

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2026

The Honorable Pamela J. Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi,

We write in service of our shared duty to keep all Americans safe from gun violence. By weakening programs that protect our communities from illegal firearms and stripping federal funding for violence intervention and prevention programs, the Department of Justice's (DOJ) policies risk undoing crucial progress in mitigating the root causes of gun violence. We urgently request that you reverse course and instead support proven strategies that increase public safety, curb the spread of illicit guns, and empower local governments as well as community-based organizations to tackle the scourge of gun violence.

Americans of all political beliefs agree that we have lost too many lives to mass shootings and violent crimes in our country. In September 2025, Senator Warnock hosted a panel at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference to draw attention to the nation's commendable decline in gun violence between 2021 and 2023¹ and to discuss successful violence reduction tactics employed by local governments.² The panel featured Mayor Brandon Scott of Baltimore, Maryland; Mayor Randall Woodfin of Birmingham, Alabama; and Greg Jackson, President of the Rocket Foundation and former Deputy Director of the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention.³ The panel discussed federal and local programs that played a critical role in decreasing gun violence in their communities, including various ways that federal policies have helped support these successes.⁴

For example, the city of Baltimore has taken a comprehensive approach to public safety, implementing a Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) that focuses on changing the behavior of individuals involved with violent groups—those who are at the highest risk of being involved in violence—and uplifting community-based programs such as Safe Streets.⁵ Through

¹ John Gramlich, *What the Data Says About Gun Deaths in the U.S.*, Pew Research Center (Mar. 5, 2025), <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/03/05/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us>.

² *Warnock Convenes Gun Violence Prevention Panel to Address National Epidemic*, Office of Senator Reverend Warnock (Sept. 26, 2025), <https://www.warnock.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warnock-convenes-gun-violence-prevention-panel-to-address-national-epidemic>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Mayor Brandon Scott of Baltimore, *Establishing the Ecosystem: A Vision for Community Violence Intervention (CVI) in Baltimore*, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (Apr. 13, 2022), https://monse.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/mocj_preview_baltimorecity_gov/attachments/MayorBMS-CVIReport-041322.pdf at 4, 17; Lea Skene, *How Baltimore Is Saving Lives by Offering Young Men Resources When They Put Down the Guns*, Associated Press (Jan. 19, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/baltimore-homicides-group->

GVRS, the city offers social services to those likely to become victim or perpetrators of gun violence and then prosecutes those who continue to repeatedly engage in criminal activity; as of January 2025, about 200 people were receiving support services from the program.⁶ Birmingham saw victories using a similar approach, including by using federal funding to support programs like its hospital-based violence intervention program.⁷ Beyond intervention programs, they also relied on regulation and litigation to address illicit gun trafficking. Just this past August, a jury awarded Baltimore \$62 million in damages from a gun dealer that had facilitated the flow of illegal firearms into the city.⁸

These programs have contributed to significant improvements in public safety. Baltimore saw a 23% drop in recorded homicides between 2023 and 2024 alone,⁹ and the first half of 2025 closed with the fewest killings recorded in the city for a 6-month period.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Birmingham's Police Department reported a 52% reduction in homicides compared to 2024.¹¹

Given the success of these programs, and of similar programs across the country,¹² we were alarmed to see that the DOJ has undermined these proven methods for reducing gun violence by working to eliminate efforts by federal agencies that tackle illicit firearms as well as defund the very programs intended to address the root causes of gun violence.

In April 2025, under your leadership, the DOJ cut millions in grants to law enforcement and nonprofit entities that support violence reduction, victims' services, and other public safety functions at the state and local level.¹³ This included eliminating the remaining balances of grants initially worth about \$145 million for community violence intervention, which support evidence-based programs that help prevent gun violence in cities and local communities.¹⁴ Roca, a nationally-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) program for at-risk young men, saw a \$2 million DOJ grant award for their Baltimore office slashed in half, with \$1 million in funding

violence-reduction-strategy-guns-564a6d247d73805279af95d856cafeb8.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Community Safety Initiatives*, City of Birmingham, <https://www.birminghamal.gov/government/mayors-office/arpa-impact-2025/community-safety-initiatives>.

