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Biden calls on faith leaders to rally in favor of gun control

by Eloisa Perez-Lozano

Vice President Joe Biden called for national faith leaders to rally their faithful in the nation's debate regarding gun control in order to reduce gun violence.

Among the 12 leaders who met with Biden in a White House meeting Wednesday was the Rev. Michael McBride, director of Lifelines to Healing, a faith-based effort to reduce gun violence in inner cities. He said the meeting was very constructive.

Biden met with the faith leaders as part of a series of meetings he is hosting this week to draft a comprehensive plan to lower gun violence. Biden also met with the National Rifle Association, gun control advocates, heads of video game and entertainment industries, and others.

"I told the vice president how we need to include as a central part of this conversation solutions to urban gun violence to unite Americans who all share the pain caused by guns," McBride said.

McBride said Biden shared some thoughts on the White House's proposal to curb gun violence, which includes universal background checks and bans on assault weapons with a possible ammunition component. Biden also expressed the need for faith leaders to appeal to all Americans to eventually pass legislation that will meet that goal.

McBride said he looked forward to "working with Vice President Biden, the Obama administration and Congress to find the comprehensive solution that keeps all of our children and neighbors safe from gun violence."

Lifelines to Healing, a program of the PICO National Network, advocates for a targeted and

comprehensive approach to gun control that includes addressing assault weapons bans, universal background checks and mental health care, with a strong focus on urban gun violence.

"Given that a lot of the gun violence is concentrated in urban and poor neighborhoods, it is the responsibility for any comprehensive approach to recognize that and to pay attention to that," he said.

"We're convinced that the pain of urban gun violence in urban neighborhoods and cities coupled with the pain of gun violence in suburban communities is an opportunity for our whole country to unite around the common and shared pain of gun violence and address it all together rather than continue to divide our country into cities and suburbs, poor and rich," he said.

The Lifelines to Healing campaign was launched nationally in November 2011. According to its website, it pushes for policies and resources to address the criminalization of people of color and the lack of meaningful opportunities they face with the goal of repairing communities hurt by violence and crime.

The campaign is hosting a nationwide Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath the weekend of Jan. 19-20, when churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship can memorialize members of their congregations who have been lost to gun violence.

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More than 35 congregations of various religious affiliations have joined the weekend commemoration. For more information, visit Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath or PICO National Network's resources page.

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