

## CHAPTER 365

AN ACT establishing a competitive grant program to fund violence intervention strategies and supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

**BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.52:17B-242.1 Findings, declarations relative to violence intervention strategies.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. In New Jersey, community violence is a public health crisis that disproportionately impacts underserved communities of color and firearm violence specifically is a major component of that violence;

b. Each year, New Jersey suffers more than 1,000 interpersonal shootings and, in 2016, African American and Latino men constituted 90 percent of the total firearm homicide victims in the State;

c. A few New Jersey cities suffer the vast majority of homicides in this State, most of which are committed with a firearm, and in 2015, more than half of the State's total homicides occurred in the cities of Camden, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, and Trenton;

d. This violence results in enormous trauma, lifelong health impairments, immeasurable human suffering, and significant economic costs;

e. The direct costs of firearm violence in New Jersey are over \$1.2 billion per year including healthcare expenses, law enforcement and criminal justice expenses, costs to employers, and lost income, and when reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering is considered, the overall economic cost of firearm violence is \$3.3 billion per year;

f. The vast majority of victims and perpetrators of violence are young men of color who are at heightened risk for exposure to violence because of a number of risk factors, including lack of educational and economic opportunity, unaddressed mental health needs, substance abuse issues, unstable housing situations, and previous exposure to violence;

g. Research indicates that in most cities in the United States less than a half percent of a given city's population is responsible for the vast majority of violence and effectively intervening with this high risk population is essential to addressing and preventing interpersonal violence;

h. Historically, community-based violence intervention strategies have demonstrated remarkable success at reducing shootings and other incidents involving the use of firearms in heavily impacted communities and when properly implemented and consistently funded, these programs produce impressive life-saving and cost-saving results in a short period of time;

i. Large reductions in violence have been seen in cities that centrally coordinate multiple violence reduction strategies, including New York City; and

j. Providing consistent funding and support to the evidence-based violence reduction initiatives is an essential part of New Jersey's comprehensive response to interpersonal firearm violence and given the extremely high cost of firearm violence, public investment in these solutions is very likely to generate significant savings for New Jersey taxpayers.

C.52:17B-242.2 New Jersey Violence Intervention Program.

2. The New Jersey Violence Intervention Program is established in the Office of the Attorney General, in the Department of Law and Public Safety. The purpose of the program is to invest in effective, evidence-based violence reduction initiatives focused on the highest-risk individuals in communities disproportionately impacted by community violence, with a particular emphasis on firearm violence.

Specifically, the Office of the Attorney General shall establish, advertise, and administer grants through the New Jersey Violence Intervention Program, conduct program evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the violence intervention programs, submit and post reports to provide transparency regarding the effectiveness of the programs, and hold public forums to gather community input regarding the programs.

C.52:17B-242.3 Awarding of funds.

3. a. The Office of the Attorney General shall award funds from the New Jersey Violence Intervention Program on a competitive basis to municipalities, not-for-profit health agencies, law enforcement agencies, and non-profit organizations that serve communities with disproportionately high rates and numbers of homicides and other incidents involving the use of firearms, as determined by the Office of the Attorney General. The grants shall be used to:

(1) implement, expand, or enhance coordination between evidence-based violence reduction initiatives, such as hospital-based violence intervention programs, street outreach programs, and focused deterrence strategies, which have demonstrated effectiveness at reducing rates of homicides and other incidents involving the use of firearms via the provision of targeted services to victims affected by crime or violence;

(2) support the development and delivery of intervention-based strategies by entities that provide targeted services to individuals who are victims affected by crime or violence and are at risk of being victimized by or engaging in violence, in order to interrupt cycles of violence, reinjury, and retaliation;

(3) support initiatives that primarily target a reduction of violence among individuals who are victims affected by crime or violence and have been identified as having the highest risk of perpetrating or being victimized again by violence in the near future ;

(4) ensure that a sufficient portion of the available grant funding is provided to support programs directed at providing public awareness, outreach, assistance or intervention services to victims of firearm violence offered at community locations such as hospitals where individuals may be encountered in the immediate aftermath of a violent incident; and

(5) conduct annual assessments of the needs of communities demonstrably affected by firearm violence to ensure program funds are used effectively.

b. In awarding grants, the Office of the Attorney General shall prioritize the following applicants:

(1) a not-for-profit hospital or a not-for-profit entity operating within, on behalf of, or in partnership with a hospital which operates or is applying to operate a hospital-based or hospital-linked violence intervention program, which provides services in a municipality that has a disproportionately high rate of firearm violence or homicide and is designated as a Level One or Level Two trauma center, under the provisions of P.L.2013, c.233 (C.26:2KK-1 et seq.) and the regulations adopted pursuant thereto, as defined in subsection e. of this section; or

(2) applicants operating in areas disproportionately affected by firearm violence, and whose proposals demonstrate the greatest likelihood of reducing, through targeted services, the rate and number of homicides and other incidents involving the use of firearms in the community served by the applicant without contributing to mass incarceration.

