



24-2183

**DATE:** January 23, 2024

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Susan Ellenberg, Supervisor;  
Sylvia Arenas, Supervisor

**SUBJECT:** Board Referral relating to community violence prevention. (Ellenberg/Arenas)

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Consider recommendations relating to community violence prevention. (Ellenberg/Arenas)

Possible action:

- a. Approve referral to Administration to develop a Countywide Community Violence Prevention Strategic Plan for Fiscal Year 2024-2025; and report to the Board no later than March 2024 with a proposed development process.
- b. Approve referral to Administration to report to the Board no later than March 2024 with options for establishing a community violence prevention fund.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Santa Clara County has taken strides in responding to rising rates of violence over the past several years:

- Former Supervisor Cortese's held the County's first Firearms and Safety Summit in 2018 in the wake of the March for Our Lives Movement and mass violence events across the nation involving firearms.
- In the years following, Santa Clara County would experience some of the deadliest shootings in Bay Area history, which Supervisor Chavez led the County in responding to by commissioning initiatives such as the creation of the Trauma Recovery Center, the Cost of Gun Violence Study, and the DA's expanded Gun Violence Taskforce, building upon a large portfolio of work in violence prevention including the San Jose PEACE Partnership and the Office of Gender Based Violence Prevention.
- Amplifying the County's gun violence prevention efforts to the national level, Supervisor Simitian led the Board in a resolution asking Congress to pass a federal ban on assault weapons after the 2019 Gilroy Garlic Festival shooting.

Approved: 01/23/2024

- Supervisors Lee and Chavez partnered on a referral to create Countywide gun buyback events and an ongoing gun buyback program with the Sheriff's Office. The referral followed the success of Supervisor Lee's local gun buyback events funded through his office's inventory grants. Additionally, to address surging hate crimes, the two Supervisors established the Hate Prevention and Inclusion Taskforce and authored a December 12, 2023 referral to move forward with the Taskforce's recommendations.

Consistent with the County's priority of equity, strategic coordination of violence prevention resources must be guided by data on the communities most impacted by violence in the County, data on the drivers of violence in those communities, and ongoing engagement with those communities to create solutions tailored to their needs. Coordination must also ensure Countywide access to resources, as well as alignment with cities and community-based organizations.

Nationwide best practices recommend that violence prevention resources focus on strengthening protective factors and mitigating risk factors that prevent residents from becoming involved in violence<sup>1</sup>. However, existing resources allocated to violence prevention and public safety overall focus heavily on criminal-legal system responses that almost exclusively act after violence has already occurred or a threat has been made. Greater emphasis on upstream strategies is needed to achieve a more holistic approach to public safety.

Given the above, this referral directs Administration to report to the Board no later than March 2024 with:

1. A process for development of a FY 24-25 Countywide Community Violence Prevention Strategic Plan to effectively track and align resources as well as violence prevention efforts currently underway. The process and strategic plan should focus on equity and partnership with the most impacted neighborhoods, communities, and population groups, taking into account:
  - Violence prevention work-to-date, as well as data previously and currently being collected including but not limited to relevant insights from: the Public Health Department (report expected Feb 6, 2024 including data from South County), the Office of Children's & Families Policy, the Office of the District Attorney, the Probation Department, the Social Services Agency, the Office of Gender-Based Violence Prevention, the Office of the Medical Examiner-Coroner, the Office of Immigrant Relations, the Behavioral Health Services Department, outcomes and recommendations from the Latino Health Assessment, and the Department of Family and Children's Services Protocols
  - An inventory of existing programs and resources including budgets and staffing
  - Engagement with key stakeholders including impacted neighborhoods, cities, community-based organizations, and law enforcement agencies

- Approaches to maximize impact and overall coordination
2. Options for establishing a community violence prevention fund, similar to that in the San Jose PEACE partnership, that would support community-directed investment in programs or infrastructure to promote public safety and prevent violence consistent with the recommendations of the Cost of Gun Violence Study<sup>2</sup>

## **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

Staff time in developing a response to this referral is the only immediate fiscal implication. This referral seeks to generate cost savings by improving coordination of existing staff, resources, and strategies to maximize their impact. Additionally, violence prevention aims to be cost-saving as a long-term public safety strategy beyond criminal-legal system interventions. Firearm violence alone costs on average \$1.2 annually, with criminal-legal system costs accounting for 98.9% of the cost borne by the County<sup>3</sup>.