⁸ *Largest Ever Verdict Dealt Against Gun Dealer Rendered for the City of Baltimore*, Office of Mayor Brandon Scott (Aug. 27, 2025), <https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2025-08-27-largest-ever-verdict-dealt-against-gun-dealer-rendered-city-baltimore>.

⁹ Skene, *supra* note 5.

¹⁰ Jeremy Biddle and Ben Struhal, *Inside the Architecture of a Strategy Reversing the Trajectory of One of America's Most Dangerous Cities*, Vital City (Aug. 20, 2025), <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/whats-behind-baltimore-s-drastic-reduction-in-violence>.

¹¹ Olivia Gauthier, *Birmingham Sees 52% Drop in Homicides, Slight Rise in Violent Crime*, ABC 33/40 News (July 1, 2025), <https://abc3340.com/news/local/birmingham-sees-52-drop-in-homicides-slight-rise-in-violent-crime-public-safety-community>.

¹² See Nick Suplina, Megan J. O'Toole, *Fear Versus Facts: Gun Violence Is Definitely Down*, Everytown for Gun Safety (Aug. 8, 2024), <https://everytownresearch.org/report/fear-versus-facts-gun-violence-is-definitely-down>.

¹³ Amy Solomon and Betsy Pearl, *DOJ Funding Update: A Deeper Look at the Cuts*, Council on Criminal Justice (2025), <https://counciloncj.org/doj-funding-update-a-deeper-look-at-the-cuts>; see also Chip Brownlee, *Trump Has Slashed Federal Funding for Gun Violence Prevention. But How Much Exactly?*, The Trace (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://www.thetrace.org/2026/01/trump-public-safety-gun-violence-funding>.

¹⁴ Solomon and Pearl, *supra* note 13.

pulled back in 2025.¹⁵ Georgia has been affected by cuts of \$3 million in DOJ grant funding, nearly \$1 million of which was dedicated to youth violence intervention.¹⁶

Beyond the DOJ, the administration has also abruptly halted payments for \$1 billion in federal grant funding for school districts to hire mental health professionals, which was part of the 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.¹⁷ Senators Cornyn, Collins, and Tillis noted the importance of funding for these resources in November of 2024.¹⁸ The administration has also terminated staff at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention responsible for researching violence prevention.¹⁹

The DOJ has also proposed defunding the federal law enforcement entity that combats the illegal proliferation of firearms and moved to dismantle their tools for doing so. Since taking office, the DOJ has reportedly diverted 80% of Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agents to take on immigration enforcement activities.²⁰ The DOJ's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget Proposal proposed even more dramatic cuts, including reducing the ATF's funding by nearly one-fourth, or \$418 million,²¹ and dismissing two-thirds of ATF Industry Operations Investigators (IOI), who are responsible for ensuring Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) are following the law.²² This proposal also suggested merging the ATF with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which could threaten resources for both agencies.²³

Beyond these funding and personnel cuts, the DOJ has revoked the ATF's "Zero Tolerance" policy and allowed gun dealers who had willfully violated federal regulations to apply to reobtain their licenses,²⁴ reportedly ended a program to identify and monitor gun dealers whose guns have been linked to crimes,²⁵ and permitted the sale of devices that enable semiautomatic

¹⁵ Baynard Woods, *Trump DOJ Eliminates Funding from Baltimore Violence Interruption Efforts*, Baltimore Beat (May 14, 2025), <https://baltimorebeat.com/trump-doj-eliminates-funding-from-baltimore-violence-interruption-efforts>.

¹⁶ Solomon and Pearl, *supra* note 13.

¹⁷ Cory Turner, *Education Department Stops \$1 billion in Funding for School Mental Health*, NPR (May 1, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/01/nx-s1-5382582/trump-school-mental-health>.

¹⁸ Senators John Cornyn, Susan Collins, and Thom Tillis, *The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Is Cause for Optimism*, Newsweek (Nov. 25, 2024), <https://www.newsweek.com/bipartisan-safer-communities-act-cause-optimism-opinion-1990754>.

