Memorandum in Support
S.2364A (Bailey)
Codify, Expand, and Fund Operation SNUG

United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) supports S.2364A (Bailey), which would codify, expand, and fund the Operation SNUG program, an evidence-based and preexisting program that supports community-based organizations to use credible messengers to do street-level outreach to prevent gun violence at a hyper-local level.

Settlement houses are deeply impacted by gun violence in their communities. Many have seen program participants killed by guns, by suicide, or for senseless reasons like walking in the wrong place. Settlement houses respond to these acts of violence in numerous ways, such as offering individual and group mental health therapy to address the trauma, rallying and flyering the neighborhood, and holding conversations with key neighborhood stakeholders. Settlement houses know that the most impactful solutions to curb gun violence are generally those that focus on listening to the people who are most impacted, working at a hyper-local and interpersonal level and in a way that centers racial equity.

Several settlement houses operate formal SNUG or Cure Violence programs that are funded by the State or by New York City. SNUG, which is “guns” spelled backwards and follows the Cure Violence model, is an evidence-based national model that started in Chicago and came to New York in 2009, with the guiding principle that gun violence should be treated like a public health epidemic. Cure Violence programs work at the community and street outreach level, training people to intervene and deescalate potentially violent situations with high-risk individuals. They are highly successful at curbing gun incidents.

While this program is already funded by the State and administered through the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the funding is limited and can fluctuate each year. In addition, many parts of the State including parts of New York City are excluded from receiving these funds. While New York City operates its own Cure Violence program, those funds are also limited. Given that the New York State Legislature declared gun violence a public health crisis in the FY 2021-2022 budget, protecting the SNUG program by enshrining it into statute is prudent. The bill includes a minimum $30 million allocation each year, which would be distributed by DCJS, the Senate, and the Assembly, and allows the program to expand to additional counties and cities.

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UNH is a policy and social change organization representing 46 neighborhood settlement houses that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York’s settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development.