

PUBLIC TESTIMONY - BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL TAXPAYERS' NIGHT

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Good evening staff & members of the City Council,

My name is Onyinye and I live in Upton. Last year we all bore witness to an **international** uprising in which people took to the streets to demand that we defund the police. In this year alone over 350 people have been killed by police officers, including children like Ma'Khia Bryant in Ohio and Alex Toledo in Chicago. The majority of victims of police murder are black and latino people. **It could not be clearer that policing is a public health hazard.** The proposed \$27 mill increase overshadows the measly \$21 mil you cut from the budget last year. I support the demand for a 100 mill dollar decrease in BPDs budget and a gradual and complete dismantling of the department, as we build alternative structures.

Policing and incarceration do not keep us safe! There have been many studies showing that adequate education, stable affordable housing, a living wage, and access to health services are better at reducing and preventing violence and harm than police or prisons.¹ Ten years ago, the city had the lowest homicide rate we've seen since the 1970s and the police budget wasn't even half of what is being proposed for the 2022 fiscal year. Each year the police budget increases and each year the homicide rate hits a new record, even as our city population continues to plummet.

On it's own the amount of money being spent on policing is ridiculous, but when compared to the amount being spent on other necessities, it is even more absurd. We are spending pennies and dimes on the dollar for fundamental services compared to what we give to a department that has demonstrated its inability to prevent harm in our communities including gun violence, intimate partner violence, opioid overdose, hunger, homelessness, and other social ailments. **We do not want more money for police pensions and benefits.** We want our tax dollars to be used to address very dire problems our communities face, particularly in East, West and South Baltimore, where many people are struggling and live impacted by economic and social disinvestment.

Spending on law enforcement and our criminal legal system dramatically outpaces spending on community services such as housing, education, and violence prevention programs. Those are the institutions that build safe, thriving, healthy communities. The same consent decree that was instituted to hold our police accountable in the wake of Freddy Gray's murder has been used to justify increased police spending. **Instead of continuing to funnel money to BPD for perks and retirement, we can use that money to fund our schools & childcare, develop and strengthen mobile crisis services, peer counseling services, and crisis hotlines, fund conflict mediation programs, build deeply affordable housing, fund eviction prevention programs, create avenues for community land stewardship, protect the city's many community gardens, increase services**

¹Doug McVay, Vincent Schiraldi, and Jason Ziedenberg, "Treatment or Incarceration? National and State Findings on the Efficacy and Cost Savings of Drug Treatment versus Imprisonment," Justice Policy Institute, January 2004, http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/04-01_rep_md_treatment_or_incarceration_ac_dp.pdf; Steven Hawkins, "Education vs. Incarceration," The American Prospect, December 6, 2010, <http://prospect.org/article/education-vs-incarceration>; Lance Lochner and Enrico Moretti, "The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports," October 2003, <http://eml.berkeley.edu/~moretti/lm46.pdf>; 27; "Housing and Public Safety," Justice Policy Institute, November 1, 2007, http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/07-11_rep_housingpublicsafety_ac-ps.pdf; 1.

for immigrants, fix our roads, implement a zero waste plan and a number of other measures which address the city's true needs.

To proceed with this budget tells us that you do not care about the needs and demands of the people. If you want to create more trauma in the city, by all means keep funding (and overspending on) the police. If you want to create holistically healthy and safe communities, it's time to make some transformative changes including creating a community wellness trust fund & pivoting to a participatory budget that allows for determination of budget priorities by and for the people.

Thank you,
Onyinye Alheri
Upton

Hello,

I am writing this testimony to provide feedback on the proposed FY22 budget. I am strongly against increasing the police budget given the continued history of BPD's abuses and the needed funding in other areas, such as housing, education and other social services. Increasing the police budget year after year has not made our community safer, only addressing the root cause of crime, poverty, will lead to lasting change.

Sincerely,
Oz Amram
Baltimore City Resident

My name is Alayna and I am a constituent of Odette Ramos. As a taxpayer of Baltimore city and an employee of the Pratt library, I care deeply for my neighbors and community members. Every day I see people work hard to take care of their families and live with joy and safety. Every day I watch cruel and unnecessary barriers to justice and happiness working against Black people in Baltimore. The police in this city don't prevent harm and violence, they respond to it after the fact. And their response is violent. It perpetuates violence. I want the money I give back to this city through my taxes to go toward measures that prevent harm and hardship, not cause it. Right now I feel complicit in the pain of my neighbors and community members because my taxes pay for their oppression at the hands of the BPD. What would Baltimore look like if my tax dollars went toward free housing and health care for everyone instead of toward heavily armed men and women living outside our city who drive in every day to surveil and murder my neighbors? Might investing security, safety, health, and education prevent more harm and violence? I hope that you, the elected representatives of our incredible city, will choose to be courageous in your stewardship and decision-making. I urge you to defund the BPD.



May 26, 2021

Dear City Council President Nick Mosby and the Baltimore City Council,

We are Baltimore Asian Resistance in Solidarity, or BARS, a collective of Asian and Pacific Islander city residents organizing for anti-racism. Formed in response to police brutality against Michael Brown and Freddie Gray in the winter of 2015, BARS brings together Asians and Pacific Islanders of all backgrounds in Baltimore to work in solidarity with our neighbors and the communities we share: Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, women, working class, disabled folks, incarcerated people, immigrants, refugees, and more. We represent a justice-oriented AAPI community, with a diverse group of people from all fields including advocates, academics, students, workers and creatives.

We are writing to join Organizing Black and many other Baltimore city groups in opposing any increase in funding to the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD). We are in support of a \$100 million cut from the BPD budget. As stated by Organizing Black, "The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and Brown communities." When BARS has been called upon to talk about addressing anti-Asian violence, we have reiterated that anti-Asian violence is not just interpersonal crime but state and systemic violence as well, as Asian and Pacific Islanders also suffer from police violence, anti-immigrant and anti-sex work policy, and community divestment.

Although we recognize the Baltimore City Council at this time cannot reallocate budget dollars, we also call for cuts to the BPD budget to be redirected to a community-centered public safety fund, along with all necessary social services, including housing, education, healthcare, and jobs. Reimagining public safety in Baltimore is not a matter of technology, training or force. Justice is not simply a matter of prosecution and punishment. Genuine improvement in public safety requires true accountability from the police, and a budget that moves towards lifting BIPOC communities out of poverty. Defunding the police and shifting our reliance on a carceral system to reliance on community and interpersonal assets are central to this and the first step towards the right direction.

We also stand with Kelly Davis and Team Free Keith and collectively urge that you call on Baltimore's State's Attorneys Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. These trials have cost taxpayers over a million dollars without being able to render an ounce of justice to the Davis family and the Jones family. From the cost of judges, witnesses, DNA analysis, police officers, court clerks, bailiffs, law clerks, utilities and operations, and juror payments - Baltimore residents are directly paying for the unjust prosecution of a police brutality victim.

As Baltimore City residents, as your neighbors, we urge that the City Council use the full extent of your powers and make these changes to the Fiscal Year 2022 budget for the needs and sake of our

Black neighbors and friends. Only in this way can we prevent violence and unnecessary Black death at the hands of law enforcement. Thank you.

For more information about Baltimore Asian Resistance in Solidarity or this position, please contact baltimoreasianresistanceinsolidarity@gmail.com.

Thank you,
Baltimore Asian Resistance in Solidarity

Good evening,

My name is Morgan Bengel and I am a resident of Highlandtown, as well as a social service worker in Baltimore City.

I oppose the FY22 budget proposal to increase funding to the Baltimore City Police Department. Within the last two months, there have been two shootings on my block, and at least one shooting that occurred only a few blocks away from my house. The police arrived *after* the shootings each time, and their presence occupying our block did not stop or prevent the first, second and third shootings from occurring.

I make this point because it is clear that increased policing does nothing to stop or prevent crime. Baltimore police do not make residents feel safe. The night after one of the shootings, an officer sat on our block shining a spotlight onto the house of a family with children long into the night. Doing social work in Baltimore City Schools, I have overheard students in the halls talking about their fear of the police, and even heard one student state that there is “no point in trying” because he “probably won’t live long enough for it to matter.” And yet despite this, the FY22 budget proposes a \$15 million dollar cut from our public schools and education grants.

The solution to crime is not increased funding to police, and we all know this. Increased funding to police only serves to bolster systems of oppression. We say to defund the police so that we can invest in communities--which is what will truly change the conditions that lead to crime.

As a Baltimore city resident and social service worker, I echo Organizing Black and CJSJ's demand that \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities, the creation of a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process, and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.

Thank you.

I'd like to submit my testimony in opposition to the final proposed budget for Baltimore City FY 2022. I am pleased to see the total funding for Baltimore Police Department has decreased since the first Baltimore City Taxpayers' night, but that reduction is nowhere near enough. I demand that BPD's budget be cut even further. The only excuse the taxpayers have received for the increase in budget from this year to last, despite community calls for defunding, is that retirements must be funded. While that may be the case, active policing budgets could and should be cut to decrease the overall agency funding. We need to invest more in Baltimore City community services, including education, affordable housing, youth services, and others. I stand in solidarity with Organizing Black's calls to remove police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other issues that do not require police presence.

Dear City Council,

The taxpayers of Baltimore pay into a system that, as often as not, uses our public funds not to support and uplift the city and its citizens, but instead to continually reinvest in a carceral system that bills itself as progressive while actively perpetuating civic and social stagnation.

Whether that be paying more per capita for one of the most corrupt, violent, and ineffectual police forces in the nation, or allowing Baltimore SAO to perpetuate further violence on our neighbors through pretrial incarceration and malicious prosecution, we deserve better.

In possibly the most egregious example of this malignant wastefulness, it has so far cost the City of Baltimore an estimated \$1.2 million to try Keith Davis Jr. For comparison, \$1.25 million is half the City's maternal health and child health budget. This is an especially potent example of misaligned priorities in a city with proven medical apartheid, knowing that the US has some of the highest maternal mortality rates in the developed world—a preventable crisis that, as with policing and prosecution, disproportionately impacts our Black neighbors.

Instead of 5 trials for #KeithDavisJr, the City could have fully funded their share of Headstart (\$428K) AND the Youth and Adult Sports Program (\$828K). How will a 6th trial stack up to the Youth and Trauma Services budget (\$830K)? In a world where study after study shows the proven, long term, community-wide benefits of such programs, how does ANY single prosecution compare to the value of these programs to our citizens? Baltimore deserves better.

