

PAM BOSLEY, CHICAGO'S FAR SOUTH SIDE

These are uncertain times. Everyone is consumed by the threat of the Coronavirus, and it seems to be all that anyone can talk about - and it is the right thing to do. But we also need to keep talking about the number one cause of death for children in Illinois: gun violence.

In the first three months of 2020, Chicago has seen a 43 percent increase in the number of killings compared with 2019. That's a virus too. And something must be done to combat it.

I tragically lost my son Terrell to gun violence in 2006. He was a college freshman and only 18 years old when he stepped outside to retrieve drums for a church choir rehearsal and a gunman opened fire, taking his life.

I work with several Chicago-area parents whose children's lives were taken by gun violence and have started the organization Purpose Over Pain to make sure no other families have to live through this type of unthinkable tragedy.

Together, we are working to protect our communities by ensuring that SB 1966, The BIO (Block Illegal Gun Ownership) bill becomes law. The BIO Bill will work to keep our communities safe from gun violence by stopping people who cannot pass a background check from obtaining or possessing a firearm. The Illinois House passed the bill in May, but the bill stalled in the Illinois Senate. This is unacceptable.

As the Illinois legislature considers a shortened session and a small package of prioritized bills, we must ensure that this critical legislation is prioritized and passed. Gun violence is a pressing crisis too.

Both the Senate and the House came together to get money to fight coronavirus and to support families through this uncertain time. The same can and should be done to end the everyday violence that is taking lives.