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EDITOR'S PICK

Michael Johnson to announce \$600 million plan to reduce Chicago violence

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Boys and Girls Club of Dane County CEO Michael Johnson and other community leaders will introduce a \$600 million 15-point plan Thursday to reduce violence in Chicago.

Boys and Girls Club of Dane County CEO Michael Johnson and other community leaders will introduce a \$600 million 15-point plan to reduce violence while at the Chicago Police Department headquarters Thursday.

A Chicago native, Johnson said he is tired of going to funerals. He said he has lost more than 50 childhood friends, family members and associates to gun violence in the city over the last 15 years.

"What I'm seeing and what I'm troubled by is I've been to dozens and dozens of marches, town hall meetings, focused groups and for whatever reason we seem to never get to the core of the issue," Johnson said.

Johnson, community activist Rev. Carey Gridon and other leaders from Chicago and with ties to the city, including some members of Madison's Focused Interruption Coalition, are asking President Donald Trump and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel to invest in their community-vetted violence prevention framework.

The framework includes:

- Re-purposing \$100 million over four years from the correctional system to employ thousands of inner city men
- Training and developing peer support coaches for violence prevention
- Training and developing peer support coaches for recidivism reduction
- Engaging youth in providing solutions with Chicago Peace Project
- Providing awards and protection for witnesses who report violent crimes
- Employing thousands of youth during summer months
- Lobbying for policies that address social justice issues
- Providing mentoring and executive coaching for inner city men in the workplace
- Providing alternative sentencing for nonviolent offenders
- Providing mental health therapy for families
- Providing court advocates for low-income individuals 25-years-old and younger
- Building new community centers in targeted neighborhoods

- Funding robust functional family therapy programs
- Providing parent management training classes that includes financial literacy and wealth building
- Creating a basic need fund for new emerging workers who struggle with housing and transportation issues.

Johnson said Gridon, a group of Chicago teenagers, community leaders and formerly incarcerated individuals developed the plan, which will be announced in detail Thursday.

"No one can challenge the merits of that plan and if they do, I welcome them to debate me," Johnson said. "There's no other group in Chicago from a grassroots level who has put forth a multi-year plan with goals to address the violence that's taken place."

Johnson and the Focused Interruption Coalition developed a 15-point plan for Madison with the goal of reducing community violence. Mayor Paul Soglin dedicated \$400,000 in the 2017 operating budget to implement the proposal.

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Abigail Becker

Abigail Becker joined The Capital Times in 2016, where she primarily covers city and county government. She previously worked for the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism and the Wisconsin State Journal.



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