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**Deval Patrick**

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<a href="#">The Administration</a>	<a href="#">Constituent Services</a>	<a href="#">Press Office</a>	<a href="#">Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Legislation &amp; Executive Orders</a>	<a href="#">Get Involved</a>
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[Home](#) > [Press Office](#) > [Press Releases](#) >

DEVAL L. PATRICK  
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

#### Media Contact

Alex Goldstein  
Heather Johnson  
Alec Loftus  
617-725-4025

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## GOVERNOR PATRICK LAUNCHES MASSACHUSETTS SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL YOUTH INITIATIVE

Plan takes comprehensive approach to ending youth violence in Massachusetts



Governor Patrick makes an announcement relative to youth violence prevention. (Photo credit: Matt Bennett/Governor's Office)

BOSTON - Monday, May 9, 2011 - Governor Deval Patrick today launched the Massachusetts Safe and Successful Youth Initiative, a multi-faceted strategy for eliminating youth violence in the Commonwealth. To implement this strategy, the Governor will issue an Executive Order emphasizing the Administration's commitment to partnering with local officials to tackle this issue, file legislation creating tougher gun laws that hold "high impact" individuals accountable and seek \$10 million in additional funding to support implementation efforts.

The Governor was joined by Attorney General Martha Coakley, Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, local legislators, public safety officials, law enforcement professionals, community organizers, parents and young people at the BCYF, Mildred Avenue Community Center in Mattapan for today's announcement.

"This plan centers on the belief that peace in urban communities is achievable," said Governor Patrick. "We must stop children from killing children, ending the despair felt by too many young people and the fear of violence felt by everybody else."

"Through this comprehensive plan, our Administration will work side by side with city officials to not only address youth violence in their communities, but help put an end to these horrific acts," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. "By strengthening our partnership with local officials, law enforcement professionals, community organizations and families, we can work together to

build safer communities in our Commonwealth."

"I want to thank the Governor for his leadership on this important bill to keep people safe," said Attorney General Martha Coakley. "This bill includes critical new tools for law enforcement to investigate criminal enterprises including street gangs and large-scale drug and human trafficking groups. It also improves our outdated wire intercept laws, an essential tool for law enforcement to investigate the major players who cause violence on our streets."

"We have made substantial progress in working with Governor Patrick and Speaker DeLeo to combat youth violence but the uncontrolled violence that is still threatening our cities and towns is unnerving," said Senate President Therese Murray. "I applaud Governor Patrick for this effort to proactively target the root of the problem and hope that these additional resources will serve as a support system for our neighborhoods that continue to battle an upsurge of violence in their communities."

"With the threat of violent months looming ahead, we must do everything we can to promote peaceful conditions in our cities," said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo. "I look forward to working with Governor Patrick and Senate President Murray on this important initiative. Our young people need to know they are not forgotten."

"Nothing is more important than the success of our young people, and it is critical that we work together across all levels of government to provide our children and families with the comprehensive support system they need to succeed. From education and social services to public safety, this is a job that nobody can do alone. I commend Governor Patrick for implementing this multi-faceted approach to help protect our children, support our families and strengthen our neighborhoods," said Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino.

In the coming months, Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services Marilyn Anderson Chase will lead efforts across the Administration to work with specific communities to ensure the availability of a comprehensive, community-wide plan for addressing youth violence. This will include identifying gaps in service needs and resources and establishing a statewide consensus around measures of success. The Administration will also seek \$10 million in public and private funding to support identified resource gaps and program implementation efforts.

