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PRESS RELEASE

Fresno EOC Receives Funding for Advance Peace Fresno

FRESNO, CA: After years of community calls for investments in new, bold, and proven models to combat gun violence in Fresno. Today, we celebrate the approval of state funding to help officially launch the Advance Peace Fresno program. With a budget of over \$900,000, over three years, the California Violence Intervention and Prevention (CalVIP) grant will be matched by local (City of Fresno) and private philanthropic sources to provide the funding needed to carry out Advance Peace Fresno.

“These funds will allow us to offer mentorship, resources, and training to reduce gun violence in Fresno. As someone who was personally affected by gun violence, I am tired of grieving with our community,” said Emilia Reyes, CEO of Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission. “With this investment, paired with community and City support, we can work to end the vicious cycle of poverty and violence.”

CalVIP programs are based on coordinated, community-oriented strategies for reducing gun violence by creating programs like Advance Peace, a proven program model, investing in individuals through training and mentoring to break the cycle of gun violence in urban neighborhoods.

“Fresno and our community have reason to celebrate this morning, as today’s news officially means the launch of Advance Peace Fresno,” said Marcel Woodruff, Lead Organizer with Faith in the Valley. “Today’s news was years in the making, and lives are literally going to be saved and changed based on where we go from here. I’m also hopeful that this represents yet another shift towards a reimagined public safety system in our city and country that truly invests in and protects every single one of us.”

Advance Peace, a model, sparked by an independent study, has been shown to have dramatically reduced gun violence by 55% in Richmond, CA. This model was later expanded to other California cities, including Sacramento and Stockton. Fresno’s longstanding history of gun violence is in large part a reflection of the City of Fresno’s historic disinvestment in communities of color.

This announcement, coupled with the recent commitment by the Fresno City Council to allocate funding for the next three years, represents a positive shift and reinvestment in people who have had to endure gun violence for far too long. With this long-term funding commitment from the state, Fresno EOC and its core partner, Faith in the Valley, will ramp up work staffing Advance Peace Fresno programmatic staff and Neighborhood Change Agents. These agents will be thoroughly trained and join the Advance Peace staff. Together, they will identify potential Peacemaker fellows and focus on violence interruption, community engagement, education, and resources for communities who are hit the hardest, not only by historic gun violence but now COVID-19 outbreaks as well.

“Our past City attempts to reduce gun violence solely through more City policing has proven unsuccessful. said Miguel Arias, President of Fresno City Council. “I am hopeful, this collaborative partnership that includes residents, public and private organizations, the State, and our City will reduce gun violence in our City and save lives.”

Gun violence costs cities around the country millions of dollars every year. In a report released by the National Insititute for Criminal Justice Reform, titled the Fresno Cost of Violence, it is revealed that each gun homicide can cost Fresno taxpayers \$2.4 million, with the real cost likely higher. Last year Fresno experienced a 30 percent increase in murders. In recent months, Fresno Police have mentioned an [80% increase in shootings since April](#). With Community-based solutions, Fresno can save lives, prevent violence, and invest in a model that can ultimately pay for itself.

About Faith in the Valley

Faith in the Valley is a multi-faith, multi-racial coalition of over 100 Central Valley congregations, covering over 200 miles from San Joaquin to Kern counties, organizing in unity for our region's most vulnerable families and communities, and for a Central Valley that truly protects, values and includes everyone. During this pandemic and at all times, this includes the right for everyone in the Central Valley to work, live and grow in health, safety, shelter and community.

About Fresno EOC

Fresno EOC is a Community Action Agency (CAA), born from the Civil Rights Movement. Our agency is a private nonprofit organization, providing opportunities and resources to low-income Fresno County residents for over 54 years. Fresno EOC employs more than 1,200 staff and offers over 35 comprehensive community-based programs that empower individuals to thrive as healthy, self-sufficient and contributing members of our communities.

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