



April 8, 2023

Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: SB 5506 - Renew Oregon's \$15 million Community Violence Intervention Fund**

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Everytown for Gun Safety, and the Oregon chapters of Moms Demand Action and Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, I'm writing to express our support for renewing the \$15 million statewide Community Violence Intervention fund in this year's budget bill. Last year, Oregon appropriated \$15 million for this fund for the very first time, which is currently being administered by the DOJ's Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division.<sup>1</sup>

Funding is set to expire in 2024, and we expect there to be much more demand than funding available. **If we want to reduce gun violence over the long term, we can't make a one-time investment; we have to make a sustained commitment to strategies we know work to reduce violence.**

Oregon's gun violence problem is multifaceted. In 2022, Portland had a record year with more than 101 homicides — making it the worst year of gun violence since 1987.<sup>2</sup> Black Oregonians are more than **ten times** as likely to die by gun homicide by their white neighbors. At the same time, Oregon is also experiencing a gun suicide crisis, particularly in rural areas. About 81% of gun deaths in Oregon are suicides – compared to 59% of all gun deaths in the US.<sup>3</sup> Everytown tracks gun suicides by US Congressional district, and of the 11 districts with more than 100 gun suicides per year, 2 are in Oregon.<sup>4</sup> These are largely rural districts with relatively small populations, which makes the data even more stark.

**Grants from this fund fund directly support evidence-informed programs all over the state that address these different types of gun violence.** For example, in Multnomah

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.doj.state.or.us/crime-victims/grant-funds-programs/community-violence-intervention-program>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.oregonlive.com/crime/2023/01/portlands-101-homicides-in-2022-set-new-record-at-some-point-we-have-to-be-tired-of-burying-our-children.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://everystat.org/#Oregon>

<sup>4</sup> CD 2 and CD 4: <https://everytownresearch.org/report/firearm-suicide-by-congressional-district/>

County, credible messengers known as “violence interrupters” reduce homicides and shootings by building relationships with people at the highest risk of being victims or perpetrators—or both—of violence, and help them address conflict without violence, as well as find housing and pursue employment opportunities. In Eastern and Southern Oregon, where gun suicides are extraordinarily high, community-based organizations provide particularly vulnerable groups like youth and veterans with accessible mental health and crisis services.

We urge you to renew your commitment to these lifesaving programs by maintaining this program. In addition to funding the grant program itself, **it’s also critical that the budget language allows the DOJ the resources to adequately staff and administer the program,** so funding can quickly get to where it's needed most.

Sincerely,

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