

June 16, 2016

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) offers our condolences, thoughts and prayers to the victims and families of last week's hate crime and terrorist attack in Orlando. This was an attack that has resonated deeply within the LGBTQ community, and we join others who condemn this act of hatred.

While we are saddened by this violence, we are also angry.

We are angry about the continued impact that gun violence has on communities in the U.S. that face so many other health disparities — particularly communities of color, like the mostly Latinx brothers and sisters who were gunned down in Orlando.

Those systemic disparities include lack of access to HIV prevention, testing and treatment. Black communities in Chicago that are affected by the HIV epidemic are also severely affected by the rampant epidemic of gun violence. These communities are caught in the crossfire of drivers of the HIV epidemic, including institutional racism and divestment from communities.

So far this year, [1,709 people have been shot in Chicago](#), according to the Chicago Tribune. That's an average of 10 people shot every day.

People besieged by violence in their communities are deterred from seeking medical services, like HIV testing or treatment, especially when combined with the stigma HIV has in the community. The fear of being shot and the grief and trauma of losing loved ones can overshadow all.

We are in the midst of a public health epidemic of gun violence, not just in Orlando and Chicago. Gun violence across this country, from the mass shootings that garner press attention to the violence that occurs every day in cities across the country, finds its roots in larger systemic issues including policies that disproportionately effect black and brown communities.

We pledge to lend our support and voices to the growing chorus demanding that we enact smarter and better laws to combat gun violence in our community — and to enforce those laws already on the books. The status quo is untenable; our elected leaders need to lead.

AFC believes we as Americans have the capacity and the will to enact positive change, especially in moments such as this where the alternative is to stand by as more Americans become victims of gun violence. Doing nothing is no longer a viable solution, and we look forward to being a part of the movement for smart, common sense gun laws that will improve community health in Illinois and throughout the country.