The background of Keith's case is notably awful, in large part because it condenses and magnifies a litany of everyday injustices inflicted on Baltimoreans, especially Baltimoreans of color, every day: from police violence and gross misconduct, to prosecutorial slander, and through to the persistent disregard for the ongoing advocacy and clearly stated will of the people of Baltimore in this matter. Countless families face these issues in some way. The Davis family experiences them all and more, and will continue to do so every day until Keith is free.

In June 2015, Keith Davis Jr was misidentified as a robbery suspect by four BPD officers who chased him into an enclosed garage and shot at him dozens of times. He was acquitted of the robbery after a trial in which the **robbery victim testified that Keith wasn't the person who had committed it**. The police and Marilyn Mosby's office then claimed that a gun found near Keith in that garage had been used to murder Kevin Jones several hours earlier that same day.

It was determined that:

- **The gun was never fired that day.**
- **There is no DNA link between Keith Davis Jr. and Kevin Jones.**
- **One of the officers who shot Keith was even investigated by the FBI for interstate drug trafficking.**

Despite these glaring problems with the case, Marilyn Mosby has chosen to repeatedly prosecute him. These trials have resulted in two mistrials and two overturned guilty verdicts.

These trials have also cost taxpayers over a million dollars without being able to render an ounce of justice. From the cost of judges, witnesses, DNA (which was outsourced by the state), police officers, court clerks, bailiffs, law clerks, utilities and operations, and juror payments - Baltimore residents are directly paying for the unjust prosecution of a police brutality victim. Taxpayers must challenge this abuse of power and understand that silence implicates us all.

On May 13, 2021, Keith Davis Jr. was granted a new trial, making way for him to be tried **a fifth** time. Please call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

We demand more appropriate budgetary priorities that serve all Baltimoreans as citizens, neighbors, and taxpayers.

Free Keith Davis Jr.

Thank you,

Sharyn Blum

Dear City Council,

As a citizen, a Baltimore homeowner and taxpayer, and member of this community I am deeply troubled by the story of Keith Davis Jr. In June 2015, police misidentified him as a suspect in a robbery, chased on him, and fired several dozen shots at him. He was acquitted of the robbery, and the victim has testified that he didn't commit the crime.

He is about to be tried again, this time for a murder it seems clear he didn't commit, on evidence that does not hold up. There is no reason to believe he committed this crime, or that he poses a threat to our community. However, he has been held for 5 years, and prosecuted at a taxpayer expense of over 1 million dollars.

If the fifth trial moves forward, this expense will only grow. While I am proud to be a member of this city, and to support this beautiful, vibrant place we share, it disgusts me to think that I'm contributing to a system that, seems to be pursuing a vendetta against an innocent man. This is unacceptable, and it needs to stop.

You have the power to change this, and I beg you to do so. Call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney's Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr, and to stop his fifth trial.

Thank you,

Greg Bowen

Dear City Council Members,

I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you divest \$100M from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested. SURJ works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

I am a new mother living in the Frankford neighborhood and am a part of District 45. I have worked in public schools for the last 3 years teaching mindfulness to students ranging from elementary to high school. Most Baltimore City Public Schools are in such dire state. How are students supposed to learn in an environment where the buildings aren't taken care of? How are the students supposed to feel taken care of? Teachers are under increasingly insurmountable pressure to always go above and beyond to make sure their students can get the education that they deserve. It is time that the city of Baltimore take responsibility and invest in our current and future students.

Baltimore spends more of its General Fund on the Baltimore Police Department than it does on schools, housing, violence prevention initiatives, substance abuse treatment, and rec and parks combined. Policing does not address the root causes of crime and violence; however, over a quarter of Baltimore City General Fund dollars are allocated to police. Baltimore City has budgeted almost \$900 to the BPD per city resident, well above every major city in the country. Instead of giving additional funding for police to expand technology and personnel to over-police already over-policed communities, money should be invested in after-school programs, crisis centers that help those who need help, felony-diversion initiatives, youth centers and many more community-centered programs that will actually address public safety and developmental community concerns.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.
Kerianne Brown
Frankford, Baltimore
SURJ

Testimony on the FY22 Baltimore City Budget

Dear Councilmembers and Mayor Scott,

Many of our residents want resources directed to mental health and other services to improve the quality of the police departments. We know that Commissioner Harrison is committed to the consent decree and the budget may very well reflect a critical need. Certainly, as an educator, substitute in the system, the need to fund our schools is of great need and Kirwan will bring about some tough, well needed tightness of our fiduciary responsibilities. Also, we fail our kids and our funding (\$14,000 roughly per student) when we graduate failing students.

Councilmember Mark Conway, 4th District, explained that health care benefits has caused the \$28 million increase and that he is carefully weighing in to meet the operational needs as well as divestment.

I support Jews United for Justice. “Our ask: The preliminary 2022 budget released by Mayor Scott included an increase of more than \$25 million to the Police Department’s budget and a cut in the education budget. This is unacceptable. Join us in lifting up the demands of our partners in the Campaign for Justice Safety & Jobs (CJSJ) for a budget that invests in people, not in policing them:

1. **\$100 million cut from BPD’s existing budget.**
2. **\$30 million** investment into a community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process.
3. **\$70 million** additional investment to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.
4. The removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues. Baltimore must create an

alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police but connects people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment, and harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

FAIR ELECTIONS

B About the issue: Elected officials should care about all of the communities they represent, not just large donors and corporations. Yet, the power of big money and corporate interests have made our elections less democratic and representative of community interests. In 2019, Baltimore passed a Fair Elections Fund to make our local elections more democratic and fair.

The Fair Elections program can: keep big money out of our elections, expand opportunities to run for office, provide equal opportunity to participate in elections, and encourage more participation in our elections through matching funds. Our ask: The Fair Elections Fund remains unfunded. **Find \$2.5 million in cuts to the current budget** and encourage the Mayor to reallocate funds towards the new Fair Elections program.

Sincerely, Renaud D. Brown, M.M.



May 27, 2021

Re: Testimony for City Budget FY 2022 -- Taxpayer's Night

Dear Council President Mosby, Vice President Middleton, Chairman Costello and Council Members:

Please accept this testimony on behalf of members of [Baltimore Renters United](#) and the undersigned organizations regarding the City's proposed FY 2022 Ordinance of Estimates. We call on the Mayor and City Council to radically reimagine the City's budget to better recognize human rights, meet human needs, and provide residents a stronger voice in creating the budget.

Baltimore Renters United (BRU) is a coalition that works to realize housing as a human right in Baltimore City. Our members know that housing is critical to an individual's quality of life, the health of families, and the prosperity of communities. We also know that the collective power of people, especially those directly impacted by housing injustice, can bring about meaningful change to systems of inequity that are built on centuries of structural racism.

I. Better Prioritize Housing Needs and Housing Rights

BRU supports additional, significant investments to meet priority housing needs that are not included in the FY 2022 budget. For example, the Council recently passed CB 20-0625, Landlord – Tenant – Right to Counsel in Eviction Cases (“Right to Counsel law”), sponsored by Mayor Scott, which became effective on April 1, 2021. The Right to Counsel law calls for the City to expand access to legal representation for all eligible tenants in eviction cases within four years. The law also calls for DHCD to fund community-based groups to conduct outreach and education regarding tenants' rights. Laws protecting human rights require enforcement, and access to representation helps renters enforce laws protecting safe, fair, accessible, and affordable housing with security of tenure. [A study by Stout Risius Ross](#) in Baltimore City found that 92% of represented tenants would avoid disruptive displacement in eviction actions with representation. We know that access to representation is even more critical in the middle of a pandemic in which 3,300 families in Maryland have already been evicted despite the so-called eviction “moratoria” in place. According to recent census data, [over 28,250 Baltimore City](#)

[households are currently facing eviction with a total rent debt estimated at \\$82 million. An astounding 82% of those facing eviction in Maryland are persons of color.](#) This should be no surprise in Baltimore City. Due to centuries of systemic racism, redlining, and disinvestment, evictions in Baltimore City have a [disparate impact on Black, women-headed households. There are 296% more evictions of Black women than white men in Baltimore City.](#)

Based on the Stout study, we estimate that scaled implementation of the Right to Counsel law including outreach and education would cost \$7.7 million per year upon full implementation after four years of a scaled investment (FY 22: \$2.5 million; FY 23: \$4.5 million; FY 24: \$6.3 million; FY 25: \$7.7 million). Baltimore City has a unique opportunity to fund the Right to Counsel Law through federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds over the next four fiscal years. Namely, the City has received or is slated to receive over \$80 million in ARPA funds designated for emergency rental assistance paid to landlords. Ten percent of these funds can and should be directed to funding the Right to Counsel Law. The City is also receiving over \$555 million in ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds. The remaining implementation budget over four fiscal years should be drawn from these funds. [Jurisdictions around the country are using ARPA funds to expand access to legal counsel and ensure that emergency rental assistance funds are used to actually keep people housed in the economic aftershock of COVID-19.](#) Baltimore City should do the same in a comprehensive way that links legal assistance with wraparound social services and rental assistance. ARPA funds provide time for the City to seek a more sustainable funding source beyond FY 2025.

BRU urges the Mayor and Council to consider other critical priorities including funding for comprehensive mold testing, code enforcement and remediation measures. In a city in which 50% of the rental housing is substandard according to the City's Consolidated Plan, little money is spent beyond housing code enforcement on ensuring safe, habitable housing. Mold and rodent infestations are the most frequent conditions reported by our members as severe threats to their health and safety that are not addressed by current law. We encourage the Mayor and Council to look to Washington D.C. and other jurisdictions for innovative ways to expand and enforce the housing code as well as financial investments in remediation.

Additionally, we support investments in permanently affordable, community-controlled housing. Over 32,000 Baltimore City renters are paying more than 50% of their income toward rent -- often in substandard units with predatory landlords. We support investments in community development without displacement including through funding for community land trusts, limited equity cooperatives, and other forms of homeownership and rental housing that give residents and neighbors a greater stake in redeveloping their neighborhoods. Finally, we support a special priority in meeting the housing needs of persons experiencing homelessness using a housing first model. Additional funding should be directed to housing construction and allocation of vouchers to meet the needs first of those who do not have a home.

