

Testimony of Gregory Jackson, Jr.

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“Oversight of the District of Columbia” Hearing

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Thank you Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Garcia, and members of the committee for inviting me to be part of this important hearing. I am Greg Jackson, a D.C. resident, survivor of gun violence here in the District, and a former Deputy Director of the first-ever White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention. The office that coordinated federal resources, implemented life saving policies and coordinated with both state and local leaders to reach a nationwide reduction in violent crime by 13.2% and homicides by 31%.¹

I've spent the last decade of my life working to address gun violence, which we know is destroying countless families and communities across the country. From teens at a cookout in Baltimore, MD to bowlers in Lewiston, ME, gun violence has become the leading cause of death for youth² and pregnant women³ in our country, as well as the leading cause of death and disability for Black men and boys⁴.

These disturbing statistics are overwhelming. But these are more than just numbers. For me, it means nearly dying from a gunshot that hit two arteries, losing my teenage mentee DeMarcos who was shot on his front porch, and mourning with countless families suffering loss of their loved ones.

The encouraging news is that we know what works. In the previous two years before the current Trump administration took office, D.C. and major cities across the country saw historic reductions in gun violence without the deployment of the military. We did this by investing in the communities most at risk and keeping illegal guns from pouring into our streets.

The United States is witnessing historic low levels of violent crime today, but this is the result of increased federal investment in violence prevention strategies and transformative policies implemented years ago.

Without masked federal agents or troop deployments, we saw homicides drop:

- 54% in Baltimore;
- 38% in Chicago;
- 20% in Atlanta;
- 41% in Phoenix;
- 27% in Los Angeles; and
- In countless other cities.

¹ <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2023-crime-in-the-nation-statistics> and <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2024-reported-crimes-in-the-nation-statistics>

² <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2024/guns-remain-leading-cause-of-death-for-children-and-teens>

³ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9134264/> and

⁴ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11189861/>

- And, by the beginning of this year, violent crime in D.C. was down by double digits in nearly every category and has reached its lowest level in three decades.⁵

We got here, in part, because Republicans and Democrats came together to enact a bipartisan law that provided billions in funding for violence prevention, mental health, school safety, and law enforcement-led strategies, including:

- Enhancing background checks for purchasers under 21;
- Investing in law enforcement and community violence intervention;
- Preventing domestic abusers from accessing guns;
- Making the largest investment in youth mental health in history; and
- Making gun trafficking a federal crime, prosecuting over 600 traffickers.⁶

These strategies and investments have reduced homicides by 31%.

My family is safer because of these bipartisan strategies.

Your family is safer because of these strategies.

America is safer because of these strategies.

These are the types of strategies and investments that work. Reducing access to guns for people who have proven to be dangerous. Disrupting the flow of crime guns into our cities. Solving shootings. Investing in community-led programs that prevent conflicts from escalating to violence. Supporting survivors of gun violence and young people who have witnessed violence with mental health counseling. That's what reduced our homicides by 31%. This is the time to double down on the sensible bipartisan strategies that got us here to make sure every single American feels safe and is safe, not abandon our progress and cost more American lives.

Our work preventing gun violence was not only a moral imperative, it also reflected responsible fiscal stewardship of public resources. Beyond intangible costs to society and unimaginable personal grief for the loved ones of victims and survivors, gun violence is extremely costly to the American taxpayer. The overall economic cost of firearm injuries in the United States has been estimated at \$557 billion annually.⁷ Policies and programs that can prevent individuals from being shot pay dividends. For instance, studies have shown that every dollar spent on robustly implemented community violence intervention programs saves between \$18 to \$41 in medical and criminal legal expenses that are often footed by taxpayers.⁸

⁵ <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/violent-crime-dc-hits-30-year-low>

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<https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-secures-more-500-prosecutions-under-new-firearms-statutes-enacted>

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https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2796678?guestAccessKey=55a622d7-8d12-4a34-886c-1f25eb5ced0a&utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_content=tfll&utm_term=092722

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<https://www.advancepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Corburn-and-F-Lopez-Advance-Peace-Sacramento-2-Year-Evaluation-03-2020.pdf>

Yet today, as our communities have been fighting our way out of this crisis, we find ourselves dealing with the Trump administration dismantling bipartisan strategies passed into law to reduce gun violence. The Trump administration shut down the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, defunded law enforcement including the ATF, cut over \$1 billion in mental health resources from schools, terminated \$812 million in funding for gun violence prevention and community violence intervention, defunded gun violence research, fired the CDC firearm injury team, and dismantled important regulations like the zero tolerance policy for gun dealers. All of these actions will only cause gun violence to increase.

And here in D.C., the administration and Congress's actions have been similarly severe and ineffective. Withholding over \$1 billion of D.C.'s local tax dollars, undermining the leadership in our District, and taking over the law enforcement in our communities. And to what end? Spending millions of taxpayer dollars to deploy troops from Mississippi, the state with the highest gun death rate in the country,⁹ to our city to pick up trash in tourist areas and terrorize neighbors in Black and Brown communities?

I live in Anacostia, one of the neighborhoods targeted by the D.C. takeover. To the Trump White House, my neighborhood is a "slum" — but to me it's home. Where we grill out in the summers, grab coffee over chess games, enjoy live jazz in the park on Sundays, and most importantly support each other.

Since the D.C. Trump takeover, I hear sirens nightly and witness my neighbors' homes being raided, people harassed while sitting on their own property, and even traffic jams from the flood of police and military on our streets. This deployment of federal troops from Mississippi, Ohio, West Virginia and beyond is not only costly and ineffective, but also stressful for neighbors who feel held hostage in their own homes. This is not the federal support D.C. needs.

We need federal law enforcement to focus on preventing illegal guns from flooding our streets. 95% of guns traced to crimes in D.C. come from other states¹⁰, and we need a fully funded ATF to catch gun traffickers and shut down those rogue gun dealers. Further, the presence of the military has made it more difficult for life-saving programs to function effectively in the neighborhoods that need their services most.

I've dedicated my career to making my community in D.C. — and communities across the country — safer from gun violence. I'll always champion smart, effective strategies to achieve that goal no matter who suggests them. Deploying masked federal agents and the military is not one of them.

Any community, any family, any person that feels threatened by crime is too many. The statistics tell us that we've made progress, but as I opened my testimony, statistics don't tell us the whole story. All Americans need to feel safe — that should be our number one priority, and more work

⁹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/state-stats/deaths/firearms.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-district-columbia-2023>

remains. Allowing the Trump administration to roll back critical public safety initiatives and slash funding for law enforcement will only worsen crime, not make us safer.

We have real solutions to save lives from gun violence and reduce violent crime, now is the time to protect that progress and build on the momentum. Not for political wins, but because for every life saved means:

- Another family attending a wedding instead of a funeral;
- Another family celebrating a newborn instead of mourning a loss; and
- Another family gathering around the table instead of a casket.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.