



EXECUTIVE ORDER #022
DECLARATION OF GUN VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

WHEREAS, in June 2021, the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services released a report indicating Erie County was the county that had the highest rate of violent crimes involving a firearm in 2020, per capita, across New York State (130.7 crimes involving a firearm per 100,000 residents), which was more than double the state average (57.4 per 100,000 residents), and even much greater than New York City's rate (77.6 per 100,000 residents); and

WHEREAS, the Erie County Crime Analysis Center data shows that homicides have increased in Erie County for the past four years, from 46 in 2017, to 58 in 2018, 59 in 2019 and 69 in 2020, the vast majority of these having been through the use of a firearm against the decedent; and

WHEREAS, as of July 14, 2021, 44 of the 49 homicides committed in Erie County used a firearm; and

WHEREAS, the effects of gun violence extend far beyond these casualties because gun violence shapes and reshapes the lives of those who witness it by either knowing someone who was shot or living in fear of the next shooting; and

WHEREAS, according to research compiled by the Everytown for Gun Safety Research Division, these injuries, whether direct or indirect, costs the United States nearly \$280 billion in three different categories: (1) immediate costs starting at the time of an incident; (2) subsequent costs such as treatment, long-term physical and mental health care, forgone earnings, criminal justice costs; and (3) cost estimates of quality-of-life lost over a victim's lifespan; and

WHEREAS, survivors, families, communities, employers, and taxpayers, all pay for the enormous costs associated with this violence, whether they own a gun or not; and

WHEREAS, gun violence is not limited to person-on-person acts, nor certain geographic areas of Erie County, but all areas of Erie County when suicides are included; and

WHEREAS, the Erie County Medical Examiner Office has issued reports indicating that a firearm was used in 29 suicides in 2019, 30 in 2020 and, as of July 14, 2021, 8 in 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office reports indicate that a firearm was used in thirty-two percent (32%) of suicides in Erie County in 2020 and thirty-one percent (31%) of suicides in Erie County in 2021; and

WHEREAS, Live Well Erie was established by Executive Order No. 21 in September 2019 to focus on the social determinants of health, including housing

stability, job opportunities, and neighborhood crime and safety, which dramatically influence the ability of every resident to achieve his or her full potential; and

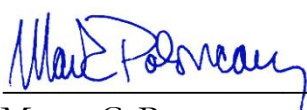
WHEREAS, the impact of gun violence on public health deserves action from all levels of government, especially counties.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, MARK C. POLONCARZ, Erie County Executive, by virtue of the authority vested in me by Erie County's Charter Sections 301 and 302, do hereby order as follows:

1. I declare gun violence to be a public health crisis in Erie County.
2. I direct the Commissioner of Central Police Services, Commissioner of Probation, Commissioner of Health, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health, and Commissioner of the Department of Social Services to form a task force to work in concert with local law enforcement, including the Erie County Sheriff's Office and Buffalo Police Department, the Erie County District Attorney's Office, members of the Erie County Legislature, local anti-violence organizations and leaders, and the Live Well Erie Task Force to prepare programs and initiatives that (a) decrease gun violence among youth; (b) increase funding to programs specifically designed to reduce gun-violence; (c) work with local law enforcement agencies to create strategies to reduce the amount of illegal firearms in Erie County; (d) work with marginalized populations to provide education on gun violence, issues and solutions; (e) advocate for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color; and (f) support local, State, and Federal programs that advance anti-gun violence initiatives.
3. I direct and authorize the Commissioner of the Department of Probation to increase the number of monthly home visits, known as Individual Custom Notifications, performed by Department of Probation officers with probationers who are at high-risk of involvement with guns and violence under the Gun Involved Violence Elimination ("GIVE") Initiative.
4. I direct and authorize the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services to (a) expedite the investment of the additional \$530,727 received by Erie County from New York State for additional summer youth employment opportunities, under the new age and geographic residence restrictions provided by New York State, thereby making more at-risk youth and young adults eligible for the program, and to work with local anti-violence organizations and leaders to identify at-risk youth and young adults for the initiative; and (b) following placement of at-risk young adults into temporary employment opportunities as described above, work to transition said young adults into permanent employment opportunities using the Department of Social Services' Placing Individuals in Vital Opportunity Training ("PIVOT") program.

GIVEN, under my hand and the Privy Seal of the County of Erie in the City of Buffalo this 20th day of July in the year two thousand twenty-one.

COUNTY OF ERIE

By: 

MARK C. POLONCARZ
ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE