

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS SHEILA KUEHL AND
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

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Addressing the Epidemic of Gun Violence in Our Communities

Over the past several years we have witnessed an escalating number of tragic mass shootings across the country. As these horrific events have become more commonplace we may begin to blur the details, but we certainly remember the names – Parkland, Florida; Aurora, Colorado; Newton, Connecticut; Las Vegas, Nevada; San Bernardino, California and so many others. While these mass shootings often capture our attention and break our hearts, they represent only a small fraction of the true devastation that gun violence wreaks on our nation. Every year we lose 33,000 of our loved ones to gun violence in America, including 1500 children. And another 85,000 of our community members sustain injuries due to gun violence annually.

The statistics for Los Angeles County are no less distressing. On average, at least three people die every day in the County due to firearms. Data from our Department of Public Health indicates that between 2004 and 2013, homicide was a leading cause of premature death for the entire County population. Only heart disease took more of our County neighbors at an early age. Gun violence takes an especially

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heavy toll on our children and young adults, particularly among minorities and males in the county's most underserved communities. It is also important to recognize that gun violence is not only directed at others but is the leading method of suicide, too. In fact, nearly one-third of all firearm deaths in the county are suicides.

Although many attempt to portray gun violence as inevitable, it is, in fact, preventable. However, effectively combatting the epidemic of gun violence that is plaguing our communities will require a multi-prong approach.

In December 2015, just days after the attack on county public health department staff in San Bernardino, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas introduced a motion asking for a report with recommendations to prevent violence, including recommendations to adopt new gun violence prevention regulations. The Board received the report back to this motion in June of 2017. The report highlights that other counties and cities across California have successfully adopted constitutional gun control regulations that are stronger than our current County regulations. The County should examine the feasibility of adopting these regulations in order to better protect our residents. In addition to strengthening our local regulations, we must also support and seek legislation in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. that will maintain the health and safety of our communities.

The June 2017 report also notes that, although several County departments are engaged in a variety of violence prevention efforts, these initiatives are not organized or coordinated in a holistic manner. As the report notes, the County currently does not have the proper infrastructure to coordinate our own programs. Our Department of Mental Health has the START (School Threat Assessment and Response Teams) program, which endeavors to prevent violence in our schools. Our Department of Public

Health implements the Trauma Prevention Initiative and supports the Department of Parks and Recreation's Parks After Dark program, which has proven effective in increasing social cohesion and reducing gang violence by creating opportunities for residents to engage in health and recreation activities at the County's parks in the evenings. Our Sheriff's Department operates an effective gun buy-back program and also works with our Department of Mental Health and the District Attorney to provide training to law enforcement members so they are better equipped to work with mentally ill residents in a non-violent manner. However, too often these programs are disjointed and the County misses opportunities to better leverage the work that we are already doing in vulnerable communities. Establishing a single office of violence prevention that is responsible for coordinating the County's myriad violence prevention programs can be a first step towards the County's adoption of a more strategic approach to preventing gun violence in our County. Such an office will also be able to help the County identify the gaps in our current array of violence prevention programs.

The Department of Public Health currently has an Injury & Violence Prevention Program (IVPP), housed within the Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, that may be able to take on this role. The IVPP is currently tasked with surveillance of violence impacting County residents, providing technical assistance to county departments and initiatives, including Parks After Dark and Violence Against Women, and coordinating the Trauma Prevention Initiative, a place-based comprehensive violence prevention and intervention strategy. While IVPP may have the expertise to assume the responsibility of coordinating countywide violence prevention efforts, it currently lacks the resources and staffing to do so effectively. The County should consider expanding the scope and resources dedicated to IVPP, or creating a new

Office of Violence Prevention, so that it can lead the County in the development of a countywide violence prevention strategic planning process.

Gun violence destroys lives, families and communities. Youth have spoken up in Florida and here at home. Thoughts and prayers are not enough and Los Angeles County must do better.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Instruct County Counsel to provide a confidential legal analysis within 60 days of regulatory options available to the County, including, but not limited to, an analysis of the potential to withstand legal challenges of ordinances that would allow the County to:
 - a) Impose additional restrictions on the sale or possession of firearms by minors or individuals under 21 years of age;
 - b) Ban 50 caliber handguns;
 - c) Strengthen safe storage requirements; and
 - d) Adopt zoning regulations that would create a buffer zone between gun vendors and sensitive areas (e.g., schools and daycare centers).
- 2) Instruct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in consultation with County Counsel, to report back in 30 days with an overview of currently pending state gun control legislation, including any recommendations for support by the County of proposed legislation that would enhance the County's efforts to protect its residents and further strengthen gun control regulations.
- 3) Instruct the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the CEO to propose the infrastructure needed within the County in order to create and support a robust and integrated Countywide Violence Prevention Initiative. DPH and the CEO shall work

together to create an Office of Violence Prevention within the Department of Public Health that will initially be tasked with coordinating the County's various violence prevention efforts, and lead the County in a violence prevention strategic planning process:

- a) DPH and the CEO shall report back in 60 days with a plan outlining the staffing and resources needed to create the new Office of Violence Prevention. The report back shall consider the possibility of expanding the scope and responsibility of the Injury & Violence Prevention Program and transitioning that unit into a countywide Office of Violence Prevention. The report back shall also identify possible funding sources to support the ongoing costs associated with the staffing and operations of the new Office; and
- b) DPH shall report back in 90 days with an overview of how the Office of Violence Prevention, working with partner agencies, will develop and roll out a Countywide violence prevention strategic plan. This report back shall provide a strategic planning process timeline, identify resources needed to complete the strategic plan, and identify possible funding sources;
 - i) DPH shall work with a wide variety of partner agencies while developing their strategic plan, including internal County partner agencies such as the Department of Health Services, Department of Mental Health, Probation Department, Sheriff's Department, District Attorney, Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, LA County Office of Education, Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Child Protection, Office of Diversion and Re-entry, County Counsel, Coroner, and the Parks and Recreation Department. DPH shall also work with countywide initiatives, outside partner

agencies, and consortia, as well as community stakeholder groups and cities;
and

ii) The report back shall also include:

(1) An assessment of the County's current violence prevention programs as well as some of the violence prevention initiatives that have been successfully adopted in other jurisdictions, such as Cure Violence;

(2) A discussion of the value in developing violence prevention strategies that are specific to certain areas or neighborhoods in the County and the unique dynamics and issues, such as gang violence, that impact those areas; and

(3) An analysis of gaps in the County's current array of violence prevention programs.