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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-4209**

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September 8, 2022

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

I write today to request additional support from the Department of Justice to confront crime in Memphis. For too long, crime, particularly violent crime, has been high.

[NeighborhoodScout.com](http://NeighborhoodScout.com) recently reported that Memphis ranked second in the likelihood of a resident becoming a victim of violent crime, with a one in 41 chance. That follows last year's report from [24/7 Wall Street](http://24/7 Wall Street), which named Memphis the most dangerous city in the United States.

Just yesterday, a gunman went on a hours-long shooting rampage through Memphis, gunning down 7 people, killing four, and triggering lockdowns throughout the city. Horrifically, that is just the latest high-profile slaying. In the past few months, three other Memphis murders have captured national attention. In July, Rev. Autura Eason-Williams, a leader in the United Methodist Church, was murdered outside her home in an attempted carjacking. Rev. Eason-Williams was the pastor of Capleville United Methodist Church and district superintendent of the Metro District in the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Annual Conference. On August 13, 2022, Dr. Yvonne Nelson, a Memphis civic leader, was shot multiple times and killed. And just a few days

ago, Eliza Fletcher, a junior kindergarten teacher at St. Mary's Episcopal School, was abducted during an early morning run and murdered. Her body was recently found behind an abandoned apartment.

These incidents are notable for the attention they received but also represent the much larger violent crime problem that Memphis continues to experience. Recently, the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission [reported](#) that the murder rate in the City of Memphis has doubled since 2006 to 50 for every 100,000 residents, and in 2021, there were more than 17,000 violent crimes reported in Shelby [County](#). This corresponds to a rapid increase in the use of guns. 70% of violent crimes are now committed with a gun, up from 40% in 2011. Similarly, guns are now used in over half of domestic violence aggravated assaults, up from 24% in 2011. Even property crimes, like burglary, auto theft, and carjackings, are becoming more common and turning into deadly encounters. Between 2021 to 2022, major property crime has risen 18% in our city. This high rate of violent crime is taking a considerable toll on Memphians. More must be done to make our city safe.

Federal support is essential to curb crime and violence in Memphis. Congress has created several grant and assistance programs for local communities and entrusted you and your department with allocating and administering them. As your department considers discretionary grant applications, I encourage you to prioritize the local governments, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organizations that serve places like Memphis, which disproportionately carry the burden of crime.

I want to ensure that Memphis is receiving every form of support and access to every resource available from the federal government that can help stem violent crime in our city. Memphis urgently needs your help.

I would appreciate a few minute phone call to discuss this crisis in my district and city with you.

As always, I remain,  
Most sincerely,



Steve Cohen

Member of Congress