



## ***Working to reduce gun violence in Maryland through evidence-based solutions***

### **Summer 2022 - Information for State Candidates on Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence**

#### **GUN VIOLENCE IN THE STATE OF MARYLAND**

Gun violence is a public health epidemic affecting the well-being and safety of all Americans. Even with relatively strong state policies, Maryland still experiences **~724 gun deaths per year**, the 22nd highest gun death rate in the country. Another **~1,747 people are wounded** by firearms. Gun deaths and injuries cost Maryland taxpayers **\$376 million annually** in direct costs due to healthcare, law enforcement, and other public expenses.<sup>1</sup> The impacts of gun violence inflict an enormous burden on our society. Gun violence is a multi-faceted problem with myriad causes. Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) tackles the issue from multiple angles, letting data and research guide these moves. It is imperative that our elected officials are informed on the types and scope of the problem as well as the short and long term efforts needed to turn this tide of violence and death.

In light of the recent Supreme Court decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Ass. Inc. v. Bruen*, MPGV anticipates that Maryland's 2023 session will be a critical one for gun violence prevention related legislation. First and foremost, it will be necessary to reconfigure our permitting standards to ensure that only those qualified and appropriate for carrying firearms in public be enabled to do so. In addition, Maryland will need to place special emphasis on criteria around gun safety from gun storage, making sure that prohibited places are identified, and holding gun manufacturers to high standards of safety and accountability should they fail to act as responsible corporate citizens. All of this needs to be navigated in light of the new approach espoused by the *Bruen* court.

#### **CATEGORIES OF GUN VIOLENCE**

##### **CHILDREN AND TEENS**

Nationally and in Maryland, gun violence has become the leading cause of death for youth under 18.<sup>2</sup> **Child Access Prevention (CAP)** is a critical component in protecting minors from firearm violence. Safe storage of firearms has been shown to reduce the numbers of both intentional and

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<sup>1</sup>[Gun-Violence-in-Maryland-2.9.2021.pdf \(everystat.org\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. Data from 2020. Children and teenagers aged 1 to 19, number of deaths by known intent (homicide, suicide, unintentional deaths).

unintentional youth-involved shootings. School shooters are most frequently young people in crisis who gain access to unsecured firearms in the home of family or friends to carry out utterly tragic events<sup>3</sup>.

Children exposed to trauma are at high risk of one day becoming involved in gun violence<sup>4</sup>. Hence, in addition to mandating responsible gun storage, programs are needed to ensure children exposed to trauma receive appropriate care. These programs can take many forms throughout our societal structures such as schools, police departments, parks and recreation departments. Addressing these needs early is a critical component to long-term reduction in gun violence.

Broadly improving access to behavioral health supports across systems within the state is also key. Potential solutions to tackle the shortage of needed behavioral health experts include providing support for college training programs and marketing to entice new students to the field.

## **SUICIDES**

Used for 42% of all Maryland suicides, firearms are the most common means. Suicides comprise 35.6% of gun deaths in Maryland with ~268 people dying that way annually. Maryland gun suicides are overwhelmingly rural<sup>5</sup>. White people are 2.5 times more likely to die of gun suicide than Black people.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted however that suicide rates amongst Black youths are on the rise.<sup>7</sup>

Suicides are frequently the result of a person in crisis acting on impulse.<sup>8</sup> Barriers to quick accessibility of a gun give a person in crisis time to make a different decision. Thus, storing firearms unloaded and locked is an often overlooked method to reducing gun suicide and once again highlights the importance of laws like **CAP** and public education on safe gun storage. We must change the culture around responsible gun ownership.

Here too, we must again highlight access to behavioral health supports. Also critical is better use of Maryland's Emergency Response Protective Orders (ERPOs) to temporarily remove guns from people in crisis. Regularly educating the public, medical professionals and law enforcement on how to use this 2018 law will save lives.