II. How Funding Decisions Are Made.

Long term, the City should study and implement models of participatory budgeting that would provide residents ongoing, meaningful input on the development of the budget -- not merely a limited opportunity for input once most major decisions have been made. The City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund is one small example of such a participatory process already in place in Baltimore. Established in 2016, the City's Trust Fund provides for a level of equity, participation, transparency and accountability in identifying and meeting the City's many housing needs.

III. Where Does the Money Come From?

In the short term, the City could readily take any of the following steps to obtain nearly \$20 million per year in additional revenue allocated to the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund to fund the investments described above.

A. Defund2Refund

We stand in solidarity with Organizing Black, Communities United, and others organizations who understand that a bloated police department consuming 26% of the budget cannot bring peace to our neighborhoods or further racial equity. Black communities need stronger schools, affordable housing, and other resources, not over policing or a lack of resources due to police over-spending. In this budget, per capita spending on the police department reaches \$965 per resident-- exceeding per capita spending on police in 72 of the biggest cities in the USA. A 25% to 50% reduction in police spending will 'rightsize' our police spending and bring Baltimore in line with the average police spending in the country. Study after study shows that a living wage, access to holistic health services and treatment, educational opportunity, and stable housing are far more successful in reducing crime than police or prisons.

B. Fully Invest In the Future and Utilize General Obligation Bond Authority.

A [2012 Debt Study](#) commissioned by the City concluded that the City could easily raise its annual limit on issuing general obligation bonds (GO Bonds) from \$60 million to \$80 million without risk to its bond rating and to bring it in line with peer cities. The 2012 Debt Study pointed out that even \$80 million was very low -- in 2012 dollars. If the City's bond issuance from 1990 had just kept up with inflation, the GO Bond issuance would be \$107 million per year. The current \$80 million per year has not even kept up with inflation. Baltimore City is not investing capital in its neighborhoods as much as peer cities. The City should immediately raise its GO Bond issuance limit to at least \$107 million to keep pace with inflation and peer cities.

C. End the Inequitable High Performance Market Rate Rental Housing Tax Credit

The FY 2022 budget includes an increase from \$13 million to \$20 million for the “High Performance Market Rate Rental Housing Tax Credit.” This means \$20 million in taxpayer money to subsidize mostly luxury rental units that likely predominate in Harbor East and similar areas of the city. There was no analysis of equity in enacting this tax credit, and we have seen no analysis of racial and economic equity in how this credit has been implemented. \$20 million per year could fully fund the Right to Counsel Law, create 200 new Community Land Trust housing units, and provide housing vouchers to 250 homeless families. The Mayor and Council should move immediately to end this credit and redirect those funds to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

D. Expand Yield Tax or Similar Equitable Other Measures

Currently the City’s “Yield Tax” on recordation/transfer taxes on real property transactions over \$1 million is only yielding \$7-\$9 million per year for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund -- in contrast to the Finance Department’s projections that the Yield Tax would produce \$13 million on average in revenue each year. The City should consider expanding the Yield Tax to cover additional property transactions or other forms of real estate revenue increase to ensure that the benefits of redevelopment and increased assessments in the City extend to those least able to afford or maintain their housing.

Thank you for your consideration. We are available to discuss this matter at your earliest convenience. Please contact Matt Hill, Public Justice Center, 410-625-9409, ext. 229, hillm@publicjustice.org to discuss further.

Regards,

Baltimore Renters United Members:

Architects of Justice
Bolton House Residents Association
CASA
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Communities United
Disability Rights Maryland
Fair Housing Action Center
Greater Baltimore Democratic Socialists of America
Healthcare for the Homeless
Homeless Persons Representation Project

Jews United for Justice
Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland
Public Justice Center
Right to Housing Alliance

Non-BRU Members:
Beyond the Boundaries
United Workers
South Baltimore Community Land Trust
Baltimore Furniture Bank

Stegman, Matthew

From: Geoff Cooper <gcooper08@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 11:35 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: Defund BPD

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Baltimore City IT Network Systems.

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Dear Members of the City Council and Mayor Scott,

As a citizen of Baltimore, and resident of Hampden, I call upon the City Council and the Mayor's Office to do your jobs and reallocate resources away from the bloated and unnecessary police budget and into city programs that would actually prevent crime, keep our people safe, prevent unnecessary killings by the police, and support struggling communities, as many of you promised to do once elected.

We are tired of excuses from the City Council and Mayor's Office and we are tired of elected officials using the rhetoric of Black Lives Matter and the defund movement for purely performative political ends that are completely divorced from structural policy changes and devoid of moral clarity.

We implore you to side with the People of Baltimore for once, rather than the police unions, and make significant cuts to the police budget that will finally start our city on a path of healing, empowerment, and solidarity or we will be forced to organize and find replacements in the next election cycle who will actually get the job done.

In Solidarity with the People of Baltimore,

Geoff Cooper

Taxpayer Night's Night for City Budget FY22
Written Testimony submitted by Baltimore City resident Sarah D'Adamo
May 27, 2021

To Mayor Scott and the Baltimore City Council:

The proposed FY22 city budget extensively details how it will dedicate part of the city's general fund to expanding and improving policing in a wide range of forms, under the heading of "public safety". This term is much disputed, as you likely know, in part because we have for so long and so extensively been funding police over and above any other kinds of public resources for meeting the welfare and safety needs of our city's population. It has become true that public safety = security culture, or the police, because that is the only system our governments actually invest in, even though security culture is actually much more focused on property protection than protecting the safety of citizens. We have years of indicting accounts and reports of police abuse of citizens in Baltimore city -- sexual abuse and rape, false criminalization and recriminalization, brutal physical violence, evidence manipulation and other kinds of flagrant deception, excessive targeting of poor Black populations and people who are unhoused and otherwise in need of services, etc etc. This is a vision of safety at the direct cost of people who most need social support. It is actively harmful. As a citizen of Baltimore, I will not accept the use of the city's general fund, which is derived from taxing our citizenry, to further terrorize and harm the most vulnerable people in our city, and to perpetuate the existing way of doing things. Adding MORE money may sound like it will make the BPD's systems stronger and more efficient, and perhaps it could make them a stronger and more efficient force of control and criminalization in the city. But why would we desire that? It will definitely NOT address any of the other areas of social duress in our city, which can only see transformation with a heavy influx of resources.

A few facts to bring this home:

The BPD has consistently received an outsized percentage of the city's general fund (26% in the FY22 preliminary budget), compared to community investment priorities, such as funding for public schools (14%), housing and development (2%), substance abuse and mental health (0.1%), recreation and parks (2%) and the Office of Homeless Services (1%).

Baltimore spends \$904 a year per citizen on policing
New York spends \$672
Chicago spends \$624
Detroit spends \$493
Atlanta spends \$490
LA spends \$436

I demand that the FY22 budget be amended before final review: we still must defund this excessive, rotten police department, we still must do better, for George Floyd, Korryn Gaines, Tyrone West, Keith Davis, and a maddening, growing number of other victims of police. To

pursue an amendment, I support Black community activists in Baltimore in their call for the creation of a Community Wellness trust fund alongside defunding BPD, and their demand for the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness and other quality-of-life issues. Baltimore must try to lead in some other indicator than corruption and extremely heavy policing of its citizens -- try harder.

Sarah D'Adamo
District 7

Baltimore City Board of Estimates
Bureau of the Budget and Management Research
FY 2022 Virtual Taxpayers' Night

May 27, 2021

Dear Board of Estimates (BOE):

Nearly a year ago, amidst nationwide protests addressing the ongoing deaths of Black people at the hands of the police, Baltimore City Council passed a budget cutting \$22 million from the Baltimore Police Department (BPD). This cut was in response to the national pressure and long unheard cries of countless Baltimore residents demanding funding for vital services and infrastructure: affordable housing, quality education, Internet access, substance abuse treatment facilities, and more.

The cut did not last long, and vital services remain poorly funded. Baltimore's current proposed budget has reserved a \$28 million increase in funding for BPD. **What was the point of cutting police spending last year only for it to account for over 15% of Mayor Scott's \$3.6 billion spending plan for FY22?**

Baltimore needs investment in *people*, not police. As we see time and time again, well-funded police forces do not guarantee safety. If that were truly the case, Baltimore would be the safest city in the United States seeing **as we spend more on police per capita (nearly \$1,000 per taxpayer) than any major city in the country.**

This city is exhausted by broken promises and skewed budgets that do not represent the needs of our communities. In alignment with the demands of [Organizing Black](#), I'm urging the defunding of the BPD, the creation of a Community Wellness Trust Fund, true investment in Black Baltimore communities, and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance abuse, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.

I ask you to reflect on what justice really means for our city and our country when it comes to policing and safety. Derek Chauvin's guilty verdict was read on Tuesday, April 20th at the exact same moment Ma'Khia Bryant (16 y.o), of Columbus, OH, was shot and killed by police **after calling them for help**. This isn't working. Increased policing isn't keeping us safe. It's time to stop the needless deaths at the hands of cops and invest in services and infrastructure that are reflective of real community needs.

Thank you for your time.

Lee Domeika
Baltimore City Resident – District 43

5/26/21

Dear Baltimore City Councilpeople:

Thank you for your time. My name is Suzanne Doogan. I am an educator from District 43. I urge you to allocate our city's budget away from BPD. Please defund BPD and put those funds directly into the hands of Black communities.

It is up to **you** to do right by the people of Baltimore, your constituents and neighbors, and to show you truly value Baltimore lives, especially those of my Black and Brown neighbors. Defund the Baltimore City police **now**, so that no more Baltimore City residents will lose their lives to BPD officers, like Tyrone West, or be violently taken away from their families like Keith Davis. Defund the police now, so that my students will have access to resources and structures that will get at the *root* of lessening crime, rather than live their lives in fear of officers. Defund the police so that families and communities are no longer ripped apart. We have seen that policing does not lessen crime. In many cases, more policed areas indeed have *more* crime. Policing is a form of surveillance, of violence, and a conduit towards arbitrary punishment. Policing is not a structural solution for a safer or more healthful community. Policing is unimaginative, and it is deadly. Defund the police, so that Baltimore residents can imagine a more beautiful and expansive future. We can do better.