¹⁹ Will Stone, *With CDC Injury Prevention Team Gutted, 'We Will Not Know What Is Killing Us'*, NPR (Apr. 21, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/04/21/nx-s1-5371519/cdc-hhs-injury-prevention-federal-layoffs>.

²⁰ Brad Heath et al., *Exclusive: Thousands of Agents Diverted to Trump Immigration Crackdown*, Reuters (Mar. 22, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/thousands-agents-diverted-trump-immigration-crackdown-2025-03-22>.

²¹ *Fiscal Year 2026 Budget and Performance Summary*, U.S. Department of Justice (Jun. 13, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/media/1403736/dl> at 145.

²² Glenn Thrush, *Justice Dept. to Cut Two-Thirds of Inspectors Monitoring Gun Sales*, New York Times (June 18, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/18/us/politics/justice-dept-guns-atf-trump.html>.

²³ Sarah N. Lynch and Brad Heath, *US Justice Dept Takes Next Steps to Merge ATF and DEA, Sources Say*, Reuters (May 16, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-justice-dept-takes-next-steps-merge-atf-dea-sources-say-2025-05-16>; U.S. Department of Justice, *supra* note 21, at 8.

²⁴ Chip Brownlee and Champe Barton, *Trump Administration Ends Zero-Tolerance Policy for Lawbreaking Gun Dealers*, The Trace (Apr. 7, 2025), <https://www.thetrace.org/2025/04/atf-bondi-gun-store-license-biden-policy; Protecting Second Amendment Rights>, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (May 21, 2025), <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/protecting-second-amendment-rights>.

firearms to operate like machine guns.²⁶ The DOJ is also reportedly planning to soften ATF regulations on the private sale and shipping of firearms, modify the types of firearms that can be imported into the United States, and make federal firearms licensing fees refundable.²⁷

These actions will make Americans less safe and more vulnerable to gun violence. They worsen the issues underlying gun violence and threaten our nation's progress in curbing it. As such, we demand you reverse these cuts and rollback these policy changes that threaten the safety of the American people that we all serve. Furthermore, we request that you provide the following information concerning these policy decisions by **February 23, 2026**:

1. Community violence intervention and prevention programs unexpectedly suffered over a \$150 million loss in federal grants due to the DOJ program cuts.²⁸ The DOJ has since released its FY2025 Notice of Funding of Opportunity for the Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI).²⁹
 - a. Why were grants related to community violence intervention and prevention programs initially rescinded? Has the DOJ provided any cost-benefit analysis regarding the efficacy of these programs and the implications of reducing their funding?
 - i. How many organizations that had their funds rescinded have applied to have their funds reinstated?
 - ii. How many of the rescinded grants have been reinstated?
 - b. Why are community-based organizations and nonprofit organizations no longer eligible to apply directly for funding from CVIPI?
 - c. How can potential grantees be sure their funding will not be subject to sudden cuts in the future?
2. In June 2025, the National Shooting Sports Foundation announced that ATF ended the Demand 2 Program, a program that identified and monitored FFLs who sold guns that were later traced to criminal activity.³⁰ However, there has been no statement from the ATF on the matter.
 - a. Please provide confirmation of whether the Demand 2 Program is operational.
 - b. Please provide a list of all programs ATF has terminated since the beginning of your administration.

²⁵ *NSSF Confirms ATF Demand 2 Program is Ending*, National Shooting Sports Foundation (June 13, 2025), <https://www.nssf.org/articles/nssf-confirms-atf-demand-2-program-is-ending>.

²⁶ Ken Dilanian, *Trump Admin Permits Sale of Device That Allows Standard Firearms to Fire Like Machine Guns*, NBC News (May 16, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/trump-admin-permits-sale-device-allows-standard-firearms-fire-machine-rcna207395>; *Department of Justice Announces Settlement of Litigation Between the Federal Government and Rare Breed Triggers*, U.S. Department of Justice (May 16, 2025) <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/department-justice-announces-settlement-litigation-between-federal-government-and-rare-breed>.

²⁷ Perry Stein, *Justice Department Weighs Rollback of Gun Regulations*, Washington Post (Jan. 19, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/01/19/trump-justice-department-gun-regulations-atf>.

