

HB 1028
March 8, 2023
Testimony for March 10, 2023
Environmental & Transportation Committee
Sponsor: Delegate Marlon Amprey

My name is Elaine Arndt, and I'm providing testimony favor of bill HB 1028. I'm a Baltimore City resident in District 46. I am providing this testimony as a volunteer gun violence prevention activist and organizer in Baltimore, working, in a large part, with survivors of gun violence. I am not an expert in physiology or mental health, but I would like to share the research that has matched most closely to my experience in working with gun violence survivors.

I would like to highlight the following research for the committee to consider:

First, "community trauma" from individual or serial events is documented and a topic of concern in Black communities where gun violence is present.

"Howard Pinderhughes is one researcher who is making crucial contributions to understanding and building a vocabulary for this concept. He and his colleagues at the Prevention Institute describe community trauma as symptoms of illness that extend beyond individuals who directly witness violence in communities characterized by high levels of violence. Community trauma results from the accumulation and interaction of many forms of violence, including gun violence. It also includes exposure to structural violence such as underinvestment in health care, schools, and housing. And it encompasses historical violence such as the legacy of slavery or predatory housing and banking practices. While this work is not exclusive to Black communities, the Prevention Institute's framework was developed based on work in predominantly Black communities in Northern California. Some Americans live in communities where gun violence is persistent, and vigilance against it is a necessary part of surviving everyday life. Still other Americans live in communities where gun violence is exceedingly rare. These are places where children never need to cover their ears until the gunfire stops, never attend the funeral of a cousin felled by gunfire."

The report goes on to describe how repeated incidents, such as hearing gunfire, can further extend the effects of trauma on individuals and the community.

Full report:

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/invisible-wounds-gun-violence-and-community-trauma-among-black-americans/>

Second, Black communities are not the only ones affected by gun violence. Survivors of gun violence live and work in every community across this country, and have to deal with the after effects for years to come.

"Experiencing gun violence has lasting emotional, physical, legal, and financial impacts on survivors as well as their communities. The breadth and diversity of the survivor experience is directly related to the wide-ranging nature of America's gun violence crisis...Identifying as a survivor of gun violence encompasses many different experiences: witnessing an act of gun violence, receiving threats with or being wounded by a gun, or having someone you know or care for wounded or killed with a gun."

This report goes on to describe the wide-ranging effects of gun violence.

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-survivors-in-america/>

Finally, researchers have noted the harmful effects of the sounds of gunfire on children. Findings from several studies at the National Institute of Health describe the issues associated with children's exposure to gun violence and gunfire. One abstract notes:

“In total, 41% of youth in this study reported ever seeing or hearing gun violence; 32% had such an experience in the past year. Among exposed youth, 50% took protective action to keep themselves safe, and 58% reported being very or extremely afraid, sad, or upset as a result of the indirect gun violence. More youth living in urban compared with nonurban areas took some protective action. Females and younger children had increased odds of experiencing high fear as a result of the violence. Current gun violence prevention has typically targeted adolescents; however, current findings suggest the need to focus on younger children as well, including the distress resulting from indirect exposure to gun violence.”

Research documentation here:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31179801/>

So, due to the issues surrounding community trauma in Black neighborhoods, in our communities in general, and on children in particular, I support limits on the places where gunfire can be heard by surrounding communities as stated in HB 1028. I respectfully request a favorable report.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Elaine Arndt
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