Thank you for your attention,
Suzanne Doogan

May 27, 2021
Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH
Baltimore, Maryland 21209

Testimony -FY2022
City Council Taxpayers' Night

Honorable Members of the City Council,

My name is Dr. Gwen DuBois and I live in the Mt. Washington neighborhood in the 5th district. I was born, educated through high school in our public schools in Baltimore and moved back to raise my family here, and educate my children in the Baltimore Public School system, practice as a primary care physician and get my degree in public health here as well. Too many of my patients have lost their children to gun violence I love Baltimore and so must speak out and urge you to reduce the amount of money we are investing in policing while ignoring the root causes of the violence, underfunding programs that are more likely to improve the lives of our children, give them hope and tools to lead meaningful lives.

While our city population has plummeted, the amount we budget for police has climbed so that we now spend [\\$840 per resident more than 71 other major cities](#). In 2018, 83% of arrests were made for low level, non-violent crimes and disproportionately those arrested were people of color. At the very least, these arrests disrupt people' lives causing them to lose jobs, make it hard for them to find housing, lose wages during incarceration, and disrupt families. This is what over policing can do.

We should be investing in removing lead paint from housing as Professor Lawrence Brown suggests. I have seen grown patients who were lead poisoned as children. In addition to behavior problems that often result in falling into the over policed criminal justice system, the loss of potential income and quality of life due to loss in IQ from lead poisoning deprives all of us of the gifts of these Baltimoreans robbed of their potential.

Baltimore is second only to Detroit in numbers of [evicted households](#), disproportionately affecting people of color. Too many Baltimoreans are forced to pay more than the recommended 30% of income on housing, too often substandard and contaminated with lead paint, mold, infestations.

FY Mayor's proposed budget now calls for a \$25 million increase in funding for police.

Please let us heed Mayor Scott's words for a holistic approach to violence in our city. We have not reduced violent crime by devoting so much of city financial resources to policing as a solution. Remember the old saying that "to a hammer, everything looks like a nail." To most police, in too many situations, when they respond to a call, they see the person involved as a criminal especially if the person is black or brown.

Imagine diverting millions of dollars from policing into programs devoted to housing, education, recreation, and social services for our children traumatized by violence. Imagine reconfiguring 911 to identify situations where police are not appropriate and sending professionals other than police who can identify mental health problems and use skills of de-escalation and reconciliation.

Thank you considering re-defining how to protect Baltimoreans.

Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH
President of Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
5th District resident
1817 Sulgrave Ave
Baltimore, Maryland 21209

Good evening.

My name is Anna Duke , and I am a resident of District 12. I have Bipolar I disorder and in 2017, I had a manic episode that led to 911 being called by my family. Instead of receiving emergency mental healthcare, I was placed in handcuffs and almost forced into a squad car, until my family was able to convince them to take me away, still handcuffed, in an ambulance instead. I am almost certain the only reason why I survived to testify in front of you today is because I'm white. Black bipolar men like Walter Wallace Jr, are murdered by the police when their mothers call the police for help during a manic episode. Cops don't help during mental health crises, they just add armed squads ready to escalate into an already charged situation.

As a Baltimore city resident, I echo Organizing Black and CJSJ's demand that \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities, the creation of a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process, and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.

You need to remove police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues. We demand Baltimore create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

Thank you.

Dear Members of the City Council,

Thank you for taking the time to hear from your constituents on our budget. I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you divest \$100M from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you create a trust for communities to dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

I am writing to you as a resident of Charles Village, a four-year Baltimorean, a water justice advocate, and a new member of the SURJ leadership team. SURJ Baltimore organizes white people across the city to take action on racial justice, and works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

Months after I moved to Baltimore, I realized that my nextdoor neighbor had been stalking me. One day he said hi to me as I was walking to my door. We chatted about the neighborhood for a minute, and he told me he was a bail bondsman. After a brief yet disconcerting conversation about his view on proposals to end cash bail, he told me that he didn't want to talk to me about "all that." He had come to ask me to go out to get drinks with him. I was a bit surprised, mostly because I suspected he was at least 30 years older than me. I said nothing, so he kept talking. He told me that his desk is in a window that faces towards my door, and that he had been watching me come and go from my apartment for a while, but I always moved "too quickly" for him. He commented on how often he saw me come home in gym clothes, and that he had been playing my license plate number as his lottery numbers for a while - but hadn't won anything yet.

I am unsure if I said anything during this exchange, as I was processing that I had just told this man exactly where I lived, that I lived alone - and now, he had just told me that he was keeping an eye on my routine, and my car. He gave me his business card for his bail bonds business, and told me to get in touch. I didn't.

A few months later, I ran into him on the way to the grocery store. He asked why I hadn't called him, and if I remembered what he did for a living. I could not forget that he was a bail bondsman, and once I replied he said "You know what that means, right? That means I have access to bounty hunters, and if you don't call me, I'm going to send one of them after you." Then he laughed, but in a way that made me feel like it was less of a joke.

This really scared me - it may have been a terrible joke, but I felt threatened. Women regularly face retaliation for rejecting men. I called a crisis hotline, explained everything that had happened, and that he was a bail bondsman, so I didn't want to call the police because it seemed probable that he could be professionally connected or friendly with police officers. They told me that they didn't know what else I could do, and that I should just call the police and see what happens.

As a white woman, this was the first time I experienced the gut feeling of knowing that getting police involved could actually put me at even more risk. I now know from the GTTF investigation that bail bondsmen can in fact be quite close with police officers. I didn't know many people in Baltimore yet, I was terrified in my own home, and had to figure out how to protect myself without any institutional support. I was able to take action to stop this harassment, but didn't feel fully safe until I had moved out from that apartment. There are other stories like mine, and not all will turn out ok. Most importantly, I know that this is how BIPOC community members in Baltimore feel every day, facing regular harassment and well documented excessive, brutal and violent policing. Yet because we have so badly underfunded and undervalued forms of social service and aid, meanwhile maintaining a steady and sizable flow of cash to BPD, people have nowhere to go when they need real support.

That is why I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust so that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested. We must recognize and respect that for so many communities, police do not bring remedy-- and because we have invested so much in the police force while neglecting other key social services, people simply have no path to remedy when in need.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Rianna Eckel
Charles Village
SURJ Baltimore

May 27, 2021

Dear Baltimore City Council Members,

I am reaching out as a Baltimore City resident and tax payer and urging you to make important considerations related to our city budget and how citizens want their taxes used.

We know that increasing funding to the Baltimore Police Department is not making our city safer or solving crime. The BPD often causes more harm to people of color and other under-represented folx in our community. There are other resources that are better suited to supporting our communities and neighborhoods.

Here is how I would like the budget to reflect how my taxes are used:

1) Defund the Baltimore City Police Department

Cut 100 million dollars from BPD's budget. The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black & Brown communities.

2) Create a Community Wellness Trust Fund

30 million dollars invested into reimagining public safety trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process. Baltimoreans are more than capable of identifying what public safety without increased police presence or surveillance tools look like for them.

3) Invest in Black Communities

\$70 million dollars allocated to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

4) Remove the police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, houselessness, and other quality of life issues

Create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

I urge our City Council members to listen to how our communities want our tax dollars spent, as we best know what resources we need.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Colline Emmanuelle

May 27, 2021
Ethan Hasiuk
Baltimore, MD 21218



Testimony - FY2022 City Council Taxpayers' Night

Honorable members of the City Council,

My name is Ethan Hasiuk. I live in Charles Village in District 14, and I am here testifying on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). JUFJ organizes more than 1,600 people in the city to support local social, racial, and economic justice issues.

Jewish tradition demands of us: "Choose life, so that you may live" (Deut 30:19). We are disappointed that the FY2022 Baltimore City Preliminary Budget continues a pattern of divesting and underinvesting from that which gives life to our communities, while increasing investments in policing and punishment that take life away.

As such, we are here to support the demands of our coalition partners in the Campaign for Justice, Safety, & Jobs, Baltimore Renters United, and Baltimore Fair Elections coalition:

1. A \$100 million cut from BPD's existing budget. The increases to police funding in this budget are unacceptable.
2. A \$30 million investment into a community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process.
3. A \$70 million additional investment to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.
4. Removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues. Baltimore must create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police but connects people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment, and harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.
5. \$2.5 million to fund counsel for renters facing eviction.
6. \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program.

This proposed budget *increases* BPD funding and doesn't invest in new programs designed to keep people housed and increase the political power of individual Baltimoreans. A budget is a moral document. We respectfully urge you to invest in supporting Black, brown, and low-income communities, not in policing them. Thank you.



April 21, 2021

The Honorable Brandon Scott
Office of the Mayor
250 City Hall, 100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Mayor Scott,

We are a diverse group of good government, faith, environmental, and community organizations who have united together to support a new way to fund Baltimore elections. We are thrilled that you and the City Council created a Fair Elections Fund and program after voter authorization in 2018. We urge you to honor the legacy that you created by getting the program off to a strong financial start.

To do so, we encourage you to include an investment of \$2.5 million in the FY22 budget to the Fair Election Fund. You and the Council President should also move quickly to finalize the Fair Elections Commission, as outlined by the City Charter. Once you do, you will receive recommendations from the Commission for annual funding. In order to ensure the program is viable for 2024, it is critically important we finalize the commission and get the program started with a strong first installment of funding.

Thanks to your support as a Councilmember and Council President, Baltimore City took a huge step forward for Fair Elections by passing [Council Bill 19-0403](#). Large campaign contributions, which few Baltimore City residents can afford to make, have too much influence over who can run for office, what issues make it onto the agenda, and who wins. [And these big donors aren't reflective of Baltimore families](#) —they're wealthier, and they are also far less likely to be women or people of color, and they have starkly different priorities when it comes to public policies.

The role of large donors contributes to an already shrinking faith in government. But small donor public financing programs [have proven effective in Maryland](#) and in [DC](#) as a way to reduce the role of large donors and increase small donor participation.

The Fair Elections program will amplify the voices of Baltimore working families by encouraging small-dollar donations, and providing matching funds for candidates who abide by stricter ethics and transparency rules, like not taking giant checks from lobbyists, corporations, or PACs. By reducing the role of these large donors we can ensure everyone can have a voice in our elections, regardless of how much money they make.

We are very grateful for your support throughout the legislative process, and urge you to continue to lead Baltimore forward by getting this program off to a strong fiscal start in the FY 2022 budget.