To date, \$1M has been approved by the Board in the FY23-24 budget to support community-based violence prevention strategies that will be initiated in the coming months in conjunction with the Public Health Department's implementation of recommendations from the Cost of Gun Violence Study.

Pending recommendations from Administration, funds in the FY24-25 budget cycle to support the development of a Countywide strategic plan for Community Violence Prevention may be needed along with a position to oversee cross-agency coordination and execution of the strategic plan.

Options for future resources to support this work, including a possible community violence prevention fund, may include: the EMS Trust Fund given the potential to reduce traumatic injuries, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds given the White House's encouragement to states to use remaining ARPA and Local funds to support Community Violence Interventions in its December 2023 Safer States Agenda,<sup>4</sup> or the \$8 million capital project fund for a new jail given the potential to decrease acts of violence and that jail design and construction has not commenced.

## **BACKGROUND**

Beyond Supervisorial-led efforts, Santa Clara County has made piecemeal investments in violence prevention resources, programs, and personnel which are scattered across County departments. An inventory of Community Violence Intervention programs is illustrated in the Public Health Department's June 8, 2023 report on gun violence prevention activities to the Public Safety and Justice Committee<sup>5</sup> and previous reports have described additional efforts across the county. Strategic coordination is needed to maximize and align the County's siloed violence prevention resources.

Prioritizing violence prevention is an issue of equity and urgency for our County.

## Equity

- Cost of Gun Violence Study
  - Zip codes with the highest rates of gun violence overlapped with those that had higher rates of poverty, lower education attainment, higher rates of single parent households with children under the age of 18, and overcrowded households
  - Latinos had the most non-fatal firearm injury-related ED visits, while African/African Ancestry had the highest rate
  - Young adults ages 18-34 were most directly affected by gun violence: Nearly 2 in 3 (65%) of non-fatal firearm injury-related ED visits were among adults ages 18 to 34, and 1 in 3 (34%) firearm deaths were among residents ages 18 to 34 years.
- The CDC reported that in 2020, counties with the highest poverty level had firearm homicide rates 4.5 times as high and firearm suicide rates 1.3 times as high as counties with the lowest poverty level. The largest increase in firearm homicides nationally was among Black people (39%). The largest increase in firearm suicides was among American Indian and Alaska Native people (42%).

## Urgency

Regional and national trends in violence coupled with best practices for addressing violence point towards an urgent need for investment in prevention as a public safety strategy.

### *Upward trends in violence:*

- According to the Cost of Gun Violence Report, nationwide, firearm deaths increased to a record level in 2020, the highest in the past 40 years. In Santa Clara County, the age-adjusted firearm death rate was 4.8 per 100,000 people in 2020, the highest rate in the past decade.
- The annual number of violent crimes committed in the County increased by 63.7% from 2013 to 2022, while the County population increased 0.2%. Much of this increase was driven by increases in aggravated assaults (68.8%) and rape (more than tripled)<sup>6</sup>

### *Traditional criminal justice approaches are not enough to respond to these alarming trends.*

- Findings from the Cost of Gun Violence Study reveal that mitigating the causes of most gun violence in the County would not fall within the responsibilities of law enforcement. 60% of firearms deaths in the County 2016-20 were suicides and 33% were homicides; 77% of non-fatal firearm injury-related emergency department visits were unintentional, with only 18% due to assault.
- Amid local and national law enforcement staffing crises associated with declining interest and public perception of the law enforcement profession, investment in equitable and cost-effective crime prevention efforts were recommended by the Public Policy Institute of California as vital.<sup>7</sup>

- Community members participating in the Cost of Gun Violence Study voiced support for more upfront investment in violence prevention over traditional criminal-legal system approaches.

