

# The Connecticut General Assembly



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Monday, Jan. 15, 2018

Contact: Sam Norton  
860-240-8579

## **REP. BAKER, SEN. MOORE, PROJECT LONGEVITY AND Y.A.N.A. ADVOCATE FOR INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE**

As Bridgeport residents gathered to mark Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy, **state Rep. Andre Baker**, **state Sen. Marilyn Moore**, members of Project Longevity and the support group, You Are Not Alone (Y.A.N.A.) held a press conference Monday to advocate for initiatives that prevent one less person from falling victim to gun violence.

Baker and Moore were joined by Project Longevity's Bridgeport Project Manager Harold Dimbo and Dawn Spearman, founder of Y.A.N.A.

During the 2017 legislative session, \$850,000 was allocated to Project Longevity, of that; \$573,750 is available for expenditure. The city, however, needs to work with the state Office of Policy and Management to ensure Bridgeport's share of the funding – \$129,615 – is released to Project Longevity. The state funding is dispersed among Project Longevity's three communities: Bridgeport, New Haven and Hartford. During Monday's press conference, Baker, Moore, Dimbo and Spearman voiced support for the funding to be released to the organization so it can continue its efforts in addressing and preventing gun violence in the city.

"While Bridgeport is not immune to gun violence, the state funding appropriated to Project Longevity represents lives saved. In the absence of this funding, our community has seen a spike in homicides and gun violence. To further protect our residents from being affected by gun violence, we need to unlock this funding, so Project Longevity can continue its efforts to make our city safer," said **Baker, D-Bridgeport**.

Project Longevity is a community and law enforcement initiative that was first established to reduce violence in Connecticut's three largest cities – Bridgeport, New Haven and Hartford. The organization uses strategies such as custom notifications, community engagement and call-ins to reduce gun violence in the city. In 2017, there were nine group-related shootings or homicides – up from five in 2016. Last year, there were 23 homicides with firearms – an increase over the previous year which saw 13 homicides involving firearms.

"Project Longevity will be working more with the people in the community. We believe that the answer to decreasing gun violence is by having the community work together. When we are doing at least 70 custom notifications per year, the shootings and homicides are less. We will also be working with

juveniles and their parents as data shows that there has been an increase in gun violence with juveniles. Project Longevity could be the magnet to bring everyone together, closing the gap between the community and the police,” **Dimbo** said.

To help families who have been hit with tragedy in and around Bridgeport, Y.A.N.A. works with families to provide the emotional and spiritual support they need.

“Y.A.N.A. is committed to serving as a support system for the community during senseless tragedies. By engaging with our youth and heightening the awareness of the violence that is present in our city, we are helping to prevent one less child from being a part of a statistic. But we need to do more. We need to work together to ensure programs like Project Longevity receive the support they need to continue its efforts in combating gun violence,” **Spearman** said.

###