Signed,

Rev. Kobi Little
President
Baltimore City NAACP

Rianna Lloyd
Communications Associate
Jews United for Justice

Jennifer Kunze
Maryland Program Manager
Clean Water Action

Nancy Lawyer
Co-President
League of Women Voters of Baltimore City

Joanne Antoine
Executive Director
Common Cause Maryland

Emily Scarr
Director
Maryland PIRG

Demos

Cristi Demnowicz
Chair
Represent Maryland

Charlie Cooper
President
Get Money Out Maryland

Charly Carter
Executive Director
StepUp Maryland

**FYE 2022 Budget for Baltimore City
Taxpayer Night Testimony
5/27/2021**

I am Dr Terry Fitzgerald. I am a resident of Mount Washington in City Council District 5. I have been practicing medicine in Baltimore for 36 years and I am a officer of Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility. I comment here on multiple issues related to housing, but I ask you to give special attention to the following two paragraphs and the last two paragraphs of this testimony.

I wish to emphasize that HOUSING IS HEALTH. There are excessive funds pouring into the police department, funds that ARE NOT creating a safer and more secure environment. Supposedly that has been recognized, and some money was removed from the police budget last year. Nonetheless, this new proposed budget provides \$27 million more to the police than the last budget as amended. **I support the call to remove 25% of the proposed budget for police and dedicate that money to activities that truly support the community and actually create public safety.**

GOOD HOUSING is critical for GOOD HEALTH. As a physician I have seen that every day. Over the years city officials have given lip service to this fact, but it has never truly been taken seriously. The health of our city and the health of its citizens demand a commitment to and a focus on dealing with the problems of housing in Baltimore City.

Poor housing conditions are associated with respiratory infections, asthma, injuries, lead poisoning, and mental health problems.¹ Asthma is a particularly serious example of how poor housing can threaten lives. “Poor housing, often the result of poverty and lack of social resources, is the real elephant in the chronic asthma room” wrote the authors of an article entitled “Home Visits are needed to Address Asthma Health Disparities in Adults”²

Children hospitalized for asthma who were from a census tract with high density for housing code violations were more likely to be return to the ER or be re-hospitalized than children in neighborhoods with lower density of housing code violations.³ This was a study out of Cincinnati.

The worst asthma hot spot in Baltimore is in zip code 21223, “where decrepit houses, rodents and bugs trigger the disease” and visits to the hospital at a rate 4 x that of residences in wealthier neighborhoods in Baltimore.⁴

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447157/>

² [https://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749\(16\)31218-0/pdf](https://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749(16)31218-0/pdf)

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4458371/>

⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/hospitals-find-asthma-hot-spots-more-profitable-to-neglect-than-fix/2017/12/01/0d804ce2-b806-11e7-be94-fabb0f1e9ffb_story.html?utm_term=.e5696d4197c4

Young children exposed to overcrowding and/or multiple moves in one year, often associated with food insecurity as well as housing insecurity, were more often felt by their caregivers to have poor health, impaired educational, social or emotional skills, and to be measured to have low weight compared to other children.⁵

In older children and adolescents, a history of multiple moves has been associated with mental health problems, substance abuse, increased behavior problems, poor school performance, and increased risk of teen pregnancy. These negative outcomes will likely handicap them in their adult lives.

Homelessness is the extreme of housing insecurity and homeless people have a shocking loss of average life expectancy from 78 years in the general population to 42-52 Years among the homeless.⁶

Housing insecurity, therefore, makes people sick, leads to expensive and ineffective overutilization of expensive emergency room and hospital care and certainly with homelessness, leads to a tragic shortening of life.

A recent article in JAMA described housing as “health” and suggested that we should consider providing housing as equivalent to giving a vaccine in regards to preventing illness and disability.⁷

It is not surprising that studies show that providing adequate housing to people who would otherwise be among the housing insecure, in addition to being the right thing to do, often saves money. A housing study in Massachusetts found that after providing housing for 766 homeless people, health costs went from “\$33,190 per year, including hospitalization, emergency room visits, drug detox, incarceration, to \$15,468 per year for housing and health care, because health care costs dropped so precipitously after housing was provided⁸.

In Baltimore there is a shortage of affordable low-cost housing and among large cities a high eviction rate exceeded only in Detroit.⁹ 56% of renters are burdened by housing costs, paying over 30% of their income. Only four other cities have a higher percentage of rent burdened residents. A two-bedroom rental is basically out of reach for too many. State programs that give incentives to investors to build housing do nothing to provide more low-income housing and might even drive up housing costs.¹⁰ All of this is a recipe for a housing insecurity and health crisis.

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3134514/>

⁶ <https://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/health.html>

⁷ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2667710>

⁸ https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/SocialDeterminantsofHealth_2014.pdf

⁹ <http://abell.org/sites/default/files/files/cd-justicediverted216.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2016/05/in-baltimore-even-full-time-working-families-cant-afford-housing/482190/>

So the problems associated with housing in Baltimore City are immense, but I want to emphasize the problem of lead in our housing as a place to start and a place to use some of the excess funds that are now directed to “policing”. The BURDEN OF LEAD in our housing is a well recognized and well ignored topic. A Baltimore Sun investigative report on rent court published recently documented that families were allowed to rent even where inspectors found that there were lead hazards noted in the rental unit.¹¹ In 2013, The Abell Foundation report “Justice Diverted,” based on a survey of people brought before renter’s court, found that 41% noted flaking or peeling paint.”¹² Lead exposure is harmful at any level and children so exposed may experience life-long neurocognitive effects.

Seriously addressing the danger of lead paint and lead in pipes in older Baltimore houses requires very serious commitment and focus. We must face up to this problem, seriously evaluate it, and fight for the funds to address it. The effects of lead on cognition, behavior, and development are generally irreversible and, in fact, contribute to crime in our city. The costs to the individual and the costs to society are immeasurable. Yet we continue to ignore it. **I call on the city to lead the way by taking excess resources currently given to the police department and committing them to the study of the lead burden and how to address it.** This should be a major undertaking, not just a small “study”. This should involve experts in many fields from across the country and should draw in officials of other cities in the US. This work could create the momentum to act on a national scale. It is time to take this seriously and to spend money for **true public safety.**

Terry Fitzgerald, MD, FASAM
1817 Sulgrave Ave
Baltimore, MD 21209
410-925-1220

¹¹ <http://data.baltimoresun.com/news/dismissed/>

¹² <http://abell.org/sites/default/files/files/cd-justicediverted216.pdf>



GREATER BALTIMORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA TESTIMONY ON DEFUNDING THE BPD TO REINVEST IN COMMUNITY SAFETY IN FY22 BUDGET

Dear Members of the City Council,

Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is a 50,000-member strong political organization, formed in 1982¹, that seeks to end the exploitative and oppressive grip capitalism holds over humanity by allowing the economy and society to be democratically controlled². Our driving goal as socialists is to ensure people, primarily the working class, are valued as the most integral catalysts of society, rather than profit margins or the whims of corporate elites.

Since January 2017, the Greater Baltimore (GBDSA) chapter has organized around numerous issues in Baltimore, such as equity in mass transit, labor and workers' rights, Medicare for All, racial justice, canvassed for electoral candidates, and most recently, stood in solidarity with the Hopkins Coalition Against ICE and Students Against Private Police. As socialists, *"We can no longer abide the oppression waged on Black people at the hands of a white supremacist, misogynist, imperialist, and capitalist police state...We acknowledge abolition as the path forward. Through abolition and reparations, resources must be given to communities most deeply impacted by racism and policing"*³ In keeping with these values, we firmly support measures to transform Baltimore by reallocating funding from the BPD, advancing harm reduction by investing in community safety – fully funding affordable housing, eradicating homelessness, strengthening and enhancing the quality of public education, providing workforce development and catering to the needs of returning citizens, ensuring viable employment opportunities exist throughout the city, and securing our children's futures by prioritizing youth development and enriching recreation center programming.

Baltimore has failed to process the multifaceted political lessons emerging from Freddie Gray's untimely death and subsequent Uprising that followed six years ago. The police budget remains the largest component of the City budget funded on a discretionary basis, ballooning in recent decades, with police spending increasing by 173% between 1965 and 2005.⁴ Police spending has escalated, even as the city's

¹ "A History of Democratic Socialists of America 1971-2017." www.dsausa.org, Democratic Socialists of America, www.dsausa.org/about-us/history/.

² "What Is Democratic Socialism?" www.dsausa.org, Democratic Socialists of America, www.dsausa.org/about-us/what-is-democratic-socialism/.

³ DSA. (2020, June 15). *DSA Supports #8 to Abolition*. Retrieved April 20, 2021, from <https://www.dsausa.org/statements/dsa-supports-8toabolition/>

⁴ Analysis by the Vera Institute of Justice, United States Census Bureau, Historical Data (formerly Special 60). Data available at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/gov-finances/data/historical-data.html>.



population has endured a steep decline, at a rate of 32% - 939,024 in 1960 to 640,064 in 2005 to 593,490 in 2019.⁵

Policing consistently reinforces systemic oppression and foments the exact opposite of public safety in many of our communities. The American Public Health Association has designated police violence as a public health crisis in the United States, *“Physical and psychological violence that is structurally mediated by the system of law enforcement results in deaths, injuries, trauma, and stress,”* disproportionately affecting, *“...marginalized populations (e.g., people of color, immigrants, individuals experiencing houselessness, people with disabilities, the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) community, individuals with mental illness, people who use drugs, and sex workers).”*⁶ The public health implications of policing are complicated by Baltimore’s pervasive trend of institutionalized racism and segregation, giving rise to tranquility and prosperity for residents of the White L, while death and terror are a routine way of life in the Black Butterfly.

Instead of fully engaging in or respecting the communities they purport to serve, members of law enforcement have exploited, destabilized, and terrorized the districts to which they are assigned – defending property and capital before our collective humanity. History reminds us that American policing originates from the state’s desire to capture formerly enslaved people of African descent, who escaped the generational nightmare of the plantation, and to defend property.⁷ Baltimoreans yearn for transformation, as so many communities have become accustomed to remaining hopeless, living in communities left dilapidated as a result of City leadership consistently choosing gentrification and corporate development to realize social progress, instead of concerted investment in the people who comprise its heart.

GBDSA urges you, as members of the Board of Estimates, to remember our children’s uncharted futures as the fiscal budget for 2022 is considered. Baltimore must courageously acknowledge the inadequacies of policing by fully funding its communities, investing in high quality educational facilities and programs for students, affordable housing, affirming healthcare as a human right, championing a living wage and promoting the dignity of workers, ending homelessness, and safeguarding the aspirations of all residents – regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion, or national origin. Defunding the BPD, to refund Baltimore’s future, is the first step in realizing a new paradigm for community safety.

