

# THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN DELAWARE

In recent years, Delaware has experienced an average of 44 gun-related homicides, 57 gun-related suicides, and dozens of nonfatal shootings per year.<sup>1</sup> Delaware has the 14th-lowest gun death rate among the states, yet **gun violence still 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 nearly 200 shootings that occur each year in Delaware are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$10 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$20 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$1 million per year), and **lost income** (\$188 million per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in Delaware is over **\$219 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 Delaware taxpayers is over \$45 million.**<sup>2</sup>

## GUN VIOLENCE'S DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT

Interpersonal gun violence in Delaware disproportionately impacts underserved communities in urban areas, with young men of color being particularly vulnerable. For example, in 2016, **black men made up just 11% of the state's population, but over 68% of gun homicide victims.** Additionally, black men are more than 21 times as likely as white men to be the victim of a gun homicide in Delaware.

Moreover, in recent years, Delaware has seen a sustained increase in interpersonal gun violence, with cities suffering particularly increased gun homicide rates. **From 2014 to 2016, gun homicides increased by nearly 11% across the state.**

Interpersonal gun violence, as well as the staggering number of gun suicides and unintentional shootings, impose massive human, moral, and fiscal costs on the state. More can and must be done to prevent these costly tragedies.

**\$219+**  
**MILLION**  
TOTAL DIRECTLY  
MEASURABLE  
COSTS

When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$392 million) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$611 million per year**. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Delaware 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

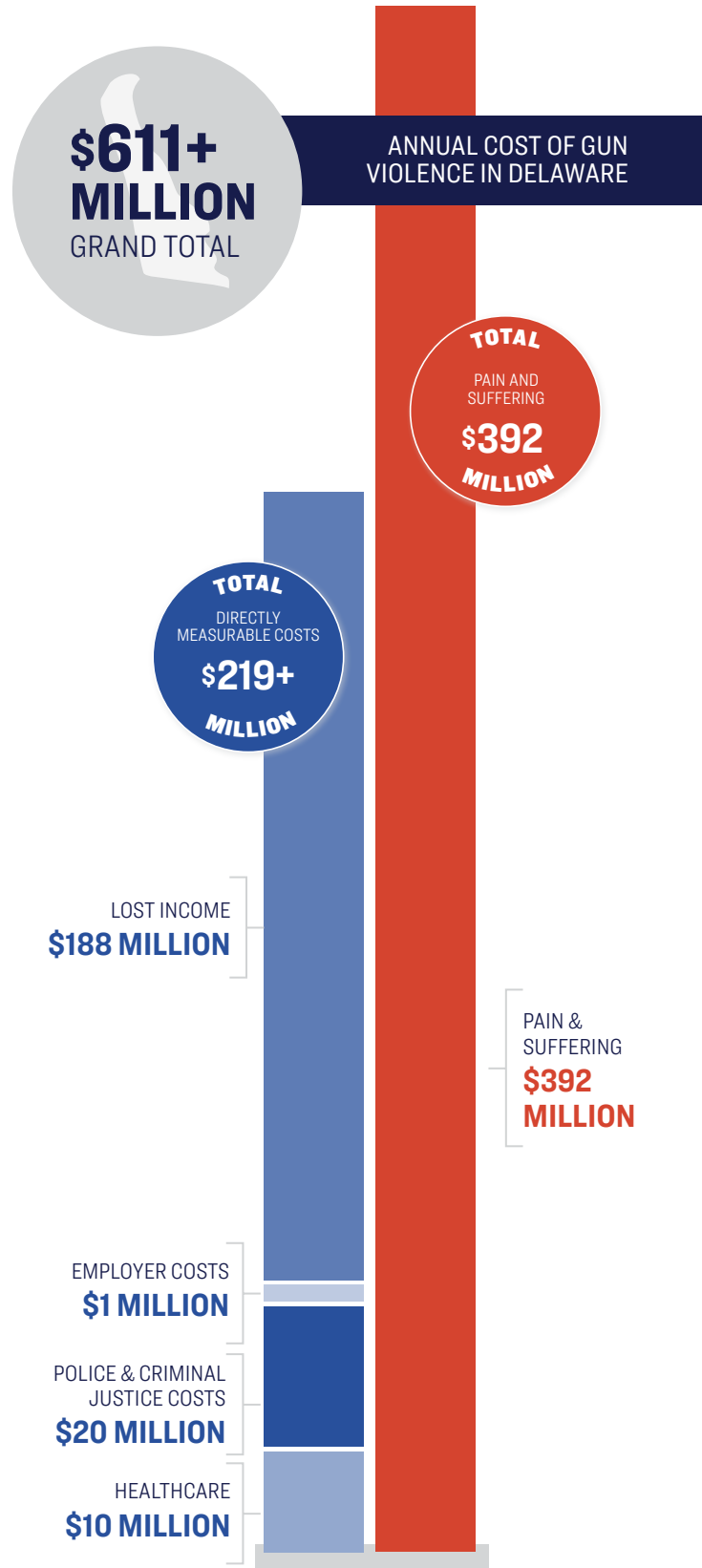
There is much work to be done. Fortunately, a number of proven solutions exist that would reduce gun violence in Delaware, including requiring a waiting period for all gun purchases, limiting access to military-style weapons, and substantially investing in urban violence intervention strategies. The 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 CDC's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports ([www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html)). Nonfatal firearm injuries were provided by the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services and an estimation tool which creates a ratio of the national incidence of nonfatal shootings, sourced from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System's Firearm Injury Surveillance Study (NEISS-FISS), and the number of fatal shootings that Delaware experienced in a given year, sourced from WISQARS. NEISS-FISS data is available at [www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/198#studies](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/198#studies).
2. Estimates of the cost of gun violence in Delaware 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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LEARN ABOUT DELAWARE'S GUN LAWS:

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