



EXECUTIVE ORDER #254

Relating to Establishing the Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention

WHEREAS, on Dec. 16, 2024, students, educators, staff, and administrators at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison, Wisconsin, experienced a deadly school shooting, which took the lives of two innocent individuals, injured six others, and forever affected and changed the lives of many, including families in the greater Madison community and across the state of Wisconsin;

WHEREAS, gun violence, which includes but is not limited to gun suicides, gun homicides, domestic violence involving a firearm, and unintentional shootings, all have serious consequences for victims, survivors, and families across our state, often causing significant trauma, creating or perpetuating cycles of violence, and potentially resulting in physical injury, long-term health impacts, and even tragic loss of life;

WHEREAS, in every year since 2019, there have been more mass shootings in America than days in the year, according to data from the Gun Violence Archive;

WHEREAS, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that, as of 2020, firearms have been the leading cause of death for kids in America—surpassing car accidents and cancer—with gun death rates in this age group increasing by 106 percent over the last 11 years;

WHEREAS, additionally, data from the CDC further report that in 2022, there were more than 48,000 firearm-related deaths in America, the second highest year on record, with more than half of those firearm-related deaths being suicide;

WHEREAS, Wisconsin reported 932 suicides in 2022, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), nearly 60 percent of which involved a firearm;

WHEREAS, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin in 2023 reported that Wisconsin saw the second highest rate of domestic violence deaths in the state in over two decades, 78 percent of which involved firearms;

WHEREAS, the Evers Administration has spent six years working to address crime, reduce and prevent violence, and invest in evidence-based strategies to keep kids, families, schools, and communities safe, including directing over \$100 million for community violence prevention, combating reckless driving, supporting services for crime victims, survivors, and their families, raising awareness about Wisconsin's burgeoning mental health crisis, and working to expand access to mental and behavioral health services;

WHEREAS, according to data from the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Wisconsin has seen a nearly 21 percent decrease in homicide, a nearly 30

percent decrease in burglary, and an almost 50 percent decrease in motor vehicle theft statewide since 2021;

WHEREAS, while positive reports in Wisconsin indicate recent efforts to address various types of crime and community violence have helped reduce crime rates such as homicides, burglaries, and motor vehicle theft, gun violence persists and continues to have detrimental impacts on Wisconsinites and families in communities across our state;

WHEREAS, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, the rate of gun deaths has increased by 54 percent from 2014 to 2023 in Wisconsin, compared to a 34 percent increase nationwide over that same time period;

WHEREAS, gun violence affects rural and urban areas alike, and according to a recent report on Gun Death in Wisconsin, firearm suicide rates have remained higher in rural Wisconsin compared to urban areas, and the majority of firearm deaths in rural areas of Wisconsin are suicide deaths;

WHEREAS, the impacts of violence, including gun violence, are cascading and can reverberate and live on through cycles of violence, through survivors and families carrying the weight and trauma of the emotional, mental, and physical toll every day, through those mourning loved ones and friends who were mercilessly taken from them, and through those whose physical injuries have life-long health consequences, among so many others;

WHEREAS, crime, violence, and gun violence are statewide problems with statewide consequences for people and families across our state, and these issues have long deserved meaningful, evidence-driven solutions from elected officials and a comprehensive, statewide response; and

WHEREAS, violence in all of its forms, including gun violence, is preventable and not a foregone reality, and the state of Wisconsin stands with all those who have lost a loved one to gun violence, advocates, students and educators, local elected officials, religious leaders, and all those who are calling on elected leaders to take meaningful action to prevent violence and keep kids, families, and communities safe.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TONY EVERS, Governor of the State of Wisconsin, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the Laws of the State, hereby:

- a. Order the Department of Administration to establish the Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention.
- b. The Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention shall do the following:
 - i. Connect the dots between state and local government agencies, including law enforcement agencies, to ensure a whole-of-government approach to violence prevention;
 - ii. Support and provide technical assistance to local violence prevention and intervention efforts;
 - iii. Promote evidence-based community violence intervention efforts and share best practices among stakeholders;
 - iv. Convene stakeholders and organizations across the state to discuss ways to keep communities healthy and safe, including groups that center the voices of victims and survivors;
 - v. Administer and award grants to school districts, firearm dealers, law enforcement agencies, non-profits, and government agencies to support violence reduction initiatives;

- vi. Develop public education campaigns to promote safer communities; and
- vii. Consider relevant public health, industry, or other data to identify opportunities to improve statewide policies or laws.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great seal of the State of Wisconsin to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Madison this fourteenth day of January in the year of two thousand twenty-five.

TONY EVERS
Governor

By the Governor:

SARAH GODLEWSKI
Secretary of State