



July 16, 2024

The Honorable Mike DeWine
Governor, State of Ohio
77 S. High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

On behalf of our bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's 31 largest cities, we write to you today with respect for the support that you have provided to Ohio's local governments, but also with continued concerns about the persistent challenge of gun violence and easy access to firearms among far too many young people in Ohio.

Over the last two years, our cities have made significant investments in public safety and our local law enforcement professionals have made great strides to reduce violent crime in our communities. In most cities across Ohio, firearm-related homicides have decreased this year. However, as the summer months have begun, we have seen a troubling spasm of gun violence in our communities, which has resulted in multiple homicides, at least three separate mass shootings, and numerous victims under the age of 18.

We know that firearms alone are not to blame. The individuals that perpetrate these crimes and engage in these deadly acts of gun violence must be held accountable and prosecuted to fullest extent of the law. However, the availability of firearms and the ease with which they are acquired are significant contributing factors to the scourge of gun violence in our communities and across Ohio.

Most troubling is the ease with which young people can access firearms. According to data from the CDC, firearms are now the leading cause of death for children and youth in Ohio and across the country. This includes the tragic reality that young people with access to firearms are two to three times more likely to successfully complete a suicide attempt.

As policymakers, with a shared concern for Ohio's youth, we must do more to keep firearms out of the hands of children and reduce the alarming trend of young people perpetrating

or becoming victims of gun violence in Ohio. As such, we would like to share the following solution-oriented recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** Establish a state-level research unit dedicated to supporting cities and local law enforcement agencies with analysis, research, and best-practice data sharing focused on the prevention of firearm-related deaths in Ohio, including homicides, suicides, and accidental deaths.
- **Recommendation 2:** Double-down on targeted state grants to cities and local law enforcement agencies for technology supports and other data-driven strategies that are working to reduce violent crime, such as the Ohio Violent Crime Reduction Grant Program.
- **Recommendation 3:** Reduce the number of stolen firearms that are being used in violent crimes by promoting awareness and enforcement of ORC 2923.20 (A)(7) to ensure that lawful gun owners know the consequences for not reporting a lost or stolen firearm.
- **Recommendation 4:** Leverage the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Standards to incentivize more Ohio law enforcement agencies to input recovered crime gun information into the eTrace system and to share that tracing data across all law enforcement jurisdictions.
- **Recommendation 5:** Re-engage legislative leaders on necessary state law changes that will help reduce gun violence and improve public safety in Ohio, with a specific focus on youth violence and reducing access to firearms among teens and adolescents.

We also need to do more as state and local officials, and as parents and community leaders, to educate young people about the tragedies that can occur when carrying a firearm or even playing with a fake gun in public. There have been too many officer-involved shootings where a young person was carrying a replica firearm or did not comply with officer commands and that interaction ended in tragedy. We must raise awareness on these issues and make sure that young people do not inadvertently put themselves in harm's way.

In addition to working with you and your administration on these recommendations, we are also bringing together other partners to engage with us on the challenges of public safety in Ohio. This year, we have been convening association leaders in the business, healthcare, and law enforcement communities. Our goal has been to establish a statewide, cross-sector coalition to build a shared understanding of the problems, impacts, and potential solutions to reduce crime and improve public safety.

The challenge of public safety and gun violence isn't just a big city issue or local law enforcement challenge. It impacts all of us. When shootings occur in neighborhoods and high-profile entertainment districts it devastates the families of the victims, terrorizes our communities, and hurts the small businesses that drive our economy. Excessive gun violence also strains our healthcare institutions and makes the job of law enforcement harder and more dangerous. We must come together – public and private sectors, state and local leaders - to reduce violent crime and improve public safety in our communities and across Ohio.

We believe this statewide public safety coalition and our ongoing partnership with your administration can have an impact. We look forward to discussing these recommendations in more detail and continuing to work with you on the urgent challenge of youth violence and improved public safety.

Respectfully submitted,

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Ohio Mayors Alliance Board of Directors

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Ohio Mayors Alliance Board of Directors

Mayor Mitch Rhodus, City of Fairfield
Ohio Mayors Alliance Board of Directors

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Mayor Tim DeGeeter, City of Parma
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Mayor Tito Brown, City of Youngstown
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