



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

## Senator James Sanders Jr. Hosted Series of Community Conversations to Prevent Gun Violence

JAMES SANDERS JR. July 7, 2022



In the wake of gun violence across our country and the uptick in gun violence that usually takes place in our community during the summer, Senator James Sanders Jr. held two community conversations to prevent gun violence – one in Jamaica and one in Far Rockaway. We brought together police officers and commanding officers from the local precincts along with the leadership of violence interrupter groups to discuss the causes of gun violence and the possible solutions to end the bloodshed.

“We know that as the pandemic is winding down and the weather is getting better outside, and school is in recess, we have a lot of young people who don’t have anything to do or anywhere to

go and that's when they start hanging around with the wrong people and getting themselves into trouble," Sanders said. "Then we have the foolishness of disputes among neighbors over parking spots and such, along with gang violence, and random acts of religious violence such as has been perpetrated against the Sikh community. We need to come together as people of good will in order to be proactive."

These community conversations were all the more timely because the Supreme Court recently struck down New York's 100-year-old conceal and carry law, which requires applicants to provide proper cause to carry handguns in public. This could be potentially devastating as we move forward to promote community safety.

The violence interrupter groups that were present such as Rock Safe Streets and Fathers Alive in the Hood (F.A.I.T.H.) seemed to agree that peaceful conflict resolution is always the goal and that the community needs to take some responsibility about when to call the police, especially when they believe violence may escalate and when neighbors are not getting along.

Community concerns included bail reform, noise complaints, car jackings, domestic violence and illegal drugs. One question that a few people asked the police was – are most of the guns involved in violent crimes obtained legally or illegally – and the answer was illegally. The community also wanted to know with conceal and carry being overturned, how can they prepare for the coming change in the environment, if there is no current plan.

Some solutions were: getting young people involved in police youth programs such as the explorers, taking youth to jails to see what it's like to be incarcerated – the so-called "scared straight" method, and teaching youth about firearms and how they can be used safely at a firing range thereby taking away the fascination or mystery of guns.

"We are involved in spiritual warfare," said Kenny Carter, Founder of Fathers Alive in the Hood (F.A.I.T.H.). "We are fighting for the souls of our children."