



Legislation Text

File #: RES. 2021-R029, **Version:** 1

To declare gun violence as a public health crisis in the city of Richmond.

WHEREAS, every day, more than 100 Americans are killed with guns and more than 230 are shot and wounded;
and

WHEREAS, when it comes to gun violence in the United States, more than one-third of gun deaths are
homicides; and

WHEREAS, the United States gun homicide rate is 25 times higher than the homicide rate of other high-income
countries; and

WHEREAS, gun homicides are concentrated in cities-half of all gun homicides took place in just 127 cities,
which represented nearly a quarter of the United States population, and within these cities, gun homicides are most
prevalent in racially segregated neighborhoods with high rates of poverty; and

WHEREAS, Black Americans represent the majority of gun homicide victims with Black Americans ten times
more likely than White Americans to die by gun homicide; and

WHEREAS, firearms are the leading cause of death for American children and teens, with more than 1,800
children and teens dying by gun homicide every year; and

WHEREAS, Black children and teens are 14 times more likely than White children and teens of the same age to
die by gun homicide; and

WHEREAS, Virginia has 1,019 gun deaths every year, with a rate of 11.7 deaths per 100,000 people; and

WHEREAS, one-quarter of all gun homicides in Virginia occur in three areas: Richmond, Norfolk, and Newport
News; and

WHEREAS, in Richmond, the year-to-date homicide rate has increased 16 percent since 2020; and

WHEREAS, in Richmond, gun violence has a far more significant impact on young people, with the rate of firearm deaths for youth ages 10 through 24 being more than three times the national rate in 2017; and

WHEREAS, cities across the nation, including Richmond, are working to end the senseless violence with evidence-based solutions; and

WHEREAS, it is the belief of the Mayor and the Council that the issue of gun violence in Richmond is rooted in racial and health inequities and injustices experienced for generations by people of color; and

WHEREAS, communities across the country require multidisciplinary solutions that address violence's root causes; and

WHEREAS, protecting public safety in the communities they serve is one of the Mayor's and the Council's highest responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, by Ordinance No. 2019-165, adopted July 1, 2019, the Mayor introduced and the Council adopted a law currently codified as section 19-335 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, which prohibits, generally, the possession, carrying, or transportation of firearms in any building owned or used by the City, in any public park owned or operated by the City, in any recreation or community center, or in any public right-of-way used by or adjacent to a permitted event; and

WHEREAS, by Ordinance No. 2019-289, adopted November 12, 2019, the Mayor introduced and the Council adopted a law currently codified as section 19-336 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, which imposes a requirement that lost or stolen firearms be reported to the Department of Police and prescribes a civil penalty for violations of that section; and

WHEREAS, it is the belief of the Mayor and the Council that sections 19-335 and 19-336 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended, together, are vital pieces of legislation; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and the Council recognize the need to provide positive and safe environments for

children through community programming; and

WHEREAS, the City has worked with community partners to expand out-of-school time programming for all elementary and middle-school students; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor proposed a new Community Safety Coordinator position within the budget of the Office of the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Human Services for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2022, to focus on gun violence prevention and other means of increasing community safety; and

WHEREAS, the City's Administration, specifically the Department of Police, supports and participates in effective gun violence prevention community programming, such as RVA League for Safer Streets; and

WHEREAS, gun violence prevention is more important than ever as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate gun violence after more than a year of increased gun sales, increased calls to suicide and domestic violence hotlines, and an increase in gun violence within the city of Richmond; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and the Council believe that it is in the best interests of the residents of the city of Richmond that the Mayor and the Council support the collaboration between Richmond residents, Virginia Commonwealth University, VCU Health Systems, Richmond City Health District, and the City of Richmond to establish an evidence-based public health response to address the underlying social, economic, and systemic factors that promote gun violence; and

WHEREAS, this collaboration, informally known as Richmond's Gun Violence Prevention framework, is designed to guarantee that those directly impacted by gun violence, community members, and direct service providers have an opportunity to be heard by the Mayor, the Council, and the City's Administration and includes key elements such as (i) hospital-based crisis intervention and intensive case management for families, friends, and survivors of violence; (ii) community-based credible messengers program and trauma response to build engagement and connections in communities that have experienced high rates of crime and unrest; (iii) grassroots support to build capacity and empower local organizations to do their work more effectively; and (iv) the establishment of a shooting and homicide review board comprised of a variety of stakeholders to assess shooting and homicide cases and provide insight into the nature of

homicides from individual, community, social determinants of health and root cause perspectives in an effort to better understand the issue of gun violence and prevent future shootings; and

WHEREAS, the foregoing model was presented during the May 6, 2021, meeting of the Education and Human Services Standing Committee and, upon information and belief of the Mayor and the Council, has received support from Representative A. Donald McEachin through his Community Programs submissions to the House Committee on Appropriations; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council believe that it is in the best interests of the residents of the city of Richmond that the Mayor and the Council declare that gun violence as a public health crisis in the city of Richmond;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the Council hereby joins the Mayor in declaring that gun violence is a public health crisis in the city of Richmond.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council joins the Mayor in applauding the collaboration between Richmond residents, Virginia Commonwealth University, VCU Health Systems, the Richmond City Health District, and the City of Richmond to establish an evidence-based public health response to address the underlying social, economic, and systemic factors that promote gun violence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council supports the Mayor's efforts to expand employment, workforce, and mentoring opportunities for youth and young adults as an evidence-based practice of reducing gun violence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That the Council supports the expansion of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities' programming to foster positive and safe environments for children and families.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That the Council appreciates the work that the General Assembly did last year to address gun violence in Virginia and calls upon the General Assembly to go even further by enacting legislation to achieve the following:

1. Restrictions on large capacity ammunition magazines;
2. A waiting period between the time of purchase and the actual physical transfer of a firearm;
3. A law requiring gun owners or purchasers to obtain a license;
4. A prohibition on individuals convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors possessing firearms or ammunition;
5. A ban on the open carrying of firearms on public property; and
6. Appropriations providing for ongoing community violence intervention funding through allocations from the Commonwealth of Virginia's general fund to ensure the sustainability of such intervention programs.