



August 5, 2022

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE PATERSON HEALING COLLECTIVE REGARDING NEW JERSEY'S USE OF AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDS

Thank you, Governor Murphy and staff, for providing advocates and service providers with the space to recommend how New Jersey can use American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds.

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice is a law and policy advocacy organization that empowers people of color by building reparative systems that create wealth, transform justice and harness democratic power – from the ground up – in New Jersey.

The Paterson Healing Collective (PHC) is a hospital-based violence intervention program in collaboration with St. Joseph's University Medical Center in Paterson, NJ. It provides essential services including community-based violence intervention, mentoring and mental health support to the Paterson community. Since its inception in October 2020, PHC has serviced 133 individuals who received gunshot injuries. It has also helped to prevent retaliation and hosted several community events that have engaged the communities most impacted by violence.

Both the Institute and the Paterson Healing Collective are members of the *150 Years is Enough* youth justice campaign aimed at closing New Jersey's antiquated youth prisons and replacing them with community-based systems of care.

Together, the Institute and PHC request that the ARP funds that New Jersey has received from the federal government be used to support and expand the work of hospital-based violence intervention programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the structural inequalities that disproportionately target communities of color.¹ Those structural inequalities coupled with the disruption caused by the pandemic have led to increases in crime and particularly gun violence.² Gun violence is literally erasing our loved ones – brothers, sisters, spouses – from our communities. In its wake, gun violence is leaving trauma and leading to retaliatory shootings.³

The New Jersey State Police recently reported that in May 2022, 117 people were shot, 20 of whom were killed.⁴ Over the past year, from June 2021 to May 2022, 1,293 people were shot and tragically, 237 were killed.⁵ According to one report, guns are the fourth leading cause of death in young people in New Jersey and 81% of those deaths are the result of gun homicides.⁶ Gun violence is indeed a public health crisis, resulting in over 45,222 deaths nationwide in 2021; 40% of these deaths were the result of gun homicides.⁷

Policymakers are understandably searching for solutions for how to stem gun violence, particularly in our urban communities.⁸ What is certain is that, during this pivotal time, we must fund programs that proactively prevent and respond to gun violence and not default to reactive approaches that are ineffective and cause further violence to communities. Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIPs) are imperative in ANY strategy to confront gun violence. These programs pair professionals who are credible messengers within their communities and who are trained in providing crisis response, trauma-informed mediation and culturally appropriate services with individuals who have been targeted by gun violence. These professionals provide treatment and services that heal and often dissuade these individuals from participating in the cycle of retaliation and violence.

PHC works within the St. Joseph's University Medical Center in Paterson and serves Paterson. It employs three individuals who recently received gunshot injuries. PHC met them at their bedside in the emergency room, provided them with services and now these same individuals have decided not to retaliate and instead bring peace to their communities. This speaks to the impact of this program.

Unfortunately, funding for programs like PHC has not been stable. In 2021, PHC was funded by a \$1.1 million grant made to St. Joseph's University Medical Center for its HVIP program. After September 2022, PHC's critically needed HVIP funding will be halted. It is concerning that PHC and potentially other programs may have to close despite the increase in shootings.⁹ We cannot let that happen. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we learned that austerity does not work. We learned that in times of great need, there must be even greater government support. We respectfully urge you to direct ARP funds to support the life-saving work of HVIPs.

In addition to the above-mentioned HVIP funding request, the Institute also, as recommended in its August 2021 ARP testimony, encourages the state to invest ARP funds in a guaranteed basic income program that would help families weather the economic impacts of the pandemic¹⁰ and the volatility of the modern economy. Additionally, we urge the state to use ARP funds for start-up costs to establish a state baby bonds program, which would allow the state to tackle the intergenerational impacts of our past policies on today's wealth disparities and give economically vulnerable youth a financial head start for their futures.

The Institute also recommends spending ARP funds on necessary COVID-19-related elections infrastructure costs. The state should provide reimbursements or grants to counties to upgrade Election Day voting machines. The state correctly passed early in-person voting last year, a measure that was not only long overdue but was recommended by voting experts as a way to increase voter access and encourage social distancing during the pandemic.¹¹ In order to implement this new law, counties will need upgraded voting machines to conduct early voting.¹² These machines require a paper trail.¹³ However, the current Election Day voting machine fleet in most counties is outdated and not auditable. For election security and to reduce any voter confusion, Election Day machines must also be upgraded so they are the same machines used during early voting. The state should provide funding to assist in this process.¹⁴

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ See N.J. INST. FOR. SOC. JUST., BLACK IN NEW JERSEY 2022 ACTION AGENDA (2022), https://assets.nationbuilder.com/njisi/pages/722/attachments/original/1646264260/2022_Action_Agenda_3.3.22.pdf?1646264260, for a survey of figures on New Jersey's racial inequalities can be found on the Institute's action agenda.

² Bertram Chukwudum Ifeanyi Okpokwa, *Income Inequality: Impact of Inequality Measures on Crimes An Analysis of the State of New Jersey*, 6 Int'l. J. Bus. Soc. Rsch. 12 (2016), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323261708_Income_Inequality_Impact_of_Inequality_Measures_on_Crimes_An_Analysis_of_the_State_of_New_Jersey (A study demonstrated that income inequality in general is positively related to increases in certain crimes in New Jersey).

