

# THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN IOWA

In recent years, Iowa has experienced an average of 34 gun-related homicides, 191 gun-related suicides, and hundreds of nonfatal shootings per year.<sup>1</sup> Iowa has the 12th lowest gun death rate among the states, yet **gun violence exacts a high physical, emotional, and financial toll on families and communities in the state.** We often hear about the heartbreak and physical pain these shootings cause, but there is another aspect of the gun violence epidemic that doesn't receive as much attention: the overwhelming financial cost.

## TALLYING THE NUMBERS

The thousands of shootings that occur each year in Iowa are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$18 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$16 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$3 million per year), and **lost income** (\$413 million per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in Iowa surpasses **\$450 million per year.** Much of this tab is picked up by the public. Up to 85% of gunshot victims, for example, are either uninsured or on some form of publicly funded insurance. Additionally, law enforcement efforts are funded entirely by taxpayer dollars. **As a result, the direct annual cost of gun violence to Iowa taxpayers is over \$68 million.**<sup>2</sup>

## GUN VIOLENCE IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

Iowa's business community is severely impacted by the negative economic consequences of gun violence. Shootings engender fear in affected neighborhoods, which keeps potential customers away, forces businesses to relocate or limit hours of operation, and decreases tourism.

A 2016 report by the Urban Institute found that in Washington DC **each additional homicide was associated with the loss of two retail or service establishments** in the following year.

During the summer of 2018, Iowa's second-largest mall ground to a halt when a gunman opened fire in the food court. Not only did this shooting claim the life of a 20-year-old employee, it also resulted in the mall's immediate evacuation and lockdown, losing dozens of merchants countless dollars in sales. With hundreds of shootings every year in the state, it's easy to see how the economy is directly impacted by gun violence.

Conversely, reducing shootings improves local economies. The same Urban Institute report found that in Minneapolis just **one fewer gun homicide was associated with the creation of 80 jobs and an additional \$9.4 million in sales** across all businesses the following year.

**\$450+**  
**MILLION**  
TOTAL DIRECTLY  
MEASURABLE  
COSTS

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When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$854 million) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$1.3 billion per year**. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Iowa because it doesn't include significant, yet difficult-to-measure costs, including lost business opportunities, lowered property values, and reductions in the tax base.

## REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

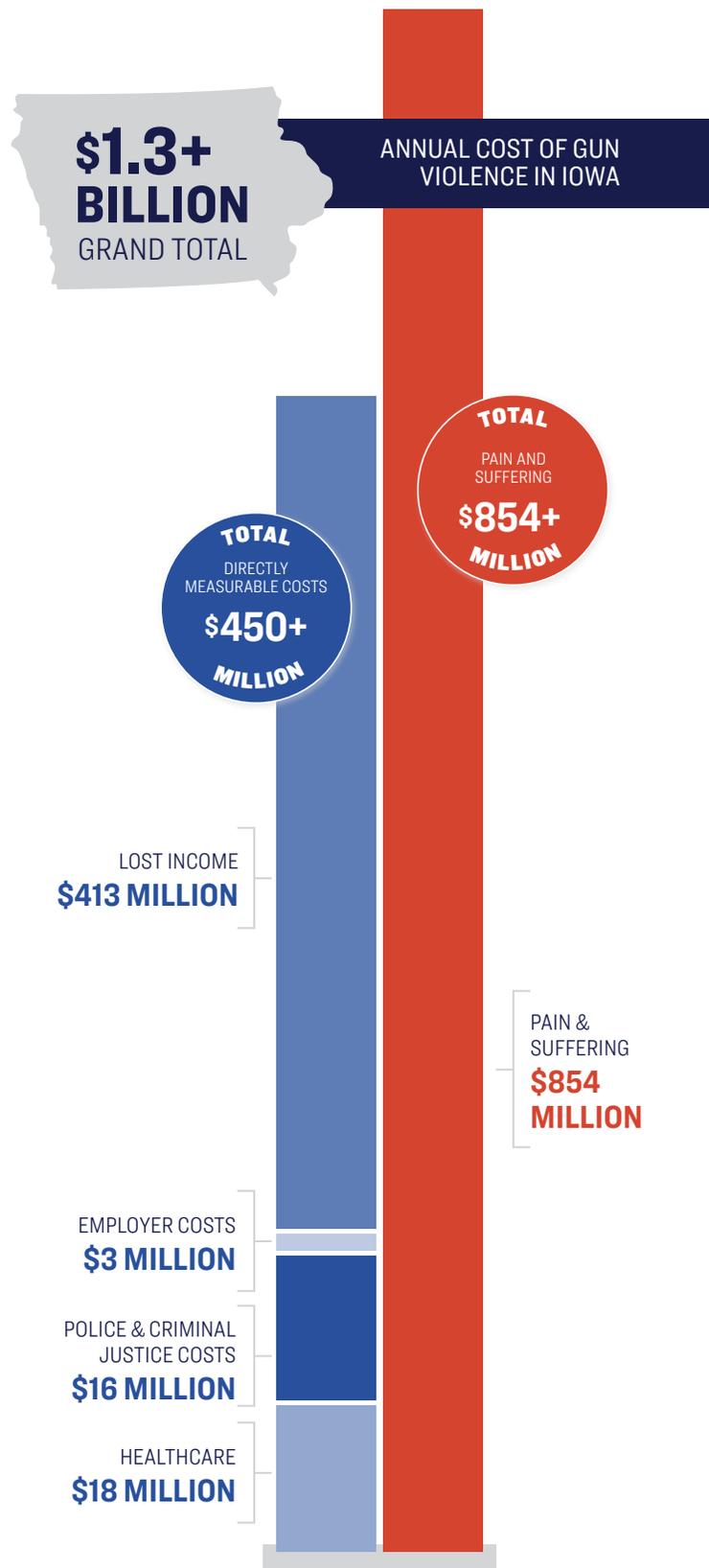
There is much work to be done. Fortunately, a number of proven solutions exist that would reduce gun violence in Iowa, including requiring a background check for all firearm purchases, passing extreme risk protection order legislation, and limiting access to military-style weapons and large-capacity ammunition magazines. The investment required to implement these lifesaving solutions is minuscule compared to the yearly cost of gun violence in the state.

1. Fatal firearm injury data came from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports ([www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html)). Nonfatal firearm injuries came from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's HCUPnet Query System (<https://hcupnet.ahrq.gov/#setup>).
2. Estimates of the cost of gun violence were created using a model published in 2012 by economists at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). PIRE is a nonprofit research organization that focuses on using scientific research to inform public policy. This model can be found at [www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf](http://www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf). All cost estimates were adjusted to 2016 dollars.

## WE'RE ON A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES

For 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence. Founded in the wake of a 1993 mass shooting in San Francisco, in 2016 the Law Center joined with former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to form a courageous new force for gun safety that stretches coast to coast.

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