

Title: American Medical Women’s Association Position Statement on Legislation’s Firearm Violence Prevention Component

Authors: Jessica Bohling, BA (IUPUI Law & Social Work Student), Katharine Ross, BA, Haley C Cropper, BS, Theresa Rohr-Kirchgraber, MD, On behalf of AMWA Advocacy Committee.

Submitted: February 15, 2022

Position Statement: The American Medical Women’s Association (AMWA) advocates for funds for community violence interventions and measures that prevent firearm violence within communities so that the public can live in a safe and healthy environment.

Background: The H.R. 5376 “Build Back Better Act” was introduced in the House of Representatives on September 27, 2021, and was passed in the House on November 19, 2021.¹ Negotiations on the Build Back Better (BBB) bill in the Senate have ceased, essentially killing the bill.² Unfortunately, this means a key provision in firearm violence prevention will likely not come to fruition . BBB included \$5 billion in funding for community violence intervention.³

This component of the legislation is incredibly important. Annually, the United States has an average of 14,062 firearm homicides (2015-2019) and 45,979 suicides in 2020 alone.⁴ Firearm violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) are inextricably linked. Although all genders can experience IPV, violence with a firearm is overwhelmingly experienced by women with male partners.⁵ In the United States, 4.5 million women report being threatened and intimidated with a firearm by a partner.⁶ These incidents often escalate to death, as women whose abusers own firearms are 5 times more likely to be killed in a domestic conflict. Community firearm violence most commonly occurs in under-resourced neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods are predominantly composed of Black and Latinx/Hispanic city residents, especially impacting women of color.⁷

Exposure to firearm violence—whether as a victim, witness, friend, or family member—should be viewed as a public health and medical issue since it causes adverse health outcomes and affects well-being. For children and teens, exposure to firearm violence can severely impact cognitive and emotional development. In adults, it is often associated with several medical and psychiatric conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and substance use

¹ Build Back Better Act, H.R. 5376, 117th Congress (2021).

² Patteson, C. & Brufke, J. (2022, January 4). Manchin: ‘No negotiations’ on Biden’s \$2T Build Back Better Act. *New York Post*, <https://nypost.com/2022/01/04/sen-manchin-no-negotiations-on-bidens-2t-build-back-better-act-going-on/>.

³ Brady United, (n.d.). *Support President Biden’s Build Back Better Act*. Brady. <https://www.bradyunited.org/act/build-back-better-act>.

⁴ The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (“EFSGV”), *Community Gun Violence*, EFSGV, <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/community-gun-violence/>.

⁵ Campbell, J. C., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C., Campbell, D., Curry, M. A., ... & Laughon, K. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study. *American journal of public health*, 93(7), 1089-1097.

⁶ Sorenson, S. B., & Schut, R. A. (2018). Nonfatal gun use in intimate partner violence: A systematic review of the literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 19(4), 431-442.

⁷ The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (“EFSGV”), *Community Gun Violence*, EFSGV, <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/community-gun-violence/>.

disorder.⁸ There are also social and economic costs related to the emotional and physical suffering of the victims of firearm violence, like trauma counseling and treatment for physical injuries.⁹

Multiple state and city-sponsored firearm violence intervention and prevention programs have proven effective in reducing firearm violence.¹⁰ Depending on social and economic needs, these programs may include job training, youth development, community centers, housing assistance, and culturally appropriate and trauma-informed health and mental health services.¹¹ The Community Justice Action Fund (CJAF) headed by Mr. Gregory Jackson, a survivor of gun violence himself, is one of the many groups that would be supported by funding allocated to these types of programs through BBB. CJAF uses a three-prong approach that includes building comprehensive policies that view gun violence as a public health issue, centering voices of people who are directly impacted by gun violence in leadership, and producing/distributing training opportunities for violence intervention programs. With appropriate funding, communities can identify and correct the social and economic inequalities causing firearm violence.

Legislation is needed that provides funding for firearm violence research and for programs to prevent firearm violence thereby improving health outcomes. If BBB does not get adopted into law, AMWA supports alternative legislative actions to adopt these provisions at the community, state, region, and federal level.

⁸ EFSGV, (n.d.), sec. How Does Community Gun Violence Impact Health and Wellbeing?

⁹ Patton, D., Sodhi, A., Affinati, S., Lee, J., & Crandall, M. (2019). Post-discharge needs of victims of gun violence in Chicago: a qualitative study. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 34(1), 135-155.

¹⁰ EFSGV, (n.d.), sec. Comprehensive Investments In Violence Intervention and Prevention Programs.

¹¹ EFSGV, (n.d.), sec. Address the Underlying Social and Economic Inequalities that Drive Firearm Violence.