³ Joshua Rosario, *Why the spike in Jersey City fatal shootings this year? 'They have to retaliate; they cannot not retaliate.'* NJ.COM (Jun. 9 2022), <https://www.nj.com/hudson/2021/06/why-the-spike-in-jersey-city-fatal-shootings-this-year-they-have-to-retaliate-they-cannot-not-retaliate.html>; John Klofas et. al, *Retaliatory Violent Disputes 5* (2020), https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-spi_spotlight_series-retaliatoryviolentdisputes_final.pdf (an analysis of homicides in Rochester, New York in 2010 revealed that of 41 homicides , 6 were the result of retaliation involving a firearm).

⁴ N.J. STATE POLICE, MAY 2022 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, <https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/May-2022-GUNSTAT-Report-month.pdf> (In May 2022, 117 people were shot, 20 of whom were killed).

⁵ This figure was determined by adding monthly numbers that have been reported to the New Jersey State Police. N.J. STATE POLICE, JUNE 2021 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/June_2021_GUNSTAT_Report.pdf (In June 2021, 146 people were shot, 17 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, JULY 2021 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/July_2021_GUNSTAT_Report.pdf (In July 2021, 151 people were shot, 27 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, AUGUST 2021 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Aug_2021_GUNSTAT_Report.pdf (In August 2021, 139 people were shot, 32 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, SEPTEMBER 2021 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Sept_2021_GUNSTAT_Report.pdf (In September 2021, 106 people were shot, 15 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, OCTOBER 2021 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Oct_2021_GUNSTAT_Report.pdf (In October 2021, 130 people were shot, 29 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, NOVEMBER 2021 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Nov_2021_GUNSTAT_Report.pdf (In November 2021, 123 people were shot, 20 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, DECEMBER 2021 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Dec_2021_GUNSTAT_Report.pdf (In December 2021, 82 people were shot, 17 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, JANUARY 2022 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, <https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Jan-2022-GUNSTAT-Report-month.pdf> (In January 2022, 81 people were shot, 15 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, FEBRUARY 2022 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, <https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Feb-2022-GUNSTAT-Report-month.pdf> (In February 2022, 59 people were shot, 13 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, MAR 2022 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, <https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Mar-2022-GUNSTAT-Report-month.pdf> (In March 2022, 89 people were shot, 19 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, APRIL 2022 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, <https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/Apr-2022-GUNSTAT-Report-month.pdf> (In April 2022, 70 people were shot, 13 of whom were killed); N.J. STATE POLICE, MAY 2022 NJGUNSTAT REPORT 4, <https://www.nj.gov/njsp/njgunstat/pdf/May-2022-GUNSTAT-Report-month.pdf> (In May 2022, 117 people were shot, 20 of whom were killed).

⁶ EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY, GUN VIOLENCE IN NEW JERSEY 2, <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-New-Jersey.pdf>.

⁷ *Violence Prevention: Fast Facts*, CTR. DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html> (last visited Aug. 2, 2022).

⁸ See N.J. INST. FOR SOC. JUST., REFUNDING COMMUNITIES: A PATHWAY FORWARD TO REAL PUBLIC SAFETY (2021), https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/njisi/pages/691/attachments/original/1635275334/Refunding_Communities_Report_6_10_26-compressed.pdf?1635275334, for recommendations on how New Jersey's communities can be empowered to keep themselves safe.

⁹ Joe Malinconico, *Paterson victim support program scrambles for funding as state grant sunsets*, NORTHJERSEY.COM (Jul 28, 2022), <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/paterson-press/2022/07/28/paterson-nj-shooting-victims-support-program-funding-expiring/65384270007/>; Tom Moran, *A cruel cut to crime victims, showing sheer incompetence*, NJ.COM (Jul 31, 2022), <https://www.nj.com/opinion/2022/07/a-cruel-cut-to-crime-victims-showing-sheer-incompetence-moran.html>; Ted Goldberg, *Advocates demand funding for violence intervention programs*, NJ SPOTLIGHT NEWS (Aug 2, 2022), <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/advocates-demand-funding-for-violence-intervention-programs/>.

¹⁰ THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOV'T., ANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN: BASIC INCOME PROGRAMS AS A WAY TO ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 (2021), <https://web.csg.org/recovery/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2021/06/Analysis-of-the-American-Rescue-Plan-Basic-Incomes.pdf>.

¹¹ Danielle Root ET AL., *In Expanding Vote by Mail, States Must Maintain In-Person Voting Options During the Coronavirus Pandemic*, CTR. FOR AMERICAN PROGRAM (Apr. 20, 2021, 12:01 am), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/news/2020/04/20/483438/expanding-vote-mail-states-must-maintain-person-voting-options-coronavirus-pandemic/>.

¹² N.J. Stat. Ann. § 19:15A-1 (West 2021).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ The costs for these machines vary, depending on which of the eligible machines are selected by the counties, but can cost between \$5000 and \$10,000 per machine. S. 3203, *Legislative Fiscal Estimate*, N.J. LEGIS. (Mar 22, 2021), https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2020/S3203/bill-text?f=S3500&n=3203_E3.