Working with the municipal and community coalitions in those identified communities, state agencies will encourage a public health approach that focuses on:

- **Deterring youth impacted by violence:** A coordinated intervention strategy will be focused on young men (age 14-24) identified as a high risk for becoming perpetrators or victims of gun violence. Led by Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services Marilyn Anderson Chase, in coordination with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, the state will administer a multi-million dollar grant program to fill in gaps in services available for this population. The program will initially focus on communities with the highest number of youth homicides and serious assaults allowing the flexibility necessary to meet different challenges in different communities. The goal is to ensure that a full continuum of services - trauma informed case management, intensive supervision, employment, education and health care - are available and coordinated in each city and are reaching the young men most likely to commit or be victims of gun violence.
- **Creating more peaceful communities:** While intervention activities will address violence in the short-term, long-term sustainability of a peaceful environment requires a community-wide embrace of prevention strategies known to restore peace. Building strong and engaged communities, providing structured positive out-of-school time activities for younger siblings and children of highest risk youth, acknowledging and addressing the impact of trauma on a neighborhood or community, providing opportunities for youth leadership development and opportunities to learn alternative conflict resolution are all methods demonstrated to be effective in promoting peaceful environments. In addition to the work already taking place in communities, the state will bring its resources and public health and public safety expertise to ensure a coordinated approach to reaching young people before they become involved in violence.
- **Facilitating community reentry for offenders:** Massachusetts adult correctional facilities will continue their reentry work, which begins 12 months prior to release. Young men who are reentering the community will connect with a case manager to begin the process of building a trusting relationship and developing a life reentry plan with a goal of having housing, employment and education plans in place at the time of discharge. DYS case managers, probation officers and parole officers will provide ongoing intensive supervision, as appropriate, for youth offenders who are perpetrators or victims of violence.
- **Getting guns off the street:** A comprehensive strategy to youth violence prevention must include effective law enforcement intervention to protect the community from the most violent offenders, particularly those who use guns in gang-related violence and drug distribution. The Administration will file legislation creating tougher gun laws that will allow law enforcement to hold "high impact" players accountable, and proposing a host of other measures to tighten existing gun laws. This bill provides public safety officials with new criminal sanctions and investigative tools to go after guns and gangs. It includes three new gun-related crimes - assault and battery with a firearm, assault with a firearm, and a "felon in possession law" parallel to federal law - with serious criminal consequences. These crimes will give police and prosecutors additional tools to protect the community from those who possess and use guns in a crime.

The Governor's plan reflects a shared commitment to ensuring all children in the Commonwealth have the opportunity to grow, play and learn in a safe, peaceful environment; and is based on the premise that in order to achieve the goal of eliminating youth violence, we must recognize:

- Youth are not disposable. Young people are an asset and are not disposable, even those engaged in violence.
- Violence is preventable. There are programs and practices that are known to work and proven tools for combating youth violence.
- Massachusetts has the expertise. There are resources, policies, programs and individuals across this Commonwealth on which this coordinated effort can and must build.
- There are gaps in our current approach. This strategy fills a hole in current youth violence prevention by specifically focusing on the young men most at risk of killing or being killed.

"Gun violence has had a devastating effect on families all across Boston and the Commonwealth. We need to take steps to stem the tide of violence attributable to illegal firearms and their devastating effect on our neighborhoods. Urban working families should be entitled to raise their children in a safe environment free from gun violence. I applaud Governor Patrick for his extraordinary work on this crucial matter," said Senator Jack Hart.

"I am happy that the Governor is here in Mattapan to announce his initiative to take on Youth Violence. This is an issue that affects everyone in the community, and that is why we need to come together in one united effort to make our neighborhoods safe. Not until our streets are safe and our families strengthened can our communities grow and thrive, and this initiative is an important step in that direction," said Representative Linda Darcena Forry.

"Youth violence is an issue that impacts every community in Massachusetts. This plan takes a holistic approach to addressing this issue and will provide communities like mine with the tools they need to add enhance youth violence prevention efforts," said Brockton Mayor Linda M. Balzotti.

"Youth and gang violence has been a scourge to urban America. I'm very appreciative of Governor Patrick's and Lieutenant Governor Murray's ongoing commitment to tackle this issue with additional funding for not only policing but for prevention, tougher gun laws to keep dangerous criminals incarcerated after trials and encouraging public and private partnerships to attack the root causes," said Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno.

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