

House Committee on Oversight and Reform
The Urgent Need to Address the Gun Violence Epidemic
2154 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC

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Written Testimony

Thank you to Chair Maloney, Ranking Member Comer and the members of the Committee for inviting me to testify at this important hearing. My name is Greg Jackson, Jr., Executive Director of the Community Justice Action Fund (Community Justice), the only national gun violence prevention advocacy organization led by a gun violence survivor of color.

I am here not by choice, but by circumstance. In 2013, I was shot as a bystander while walking home and my life was changed forever. The bullet ruptured two arteries and I nearly bled to death.

When I arrived at the hospital that night, I wasn't met with nurses or doctors, I was met with detectives who interrogated me as a suspect, instead of a patient.

When I met my surgeon, I had lost so much blood that I only had minutes to live.

I went through six surgeries, was hospitalized for 21 days and spent six months in therapy learning how to walk again.

I'm one of the lucky ones. [Every year, more than 110,000 Americans are shot and over 40,000 killed](#) [1]-- that means nearly a million people have been shot since I was.

Most of their stories, like mine, don't make headlines, but they traumatize families and communities forever.

There are countless stories from right here in D.C.

Makiyah Wilson, a 10 year old girl, was gunned down less than two miles from this chamber as she was getting ice cream.

11 year old Karon Brown was killed days after hosting a community event to end gun violence.

Pamela Thomas, who was so concerned with violence that she wrote her own eulogy, was killed by a stray bullet.

Every day, 110 Americans are killed with guns and over 200 are shot and wounded. [2]

[Gun violence is now the leading cause of death](#) for children and teens in the United States, surpassing car accidents, drug overdoses, and COVID-19. [3]

Amid the global pandemic, [homicides by gun increased 35 percent](#) [4]. Today, gun violence **remains** the leading cause of premature death for Black men, as well as the number two cause of premature death for Latino men and Black women. [5]

We are here because we can not — and **must** not — hide from the harsh truth: Gun violence is ravaging communities around the country, and every day, families experience first-hand the devastation gunfire brings.

To eliminate gun violence in America, we must swiftly recognize that this is a public health crisis and deliver a public health response.

At Community Justice, we address gun violence by focusing on the communities most impacted by it.

We urge greater investment in evidence-based community violence intervention and prevention strategies that support victims of violence, reduce risk factors and take people-centered approaches to reduce violence in our communities. We also strongly urge that any supply side approaches to reduce violence address not just the shooter, but also the source or supplier of the gun.

In moments of crisis, Congress has proven as determined and resilient as the American people. When we put our minds to it, there's nothing we can't do.

When the Coronavirus struck America, Congress authorized bipartisan legislation to provide resources and implement regulations and policy changes to save lives.

When Ukraine was in crisis, Congress sprang into action and mobilized a bipartisan authorization of immediate humanitarian aid, economic investments, mental health counseling and other services to meaningfully support Ukrainian communities.

On these issues and many more, Democrats and Republicans have come together to address the biggest challenges we face to save lives and keep us safe.

Each time, we did the *hard* thing because it was the *right* thing to do. This crisis is no different.

Our most vulnerable communities are being destroyed by gun violence. Taking away grandparents in Buffalo. Elementary kids in Uvalde. Fathers in D.C. Mothers in Atlanta. Nephews in Chicago. Nieces in Boulder. Aunts in Las Vegas. Pastors in Charleston. This crisis is taking lives and ravaging communities in every corner of our country.

Now is the time again to do the hard thing and take action to save lives, not political careers.

I am asking this committee and chamber to change the trajectory of gun violence in America by doing the following:

- First, acknowledge gun violence as a public health crisis and craft policies to combat it;
- Second, advance common sense legislation that promotes community-based solutions to end gun violence, such as Congressman Horsford's Break the Cycle of Violence Act (H.R. 4118) and the inclusion of community violence intervention programs in the FY23 appropriations bill. In addition, we ask the committee to urge the Senate to pass Congressman Ruppberger's Bipartisan Solution to Cyclical Violence Act, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act which contains Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester's amendment to provide youth in communities disproportionately affected by gun violence to programs to help them get connected to in-demand occupations.
- Last, create a Select Committee on the Gun Violence Crisis to investigate the health impacts of gun violence and its disproportionate impact on Black and brown communities across the country.

I am also submitting into the record copies of policy papers and evidence showcasing the effectiveness of several violence intervention strategies.

Now is the time to take action.

Before another person takes their last breath.

Before another child opens his last textbook.

Before another parent hugs their child for the last time.

Before someone like me isn't alive anymore to ask you to do so.

I look forward to answering your questions today. Thank you.

[1] Brady Key Statistics - <https://www.bradyunited.org/key-statistics>

[2] CDC Underlying Cause of Death Report, 1999-2020
<https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D76.jsessionid=3D13A12C941Co66443D77D1333EC>

[3] CDC Underlying Cause of Death Report, 1999-2020
<https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D76.jsessionid=3D13A12C941Co66443D77D1333EC>

[4] *Vital Signs*: Changes in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates — United States, 2019–2020 - May 13, 2022 <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/firearm-deaths/index.html>

[5] CDC Underlying Cause of Death Report, 1999-2020
<https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D76.jsessionid=3D13A12C941Co66443D77D1333EC>