⁵ “Baltimore, Maryland Population History, 1840-2019,” accessed February 24, 2021, <https://www.biggestuscities.com/city/baltimore-maryland>.

⁶ Beller, S. (2018, November 18). The American Public Health Association Declares Police Violence a Public Health Issue. Retrieved April 21, 2021, from <https://filtermag.org/the-american-public-health-association-declares-police-violence-a-public-health-issue/>

⁷ Gourevitch, A. (2020, June 12). Why Are the Police Like This? Retrieved April 21, 2021, from <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/06/police-united-states-strikebreaking-class-war>



Respectfully submitted,

Greater Baltimore Democratic Socialists of America

Testimony for Taxpayer Night FY 2021-2022

Good folks of the City Council,

My name is Quentin Gibeau and I currently work in District 12 in Baltimore City, in an apartment building. The Community in which I work is in transition, which is the nice way that we say gentrifying. Having worked in this neighborhood for at least 10 years in some capacity, I have seen these changes slowly unfold, and the stress that structural inequality places on the residents of such communities. Often with more money comes more police, and more security culture, whether it is part of an institution or not, and in my current vocation I am also part of that economic reality. I would like to point out that with the gentrification and increased police presence that Greenmount West often receives, the neighborhood with its challenges has not been made “safer,” or “more stable” during this pandemic. Often, when trouble arises, it is up to me and the residents of my building, as well as neighbors, to safely address the issue, which we often do before the police ever get there. In short, the police have never been a viable solution for many of the neighborhood's problems, moreso an administrative hurdle.

The pandemic, as it has often been echoed, has exposed the cruelty that has become inherent in our way of life. Now it is unavoidable to see that one cannot have a stable and safe neighborhood without mental health resources, social services tailored around providing economic stability and safe social environments, access to work, access to food, and access to healthcare and healthy living. By addressing the root causes of our many social issues our good city faces, and funding said solutions, we can arrive at safety. Instead, we have a proposal to treat the symptoms with a \$555 million dollar hammer.

The goal of a government for the people and by the people in 2021 should be to make our harmful past as a nation obsolete. Increasing our police budget is no way to address that past. I echo Organizing Black and CJSJ's demand that \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black Communities, the cretion of a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process, and the removal of the police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues.

Thank you,

Sincerely,
Quentin Gibeau

Testimony on Baltimore City Budget

Request for study of the energy efficiency of Baltimore City Buildings.

Honorable Council Members,

Today you will hear many requests for more money for programs to help the citizens and businesses of Baltimore. You may have to say no to funding worthy programs because you don't have enough money in the budget.

But what if your energy costs were lower? Wouldn't that allow you to spend more money on the programs that will benefit Baltimore?

What if your greenhouse gas emissions were lower? Wouldn't that clean the air and help our citizens breath easier and live longer?

I am asking the council to study the energy efficiency of Baltimore City buildings and to investigate whether heat pumps, solar EV, and solar water heaters can help the City save energy, lower costs and greenhouse gas emissions. The efficiency of heat pumps and solar panels have increased over the past 10 years and these technologies offer a pathway to significantly lower the greenhouse gas emissions in Baltimore City.

No one wants to pay more money for energy or pollute our air, so let's study our options so that in future Tax Day hearings there will be more money to fund important programs for Baltimore.

Best wishes,

Shan Gordon
MD Energy Savers
602 Hollen Road
Baltimore, MD 21212

Stegman, Matthew

From: Tracie Guy-Decker <tracieguy@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 2:31 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: City Budget FY22-Public Comment for Taxpayer Night

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May 27, 2021
Tracie Guy-Decker
Baltimore, MD 21229

Testimony - FY2022 City Council Taxpayers' Night

Honorable members of the City Council,

I'm a proud Baltimorean. I choose to live, work, worship, and educate my kid in Baltimore City. I live in the Hunting Ridge neighborhood of the 8th district.

I believe in our City and in its citizens. I think we have the grit and the resilience to be a model for the country. I want us to be the kind of community that uses radical imagination and a commitment to one another's humanity to interrupt state-sanctioned cycles of poverty and violence. Our problems are only intractable if we continue to rely on the "solutions" that simultaneously perpetuate harm.

The City budget is a moral document, and I believe this budget is not meeting the needs of residents of our city.

I am disappointed that the FY2022 Baltimore City Preliminary Budget continues a pattern of divesting and underinvesting from that which nurtures our communities, while increasing investments in policing and punishment that pile on harm and perpetuate cycles and systems that lead to negative outcomes for all of us.

As a resident and citizen of the City, I am writing to encourage you act on the demands of the activists and advocates of the coalition made up of the Campaign for Justice, Safety, & Jobs, Baltimore Renters United, and Baltimore Fair Elections coalition:

1. A \$100 million cut from BPD's existing budget. The increases to police funding in this budget are unacceptable.
2. A \$30 million investment into a community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process.
3. A \$70 million additional investment to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

4. Removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues. Baltimore must create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police but connects people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment, and harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.
5. \$2.5 million to fund counsel for renters facing eviction.
6. \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program.

This proposed budget *increases* BPD funding and doesn't invest in new programs designed to keep people housed and increase the political power of individual Baltimoreans. It is clear from the 2016 report from the DOJ on the BPD, from corroborating evidence from around the country, and from a street's-eye view of this city that police officers and departments are not the right response to a large number of personal and public health issues we currently force them to address. We can do better. We must do better. A budget is a moral document. I respectfully urge you to invest in supporting Black, brown, and low-income communities, not in policing them.

Thank you.

--

Tracie Guy-Decker
Senior Partner, [Joyous Justice](#)
Co-host & co-creator, [Jews Talk Racial Justice with April & Tracie](#)
Writer, [bmoreincremental.com](#)

Good Evening,

My name is Lydell Hills and I am an Organizer with Organizing Black and a community member living in Southwest Baltimore. In Baltimore I have witnessed the impact of policing through mass incarceration, hosting re-entry mediations for hundreds of Black men in pre-trial and pre-release. By working with individuals on a case by case basis we found that participants were able to come to their own solutions and that actually provided more stability than the police interventions which further destabilized their families by arresting them. I would often mediate for men whose brothers, fathers, uncles and cousins resided with them or in adjacent facilities. Sadly even mothers resided in the facilities that we were not allowed to serve. This further demonstrated the ways Black residents throughout Baltimore are targeted by the police. Their white counterparts are notably fewer in number and often find themselves in prison due to addiction, mental health challenges and general barriers to finding stable work with their conditions. If you look at their black counterparts they often deal with similar issues of mental health and stress in traumatized neighborhoods, trying to cope and stabilize while finding all the doors shut to you if you try to find "legitimate work". There seems to be solutions available to white residents of Baltimore City that are denied to our Black residents and we simply need to invest in our black communities.

There aren't enough job opportunities. Social services are severely lacking and allow residents that should otherwise transition into independence and out of homelessness to slip through the cracks. We lack investment in community based solutions from the various agencies across Baltimore City. Baltimore is lacking in resources though that is not the primary problem. The true issue is the lack of connectivity between various stakeholders that provide valuable resources to the community. We do not empower community leadership enough and the city's attempts to control resources and steer solutions leaves black communities further devastated.

As a Baltimore city resident, I echo Organizing Black and CJSJ's demand that \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities, the creation of a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process, and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.

Thank you.

Organizing Black's Demands

We demand the defunding of the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD).

We demand the creation of a Community Wellness trust fund.

We demand investment into Black communities.

We demand the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.

The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and brown communities.

Defund the Baltimore City Police Department. **We demand that 100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget.**

Baltimore spends more per capita on police than any major city in the country - \$880 - logic would say Baltimore should be the safest city in the country. And we are far from that.

Create a Community Wellness trust fund. **We demand a \$30 million dollar investment into a community wellness trust fund** to be governed through a participatory budgeting process.

Baltimoreans are more than capable of identifying what public safety looks like without increased police presence or surveillance tools.

Invest in Black communities. We demand that \$70 million dollars be allocated to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

The proposed FY22 budget cuts \$15 million dollars from our public schools and education grants.

Black children deserve a high-quality education, not incarceration and punishment

Remove police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues. We demand Baltimore create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in

crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

The role of the police is too expansive. There are better ways to meet many of the functions that they serve without armed police.

Invest in alternatives for mental health crisis response.

Create alternatives for routine traffic enforcement.

Eliminate traffic and car stops. Often, citations can be mailed to people's homes.

Invest in community-based alternatives for addressing harm and promoting accountability.

Despite a continuing rate of opioid overdose deaths, the budget for mental health and substance abuse stayed virtually the same. (\$4.7M or 1% of the BPD Budget)

There was a great increase in emergency medical services (\$35M), but again this is waiting until bad things happen instead of caring for the health and wellness of our communities

FY22 Budget numbers

555.5M for the Baltimore City Police Department, a 5.2% and **27.5 million dollar increase** from the 528 million dollars allocated in FY2021.

The proposed FY22 budget **cuts \$15 million dollars from our public schools** and education grants.

The police budget costs each tax payer \$880 - by far the most per capita in the country

26 cents of every general expenditure dollar goes to BPD

23.2% of all staff working for the city work for the police department.

\$66.1M additional general fund dollars directly supports the apparatus of policing.

Baltimore City Sheriff's Office: \$21,740,262

Law - Police Legal Affairs: \$2,150,559

CitiWatch (Crime Cameras): \$2,941,312

Office of Equity and Civil Rights - Police Community Relations: \$729,172

State's Attorney - \$38,527,258

I've been a resident of Baltimore for 20 years, for my entire working life and witnessed the challenges that this city faces. Baltimore has such pride in its community leaders and leadership as we work to do the difficult work of dismantling institutionalized racism- particularly how it affects the economic circumstances of Baltimore citizens, and their opportunities for stable housing, good education, and just treatment under the law.

I'm one of many citizens that objects to the disproportionate funding of police to tackle Baltimore's issues. In the preliminary FY22 budget BDF stands to be apportioned 26% of the general fund.

I'm one of many citizens that cannot understand why this number would outrank community investment priorities, such as funding for public schools (14%), housing and development (2%), substance abuse and mental health (0.1%), recreation and parks (2%) and the Office of Homeless Services (1%).

