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Gov. Wolf Highlights Grassroots Efforts Combatting Gun Violence Amidst Republicans' Efforts to Pass Bills Endangering Communities

Chester, PA – Governor Tom Wolf was joined by Senator John Kane, Representative Brian Kirkland, and advocates for a safer Pennsylvania today for a visit to the homefield of the Chester Panthers Foundation to spotlight their critical work to combat the roots of gun violence with youth at a hyper-local level through a state-funded gun violence prevention grant.

The visit follows the Wolf Administration's announcement this week of [\\$15.7 million to fund 40 Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention grants](#) across the commonwealth and yesterday's [veto of Senate Bill 565](#), the work of the Republican-led General Assembly this fall to disrupt the commonwealth's system for responsible gun ownership and remove critical checks and balances for law enforcement.

"With every act of gun violence in Pennsylvania, we lose an invaluable piece of our future as the precious, irreplaceable lives of loved ones and neighbors are lost," said Gov. Wolf. "I'm committed to putting an end to gun violence, but it's something we need to be committed to together. Unfortunately, many of our elected officials are working against this goal to reduce gun violence by writing bills that make us all less safe. I urge my Republican colleagues to get on board with real solutions to the real problems plaguing Pennsylvania."

From 2019 to 2020, the number of gun homicides in Pennsylvania increased by 48 percent. In addition to lives, according to a [report by Everytown](#), gun violence in Pennsylvania costs \$12 billion annually, of which \$567 million is paid by taxpayers. Costs to taxpayers include government payments for medical care, mental healthcare, emergency transport, police response, criminal justice and incarceration, Medicaid, and Social Security Insurance payments. Individuals, families and employers of gun violence victims cover the remaining cost.

Amanda Lyons, gun violence survivor, joined Gov. Wolf today at Veterans Memorial Field in his call for action against gun violence versus decreased responsibility. Just six months ago, Lyons was shot in the back while playing kickball at a Philadelphia-area rec center. A 16-year-old boy died from the same incident.

"We are facing a gun violence epidemic in Pennsylvania and our communities rely on the life-saving, proactive work of local intervention programs," said Amanda Lyons, a volunteer with the Pennsylvania chapter of Moms Demand Action. "We are very grateful to Governor Wolf for helping to champion this crucial funding for community-based violence intervention and are

eager to see the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency grow and expand their important efforts.”

Gov. Wolf has taken many steps throughout his administration to combat gun violence in Pennsylvania. In 2019, Gov. Wolf signed an [executive order](#) to make sweeping changes that would combat gun violence in PA, including the creation of a Special Council on Gun Violence with a mission to study gun violence and reduce it. In March 2020, the council released a [report](#) with recommendations including to prioritize funding for community-led violence prevention programs. In 2021 Gov. Wolf increased funding for the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency’s Gun Violence Grant Programs and announced the availability of [\\$24 million in September](#). In October, the governor joined New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, New York Governor Kathy Hochul, and Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont to announce a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to share crime gun data in an effort to prevent gun violence and enhance public safety.

A second round of Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention grants is expected to be announced in early 2022.

The Chester Panthers Foundation is receiving a \$50,000 grant to expand its current portfolio of sports activities and youth programming to include lectures, listening sessions and mentoring interventions that aim to reduce gun violence and other criminal activity by reaching youth early.

"I want to congratulate the Chester Panthers on their award, and recognize all the work they've done for our community. The City of Chester is feeling the gun violence epidemic, like so many of our cities here in Pennsylvania are. But we also have organizations like the Panthers working to support this community, to serve our kids, and to prevent gun violence," said Senator Kane. "I'm glad to be here with the Governor to honor the work they've been doing."

“Over the past few years, we have seen an uptick in gun violence particularly involving teens. That is why funding these youth sports organizations is critical in keeping guns out of the hands of teenagers and providing them with a safe haven,” said Rep. Kirkland.

Gov. Wolf encourages the legislature to use the remaining session days to move commonsense bills forward that work to solve issues for everyday Pennsylvanians while simultaneously improving public safety and quality of life.

Note: Photo and video from the event available at [PACast.com](https://pacast.com).

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