



April 17, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**GOVERNOR/LEGISLATORS HAIL NEW REPORT CREDITING STATE-FUNDED
PEACEKEEPERS PROGRAM WITH HELPING REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE IN CHICAGO**

State and local officials joined community anti-violence leaders today at a press conference in Chicago to celebrate a state-funded anti-violence program that has contributed to dramatic declines in gun violence in the Chicago region in recent years.

The Peacekeepers Program, funded through the Illinois Office of Firearm Violence Prevention in the Illinois Department of Human Services, is an initiative of community violence intervention (CVI) groups in Chicago. Under the program, more than 1000 individuals at high risk of shooting or being shot are deployed to help defuse tensions among rival street organizations and to occupy more than 200 of the most dangerous locations (“hotspots”) in the city and suburbs during periods of high conflict.

“Peacekeepers is the sort of innovative and effective anti-violence initiative this country and state need to save lives, save money, and give hope to violence-plagued communities in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Community violence intervention programs like this one are proven to be effective ways of reducing violence and are worthy of our continued commitment and investment.”

The Governor’s proposed fiscal year 2026 budget includes funding for the Peacekeepers Program and to support CVI statewide through a state law called the Reimagine Public Safety Act (RPSA). Several RPSA co-sponsors also attended today’s press conference, along with legislative leaders and city officials.

According to a [report](#) from the Center for Neighborhood Engaged Research and Science (CORNERS) at Northwestern University, the 27 city and 8 suburban communities served by the Peacekeepers Program experienced a 31% decline in gun violence in 2023 and 2024 compared to the previous two years. The actual hotspots saw a 41% decline in shootings.

Andrew Papachristos, a sociology professor at Northwestern University and the Faculty Director at CORNERS, emphasized that the data in the report shows, “There is a clear correlation between the work of the peacekeepers and declines in gun violence at hotspots and in surrounding communities. The research strongly suggests CVI in Chicago works.”

The CORNERS report further credits peacekeepers and outreach workers with conducting more than 2000 separate mediations and negotiating dozens of peace treaties among rival street factions.

According to a [City of Chicago website](#), gun violence has declined in Chicago in six of the last 8 years and is down 35 percent this year. Mayor Brandon Johnson has set a goal of bringing the number of homicides below 500 in 2025, which has not happened since 2019.

Mayor Johnson said, “Violent crime trends are moving in the right direction, proving the effectiveness of programs like Peacekeepers. We are confident that we are on track to becoming the safest big city in America thanks to the work of the Chicago Police Department, our CVI and community partners, and both the investments we are making to address the root causes of violence and our rapid responses to crime through the People’s Plan for Community Safety.”

Over the last decade, with initial support from a local philanthropic consortium called the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities, as well as the business community and the public sector, Chicago has built a network of about two dozen CVI organizations that today serve nearly half of the city’s 77 neighborhoods. Services include outreach, life coaching, trauma treatment, education and job training.

Arne Duncan, founder of CVI organization Chicago CRED, thanked the Governor and State Legislators for their support, saying, “State support has made it possible for people at extreme risk of shooting or being shot to be a part of the solution. This is community-driven and community-led violence reduction.”

Highlighting state, city and county support for CVI, Duncan added, “Because of our public sector partners, CVI is becoming a permanent feature of Chicago’s public safety strategy, and our city is becoming a national leader in violence prevention.”

Vaughn Bryant, Executive Director of Metropolitan Peace Initiatives, a convener of 15 nonprofit organizations working in the CVI ecosystem, emphasized the impact of FLIP workers on the community, stating, “Chicago’s FLIP workers have mediated thousands of conflicts and brokered peace deals across the city, often at a risk to their own safety. Instead of further perpetrating the cycle of violence, these individuals are an essential part of the CVI framework.”

LeVon Stone, co-founder and CEO of Acclivus, the largest local, black-led CVI provider and convener of 17 CVI agencies said, “As an indigenous leader, I am proud to have implemented the Peacekeepers program as a platform to give a voice and opportunity to 900 Peacekeepers across Chicago and Cook County. We are grateful to have the support of our elected leaders and our communities; with these partnerships, every shooting prevented and every life saved brings us one step closer to creating a safe city for residents of all ages.”

The press conference also featured a brief report from Sharonda Giles, the Director of a new initiative called The Crisis Prevention and Response Unit (CPRU). CPRU deploys between 10 and 30 outreach workers and peacekeepers to support police during so-called “teen trends,” which are spontaneous gatherings among hundreds of young people that have sometimes escalated into violence and led to arrests. All told, in 2023 and 2024 CPRU responded to 62 separate events, 51 of which resulted in zero arrests, injuries or shootings.

The CVI community in Chicago includes approximately 2000 men and women – including many who are justice-involved – working to reduce gun violence, both as part-time peacekeepers and as full-time CVI workers. Hundreds of Peacekeepers and CVI workers were in attendance today at the press conference, which was held at the Pullman Community Center, 10355 South Woodlawn Avenue in Chicago.

CVI organizations are also partnering with the business community through the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club to help graduates of CVI programs transition into the legal economy. Today, CVI grads work in a range of industries, including transportation, hospitality, manufacturing and security.

Providing jobs are one pillar of a broad plan announced by the Civic Committee in 2023 to improve public safety that also includes support for CVI and investments in modernizing and professionalizing policing.

In February of 2024, state and local officials joined CVI leaders, philanthropists and business leaders to announce a major new initiative to “take to scale” CVI in seven Chicago communities that account for a major share of the gun violence in the city. The initiative is called *Scaling Community Violence Intervention for a Safer Chicago*, or “SC2” for short.

SC2 aims to serve up to 75 percent of the people at highest risk of shooting or being shot and, along with traditional policing and other investments, hopes to reduce gun violence citywide by 75 percent over the next decade. Communities served by SC2 are North Lawndale, Austin, Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, Little Village, New City and Englewood.

For Further Information:

- Peter Cunningham, (CRED) 312-636-8619, petercunningham57@gmail.com
- LaToya Egwuekwe Smith (MPI) 773-882-2751, SmithL@metrofamily.org
- Katrina Waddy, (Acclivus Inc.) 312-545-7392, Katrina.waddy@acclivusinc.org

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