## **HOMICIDES - Community Violence, Domestic Violence and Mass Shootings**

<sup>3</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2018/08/01/feature/school-shootings-should-parents-be-charged-f-or-failing-to-lock-up-guns-used-by-their-kids/>

<sup>4</sup> Wamser-Nanney, Rachel et al. "Childhood trauma exposure and gun violence risk factors among victims of gun violence." *Psychological trauma : theory, research, practice and policy* vol. 11,1 (2019): 99-106. doi:10.1037/tra0000410

<sup>5</sup> <https://preventfirearmsuicide.efsgv.org/states/maryland/>

<sup>6</sup> Gun-Violence-in-Maryland-2.9.2021.pdf (everystat.org)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2020/black-youth-suicide>

<sup>8</sup> Suicide-Prevention-Factsheet-Giffords-Law-Center.pdf

## **Community Violence**

The majority of homicides in America involve firearms. In Maryland, 79% are committed with guns. Homicides make up 62.1% of Maryland gun deaths, averaging ~462 people killed each year. In addition to gun violence being a public health crisis, it is also an equity issue. Black Marylanders are 17.9 times more likely to die of gun homicide than white people.<sup>9</sup> The vast majority of Maryland homicides occur in our urban areas. Since 2015, the number of homicides in Baltimore has exceeded 300 people per year. Along with the lives lost comes families, friends, and communities repeatedly traumatized and a profound economic drain where a lack of resources already exists.

Solving the gun homicide problem will not be easy or quick, but a substantial and sustained investment in Violence Intervention and Prevention Programs (VIPPs) will save lives and taxpayer dollars. Community-based organizations stand poised and ready, with the effectiveness of their work backed up by data. Maryland has done good work establishing a VIPP framework. Funding for some of these organizations has been improving, but needs active engagement by the executive branch and program directors. Helping them gain stable and sustainable financial support is critical. SB350 recently granted access to Medicaid funding to certain VIPPs, but that will also likely require government support to navigate for true success.

This is a complex topic that cannot be fully addressed in this document. It is advised that the new governor and/or attorney general's office prioritize a state level violence prevention office with key players from a broad coalition of organizations that work every day to reduce violence. From programs working directly with those most impacted, to those working to advance violence prevention and reduction policy; from government entities like law enforcement to small community-based organizations providing support to youth, their wide-ranging expertise and experience must be harnessed to attack the problem from multiple angles. [The Maryland Violence Prevention Coalition](#), co-lead by MPG, is a great place to start to find critical people doing this work.

## **Domestic Violence**

The presence of guns makes domestic violence far more likely to end in death. Guns are used in 54 percent of Maryland's intimate partner homicides. From 2015 to 2019, 47 women were murdered this way in our state.<sup>10</sup> We need to increase protections for domestic violence victims, including, among other things, creating a clear system for defendants convicted of domestic violence to quickly and safely turn over their firearms post conviction.

## **Mass Shootings (and other public space shootings)**

Maryland's law regulating who and how someone can carry a firearm in public has been in place for decades. We know that more guns in public spaces leads to more gun violence.<sup>11</sup> We must not allow

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<sup>9</sup> Gun-Violence-in-Maryland-2.9.2021.pdf (everystat.org)

<sup>10</sup> Gun-Violence-in-Maryland-2.9.2021.pdf (everystat.org)

<sup>11</sup> 2021 Annual Scorecard | Giffords

the gun industry's assault on standards to get a foothold here. The Supreme Court's decision in *Bruen* has dealt a blow. Nevertheless, it is possible to protect our high standards by insisting that our permitting system involve a close investigation of each applicant and their training. This will require a reworking of the current law to a format shown successful in other gun safe jurisdictions yet still in line with the new federal decision.

## **ADDITIONAL AREAS OF FOCUS**

### **PROTECTING DEMOCRACY**

It is widely believed that the events of January 6 were very much mitigated by D.C.'s strong gun laws. To protect our democracy and to limit the potential for events escalating to deadly violence during upcoming elections, we seek to **prohibit the carrying of firearms at or near polling sites**.

### **GUN INDUSTRY ACCOUNTABILITY**

With nearly every American industry and product, civil liability can be used as an important check on irresponsible manufacturers and sellers—but not the gun industry. When Congress passed the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA) in 2005, the gun industry effectively became immune from nearly all lawsuits, leaving survivors and families of gun violence victims without an avenue to seek justice regardless of unreasonable, illegal, or reckless behavior that leads to harm. We must enact legislation that breaks through these protections and gives gun violence survivors **access to justice** by allowing them and state authorities to file suit against manufacturers and dealers whose bad conduct results in harm.

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*Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) is a leader in the state level gun violence prevention movement. We have secured major victories in drafting, passing, and implementing Maryland legislation at a time when gridlock has stymied gun legislation at the federal level. We are willing to work across party lines to find common ground to move forward with bipartisan support. Legislators from the national and local levels reach out to us for advice and guidance. In addition to strengthening our laws and closing loopholes, MPGV analyzes the implementation of gun laws to ensure optimum effectiveness. Learn more at [www.mdpgv.org](http://www.mdpgv.org) or by emailing us directly.*

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