Applicants may apply either independently or jointly.

c. The amount of funds awarded to an applicant shall not be limited to a specific amount and shall be commensurate with:

(1) levels of firearm violence in the community served by the applicant; (2) the scope of the applicant's proposal; and

(3) the applicant's demonstrated need for additional resources to effectively reduce the rate and numbers of homicides and other incidents involving the use of firearms in the community served by the applicant.

d. A grantee may use the grant awarded to supplement, but not replace, funding that would otherwise be made available to address firearm, group, and community violence in the grantee's community.

e. As used in this section:

"Hospital-based or hospital-linked violence intervention program" means a program that is operated by a not-for-profit hospital, or by a person or entity who is contracted to operate a program within, on behalf of, or in partnership with a hospital, and which works to end cycles of violence through the provision of intensive counseling, case management, and social services to patients who are recovering from gunshot wounds and other injuries resulting from violence.

#### C.52:17B-242.4 Application for grant.

4. Application for a grant shall be made in a manner and form as determined by the Office of the Attorney General. A formal Notice of Availability of Funding shall be posted prior to the time for acceptance of applications. However, at a minimum, in applying for the grant, the applicant shall provide:

a. a description of how the applicant proposes to use the grant funds to implement an evidence-based violence reduction initiative pursuant to the provisions of this act;

b. a description of how the applicant proposes to use the grant funds to promote or improve coordination among agencies, organizations, and any already-existing violence reduction strategies or programs, in order to minimize duplication of services and achieve maximum impact;

c. objective evidence indicating that the applicant's proposed violence reduction initiative would likely reduce rates of homicides and other incidents involving the use of firearms; and

d. clearly defined, measurable objectives for the violence reduction initiative.

#### C.52:17B-242.5 Use of funds for technical assistance, implementation and administration of program.

5. The Office of the Attorney General may use up to eight percent of the funds appropriated or made available, or such percentage as may be authorized under program guidelines for funding made available to the New Jersey Violence Intervention Program through federal funding sources, for technical assistance and for the costs of implementing and administering the program, including but not limited to employment of dedicated grants management and programmatic personnel, and annual program evaluation and analysis of the effectiveness of violence reduction initiatives. These evaluations shall be made available to the public.

#### C.52:17B-242.6 Three annual public hearings.

6. The Office of the Attorney General shall annually hold three public hearings: one hearing in each of the northern, central, and southern regions of the State. The public hearings shall provide a forum to receive information on how the public funds are spent, testimony from grant award recipients on the effectiveness of their programs and best practices, and input from the public on whether the initiatives and the grant funded programs

are accomplishing their respective missions. Public input shall be used to assess whether the grant-making metrics and process for issuing grants needs to be revised.

C.52:17B-242.7 Annual report to Governor, Legislature.

7. The Office of the Attorney General shall report annually to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature, on the activities of the program. The report shall include a listing of the grants awarded under the program, descriptions of the initiatives and impact on the communities served through the grants, and such other information as the Attorney General deems appropriate.

The report shall include, but not be limited to:

- (1) a list of all grant applicants and approved grant applicants;
- (2) the amounts awarded to approved grant applicants;
- (3) the amount of matching funds and types of in-kind contributions provided by approved grant applicants; and
- (4) a status report on the activities funded by an approved grant applicant.

C.52:17B-242.8 Funding from federal government.

8. a. The Office of the Attorney General may seek money from the federal government, including but not limited to Victims of Crime Act grants, private foundations, and any other source to fund this initiative.

b. Available federal funding under the "Victims of Crime Act of 1984," 42 U.S.C. s.10601 et seq., may, to the extent permitted by federal law, be used to award grants for initiatives authorized under this section and to promote the purposes of the New Jersey Violence Intervention Program, which funding shall be in addition to any other funds appropriated, contributed, awarded, or otherwise provided for these purposes. The Attorney General may establish or provide for such additional conditions, limitations, and requirements on New Jersey Violence Intervention Program applicants and grantees as he or she deems appropriate to promote the purposes of this section and to ensure that any grants relying on federal funding sources or participation are awarded in compliance with federal law.

9. The act shall take effect on the first day of the third month following enactment.

Approved January 20, 2020.