Fund the public welfare and you will see less of the desperation that results in crime. Assist the community-led groups which fill the gaps of city government policy. We the citizens are working to develop affordable housing and promote harm reduction techniques, we teach our children and clean our neighborhoods, we distribute food to the hungry. Please reallocate the police budget to help us in our work.

Thank you,

Sarah Jacklin
Market Center Resident

Dear City Council,

In solidarity with my fellow Baltimoreans I call that the City Council move swiftly to make substantial changes to the proposed FY2022 budget to include:

- Defund the Baltimore City Police Department.
 - We demand that 100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget. The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and brown communities.
- Create a Community Wellness trust fund.
 - We demand a \$30 million dollar investment into reimaging public safety trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process. Baltimoreans are more than capable of identifying what public safety without increased police presence or surveillance tools looks like for them.
- Invest in Black communities.
 - We demand that \$70 million dollars be allocated to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.
- Remove police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.
 - We demand Baltimore create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

Thank you,

Brittany Johnstone

[Bao.johnstone@gmail.com](mailto: Bao.johnstone@gmail.com)

808-295-3784

515 S Durham Street, 21231 (Council District 1)

Dear City Council Members,

I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you **divest \$100M** from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

I have lived in the Baltimore area for 5 years and currently work in the city. I am a church member and a volunteer at several Baltimore-based non-profits. These non-profits focus on improving life in our city by providing arts education, hunger relief, and job training. SURJ works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

Baltimore City has budgeted almost \$900 to the BPD per city resident, well above every major city in the country. We should be leading the country in investing in communities and community services, not in police spending per resident. Despite the staggering sums for the BPD, policing does not address the root causes of crime and violence in the city. I am disturbed that our elected officials allocate enormous amounts of taxpayer dollars to policing, year after year, and expect different results in safety and violence from the last year. Why do you continue to pursue a policy that has not been shown to be effective?

It is for these reasons that I ask you to **divest \$100M** from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Arielle Juberg
Worker in Baltimore City
SURJ Baltimore

As a special educator at Baltimore City Schools, as a resident of Upper Fells in District 1, and as a queer woman living in Baltimore, I am testifying today to demand that the Mayor and City Council reallocate resources from the current budget away from the police.

As countless researchers have demonstrated, time and time again, increasing police budgets does not decrease crime. Instead, providing housing, quality education, youth programming, and access to food, transportation, and healthcare for people reduces the circumstances that lead to crime in the first place. Budgets show priorities. Right now, the Mayor is showing that he cares more about providing surveillance technology and deadly weapons to police officers than he cares about investing in Black neighborhoods, families, and kids.

As a teacher in Baltimore City, I work in a building that does not have potable water due to lead pipes, that does not have reliable heating or air conditioning, that has classes of over 40 students, that has mice, cockroaches, and other pests living in the walls, and that is armed with surveillance cameras, metal detectors, and a school-based police officer instead of adequate funding for social workers, special educators, or reading interventions. I have spent countless hours this year talking with my students who are mourning the Black people killed by police across the country and who remember the Uprising from 6 years ago. Each day, my students walk into a building that reminds them that the city cares more about policing them than investing in their education or future.

Carceral punishments do not provide justice. Arresting people does not right any wrongs. Please reduce the funding from the police department and instead fund our communities to stop injustices from happening in the first place. I endorse the demands of Organizing Black that you cut \$100 from the BPD budget to be allocated to a community wellness trust fund and Black communities. Additionally, it is imperative for Baltimore to begin developing alternatives to 911 to cut police from responding to mental health, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other sensitive calls that are continually escalated by police. While the Mayor's program to divert calls from the police might seem like a positive step, it is necessary for the program to exist outside of 911 or existing infrastructure that is so fundamentally tied to the police.

Additionally, I testify today in support of the calls to free Keith Davis Jr. His trials have resulted in two mistrials and two overturned guilty verdicts. These trials have also cost taxpayers over a million dollars without being able to render an ounce of justice. From the cost of judges, witnesses, DNA (which was outsourced by the state), police officers, court clerks, bailiffs, law clerks, utilities and operations, and juror payments - Baltimore residents are directly paying for the unjust prosecution of a police brutality victim. Taxpayers must challenge this abuse of power and understand that silence implicates us all.

I am testifying today as somebody who voted for Mayor Scott and was incredibly excited that Mayor Scott would champion the progressive values he purported to hold. I am extremely disappointed in the Mayor and his budget, and I reject the idea that we must maintain the status quo before reallocating funds. I point to Mayor Jones in St. Louis as an example of a progressive mayor whose budget immediately reallocated funds away from carceral punishments. Do better, Mr. Mayor.

Good evening.

My name is Martin Kasey, and I am resident of Charles Village.

I'll never forget over a decade ago when I was arrested after I talked back to a cop when he pushed my girlfriend on her fire escape while busting a party at her house. I was loaded into a wagon that spent the whole night going around and provoking homeless people and people coming out of clubs until the van was packed with folks who hadn't committed any crimes. Urine was sloshing around on the floor. When we got to Central Booking, I heard the ranking officer loudly counting all of us and telling the employee "These are all mine! Do you have that down?" I spent the night with about eleven other people in a cell meant for four, and in the morning everyone from the van and everyone in my cell were released without charges, because noone had broken the law.

As a Baltimore city resident, I echo Organizing Black and CJSJ's demand that \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities, the creation of a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process, and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.

Thank you.

Organizing Black's Demands

- 1. We demand the defunding of the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD).**
 - 2. We demand the creation of a Community Wellness trust fund.**
 - 3. We demand investment into Black communities.**
 - 4. We demand the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.**
-
1. The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and brown communities.
 - a. Defund the Baltimore City Police Department. **We demand that 100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget.**
 - b. Baltimore spends more per capita on police than any major city in the country - \$880 - logic would say Baltimore should be the safest city in the country. And we are far from that.

- c.
- 2. Create a Community Wellness trust fund. **We demand a \$30 million dollar investment into a community wellness trust fund** to be governed through a participatory budgeting process.
 - a. Baltimoreans are more than capable of identifying what public safety looks like without increased police presence or surveillance tools.
- 3. Invest in Black communities. We demand that \$70 million dollars be allocated to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.
 - a. The proposed FY22 budget cuts \$15 million dollars from our public schools and education grants.
 - b. Black children deserve a high-quality education, not incarceration and punishment
- 4. Remove police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues. We demand Baltimore create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.
 - a. **The role of the police is too expansive.** There are better ways to meet many of the functions that they serve without armed police.
 - i. Invest in alternatives for mental health crisis response.
 - ii. Create alternatives for routine traffic enforcement.
 - 1. Eliminate traffic and car stops. Often, citations can be mailed to people's homes.
 - iii. Invest in community-based alternatives for addressing harm and promoting accountability.
 - b. Despite a continuing rate of opioid overdose deaths, the budget for mental health and substance abuse stayed virtually the same. (\$4.7M or 1% of the BPD Budget)
 - c. There was a great increase in emergency medical services (\$35M), but again this is waiting until bad things happen instead of caring for the health and wellness of our communities

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 - CitiWatch (Crime Cameras): \$2,941,312
 - Office of Equity and Civil Rights - Police Community Relations: \$729,172
 - State's Attorney - \$38,527,258
-

Stegman, Matthew

From: Elam Klein <elamklein@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 10:07 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: City Budget FY22-Public Comment for Taxpayers Night

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Dear City Council Members,

My name is Elam Boockvar-Klein, and I'm a resident of the Old Goucher Neighborhood in Council District 12. I am testifying in support of reducing Police Department funding by at least 25% of its current budget, and reinvesting those funds in community-based solutions that are proven to boost the health of residents across our neighborhoods.

This is urgent; I know from what I've observed first-hand. I work with middle-schoolers at a non-profit organization in Southwest Baltimore. We provide a safe, healthy environment for our students to learn, play, and build relationships with one another. **They thrive in that setting, many becoming visibly more comfortable in a matter of days.** Students share insights on homework, help with math problems, and play kickball in the field across the street.

But sometimes, a patrol car sits in the parking lot next to that field. It is striking to see how the students' dispositions change when the police surveil next to their play and learning-space. They become more tense and distant, with one student even remarking to me: "I don't want the police here", and then running back inside. Their fear - undoubtedly due to run-ins they've observed between officers and parents, relatives, siblings, friends- impedes their ability to comfortably learn and play. Their ability to be kids. **Because suddenly they are in survival mode, the color of their skin making them a potential target.**

Their fear is justified; this reality is not. It is unconscionable that we spend \$840 on police per capita, more than any other big city in the country, which is more than double what we spend on schools, and triple what we spend on housing & community development. We know what needs to be done to create opportunity in our communities: invest in schools, mental health services, workforce development programs, and youth services, to name a few. In this political moment of heightened awareness of racial injustice, we have a unique opportunity to do just that. We must invest in our youth, and not the institution that instills fear in their play-spaces. For this reason, I urge you to increase funding by 25% in community-based services and programs, using funds currently earmarked for the police department.

Additionally, I ask that you fund the following programs:

1. A \$30 million investment into a community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process.
2. A \$70 million additional investment to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.
3. Removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues. Baltimore must create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police but connects people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment, and harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.
4. \$2.5 million to fund counsel for renters facing eviction.

5. \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program.

As a moral document, it is imperative that our budget reflects the needs of our communities, and these important amendments would get us there. Thank you for your consideration of this perspective.

Sincerely,

Elam Boockvar-Klein
elamklein@gmail.com

Stegman, Matthew

From: Sylvia Leith <sylvia.leith@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 27, 2021 4:37 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: FY 22 Budget testimony

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Good afternoon,

My name is Sylvia Leith, and I am a Medfield resident in District 7, represented by Councilman Torrence. Last month, I wrote to Councilman Torrence and Mayor Scott to express my deep opposition to the proposed increase to the BPD budget. I understand that, at this phase in the budget process, funding can be cut but not reallocated. I write today to reemphasize the necessity of a significant cut to the BPD budget. It is a stinging betrayal of the Mayor's campaign pledges to voters to raise the BPD budget, much less while urgently needed social programs, public schools, and mental health services face budget cuts.

Policing costs each Baltimorean taxpayer more per year than it does in any other major metropolis in America, and the BPD budget has ballooned even as the city's population has shrunk. I have spent time reviewing publicly available information on the department's budget. The devil is in the details. \$161 million for "other personnel costs." \$9 million for "Materials and supplies." Taxpayers deserve to see detailed receipts of these vague line items. I am confident that if we did, we would discover widespread waste.

