

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  
Cabrini 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 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  
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