

**GIFFORDS WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 1015  
(SOLLMAN)**

**TO: SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

**FROM: GIFFORDS CENTER FOR VIOLENCE INTERVENTION**

**DATE: April 10, 2025**

**RE: SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 1015 (SOLLMAN) - SUPPORTING A CVI GRANT PROGRAM AT THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

GIFFORDS is a national gun violence prevention organization named after former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, who was shot in the head in 2011 while hosting an event for her constituents in Tucson, Arizona. At Giffords, we work with legislators and advocates around the country to promote common sense solutions to gun violence, and with our community violence work we recognize that the day-to-day shootings on our city streets that occur disproportionately in communities of color are one of the main drivers of America's gun violence epidemic.<sup>1</sup> This is true in Oregon as well, which has the fifth-highest rate of gun death for Black residents in the country.<sup>2</sup>

**There is a clear and urgent need to respond to community violence with every available resource and not just law enforcement approaches, but also community and public-health based solutions.** We know that in communities across the country, it is actually a very small number of high-risk individuals that commit most acts of serious violence—and by identifying and intervening with this high-risk population, it is possible to dramatically reduce violence levels in a relatively short period of time. **That's why GIFFORDS strongly supports SB 1015**, which would direct the Oregon Department of Justice to continue its current grant program to fund effective community violence intervention ("CVI") programs in the Oregon communities that are disproportionately impacted by this form of violence.

Community violence intervention and prevention programs are highly individualized and targeted violence reduction strategies that recognize how relationships, social norms, and

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<sup>1</sup> Giffords Center for Violence Intervention, Community Violence, <https://giffords.org/issues/community-violence>.

<sup>2</sup> Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Gun Violence in Oregon, <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-10/gun-violence-in-oregon-2022-factsheet.pdf>.

peer networks influence behavior.<sup>3</sup> Public health-centered approaches like Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIPs), street outreach, cognitive behavioral therapy, and intensive peer mentoring use outreach, direct communication, and supportive relationships to engage those at greatest risk of gun violence, while providing transformational opportunities to high-risk young men. In communities that have significantly embraced CVI solutions in recent years, the results have been dramatic:

- **Baltimore:** In 2024, the city saw a 23% decrease in homicides on top of the 20% drop in homicides from 2023. Additionally, non-fatal shootings declined 34%, and juvenile victims of homicides and non-fatal shootings **dropped 74%**.<sup>4</sup>
- **Detroit:** Detroit ended 2024 with 203 criminal homicides, 19% lower than the previous year's **57-year low** and down 33% since 2022.<sup>5</sup>
- **Newark:** Homicides dropped in 2023 and 2024 to levels **not seen since the 1940s**.<sup>6</sup>
- **Philadelphia:** The city saw its lowest homicide level in a decade in 2024.<sup>7</sup>
- **St. Louis:** In 2024, St. Louis had its lowest number of homicides in 11 years.<sup>8</sup>

Many of these communities have programs exactly like those that would be strengthened and enhanced by SB 1015. In states like Massachusetts, which has one of the lowest gun homicides rates in the nation, large investments in such strategies are saving lives and taxpayer dollars: **generating more than \$5.00 in savings for each dollar invested because of significant reductions in violence and crime recidivism rates**.<sup>9</sup> This is

<sup>3</sup> Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, Healing Communities in Crisis, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/healing-communities-in-crisis-lifesaving-solutions-to-the-urban-gun-violence-epidemic>.

<sup>4</sup> Mayor Scott, City of Baltimore Mark Historic Violence Reductions, Jan. 8, 2025, <https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2025-01-08-mayor-scott-city-baltimore-mark-historic-violence-reductions>.

<sup>5</sup> City of Detroit, Detroit partnerships result in another historic drop in violent crime in 2024; fewest homicides since 1965, shootings & carjackings, Jan. 3, 2025, plummet <https://detroitmi.gov/news/detroit-partnerships-result-another-historic-drop-violent-crime-2024-fewest-homicides-1965-shootings>.

<sup>6</sup> Toni Yates, Newark sees decrease in murders, but increase in overall violent crime in 2024: officials, Dec. 30, 2024, [https://abc7ny.com/post/newark-crime-stats-city-decrease-murders-rise-violent-2024-officials-say/15729127/#:~:text=NEWARK%2C%20New%20Jersey%20\(WABC\).lowest%20level%20since%20the%201940s](https://abc7ny.com/post/newark-crime-stats-city-decrease-murders-rise-violent-2024-officials-say/15729127/#:~:text=NEWARK%2C%20New%20Jersey%20(WABC).lowest%20level%20since%20the%201940s).

<sup>7</sup> Claudia Vargas, Philly saw its lowest homicide rate in a decade in 2024, Dec. 31, 2024, <https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/philly-saw-its-lowest-homicide-rate-in-a-decade-in-2024/4066099>.

<sup>8</sup> St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, 2024: Crime Remains on Downward Trend, <https://slmpd.org/2024-crime-remains-on-downward-trend/#:~:text=Crime%20remains%20on%20a%20downward%20trend%2031%25%20compared%20to%202022>.

<sup>9</sup> Commonwealth Corporation, SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL YOUTH INITIATIVE (SSYI), <https://commcorp.org/programs/safe-and-successful-youth-initiative>.

because, in addition to the enormous human impact caused by gun violence, there is also tremendous economic harm—directly increasing expenses for taxpayers and limiting opportunities for businesses in areas where gun violence is concentrated, creating a drag on local economies.<sup>10</sup>

**Finally, while the \$10 million appropriation that SB 1015 would utilize is a step in the right direction, we encourage the Oregon Legislature to go above and beyond this amount and fund this grant program at \$20 million.** For context, Massachusetts is investing more than \$40 million annually for the programs described above.

In recent years, other states around the country have taken significant action on this issue including in Illinois (\$250M),<sup>11</sup> California (\$200M),<sup>12</sup> Wisconsin (\$45M),<sup>13</sup> and Pennsylvania (\$30M).<sup>14</sup> Oregon has as well, and the passage of SB 1015, combined with a robust investment in the CVI grant program, would help maintain significant momentum and save lives while also saving taxpayer dollars.

Giffords works with state administrators around the country who implement state-level community violence reduction programs and is available to assist in any way, including sharing best practices and lessons learned from other states.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike McLively  
Policy Director, GIFFORDS Center for Violence Intervention

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<sup>10</sup> <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-10/gun-violence-in-oregon-2022-factsheet.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Illinois invests \$250 million in community violence prevention programs, <https://www.kfvs12.com/2021/12/10/illinois-invests-250-million-community-violence-prevention-programs>.

<sup>12</sup> May Budget Revise: Governor Newsom Delivers Largest Ever State Investment in Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Efforts; <https://asmdc.org/press-releases/may-budget-revise-governor-newsom-delivers-largest-ever-state-investment-gun-violence>.

<sup>13</sup> Evers allocating \$45M in federal funds to violence prevention, crime victim programs, <https://www.wpr.org/evers-allocating-45m-federal-funds-violence-prevention-crime-victim-programs>.

<sup>14</sup> Governor Wolf Announces \$23 Million in Second Round of Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program Awards, [https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/governor-wolf-announces-23-million-in-second-round-of-violence-intervention-and-prevention-grant-program-awards/#:~:text=Governor%20Tom%20Wolf%20announced%20today,Crime%20and%20Delinquency%20\(PCCD\)](https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/governor-wolf-announces-23-million-in-second-round-of-violence-intervention-and-prevention-grant-program-awards/#:~:text=Governor%20Tom%20Wolf%20announced%20today,Crime%20and%20Delinquency%20(PCCD)).