



SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER
Rise Up AND Act for Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 12, 2023

On the Road to Justice in Honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

(Silver Spring, MD) – We remember always the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and every January we celebrate his holiday. Ironically though this January, like many Januarys, we note the record-breaking violence around the country, we see gun violence increasing and more communities feeling unsafe. It is time to break the chain.

“The Road to Justice runs through the very streets experiencing violence and where communities often face the greatest challenges. We believe that two lanes on the Road to Justice are violence interrupters and reduced gun access,” said Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. **“We urge Congress to honor Dr. King and promote nonviolence by appropriating funds for violence interrupter programs making our streets and communities safer and restoring self-worth and purpose to young men and women who often are cast-aside.**

“After 30 years of debate and missed opportunities and untold lives stolen, Congress took a critical step forward last year in passing the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. We have a gun violence problem in America; there are too many guns and they are too easy to get.

“This law will not solve all our problems, but it is a multi-pronged start – addressing gun control, expanding mental health resources and improving school safety. In addition, jurisdictions around the country must use the laws already on the books, and loopholes must be scrutinized and closed.

“This must be only the beginning of Congressional dialog and action to reduce gun violence. **We call on Congress to pass additional common-sense legislation such as strengthening background checks and banning assault weapons,**” said Fran Eskin-Royer.

An inescapable and tragic part of American society for the past few decades has been gun violence. One piece to finding peace is [Good Shepherd Services' Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence \(B.R.A.G.\) program](#) that works with young people, local community residents, community organizations, and the public to promote safer streets and new community norms where violence is not accepted. Violence interrupters are an integral part of the B.R.A.G. program.

[Good Shepherd Services New York](#) has been serving New York City officially since 1947 and is a Good Shepherd partner agency. Good Shepherd Services New York goes where children, youth, and families face the greatest challenges and provides resources that build on their inherent strengths to help them thrive. Operating nearly 100 programs, Good

Shepherd Services New York supports over 30,000 children, youth and families across the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan. All programs are united by a common goal – to create opportunities that help its participants succeed at school, at home, and in their community.

B.R.A.G.'s program staff help reduce gun violence by identifying youth at risk for retaliatory violence, working with victims and their families and friends to help prevent future violence, and providing linkages to resources and follow-up services to patient participants. Additionally, B.R.A.G. mobilizes community residents and organizations through community events to raise awareness about violence and its larger impact, and to promote community norms that embrace non-violence.

B.R.A.G. staff includes **violence interrupters** who are credible messengers in the community who have themselves experienced violence. They work with young people ages 16 to 25, community organizations, and the public.

A strong, connected community can offer the safety, mentorship, and pride that bolster young people along their path to success. But in many of the neighborhoods Good Shepherd Services New York supports, the challenges that often accompany poverty – including high unemployment, low-wage jobs, crime, and incarceration – stand in the way of this potential.

Good Shepherd Services New York works in partnership with local leaders, volunteers, and businesses to address local challenges and support young people.

“At NAC, we will continue our work to make this country safer, healthier, and happier – especially for the children. We are happy to share and amplify the wonderful work of Good Shepherd Services New York, and we look forward to working with Congress on reducing violence and transforming society to the benefit of all people,” said Fran Eskin-Royer.

[The National Advocacy Center](#) educates and advocates on social justice issues for the transformation of society to the benefit of all people reflecting the spirituality, history and mission of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. NAC advocates at the Federal level for people living in poverty, immigrants, survivors of human trafficking, survivors of domestic abuse, and other vulnerable populations.

The National Advocacy Center reflects the spirituality, history and mission of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (better known as the Sisters of the Good Shepherd). The sisters and their agencies work in solidarity with the disenfranchised – particularly families, women and children – who often are forgotten, left-behind or dismissed.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd was founded in France in 1835 and are in 70 countries on 5 continents and have had a presence in the United States for over 175 years. With a presence in 22 states and 1 U. S. Territory, the Sisters and their Lay Mission Partners have dedicated themselves to serving girls, women and families who experience poverty, exploitation, vulnerability and marginalization.