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New coalition to tackle Philadelphia's gun violence

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Sharmain Matlock-Turner, president/CEO of the Urban Affairs Coalition, says “Together, as a city, we have the resources, support and commitment to save lives.”
—TRIBUNE PHOTO/ABDUL R. SULAYMAN

As gun violence and crime continues to plague the city of Philadelphia, businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and other leading institutions have been stuck wondering what they can do to help curb the issue.

In response, The Philadelphia Foundation and the William Penn Foundation, in partnership with Urban Affairs Coalition, Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, and the Philadelphia Equity Alliance, are creating the Coalition to Save Lives — a coalition consisting of 70 groups representing a cross-section of community and faith-based organizations, nonprofits and the business community in an attempt to increase collaboration and implement proven strategies geared towards reducing gun violence.

“Last year there were 562 homicides in our city. The vast majority — 506 people — were lost to gun violence. We are on a similar pace this year,” said Pedro Ramos, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Foundation. “The future of Philadelphia is at stake and we are all stakeholders who have a shared responsibility to step forward and contribute to effect change.

“Government has a crucial role to play, but government can’t do it alone. This public crisis demands civic leadership and coordinated civic action.”

City officials such as Mayor Jim Kenney and Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw have expressed their appreciation for the coalition, welcoming the support in efforts to end Philadelphia's gun violence epidemic.

“Gun violence destroys lives, damages communities, and diminishes the well-being of our entire city,” Kenney said. “We know that reducing shootings in our communities requires effective, targeted approaches for those most likely to commit or become a victim of violence, and we are appreciative that the Coalition to Save Lives is working with us to deepen and strengthen our intervention work.”

“The Philadelphia Police Department has always been clear that we need the support and collaboration of community stakeholders in order to reduce crime in our precious neighborhoods,” Outlaw said. “We are grateful to the Civic Coalition for their partnership in our continuous mission towards making Philadelphia a safer place to live, work, and play.”

According to the coalition, its goal is to reduce gun violence within the city annually by providing community organizations already doing the work with data, tools and resources.

The coalition is also looking to increase coordination between city government departments, direct service providers, and other stakeholders responsible for public safety.

The coalition points towards cities like Indianapolis, which have seen reductions in gun violence deaths by more than 17% the past year due to its shared gun violence strategy amongst its city government, law enforcement, and community organizations, as an example of what it is trying to emulate.

“This violence affects our entire city and impacts the health and well-being of individuals, and whole communities in too many neighborhoods,” said Sharmain Matlock-Turner, president and CEO of the Urban Affairs Coalition and a founding member of the Coalition to Save Lives. “We know that change will not happen overnight, but there is reason for hope.

“Together, as a city, we have the resources, support and commitment to save lives.”

In order to learn more about the coalition, visit their website at www.savephillylives.org.

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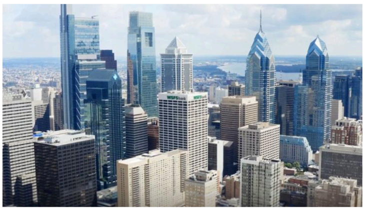

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