July 12, 2022

United States Senate

Committee on Appropriations

Room S-128, The Capitol

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Appropriators,

The[Alliance for Peacebuilding](http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org) (AfP), the leading nonpartisan global peacebuilding network of 160+ members working in 181 countries, including the United States, to end violent conflict and build sustainable peace, and the undersigned organizations urge the Senate to strengthen agencies and robustly fund programs to prevent and reduce conflict dynamics leading to domestic conflict and violent extremism. Conflict dynamics are rapidly increasing and driving violent conflict and extremism in the United States*.* Civil society organizations in the United States are already working to [prevent violent extremism](http://pnetworks.org/), [strengthen democratic institutions](https://medium.com/the-carter-center/u-s-avoids-nightmare-election-scenarios-as-institutions-prove-more-than-adequate-9863d8cc022), [advance criminal justice reform](https://www.uraction.org/criminaljustice.html), [collect accurate data on violence](https://acleddata.com/2021/02/11/acled-resources-united-states/), [provide trauma healing to communities](https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-restorative-justice-leader-sees-this-method-as-best-opportunity-to-heal-trauma/567082982/), [promote local-level mediation and build social cohesion](https://mediatorsbeyondborders.org/trust/), and [reduce political and community violence](https://cvg.org/what-we-do/), but the resources are insufficient to address the drivers of increasing violence and extremism. The Senate must act now to support these efforts and reverse increasing violent conflict and extremism trends.

Unfortunately, conflict dynamics are rapidly rising, as evidenced by the U.S. consistently sliding down indices that measure peace and security. In 2021, the [Fragile States Index](https://fragilestatesindex.org/) found the U.S.'s overall total fragility score dropped the most compared to any other country due to worsening social cohesion and political violence. [The 2022 Global Peace Index](https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GPI-2022-web.pdf) found peacefulness in the U.S. deteriorated again, following a trend beginning in 2015. Meanwhile, the U.S. continues to consistently drop on indices that measure democratic trends. Since 2016, the [Economist Intelligence Unit](https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-the-state-of-global-democracy-2022/#:~:text=In%20this%20year's%20report%2C%20the,democracy%20%E2%80%9Cof%20some%20sort.%E2%80%9D) classifies the U.S. as a “flawed democracy” pointing to extreme polarization as a key issue.

While domestic conflict and violent extremism is not new in the United States, [homegrown incidents have surged](https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2021/domestic-terrorism-data/) to levels not seen in a quarter-century. Law enforcement investigations into domestic extremism [increased almost three-fold](https://twitter.com/CBSEveningNews/status/1526333016800382978) in the past year, up to 2,700 from 1,000. The [Anti-Defamation League](https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resource-knowledge-base/adl-heat-map) documented 12,351 incidents of extremism or antisemitism in the U.S. in 2020 and 2021. The U.S. has an increasing violent conflict and extremism problem.

As you consider the recently advanced FY 2023 appropriations bills from the House of Representatives, we strongly urge the Senate to robustly increase funding that targets areas most at-risk for violence in the United States and support programs that will reduce and prevent violent conflict. This funding should support federal agencies to integrate conflict and extremism prevention initiatives into existing programs and ensure a coordinated interagency approach. The 117th Congress must take urgent and bold action by urgently funding programs to address the causes of violent conflict and extremism. Failure to invest in upstream prevention now will result in a significant uptick in violence, conflict, extremism, and overall instability in the United States.

**Urgently and Robustly Fund Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Programming**

**Preventing and Reducing Violent Extremism**

* **Double the** [**Department of Homeland Security’s domestic extremism prevention grants**](https://www.dhs.gov/tvtpgrants) **from $20 to $40 million**. The Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program supports the development of local capabilities to prevent violence, hate crimes, and homegrown violent extremism. TVTP provides state and local governments, [non-governmental organizations](https://www.sfcg.org/common-ground-usa/), and academic institutions funds to raise social awareness, promote civic engagement, build youth resilience, and develop threat assessment and bystander training around the country. TVTP programming also supports [exit movements](https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-explains-why-people-join-and-leave-far-right-groups.html) that assist individuals to leave extremist groups and reintegrate and participate constructively in society.

