

On behalf of Mothers United Against Violence and the hundreds of mothers and families which we represent over the region we offer the following testimony.

During the past 23 years of working on the front lines on behalf families from the beginning of their trauma and through an extended period of time where we help to create a sustainability plan for families. We have maintained our presence as boots on the ground, providing advocacy work before it was popular to speak out on behalf the underserved communities and we clearly understand the importance of this Commission work going forward..

Our communities have lacked equitable distributions related specifically to education, health, mental health, housing, criminal justice system and every other systemic ill which has impeded the progress of people living in the underserved communities. The access to resources has always and continues to be a major difficulty in this work specifically as it relates to gun violence in our communities. Although the numbers of fatalities bear out that African Americans have been identified as the highest number of victims of gun violence, the organizations providing this work, " boots on the ground" have not been able to receive the type of funding which is necessary to provide the effective of support required to conduct this work.

More importantly we would like for our legislators and this Committee to understand on how important it is for our group to remain vigilant during this process and mindful of the existing community risk and protective factors which could vary from agency to agency in addition to the CDC risk factors which include family risk factors , school risk factors, individual/peer risk factors and to create proactive ways to incorporate protective factors which could begin to address the systemic issues of inequities in housing, economic, health, education, criminal justice system and other areas of inequities and injustices.

We remain committed to this work of helping to create equity and we pray that others will remain the same and continue to work from the bottom up in the Community Engagement area as this will provide the element of inclusiveness from the Commission to the state legislature.