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## **Lt. Gov. Austin Davis Joins Gun Safety Advocates, Family Members of Gun Violence Victims to Call for Investment in State Office of Gun Violence Prevention**

*Gov. Josh Shapiro's proposed 2024-25 budget will invest \$100 million to address and prevent gun violence in Pennsylvania communities*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Lt. Gov. Austin Davis joined gun safety advocates and family members of gun violence victims at a Capitol news conference today to call for an investment in the state Office of Gun Violence Prevention, which is a key part of Gov. Josh Shapiro's budget and plan to make Pennsylvania communities safer.

"Every Pennsylvanian, no matter what they look like or where they live, deserves to be safe and feel safe in their home and in their neighborhood," said **Davis**. "We're making strides to make Pennsylvania communities safer, but gun violence rates are still unacceptably high, particularly amongst young people. We can't thrive as a Commonwealth if we aren't delivering on the basic need for public safety in every neighborhood and in every community.

"Our investments in safer communities are making a difference, but we need to double-down on our efforts and make sure they're even more effective. That's why we need a statewide Office of Gun Violence Prevention to coordinate our efforts and make sure our investments are smart and strategic."

To address the epidemic of gun violence, the Shapiro-Davis budget will invest \$100 million, including \$1 million to stand up, staff, and fund the Office of Gun Violence Prevention within the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), which the Lieutenant Governor chairs. Since 2019, PCCD has worked with stakeholders to identify, develop, and advance strategies to prevent and reduce gun violence in the Commonwealth. The Shapiro-Davis budget's proposed \$1 million will build on these efforts and will help coordinate gun violence prevention efforts with federal, state, and local partners.

"A dedicated Office of Gun Violence Prevention is a critical part of a whole-of-government approach to addressing gun violence in our communities, and we're grateful that the Shapiro-Davis Administration is committed to standing up and funding this important office in Pennsylvania," said **Mary Kenah, legislative counsel with Everytown for Gun Safety**. "As we continue to see communities across Pennsylvania devastated by daily gun violence, we need leaders like Lieutenant Governor Davis to support these critical efforts, including those from community violence intervention programs. With the support from this office and the additional funding from this month's announcement, these community-based groups will be better equipped to continue their work to address the root causes of gun violence and save lives. "

The state Office of Gun Violence Prevention will focus on four key areas: community outreach and technical assistance; interagency coordination (federal, state and local); addressing intersections of gun violence with domestic violence; data, research and evaluation. Pennsylvania would be one of the first states in the country to stand up an Office of Gun Violence Prevention since the White House called on states to do so.

“With recent record investment in gun violence prevention from the federal government, Pennsylvania’s Office of Gun Violence Prevention will allow for crucial collaboration across the local, state, and federal level,” said **Brady President Kris Brown**. “Focusing on understanding trends in Pennsylvania’s gun violence, community outreach, and the critical intersection of domestic and gun violence will enable the Commonwealth to take a proactive approach to stopping gun violence before it happens. And Pennsylvania is leading the nation, joining only a handful of states prioritizing their citizens’ safety. Brady applauds Governor Shapiro and Lieutenant Governor Davis for continuing to champion this issue and bring all Pennsylvanians closer to a future free from gun violence.”

In launching the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, the Biden-Harris Administration recently released their “Safer States Initiative,” which encouraged states to set up their own gun violence prevention offices to coordinate across state agencies and with local and federal governments, build gun violence data collection and analysis capacity, develop and implement comprehensive strategies for addressing various types of gun violence and develop and implement a state plan to prevent targeted violence and effectively respond to incidents of mass shootings and surges in other forms of gun violence.

“The community has shown again and again they have the solutions to the gun violence crisis as their local programs have driven down shootings in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, the Lehigh Valley, and other communities,” said **CeaseFirePA Executive Director Adam Garber**. “The Office of Gun Violence Prevention will build on the Shapiro Administration’s responsive, innovative approach to further empower those most impacted by this epidemic to be part of the solution. We applaud Lieutenant Governor Davis’ for his work and urge the General Assembly to include it in the final budget.”

After peaking during the COVID-19 pandemic, gun violence and crime rates are beginning to decline in many states across the country, and they fell significantly in Pennsylvania last year. According to the Center for American Progress, [Pennsylvania had the second-highest decline in gun homicides in 2023](#). Both [Philadelphia](#) and [Pittsburgh](#) had fewer homicides in 2023, compared to 2022, but those figures are still higher than pre-pandemic levels.

In addition to funding for the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, the Shapiro-Davis budget includes the following:

- A \$37.5 million increase for the successful Violence Intervention and Prevention program, which supports a wide range of models focused on reducing community violence and relies on community groups that are most in tune with specific local needs;
- A \$5 million increase for the Nonprofit Security Grant Fund, which provides resources for places of worship, community centers, and other entities to equip themselves with security measures;
- \$1 million for a Firearm Injury Prevention Program within the Department of Health to enhance data collection and analysis around gun violence, engage in community education initiatives, support evidence-based interventions, and collaborate with county coroners and law enforcement;
- \$11.5 million to create a statewide Building Opportunity through Out of School Time (BOOST) program, which will aim to reduce community violence by providing more after-school learning opportunities for young people;

- \$11 million to create more welcoming environments by building parks, addressing blight, and improving shared spaces, such as parks, streets, and playgrounds to promote safer communities; and
- \$1.5 million to increase staffing at the Pennsylvania State Police to grow the trooper force and its civilian employees in essential units to combat gun violence.

"It is long overdue for action to stop the cycle of gun violence that has touched every corner of our society," said **state Sen. Steve Santarsiero**. "Reasonable gun safety measures will keep our communities safe, protect our children, and not infringe on the rights of responsible gun owners. As co-chair of the PA SAFE caucus, I applaud the Governor's proposal for a state Office of Gun Violence Prevention in this year's budget and urge my colleagues in the Senate and House to fund this initiative."

"Since taking office Governor Shapiro and Lieutenant Governor Davis along with House Democrats have made immense progress to address gun violence in Pennsylvania," said **state Rep. Anthony Bellmon**. "The progress is in the statistics, with the number of gun-related deaths decreasing in 2023 compared to 2021 and 2022," Bellmon said. "While this progress is a great step to address this issue, much more remains to be done to ensure all communities across the commonwealth are safe. The Governor has offered another inspiring proposal to tackle gun violence, and as co-chair of the PA SAFE Caucus, I will do my part to ensure his proposal of investing \$100 million is included in the 2024-25 budget to establish the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and ensure that Pennsylvanians everywhere can enjoy a safer community."

"The gun violence prevention spending in this budget is an acknowledgment that every life lost to gun violence is precious, and every gun death is preventable," said **state Rep. Dan Frankel**, co-founder and co-chair of the PA SAFE Caucus. "Even in a time of heightened political polarization, I believe that we can and must come together to help make our communities safer from gun violence."

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