

6 NJ mayors call for changes to Bail Reform laws to prevent more gun violence

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The mayors of some of New Jersey's largest cities are banding together to call for change to New Jersey's Bail Reform laws.

The mayors of Hillside, Newark, Paterson, Plainfield, Roselle and Trenton gathered at Paterson City Hall on Tuesday. They say that while they do support the Bail Reform law, their cities are seeing an uptick in gun violence.

"What we are saying is – there are far too many guns and shooters on our streets. And action must be taken," Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh said.

"It is us that has to talk to the mothers. It is us who are teachers who have to deal with the loss of a student, the loss of a community person," said Hillside Mayor Dahlia Vertrees.

The mayors say that there is a weakness in the law. Those who are arrested for gun use are getting out of jail too easily. The mayors say that those who get out often go on to shoot other people.

They say that they want the law to change to make sure that a county prosecutor can keep an accused shooter in jail until trial.

"It's about folks who are arrested with guns, who have a history of using guns," said Newark Mayor Ras Baraka.

"We support bail reform, but it could be a bill if we focus on keeping the shooters off of our streets," Sayegh added.

Bail reform is supposed to create a system of fairness, so that those without much money, especially those who may be innocent, have a chance for release until trial. But there is an unintended effect.

The New Jersey Attorney General's Office has tried to help with reforms allowing

release. But the mayors say that the law should be tweaked so that others are not shot and killed in the meantime.

"Bullets do not have names on them. Sometimes they stray and we've had situations where young children have lost their lives," says Paterson Public Safety Director Jerry Speziale.

The mayors have asked the New Jersey Office of Legislative Services to examine the law to see where and how exactly it needs to be changed. Legislators would need to vote on it to make any changes.