²⁸ Solomon and Pearl, *supra* note 13.

²⁹ *FY25 Office of Justice Programs Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative*, Bureau of Justice Assistance (Sept. 17, 2025), <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/o-bja-2025-172468>.

³⁰ National Shooting Sports Foundation, *supra* note 25.

3. In its FY2026 Budget and Performance Summary, the DOJ proposed a \$418 million cut to the ATF.³¹ This included a cut of \$82 million for industry regulation, corresponding to a 40% decrease in the ATF’s capacity to regulate the firearms and explosives industries.³²
 - a. How does weakening the ATF’s industry oversight capabilities help to address gun violence and improve public safety in our communities?
 - b. What specific studies, analyses, or estimates did the DOJ rely on in making these proposals?
 - c. Did the DOJ consult with any state or local governments in developing this proposal? If so, which ones?
4. The DOJ’s FY2026 Budget and Performance Summary also included the DOJ’s plans to merge the ATF with the DEA.³³ How would merging the ATF with the DEA better serve public safety?
5. According to press reports, 80% of ATF’s roughly 2,500 agents have been assigned some immigration-related duties.³⁴
 - a. How many ATF agents have been assigned immigration-related duties?
 - b. What percentage of their time, on average, is expected to be devoted to immigration-related duties?
 - c. When did these reassessments begin? When will they be completed?
 - d. How many pending investigations were these officers working on prior to their reassessment? Specifically, how many pending firearms trafficking investigations were these officers working under the following statutes: trafficking investigations under 18 U.S.C. § 922(a)(1), 18 U.S.C. § 932, and 18 U.S.C. § 933?
 - e. How many ATF investigations were paused or terminated to assist with immigration enforcement?
 - f. What specific steps has ATF taken to ensure that current investigations are completed?
 - g. Has ATF revised oversight plans given the reduction in agents and potential limited oversight capacity over FFLs?
6. In its FY2026 Budget and Performance Summary, the DOJ noted it planned to dismiss around two-thirds of ATF IOIs from their duty.³⁵
 - a. In eliminating these roles, what criteria did the DOJ use to determine whether the investigators were no longer necessary?
 - b. Has the ATF developed a plan for meeting its industry regulatory responsibilities with decreased staff? Please submit this plan to Congress.
7. The DOJ has reversed the ATF’s prior “Zero Tolerance” policy, which revoked the licenses of gun dealers who willfully violated firearm regulations. The ATF has also

³¹ U.S. Department of Justice, *supra* note 21 at 145.

³² *Id.* at 146.

³³ *Id.* at 8.

³⁴ Heath et al., *supra* note 20.

³⁵ Thrush, *supra* note 22.

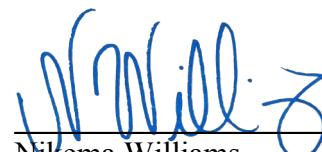
invited individuals who have had their federal firearms licenses revoked to reapply for a new license.³⁶

- a. What has the DOJ done to modify the reapplication process to ensure gun dealers who lost their licenses under the ATF’s “Zero Tolerance” policy will not violate federal law in the future? What criteria did your agency use to make such determinations?
- b. Will the individuals that lost their licenses who then reapplied and received new licenses be subject to additional oversight or inspections to ensure they follow the law?
- c. Is the ATF prepared to respond or does the bureau have a plan in place if former violators whose licenses have been reinstated continue to violate the law? Does this plan include coordination with local law enforcement?
- d. How many FFLs that lost their licenses under the “Zero Tolerance” policy have reapplied and been approved for new licenses?

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



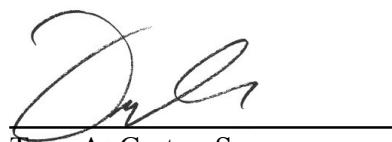
Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



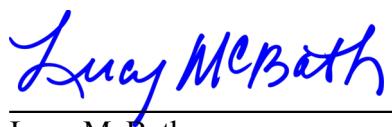
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

³⁶ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, *supra* note 24.