

May 23, 2022

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot
121 N. LaSalle St. Unit 507
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Mayor Lightfoot,

We, the undersigned organizations, representing thousands of Chicago's residents, advocates, service providers, and policy experts, are writing to call on your office to change course in attempts to address violence in our city.

Each summer, our communities suffer from heightened gun violence as temperatures rise. We know that gun violence plaguing our city is rooted in economic disinvestment and instability. Across the country, gun violence has risen sharply throughout the pandemic, a time when many have not had their basic needs met. While in recent years, you have talked more about prioritizing community investments and violence interruption, your public responses to violence in the press continue to insist on more pretrial jailing, which has been shown to destabilize communities and exacerbate the violence we're all working to address. You have repeatedly blamed violence on local criminal legal system reforms without evidence, ignoring the fact that violence has increased all over the country, even where reforms have not been implemented. You have even advocated for new laws and practices that would incarcerate more people pretrial. These punitive policies and rhetoric are damaging to our collective efforts to attain true community safety. Our city has the second highest per capita spending on police in the country and is home to the country's largest single-site jail, yet our neighborhoods are still continually subjected to high levels of gun violence.

This year, we say no more. We cannot accept more of the same harmful narratives and policies from City Hall that sideline the root causes of violence and criminalize community members, all while failing to meaningfully invest in what truly keeps us safe.

Our communities' greatest resource is its people, and it is harmful when our mayor insists that systemic problems will be solved by simply arresting and locking more of our neighbors away. We are calling on you to abandon these policies that have failed to keep us safe, and focus on investing in:

- Community-based violence interruption programs
- Supportive resources for survivors of violence, including gender-based violence
- Restorative justice
- Youth programs
- Stable affordable housing
- Good paying jobs with benefits
- Quality public mental and physical health care

These are the resources that our communities need to thrive, and as long as punishment is prioritized over these supports, we will not achieve community safety. We challenge you to honestly engage in conversations about the need to heal trauma and address structural inequity to make Chicago communities safer. As long as trauma is punished instead of healed, our city will remain trapped in cycles of violence. As long as we fail to redress the economic inequities that precede community violence, we will not be able to stop it. As long as we rely on the systems that have harmed us, we will continue to get the same results.

Tackling violence at the root is a challenging feat, especially when it is entrenched by decades of systemic disinvestment. However, investing in real, deep healing will be worth it, and can prevent more lives from being destroyed or lost to punitive, reactive, and ruthless systems of punishment. Chicagoans of various neighborhoods, socioeconomic backgrounds, and identities have long called for restorative approaches to addressing violence in our communities; this most notably includes [survivors of violence](#). Our city is ready to take a public health approach to addressing this long standing issue. As mayor, you have the opportunity and responsibility to move our city forward this summer, beyond the cycles of bloodshed and blame, and into progress toward a future where we all can truly thrive. Please rise to the occasion so that our city can rise as well.

Thank you for your consideration,

ACLU-Illinois
AIDS Foundation Chicago
A Just Harvest
American Friends Service Committee:
Chicago
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |
Chicago
Black Lives Matter: Chicago
Black and Pink: Chicago
BPI
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Cabrin Green Legal Aid
Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition
Chicago Afrosocialists and Socialists of
Color
Chicago Alliance Against Sexual
Exploitation (CAASE)
Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts
Chicago Council of Lawyers
Chicago Community Bond Fund
Chicago Democratic Socialists of America
Chicago Freedom School

Chicago Teachers Union
Chicago Torture Justice Center
Chicago Votes Action Fund
Children's Best Interest Project
Children and Family Justice Center
Circles and Ciphers
Collaborative for Community
Wellness
Communities United
Community Renewal Society
Covenant United Church of Christ--Rev. Dr.
Patrick L. Daymond
Criminal Justice Task Force,
First Unitarian Church of Chicago
Equity and Transformation (EAT)
First Defense Legal Aid
Fully Free Coalition
GoodKids MadCity
Grassroots Collaborative
HANA Center
Illinois Alliance for Reentry & Justice
Illinois Office of the MacArthur Justice

Center

Indivisible Chicago Alliance
Indivisible Chicago-South Side
Indivisible IL9
Indivisible Lakeview | Lincoln Park
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs
John Howard Association
League of Women Voters of Chicago
Liberation Library
Live Free Illinois
Love & Protect
Moms United Against Violence and
Incarceration
National Lawyers Guild: Chicago
Nehemiah Trinity Rising
Nikkei Uprising
Northside Transformative Law Center
ONE Northside
Palenque LSNA
People's Law Office
Parole Illinois
Pride Action Tank
Renaissance Social Services, Inc.
Restore Justice
Revolution Workshop
Social Service Workers United Chicago
Southsiders Organized for Unity and
Liberation (SOUL)
STOP - Southside Together Organizing for
Power
The People's Lobby
The Uplift
Trinity United Church of Christ
United Working Families
Uptown People's Law Center
Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of
Illinois
Westside Justice Center