

United Ways of New Jersey Statement on Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue

May 31, 2022

We join those across the state and country mourning the 19 innocent children and 2 teachers who were murdered yesterday in Uvalde Texas. We as the collective United Ways of New Jersey are also calling for action on gun violence as a public health issue.

Since January 1, 2022, there have been 17, 202 deaths by gun violence across the United States. According to the Gun Violence Archive, of those, 649 were under the age of 18, and 104 were children under the age of 11. In New Jersey, in 2022, there have been 3 recorded mass shootings. Gun violence in New Jersey has taken 86 lives this year. The senseless, violent and preventable killing of children, adults, LGBTQ+, People of Color, Jewish residents and Asian Americans must be a call to action that gun violence has become a national public health issue.

United Ways across New Jersey are focused on the education, financial stability and health of every person, in every community we serve. Our work connects communities to financial, social and human resources to address issues that affect the social determinants of health. We would be remiss if we did not step up to call on our elected officials to address gun violence as a public health issue. Elected officials have the ability to address reforms through the power of legislation.

Gun Violence is preventable and not inevitable. Using common sense approaches to tackle this issue would take into account risk factors associated with gun violence. These include but are not limited to mental and emotional health, access to guns and ammunition.

We can change the course of this senseless and preventable tragedy that keeps repeating itself over and over in communities across our country if we are willing to come together, #LIVE UNITED and address this urgent public health issue.

Signed,

Catherine P. Wilson
President and CEO, *United Way of Greater Newark*

Dan Altilio, *United Way of Hudson County*
Tom Toronto, *Bergen County United Way*
Yvonne Zuidema, *United Way of Passaic County*
Kiran Gaudio, *United Way of Northern NJ*

James Horne, *United Way of Greater Union County*
Gloria Aftanski, *United Way of Central Jersey*
Sandra Toussaint-Burgher, *United Way of Greater Mercer County*
Bonnie Duncan, *United Way of Hunterdon County*
Lori Ann McLane, *United Way of Monmouth & Ocean Counties*
Michael Gower, *United Way of Gloucester County*
Michelle Taylor, *United Way of Delaware*
Bill Golderer, *United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey*