

Submitter: Bethany Price

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5014

I am writing to you today in support of funding Community Violence Intervention as a parent, a former social worker, and a volunteer for community violence prevention. I know many responsible gun owners, but I have also seen the finality of gun violence firsthand. My cousin Ted was taken by gun homicide. He was at a party, and someone who was intoxicated and angry went into their bedroom and grabbed a gun and attempted to shoot everyone at the party. Ted stopped him, but lost his life.

Although I grieve the personal loss of a family member to gun violence, my reasons for working for systemic reform extend to my concern for my community. Every day in my neighborhood I pass 3 heartbreaking memorials to neighbors who were murdered in broad daylight, traumatizing our small neighborhood in NE Portland. Recently, a gun battle (likely involving a rapid fire device) again left NE Portland terrorized, again in the middle of the day, on the street I travel on by bike to the grocery store. I think of these senseless acts of violence every time my 12 year old walks down the street. I refuse to accept that her future and her freedom should be curtailed by our society's failure to enact common sense gun violence prevention laws. I want nothing more than for my child to grow up in a culture that acknowledges the inherent dangers of guns and takes responsibility for addressing the violence we currently face every day.

Before I became involved as a volunteer with the grassroots movement to end gun violence, I felt hopeless and depressed about the level of gun violence in my community, and considered moving away from the neighborhood where I got married, became a parent and felt extraordinarily lucky to be a part of the community. Instead of moving, I became aware of the incredible work being done by community violence prevention organizations in our community, such as Love is Stronger and Healing Hurt People. As a former social worker, I quickly recognized the effectiveness of these direct intervention programs and became convinced they could help reduce gun violence in my neighborhood. Not only do these programs work to help people change their involvement with gun violence, research has shown time and again that they reduce gun violence and are extremely cost effective, and that a relatively low investment in these programs strongly outweighs the financial cost of gun homicide, injury, and mental health impacts borne by our society.

My first hand observation of these programs has changed my life for the better, as I now feel hope and can see the reduction in violence in our community. I have met and spoken with people who can see a different future for themselves, thanks to the

hard work and dedication of the people who pour their heart and soul into these programs. The people who do this work have lived experience with gun violence, and they are the essential trusted communicators that must be supported to continue their life-saving work. I am also a former legislative budget analyst, and I strongly believe this is the kind of investment our state should be making in people and prevention. These programs cannot operate for free, and cannot be effective without paying the people who work for them a living wage. If you stop funding them, we will go back to where we were before.

A few weeks ago I know that some young adults helped by these programs came to the Capitol and met with legislators and staff. This takes incredible bravery and vulnerability, to share the stories of trauma and tragedy, with strangers who know nothing of their experience. I ask you to have similar courage and to stand up for funding programs that our community needs to be safer - so our children can walk to school and play in the park without fear of gunfire. Thank you.