*In the wake of mass shooting events across nation, a movement to prioritize community violence prevention and intervention as a key public safety strategy has been advanced by the White House, California Legislature, and gun and criminal justice reform advocates alike.*

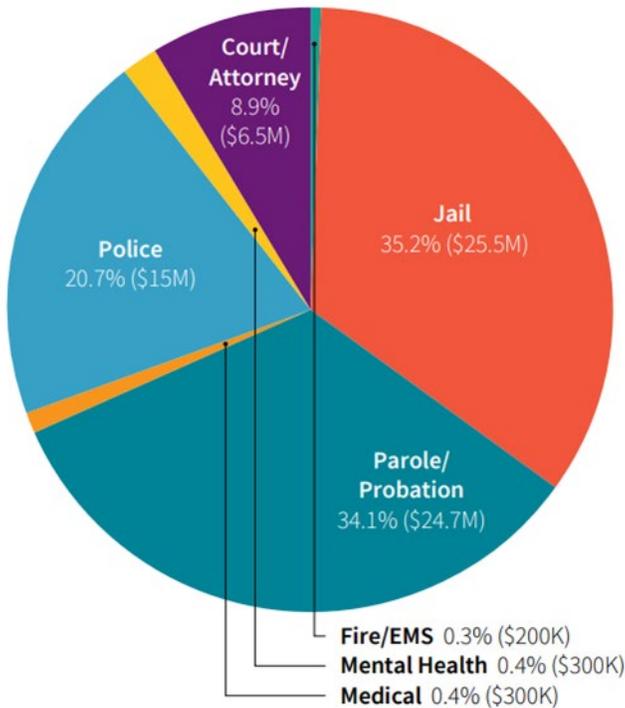
- The White House established the Office of Gun Violence Prevention in September 2023 and created the first-ever federal funding stream dedicated to CVI, the Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative
- The State Legislature established the California Violence Intervention & Prevention Grant in 2017 and, in 2019, codified its establishment and purpose: “To improve public health and safety by supporting effective violence reduction initiatives in communities that are disproportionately impacted by violence.”
- A key tenet of the March for Our Lives platform is to address police violence and invest in addressing structural causes of gun violence in communities.
- The Vera Institute for Justice has advocated for investment in community violence intervention programs driven by credible messengers, an evidence-based approach involving individuals with lived experiences and ties with the community who can intervene to prevent residents from being involved in violence in a way outsiders often cannot.<sup>8</sup>

## References

1. US Department of Justice Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/community-violence-intervention/overview>;  
  
March for Our Lives Policy Platform <https://marchforourlives.com/policy/>
2. *Cost of Gun Violence in Santa Clara County*, Public Health Department, August 2022  
[publichealth.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb916/files/documents/SCPubHealth\\_2022\\_Gun\\_Violence\\_Report.pdf](https://publichealth.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb916/files/documents/SCPubHealth_2022_Gun_Violence_Report.pdf)

3. From page 10 of the SCC Cost of Gun Violence Study:

**Figure 3.** Costs of firearm violence by County Departments



4. *White House Safer States Policy Agenda*, December 2023  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/OGVP-Safer-States-Policy-Agenda.pdf>
5. See Figure 1: Non-Law and Law Enforcement Violence Prevention Efforts  
[https://sccgov.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail\\_LegiFile.aspx?Frame=&MeetingID=14787&MediaPosition=&ID=116408&CssClass=](https://sccgov.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?Frame=&MeetingID=14787&MediaPosition=&ID=116408&CssClass=)
6. *2023 Santa Clara County Law Enforcement Agencies Annual Crime Statistics*, Office of the District Attorney  
<https://countyda.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb1121/files/documents/Crime%20in%20Santa%20Clara%20County%202023%20%28final%29.pdf>
7. *Fact Sheet: Law Enforcement Staffing in California*, PPIC, January 2024  
<https://www.ppic.org/publication/law-enforcement-staffing-in-california/>
8. *How Cities Have Reduced Gun Violence—And Saved Millions*, Vera Institute for Justice, December 2021  
<https://www.vera.org/news/how-cities-have-reduced-gun-violence-and-saved-millions>