

CALIFORNIA PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES

G.A.P. Gang Awareness and Prevention



FRESNO BARRIOS UNIDOS
Advocacy • Education • Wellness



PICO National Network
Unlocking the Power of People™



Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice



VIA FAX & EMAIL

February 9, 2017

The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell
Chair, Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: The Need for Continued Funding for the California Gang Reduction, Intervention & Prevention (CalGRIP) Grant Program

Dear Chair Mitchell,

The undersigned organizations work to champion and implement evidence-based, community-driven strategies to interrupt cycles of violence and recidivism in California's most impacted and historically underserved communities.

We strongly urge you to work to reauthorize funding for the California Gang Reduction, Intervention & Prevention (CalGRIP) Program in this year's Budget Act to sustain our state's important investment in the safety and well-being of our cities and young people. CalGRIP is one of the only sources of state-level funding for locally driven violence prevention strategies. The Governor's proposal to eliminate this program could have dire consequences, particularly in under-resourced urban communities that need stronger and more targeted investment from the state, not less.

In recent years, CalGRIP grantee cities across California have achieved lifesaving, cost-effective reductions in both violent crime and incarceration by implementing programs that provide focused outreach, counseling, and other services to youth identified as at-risk, and by developing coordinated agency responses to group-related retaliatory violence.ⁱ Many of these strategies have been directly supported by CalGRIP funding. For example:

- CalGRIP has provided Los Angeles \$3 million over the past 3 years to help fund its Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) program. Los Angeles has seen a 38% reduction in homicides and 46% reduction in aggravated assaults since launching GRYD in 2007.ⁱⁱ
- Over the past three years, CalGRIP has provided the City of Richmond \$1.5 million to help fund the Office of Neighborhood Safety—a city agency dedicated exclusively to the prevention of violence. Richmond has seen a 53% drop in gun homicides and a 45% drop in non-fatal shootings since ONS launched the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship program in 2010.ⁱⁱⁱ

CalGRIP has also funded after-school youth programming, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, tattoo removal programs, violent conflict mediations, case management programs, and other services that have historically been scarce in communities hit hardest by violence. Tens of thousands of Californians have received direct services funded by CalGRIP, including at least 6,700 who participated in educational or employment-related programs from January 2015 to September 2016.^{iv} Unfortunately, these programs' progress and future are in jeopardy because the Governor's Proposed Budget seeks to entirely eliminate funding for CalGRIP.

Background on CalGRIP

For nearly a decade, California's Budget Acts have appropriated \$9.215 million from the Restitution Fund every year to fund CalGRIP, a grant program to cities that provide a dollar-for-dollar match to implement evidence-based programs to reduce youth and group-related crime and violence. The Budget Acts have set aside one million dollars annually for the City of Los Angeles, with the remainder distributed to other cities of all sizes through a competitive application process administered by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). The Budget Acts have also required that grantees distribute at least 20% of CalGRIP funds toward community-based organizations. According to BSCC records, in recent years cities have chosen to direct a majority of CalGRIP funding to community-based organizations. CalGRIP is currently administered on a three-year grant cycle that will end at the close of this year.

Through local funding matches, CalGRIP will have leveraged over \$55 million dollars in investments in 19 cities across the state from 2015-2017, providing important support for these cities' innovative initiatives to provide expanded opportunities and safer streets to their most vulnerable residents.

The Need to Reauthorize Funding for CalGRIP

CalGRIP's roughly \$9.2 million annual appropriation is considerably smaller than most of the state's other public safety grant programs—but it is uniquely important.

First, CalGRIP awards grants directly to cities who are well-positioned to identify and fund effective community-based organizations and approaches to violence prevention. Community-based organizations are uniquely positioned to have a detailed and nuanced understanding of the neighborhood-level dynamics of group-related violence in their own communities, and of how service providers and intervention programs can have the greatest local impact. CalGRIP also offers a mechanism for investing in community-based organizations and approaches to violence prevention. While recent years' Budget Acts have supplemented CalGRIP with millions of dollars in additional appropriations to specific cities' counter-violence programs, the Governor's Proposed Budget includes no such funding this year, further magnifying the impact CalGRIP's elimination would have on counter-violence work across our state.

