress increased the CDC’s Community and Youth Violence Prevention funding line to $18.1 million (including $3 million for CVI) in the FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act while having previously created a dedicated program within the Department of Justice to support CVI programs through the FY 2022 Consolidated Appropriations Act. While these investments are critical, they are not sufficient to move the needle in communities most impacted by violence and they do not yet constitute the full elements of a public health approach. By increasing the resources available through the CDC—including resources dedicated to CVI—we can more fully reap the benefits of a public health approach to community safety and violence prevention.

Everyone deserves a safe community where they can live, work, learn, and play without fear of violence or harm toward themselves and their loved ones. Public health strategies for preventing violence are achievable and necessary for all of us to flourish. The undersigned groups strongly urge you to prioritize $268 million for Community and Youth Violence Prevention—including a dedicated CVI Initiative—at the CDC as part of FY 2024 appropriations.

Please contact Sana Chehimi, Prevention Institute at sana@preventioninstitute.org or 510-681-3534 with any questions.

Sincerely,

AFT Nurses and Health Professionals
Alliance for Gun Responsibility
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention
Urban Community Network
ValorUS®
Where Do We Go From Here Inc
YMCA of the USA