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Philly leaders, organizations come together to form new coalition to combat gun violence

The Coalition to Save Lives is a coalition of 70 groups, consisting of nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and other institutions across the city.

By Jensen Toussaint
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Gun violence has been plaguing the city of Philadelphia for several years now, as the city has seen an increase in homicide deaths each year since 2016.

As gun violence has continued across the city, leaders, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and various other institutions have been brainstorming ways to combat this serious issue.

To this effect, the Philadelphia Foundation and the William Penn Foundation have partnered with the Urban Affairs Coalition, the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Equity Alliance to create the Coalition to Save Lives.

The coalition consists of 70 groups representing a cross-section of community and faith-based organizations, nonprofits and the business community to increase collaboration and implement proven strategies geared toward reducing gun violence.

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Last year, Philadelphia witnessed 562 homicides — 506 of those lives were lost to gun violence.

"We are on a similar pace this year," said Pedro Ramos, CEO of the Philadelphia Foundation, in a statement. "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."

The Coalition to Save Lives aims to provide the collaboration, data, tools, and resources to drive evidence-based, human-centered, sustainable strategies toward reducing gun violence, and is modeled toward strategies that have proven successful in other cities.

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In Oakland, California, a similar strategy led to a 46% reduction in homicides and a 50% reduction in non-fatal shootings over a six-year period, while Indianapolis, Indiana, began the same effort at the start of the year, and to date, has seen a 17% reduction on homicides and a 14% reduction in non-fatal shootings.

"This violence affects our entire city and impacts the health and well-being of individuals, and whole communities in too many neighborhoods. We know that change will not happen overnight, but there is reason for hope," said Sharmain Matlock-Turner, president and CEO of the Urban Affairs Coalition. "Together, as a city, we have the resources, support and commitment to save lives. There is nothing more important we can do for the city than to address the gun violence crisis."

City officials — including Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw, Mayor Jim Kenney, Council President Darrell Clarke, District Attorney Larry Krasner, and Managing Director Tumar Alexander — have all thrown their support for this new coalition.

The Coalition's three core pillars are:

- Coordination: Establishing an intervention coordination center that will help to expand the capacity, effectiveness, and coordination of the city's intervention efforts.
- Resources: Forming a Community Safety civic resource board that will provide experts and resources from the business and civic community to support the effort.
- Information: Launching a Community Safety information campaign to keep stakeholders current on obstacles, successes, and evidence-based strategies to combat gun violence.

"We believe that the solution to gun violence requires all of us to work together — government, civic leaders, businesses, and faith-based organizations — acting with a sense of urgency and resolute commitment," said Mike Innocenzo, President and CEO and Chair of the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia.

To learn about the Coalition to Save Lives, visit their website here.

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