The U.S. government must also resource and scale early warning systems that collect and analyze threats and provide recommendations for urgent and adaptive programs and activities. Civil society organizations, including [ACLED](http://acleddata.com/) and [The Trust Network](https://www.thetrustnetwork.net/)**,** collect data and disseminate early warning data and reports. The $20 million provided by the [House for FY 2023](https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP00/20220624/114951/BILLS-117-FC-AP-FY2023-AP00-HomelandSecurity.pdf) is not enough to adequately to support research and impact local communities across the country to achieve the upstream prevention aims of the TVTP program. If the U.S. is serious about addressing its violent conflict and extremism drivers, then more funding is essential to reduce and prevent violent extremism.

* **Support $125 million for a public health approach to community violence prevention and provide at least $125 million in new, additional funding to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to advance a** [**much-needed shift to an integrated public health model**](https://www.lawfareblog.com/prevent-extremist-violence-united-states-think-beyond-homeland-security-box) **for preventing domestic violent extremism.** The House and Senate Appropriation committees have already indicated their desire to move toward a public health approach to violence as evidenced by the inclusion of $100 million and $115 million respectively in FY 20222 for community violence intervention funding for HHS, but no money was ultimately appropriated. The [FY 2023 House version](https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP07/20220623/114920/BILLS-117--AP--LaborHHS.pdf) failed to include this funding or any additional support for HHS to address community violence. Congress should provide $125 million to HHS for community violence intervention plus an additional $125 to apply a public health approach to preventing domestic violent extremism. Evidence demonstrates that [mental health challenges](https://www.start.umd.edu/news/how-public-health-can-improve-initiatives-counter-violent-extremism) exacerbate the grievances that fuel violence and radicalization. Given rising polarization, hate, and radicalization, threatening our national security, Congress must immediately support programming to better understand and address the [interrelationships](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA1071-1.html) between mental health and political and socio-economic polarization, cognitive radicalization, and violent extremist behavior. To successfully prevent violent conflict and radicalization to violence, Congress must provide at least an additional $125 million annually to HHS in addition to the $125 million for community violence prevention.

**Strengthening Community-Led Violence Prevention and Reduction Programs**

* **Increase funding for the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Community Relations Service to $50 million** from the $21 million provided in FY 2022 and the $25 million in the [FY 2023 House appropriations bill](https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP00/20220628/114966/BILLS-117-FC-AP-FY2023-AP00-CJSBill.pdf). Additionally, the Senate must **provide the full $30 million**, as passed in the House Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Programs’ FY 2022 and FY 2023 appropriations bills, to support conflict resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding at the local level through the **DOJ’s community approaches to advancing justice grants initiative**. Despite the bipartisan support, the full Congress only enacted $5 million in FY 2022 for these grants. These programs are vital to assist communities to mediate disputes, enhance local capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts, and build social cohesion and trust.
* **Support the $225 to improve police-community relations generally and the $150 million for a community-based violence intervention and prevention initiative** passed in the House Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Programs appropriations bill for [FY 2023](https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP00/20220628/114966/BILLS-117-FC-AP-FY2023-AP00-CJSBill.pdf). There is a significant need to fund police culture and systemic change efforts that can transform law enforcement and communities nationwide to build new mechanisms for community engagement, increase police legitimacy, enhance public trust, and prevent and mitigate violence at the community level. Police-involved violence has become a significant trigger for violent conflict in the U.S. and police use-of-force is a [leading cause of death for men](https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1821204116) overall, and [disproportionately](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2821%2901609-3/fulltext) for men of color. Police reform faces significant challenges with 18,000 separate police departments governing their own practices and policies. There is an urgent need to increase funding to agencies such as the National Institute of Justice, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services to research and study the impact of policing on communities and develop programs to support police culture reform and community-based engagement. $150 million for community violence intervention and prevention can substantially prevent community-level violence while reducing the demands on local police departments. Supporting community-led violence prevention efforts complements other efforts to strengthen and reform police departments.

We have much bipartisan work to do as a country across all levels of society—local, state, and national. The recommendations outlined above, while not exhaustive, send a strong signal that the Senate is committed to the bold action necessary to prevent and reduce violent conflict and extremism here at home. We stand ready to work with you to advance our shared goal of building sustainable peace in the United States.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Peacebuilding

Bridge Alliance

The Bridgeway Group

Civilian Peace Service Canada

Cure Violence Global

DT Global

EIHR: The Educators’ Institute for Human Rights

International Center for Religion & Diplomacy

National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM)

One Earth Future

PartnersGlobal

Peace Catalyst International

Peace Direct

Peace Initiative Network

Police2Peace

Search for Common Ground

Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding

United Nations Association of the National Capital Area

Urban Rural Action

Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation