



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, August 1, 2025

MEDIA CONTACT:

Governor's Press Office, ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov

In Philadelphia, Governor Shapiro Highlights Investments in Violence Intervention and Prevention Program to Reduce Crime and Create Opportunities for Young Pennsylvanians

Governor Shapiro visited Beyond the Bars — a nonprofit that empowers youth through music and leadership development — to highlight how community-based programs supported by the Commonwealth can help to reduce violence and empower young people.

Governor Shapiro's commitment to public safety includes support for more than 130 community-based programs like Beyond the Bars through the Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) program.

Governor Shapiro has increased support for community-based violence prevention and intervention initiatives by 40 percent during his time in office.



Philadelphia, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** met with young people, local educators, community leaders, and elected officials at the **Community Education Center in West Philadelphia** to talk about the impact of his Administration's investments in community-based violence prevention. The Governor met with students and teachers at [Beyond the Bars](#), a Philadelphia nonprofit that empowers youth through music and leadership development — the program has grown significantly thanks to more than \$530,000 in support from the Commonwealth's **Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) program**.

From day one, **Governor Shapiro** has prioritized public safety and delivered historic resources to both law enforcement and community-based organizations working to reduce violence. *Beyond the Bars* is one of more than **130 initiatives** across Pennsylvania supported through the Commonwealth's **Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) program**, administered by the **Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)**.

"Every Pennsylvanian deserves to be safe and feel safe in their community — and my Administration has invested in law enforcement and community-based efforts to reduce violence," said **Governor Shapiro**. "In order to build safer communities, we need a comprehensive public safety strategy — and my Administration has made historic investments, supporting law enforcement and delivering funding directly to the communities doing the hard work to create pathways to opportunity for our young people. Programs like *Beyond the Bars* are proof that when we invest in our young people and lift up community-based solutions, we can break cycles of violence and build safer, stronger communities."

In January 2025, *Beyond the Bars* received a **\$285,000 VIP grant** to expand its trauma-informed "Ecosystem of Support" program to 56 music labs in schools, shelters, trauma clinics, foster care settings, and diversion programs across Philadelphia. This followed a **\$250,000 grant** in January 2023 that helped grow the program from 40 sites. The nonprofit started in 2015 as a single music program inside a city jail and now partners with over 35 organizations to provide wraparound services to youth.

"Beautiful things happen in our city, but they do not happen without the amazing support of PCCD and CEG, as well as the tireless work of our teachers, partners, and youth leaders," said **Matt Kerr, Executive Director of Beyond the Bars**. "When you listen to and build with young people — and when you invest in systems not of harm, but of compassion and community — we can do something that seems impossible and live in a more peaceful and just world that our young people deserve."

"I joined Beyond the Bars in 2020 as a student. From the start, I was walking into a safe space and loving environment, surrounded by peers and mentors that share similar interests," said **Isaiah Robinson, who is the Student Teacher Lead & Lead Facilitator at Beyond the Bars**. "Beyond the Bars quickly became a second family to me."

“I’m proud to continue to work with Governor Shapiro and PCCD to get these critical investments out into the community,” said **Senator Vincent Hughes, who also serves as the Senate Democratic Appropriations Chair**. “Since we created the VIP program in 2018, we’ve understood how important it is to provide funding directly to the community. These grants are going to folks who are on the front lines working to stop violence in their neighborhoods and because of that we’re empowering organizations like Beyond the Bars to implement solutions and community outreach they know will be the most impactful.”

“I came up through The Beacon programs some 20 years ago, and I worked there with young people. We created safe spaces, and we protected children. And I see that here today at Beyond the Bars, and I’m thankful, I’m grateful that you guys exist,” said **Representative Amen Brown**. “I’m also thankful for our leadership, for our Governor, and for his commitment to investing in programs like this one.”

“The city is not just writing checks — we are helping to build the internal infrastructure of our local leaders. We are working to set them up for success so they, in turn, can pursue additional resources of funding, from state sources like PCCD to private philanthropy,” said **Evangelina Manos-Conroy, Deputy Director of Public Safety, Office of the Mayor**. “Helping organizations like Beyond the Bars grow and thrive is the ultimate goal, because they are the boots on the ground — they’re the ones doing the work. They are the ones who need to lead the way, because we know government cannot do it alone.”

Investments in Public Safety and Law Enforcement

The Governor’s commitment to reducing violence dates back to his time as Pennsylvania’s Attorney General. During his tenure, his office fought to close the ghost gun loophole, arrested hundreds of gun traffickers, took thousands of crime guns off the streets, and launched targeted initiatives like the Kensington program to combat violence in Philadelphia. This foundation laid the groundwork for the comprehensive, community-focused strategies his Administration continues to advance today.

The **Shapiro Administration** has invested over **\$600 million** in public safety, including:

- **\$85 million in VIP grants** to more than 130 projects across Pennsylvania — with **\$42 million** awarded to 64 projects in Philadelphia
- Funding to train over **800 new Pennsylvania State Police troopers** across four cadet classes
- **\$11.5 million to launch the Building Opportunity through Out of School Time (BOOST) Program** for after-school learning and violence reduction
- **\$5 million increase for the Nonprofit Security Grant Fund**, doubling the state’s investment in securing places of worship and community centers

- Over **\$3 million in law enforcement recruitment grants** to help fill nearly 700 municipal police positions
- Re-established the **Pennsylvania Office of Gun Violence Prevention** to coordinate a statewide strategy for reducing gun violence and crime

Since **Governor Shapiro** took office, gun violence is down **42 percent** and gun deaths by firearm are down **38 percent** across Pennsylvania. In 2024 alone, violent crime declined nearly 12 percent compared to 2022.

Governor Shapiro's [2025–26 proposed budget](#) builds on this momentum by calling for:

- A **\$10 million increase** to the Violence Intervention and Prevention program, bringing it to **\$55 million**
- A **\$10 million increase** to the BOOST program, totaling **\$21.5 million**
- New resources to train over **430 new Pennsylvania State Police troopers** and eliminate outdated staffing caps

Governor Shapiro and his Administration remain committed to finding commonsense solutions to the pressing issues we face and delivering real results for all Pennsylvanians. Public safety has been a top priority for this Administration as we work to ensure communities across the Commonwealth are safer, stronger, and better equipped for the future. Learn more about how the **Shapiro Administration** is [Investing in Safer Communities For All](#).