



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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In Philadelphia, Governor Shapiro, Local Leaders Highlight Proposed Budget Investments to Combat Gun Violence, Create Opportunities for Kids, and Make PA Communities Safer

Governor Shapiro's proposed 2024-25 budget proposal invests \$100 million to reduce gun violence – including an additional \$37.5 million to reduce community violence by investing in proven initiatives like afterschool programs, job training, and peer mentorship.

Since the VIP Grant program began in 2021, the Commonwealth has invested \$185 million in 256 projects to prevent, intervene in, and reduce gun and group-related violence.





Philadelphia, PA — Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** joined leaders from Philadelphia and the General Assembly, as well as gun violence prevention advocates to highlight the Shapiro-Davis Administration’s work to create safer communities by investing in community groups focused on reducing gun violence.

Governor Shapiro believes that all Pennsylvanians deserve to be safe and feel safe in their communities – and to address and prevent gun violence in our communities, the Governor’s proposed [2024-25 budget](#) invests **\$100 million** to reduce gun violence, including a **\$37.5 million** increase for the successful Violence Intervention and Prevention program (VIP) through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD).

The VIP program aims to reduce community violence by investing in a wide range of well-known community organizations including mentorship programs like the Boys & Girls Club, afterschool programs like Kensington Soccer and Philadelphia Youth Basketball, and job training initiatives.

“In too many communities all across the Commonwealth, we’re seeing unacceptable levels of violence right now. For years, I’ve worked to address gun violence and make our communities safer – it’s been a top priority for me, and my Administration has been working to create safer communities and to combat gun violence,” said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. “Last year, my budget delivered \$40 million for gun violence prevention across Pennsylvania. This year, I want to more than double that investment with another \$100 million to reduce gun violence – and that includes \$37.5 million for the Gun Violence Intervention program that funded the Kensington Soccer Club and so many other community-driven initiatives that work every day to intervene and prevent violence before it happens. Pennsylvanians deserve the freedom to walk down the street without fear.”

The Kensington Soccer Club – through Philadelphia Community Empowerment – [received](#) a **\$400,000** grant from PCCD to continue and expand teen and adult youth programs in the Kensington area. The club organizes and runs teen and young adult year-round soccer leagues for hundreds of high school students through structured and meaningful guidance for Philadelphia youth who lack a safe, welcoming place to participate in recreational sports.

“I’ve lost students to gun violence and then I lost my own son at school to gun violence. I’m out here supporting the Governor and our communities because I have always said – just as all Philadelphia teachers have said, as many people across this country say – an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” said **Meredith Elizalde, mother of gun violence victim Nicolas Elizalde**. “I want to prevent children from becoming shooters, from becoming victims. And if everyone out here were like Jim, and like this mom, then Nick would be alive. If they had gym, if they had a soccer club, if they had a mom like this, if they had had any number of things that we are entirely capable of providing – that the Governor is supporting – they would have seen value in their own lives and they wouldn’t have been so quick to take others’.”

“Governor Shapiro’s violence intervention and prevention funding has really made a crucial difference for our youth and our young adults. This funding enables us to reach so many more than we used to and have a much bigger impact on each person,” said **Jim Hardy, Executive Director and Founder of the Kensington Soccer Club**. “We’re teaching conflict resolution skills, connecting them with careers and connecting them with education, helping them navigate that transition from high school to adulthood, building them up as leaders who serve a community with empathy and help guide the next generation.”

“I’ve seen firsthand the benefits this program has had on kids,” said **Felicia Bryant-Dawson, Kensington Soccer Parent and Board Member**. “It’s my belief that for a community to be able to grow and flourish and impact things like preventing violence, these are the types of initiatives that need to be supported, so that all families and all children can have these kinds of resources.”

