



Politics & Government

Mayor Ginther declares gun violence a public health crisis in Columbus

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Renee Fox / WOSU

Doug Rogers with Moms Demand Action greets Jackie Casimire with Mothers of Murdered Columbus Children just before Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther announces new initiatives to advocate for gun law changes.

Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther declared gun violence a public health crisis. Ginther is asking the federal government to include Columbus in the National Firearms Trafficking Strike Force and creating the Columbus Alliance Against Illegal Guns.

Jackie Casimire lost her 30-year-old son two years ago when he was shot 22 times. She believes he was killed for his legal gun collection. To Casimire's dismay, the 10 guns still haven't been recovered. Now she worries they're being used to hurt others.

Casimire joined city officials, faith leaders and other anti-gun violence advocates for a press conference on Tuesday at the Linden Community Center on Briarwood Avenue. That's where her son played as a child and where he passed his swim test. When he got older, he volunteered at local community centers where he helped others learn to swim. Casimire heard from a young woman recently who learned to swim because of her son. But because he was killed, he was never able to live up to his promise to teach that woman's child to swim, too.

"He would have kept that promise if he could have. That baby would be diving from the diving board by now," Casimire said.

The pain doesn't get any easier, Casimire said. "Two years later, my life is still in shambles."

Illegal guns cause "death and destruction" daily, and wreak "havoc on the streets," she said.

Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther declared gun violence a public health crisis at the press conference on Tuesday. Ginther also announced he is asking the federal government to include Columbus in the National Firearms Trafficking Strike Force and creating the Columbus Alliance Against Illegal Guns.

"We're putting front and center the outsized role of gun violence in our community and pursuing multiple measures to better protect all of our neighbors, friends, and loved ones from this dreadful scourge," said Ginther.

The new alliance will advocate for law changes at the state and national level.

"This group will also be instrumental in studying what other communities are doing right now and have already done to address gun violence from the ground up, and designing and employing new solutions to further reduce violence and restore community safety," Ginther said.

Ginther said the city should also have the ability to impose its own local gun rules, but it is prohibited by state law.

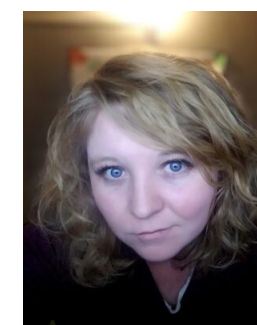
Casimire hopes the city's announcement will lead to changes that prevent deaths by guns. She said everyone in the community has to make an effort to end gun violence, and they should because the pain of losing a loved one too soon doesn't go away.

"Everybody has to put a penny in the pot to make a difference. It's the only way this is going to change," she said.

Casimire said when someone is killed prematurely, their loss is felt not only by their closest family and friends but also in waves throughout the community because they are no longer there to contribute to society, to volunteer their time, to teach someone to swim.

In a record-setting year for homicides in 2021, 204 people in Columbus were killed, 91 percent with guns. Twenty of the victims were children.

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Renee Fox

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