Second, CalGRIP is the only state grant focused on systematically reducing the incidence and impact of group retaliatory violence, which is a significant factor driving shootings and homicide in particular in California's cities. Without continued state-level support, local funding matches and city-level investment for programs focused on this work could disappear entirely in many cases.

Third, other states, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York, have provided much stronger and more targeted state funding for violence prevention programs in their communities than California and have also reduced their rates of violent crime more than we have. Though we are mindful of the current fiscal and political climate and of the need to make tough choices, now is not the time to cut the relatively small yet critical investment our state has made in evidence-based initiatives to address violent crime.

Finally, the impact of these proposed cuts would be disproportionately felt in already under-resourced communities who also most frequently endure the profound trauma caused by violence. African Americans were 8 times more likely to be murdered in California than their white neighbors in 2015; Latinos were twice as likely. African American youth aged 10-20 were 12 times as likely to be murdered as their white peers; Latino youth were three times as likely. Investing in programs proven to reduce rates of violent crime in heavily impacted communities is an issue of both public safety and equity.

Recommendations for Reauthorizing CalGRIP

To ensure that CalGRIP funds are spent as effectively as possible, we propose that CalGRIP's enabling language in the Budget Act also include the following modifications to the CalGRIP program:

- Cities applying for CalGRIP funds should be required to provide clearly defined, measurable objectives for their grant proposals. Grant recipients should also be required to provide the BSCC with quantifiable measures of progress in meeting those objectives. Moreover, the BSCC should report to the Legislature once per funding cycle about the overall effectiveness of CalGRIP.
- To ensure that CalGRIP funds are directed to communities where they can have maximal impact, we recommend that in scoring CalGRIP grant proposals, the BSCC should be required to prioritize proposals from cities that are disproportionately and persistently affected by violence. The BSCC should also be required to prioritize proposals that would direct resources to programs that have been shown to be the most effective at reducing violence.
- The minimum threshold of funds grantees are required to distribute to community-based organizations (currently 20%) should be substantially increased, and eligibility for primary applications should be extended to community-based organizations. These changes would align with the recent trend of grantees to direct the majority (over 50%) of funds to effective community-based organizations.
- To reflect modern, evidence-based approaches to achieving reductions in crime and violence, we recommend that CalGRIP's name be amended to the California Violence Reduction, Intervention & Prevention (CalVRIP) Grant Program.

We respectfully urge you to work to sustain California's existing grant funding structure for this important work.

Sincerely,

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Fernando Rejón
Urban Peace Institute

Anne Marks
Youth ALIVE!

Kim McGill
Youth Justice Coalition

cc: Chair Nancy Skinner, Senate Budget Subcommittee #5 on Corrections, Public Safety and the Judiciary
Senator Joel Anderson, Budget Subcommittee #5 on Corrections, Public Safety and the Judiciary
Senator Jim Beall, Budget Subcommittee #5 on Corrections, Public Safety and the Judiciary

ⁱ Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence and PICO National Network, *Healing Communities in Crisis: Lifesaving solutions to the Urban Gun Violence Epidemic* (Mar. 10, 2016), available at <http://smartgunlaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Healing-Communities-in-Crisis-4.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Compiled using Offense Table 8 of 2004-2015 Uniform Crime Reports data. "Crime in the U.S.," Federal Bureau of Investigation, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Compiled using the following sources: "2013 Summary Report," Office of Neighborhood Safety, <http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/28431>; Wayne Drash and Tawanda Scott Sambou, "Paying kids not to kill," CNN, May 20, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/19/health/cash-for-criminals-richmond-california>.

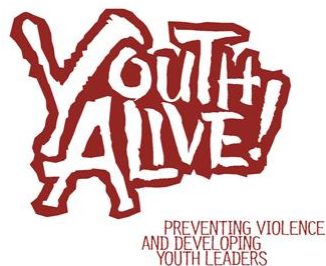
^{iv} According to records obtained from the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC).



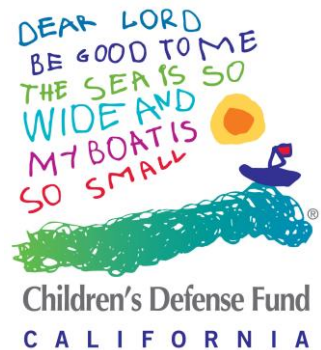
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