“This is really about saving lives and saving these precious children. Children are dying every single day in the city – but it’s a new day in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I have made this work my life’s work over twenty years and through many different administrations. Never has the Governor made a commitment to support gun violence in my 21 years. This is a new day. Our Governor Josh Shapiro doesn’t just talk the talk – he cares. He shows that by the commitment he’s made to gun violence,” said **Dr. Dorothy Johnson-Speight, Founder and Executive Director of Mothers in Charge**. “I can’t tell you how much that means to thousands of families who’ve come through my doors over the twenty-one years who had to bury a son, or daughter, or loved one because someone made a conscious decision to take their life. There are so many others that are doing the same thing

here in the city that need our help. We have got to have the resources for that to happen. This Governor is making that happen for the first time I know about in twenty-one years.”

Since the VIP Grant program began in 2021, 256 projects across the Commonwealth have been approved for a combined total of approximately **\$185 million** in grant funding to prevent and to reduce gun-related violence, helping to make Pennsylvania communities safer.

“We know there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to fixing our Commonwealth's violence and gun violence problems,” said **Senator Tina Tartaglione**. “By empowering local community groups that are familiar with the specific needs of their neighborhoods, we can help tailor interventions designed to address each community's specific challenges. Every dollar invested in violence prevention is an investment in safer streets, brighter futures, and lives saved from the gun violence.”

“Over six years, we’ve invested over \$200 million in the Violence Intervention & Prevention grant program to empower and invest in grassroot organizations that are working at a community level to prevent gun violence. And now we’re pushing for \$100 million more in our next budget,” said **Senator Vince Hughes**. “I’m thankful to Governor Shapiro and my colleagues who recognize the value of getting this money to local programs who are truly making a difference. Their prevention efforts are one of the most effective ways to keep our communities safe and keep young people away from violence and crime.”

“It's great to be here and be with so many of my colleagues to celebrate not only what we're looking at doing in this year's budget, but what we've done in the past,” said **House Majority Appropriations Chairman Jordan Harris**. “What we know in our communities is that time after school between when the children get out of school and when their parents get home is a very crucial time for young people in our community. What we're trying to do in Harrisburg with these funds through PCCD – led by our former colleague Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis – is make sure that we have opportunities for our young people to be productive when their school day may end. I'm very grateful to be here and be supportive of the resources that are in the Governor's budget to continue to fund programs like these all across the state.”

“Governor Shapiro’s budget proposal is a safety and prevention investment for all Pennsylvanians,” said **Representative Danilo Burgos**.

In the [2023-24 budget](#), Governor Shapiro secured **\$40 million** for the VIP program to address community violence throughout the Commonwealth, on top of funding at PCCD to reduce gun violence and make communities safer. PCCD [opened](#) the VIP grant application in November 2023 and [approved](#) the \$40 million in VIP grant funding for 64 organizations in March 2024.

Additionally, the Governor’s proposed budget includes a **\$5 million increase** for the Nonprofit Security Grant Fund through PCCD, which supports nonprofits, community centers, faith-based institutions (such as churches, synagogues, and mosques), and other organizations install safety and security measures.

On Wednesday, Governor Shapiro and Lieutenant Governor Davis [joined](#) bipartisan leaders and gun violence prevention advocates in Luzerne County to highlight investments in local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute gun violence and make our communities safer. With gun violence at unacceptable levels in Pennsylvania communities, the Shapiro-Davis Administration is continuing its work to create safer communities and support the local community organizations and law enforcement agencies who are combatting gun violence.

Earlier in the day, Governor Shapiro also joined Meredith Elizalde to visit a mural in honor of Nick Elizalde at Roxborough High School. Nick's mother Meredith [has been a powerful advocate](#) for gun safety legislation, and she was a guest [at the Governor's budget address in February](#).

Governor Shapiro has [called on the General Assembly](#) to strengthen Pennsylvania's laws and pass significant gun reform legislation. The Pennsylvania House has already passed a package of bills to do just that in a bipartisan manner, including universal background checks and legislation that bans ghost guns. Governor Shapiro supports these bipartisan bills that empower families and Pennsylvania law enforcement – and he is committed to building a broad coalition to support commonsense gun safety reform to protect communities all across the Commonwealth.

Read more about Governor Shapiro's 2024-25 budget proposal at shapirobudget.pa.gov.

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