

# INVESTING IN EFFECTIVE VIOLENCE INTERVENTION INITIATIVES IN CALIFORNIA

Cities in California have implemented some of the nation's most innovative and effective initiatives to break cycles of violence, trauma, and retaliation in their communities. But thus far, the State of California has provided only minimal funding to support and expand this lifesaving work. This year, a broad coalition of advocacy organizations, community and faith leaders, and public officials is calling on state lawmakers to make California the nation's leader in investing in effective violence intervention initiatives.

**Budget Request:** We are urging California's lawmakers to allocate at least \$39 million per year for at least three years for the California Violence Intervention and Prevention (CalVIP) competitive grant program, including \$2 million annually for rigorous and independent evaluations of CalVIP-funded programs.

## THE CALIFORNIA VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION (CALVIP) GRANT

The CalVIP grant program provides competitive grants to cities and nonprofit organizations that implement evidence-based violence reduction initiatives in impacted communities. It has helped to fund highly successful, data-driven intervention initiatives, including:

- Operation Ceasefire in Oakland (52% reduction in shootings since 2012);
- The Advance Peace strategy in Richmond (66% reduction in shootings causing injury or death since 2010) and Stockton (40% reduction in homicides and 31% reduction in nonfatal shootings since 2017); and
- The Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Initiative in Los Angeles (credited with preventing hundreds of retaliatory shootings and saving taxpayers tens of millions in costs per year)

## THE CALIFORNIA VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION (CALVIP) GRANT

This program is supporting highly effective, lifesaving work. But its funding is woefully inadequate to meet our communities' needs—frozen at \$9 million annually since 2007. This amount pales in comparison to gun violence's enormous human, moral, and fiscal toll in our state. Nearly 9,000 Californians are shot per year and city and state taxpayers pay an estimated \$1.4 billion annually in direct costs for law enforcement, health care, and similar expenses in response to these tragedies.

### UNMET NEED

In the most recent grant cycle, BSCC received CalVIP grant applications from over 120 cities and community-based organizations, but distributed its \$9.215 million appropriation in small grants to fewer than 20 applicants stretched over a two-year period. Due to limited funding and low caps on CalVIP awards, no applicant could receive more than \$250,000 per year for violence prevention.

### OTHER STATES' SUCCESS

The states that have achieved the most significant reductions in violence in recent years, New York and Massachusetts, have taken meaningful action

on gun safety reform and committed significant new ongoing funding to violence intervention programs. Both states' residents are now less than half as likely to be murdered with a gun than Californians are. Evaluations of Massachusetts's program also estimated that taxpayers saved up to \$7 for every dollar spent on violence prevention. California should learn from these states' successes.

### MATCHING OTHER STATES' INVESTMENT

Massachusetts is spending more than twice as much as California on violence intervention initiatives for a state with 1/6th as many people and 1/14th as many shootings. While a \$39 million appropriation for CalVIP would not match Massachusetts's enormous per capita investment (that would require well over \$100 million in California), this amount would approximately match New York, which has cut its gun murder rate by a remarkable 41% since 2010. This would represent the largest investment in raw dollars any state has made in violence prevention to date, and would make a clear statement about California's leading role in treating violence as a preventable public health and safety issue.

**Conclusion:** A \$39 million appropriation for CalVIP would allow California to help meaningfully expand and replicate effective violence reduction strategies in more communities across our state, while also funding rigorous evaluations of CalVIP-funded programs to establish best practices. This funding is critical for California to achieve the sort of transformative progress others states have made against gun violence within the last decade—progress that has kept thousands of families and communities safer, healthy, and whole.

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For 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence. Led by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, Giffords Law Center is on a mission to educate Americans about gun safety, advance lifesaving legislation, and hold the gun lobby accountable.

**[giffordslawcenter.org](http://giffordslawcenter.org)**

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