The best thing the Council can do now is cut the BPD budget. I stand with activists demanding a \$100 million cut.

As a Baltimorean who voted for Mayor Scott and Councilman Torrence, I feel betrayed and disillusioned. Going forward, I intend to push for accountability from them throughout the year, not just in the weeks surrounding the city's budget proposal and approval. You can do better, we demand that you will do better, and we will be watching.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,
Sylvia Leith
District 7 Resident

Stegman, Matthew

From: Julie M <julietm.3348@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 25, 2021 10:41 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: Taxpayer's Night - May 27th

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Good Evening,

I am writing regarding the Taxpayer event on Thursday but I am deeply concerned about the proposed 2022 Baltimore budget and firmly believe that we should be investing in housing, healthcare, education and other community based solutions over policing. For that reason, I am writing in support of and to uplift the demands of Organizing Black to defund & divest from BPD (100 million dollar cut), create a community wellness trust fund (30 million, governed by a community participatory process), invest into Black communities (70 million dollars), and remove police entirely from responses of mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues.

Growth in the police budget has not and will not lead to a decrease in harm or crime and has only led to surveillance and police violence toward black and brown communities. All Baltimoreans deserve to live with dignity and free of police terror and surveillance. That's why we must divest from policing and shift those funds to proven solutions like high quality & affordable healthcare, education, housing, jobs, universal basic income and community programs.

Sincerely,
Julie

Dear City Council Members:

My name is Martha Schmitz, and I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore. I ask that you divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget, which is over a half a billion dollars. Further, I ask you to encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime and support real safety. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust which communities will be able to use to reinvest money where and how they see fit.

I was born and raised in Baltimore. I am a firm believer in and supporter of local solutions for peace and safety, including the Baltimore Community Mediation Center and SURJ, which works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

Policing as we know it does not work. I believe that true safety does not come from calling more armed actors into a situation. When police arrive, Black and Brown communities are often less safe, as they face excessive, brutal, and violent policing tactics. Police do not prevent or deter crime, and they often respond in a violent manner.

Despite the ineffectiveness and violence of the police, their role in our society is far too expansive and appears to be ever-growing. Meanwhile, vital services like health and education see cuts. Baltimore spends more of its General Fund on the Baltimore Police Department than it does on schools, housing, violence prevention initiatives, substance abuse treatment, and rec and parks combined.

For these reasons, I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Martha Schmitz
Baltimore, MD
SURJ Baltimore

I am a homeowner and a taxpayer in the Hampden neighborhood and I am writing, once again, to say that we need to REALLOCATE funding AWAY from the Baltimore Police Department budget and move it INTO homeless programs, jobs programs, schools, afterschool programs, mental healthcare and other poverty alleviation efforts. It is sickening that we spend so much money on policing when so many city residents sleep outdoors each night. It's embarrassing that our city's political leaders do not have the spine necessary to fight for working class Baltimoreans, and instead kowtow to pressure from BPD to increase their budget every year. God is watching, residents are watching, the world is watching. Stop increasing the police budget and start making this city a better place to live in, a place that people will want to stay and raise their kids in. Councilors, do the right thing for once.

Natalie Spicyn MD, MHS
3933 Keswick Road
Baltimore, MD 21211
District 41

May 26, 2021

TESTIMONY - FY2022 City Council Taxpayers' Night

Honorable members of the City Council,

I am a resident of the Wyman Park neighborhood and work as a primary care physician at a community health center in the Park Heights neighborhood of Baltimore. I am writing with the following concerns related to the proposed budget, which I hope you will address with amendments as appropriate:

1. Renters' issues: Housing, of course, is healthcare, and the COVID pandemic has laid bare how fragile this is for so many individuals. I was pleased that "Right to Counsel" was passed this year to help level the playing field between landlords and tenants in court, but was disappointed for this important program to potentially become an "unfunded mandate." I urge you to support an amendment dedicating **\$2.5 million to fund counsel for renters** facing eviction.
2. Police: To be blunt, we over-utilize police in circumstances where other community services would be better suited to help a Baltimorean in need - ranging from substance use concerns to other mental health crises. As a moral document, a budget should make clear our priorities as a society; in this vein, I request that you champion a **\$100 million cut from the Baltimore Police Department's existing budget** and reconsider how this money can be better used to support Baltimoreans in need.
3. Structural issues related to the democratic process: Please support the following amendments to the budget:
 - a. \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program
 - b. \$30 million investment into a community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process
 - c. \$70 million to support education, healthcare, jobs, housing, a universal basic income, and other values-driven community programs

Without these needed amendments, the FY2022 Baltimore City Preliminary Budget continues a pattern of divestment and underinvestment in our communities. We recently marked 5 years since Freddie Gray's death and 1 year since George Floyd's -- how many more lives need be lost before we have the vision and bravery to build a budget that protects and empowers minoritized communities, rather than investing in the same old same old?

Sincerely,
Natalie Spicyn, MD, MHS
Wyman Park, Baltimore (D41)

Dear City Council Members,

I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you divest \$100M from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

I am speaking here today as a resident of Greenmount West and a lifelong Baltimorean. I am also a healthcare professional and have seen first-hand how racial disparities and systemic oppression negatively affect health outcomes in communities of color. In addition to work with SURJ, I am an active member of my community association. SURJ works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

Instead of giving additional funding for police to expand technology and personnel to over-police already over-policed communities, money should be invested in after-school programs, crisis centers that help those who need help, felony-diversion initiatives, youth centers and many more community-centered programs that will actually address public safety and developmental community concerns.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Nathan Rehr
Greenmount West
SURJ Baltimore

May 25, 2021
Jo-Ann Orlinsky
3704 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

Testimony-FY 2022
City Council Taxpayers Night

Members of the Council:

My Name is Jo-Ann Orlinsky and I have lived in Baltimore City for more than 60 years. I have lived in Mt. Vernon, Bolton Hill and for the last 31 years in Tuscan Canterbury in District 14. Several of you know that I have been active in city campaigns and on issues of concern to the entire Baltimore Community.

Today I come to you to talk about reconfiguring the priorities in the budget for things that provide more assistance for our neighborhoods. For several years I have been involved in working on Right to Counsel. My thanks to you for all you have done to make this law a reality. Now it is time to implement it. Next year's budget needs to include an item to create an account to fund the beginnings of funding or grants to the organizations which have been willing to participate in providing counsel to those in rent court facing evictions. I know you are all aware of the ludicrous statistics and the necessity for this to be accomplished, so I won't take up your valuable time to go into them again. Baltimore City cannot continue to be the eviction capitol of the country.

Thank you for your consideration.

Good Evening,

My name is Joel Pally. I'm a Baltimore City Resident in the 6th District and an Educator in Baltimore City Public Schools. I'll be brief. Increasing the police budget at this time is blatantly disrespectful to the demands and needs of the Baltimore City Community.

We already spend more per capita on police than anyone else in America, and likely on earth at this point. It has gotten us very little. We all know why. Policing doesn't address the root causes of crime, it merely surveys, contains, and reacts to crime after the fact. Our own department has vgravantly displayed inappropriate use of funds and egregious for the whole nation to see. Our young people deserve so much more. Pay young people to clean up our streets, repair our housing, and create inviting spaces for youth. End homelessness and support affordable housing in our city. Increase access to mental health and drug treatment services. Invest in our young people's education for goodness sake. The police are the only people in the city, y'all even pretend to listen at this point. Listen to the people or the people will find someone who does listen.

Joel Pally
860-882-9816
pallyjoel@gmail.com

Hello,

My name is Margaret Vail Palmquist and I am a Baltimore City resident. I am here to voice my opposition to the proposed increase in the Baltimore Police Department Budget.

We unequivocally need to *defund* the police. I am deeply hurt and angry to not see a slash in the bloated police budget, but rather an increase. We must stop providing BPD endless funds and weapons of war and taxpayer money to settle lawsuits when they inevitably use those weapons of war to terrorize citizens and uphold racial capitalism.

The charade has been exposed for too many, particularly since the onset of the pandemic. We know what communities need and it is not to have their tax dollars used for a civilian militia. We need *resources*, we need money for community centers, jobs programs, free and accessible education, free and reliable internet. We need guaranteed healthcare, guaranteed housing, and an end to the war on drugs.

We all live in this city together. Listen to what people want.

1. *WE DEMAND THE DEFUNDING OF THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT.*
2. *WE DEMAND THE CREATION OF A COMMUNITY WELLNESS TRUST FUND.*
3. *WE DEMAND INVESTMENT INTO BLACK COMMUNITIES.*
4. *WE DEMAND THE REMOVAL OF POLICE ENTIRELY FROM RESPONSES TO MENTAL HEALTH DISTRESS, SUBSTANCE USE, SEX WORK, HOMELESSNESS, AND OTHER QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES.*

**Stop the state-sanctioned violence, stop the helicopter joy rides.
Defund the police and refund the community.**

Thank you.

Written Testimony for City Budget FY22
Position: Support with Amendments

Dear Councilmembers,

I am a registered voter in the Remington neighborhood submitting testimony on the proposed city budget. A \$27 million *increase* in the city police budget and a \$12 million decrease to the city school budget is unacceptable.

I request that you adopt the following demands communicated by the Organizing Black organization:

Defund the Baltimore City Police Department. We demand that 100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget. The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and brown communities.

Create a Community Wellness trust fund. We demand a \$30 million dollar investment into reimaging public safety trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process. Baltimoreans are more than capable of identifying what public safety without increased police presence or surveillance tools looks like for them.

Invest in Black communities. We demand that \$70 million dollars be allocated to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

Remove police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues. We demand Baltimore create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

Thank you!

Alicia Pereschuk
321 W 28th St
Baltimore MD 21211

Dear City Council Members,

I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you divest \$100M from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

I am currently a school social worker with Baltimore City Public schools. In my role as a social worker, I have also worked in foster care and in special education schools located in both the City and in Baltimore County. I've lived in Canton for the past 20 years and am now raising my family here. My children attend Baltimore City Public Schools. SURJ works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

In my experience with working with foster care children and their families, whom were often Black or Brown people, the lack of trust many of them had in working with the police was heartbreaking. Whether their perceptions were from personal experience or from the experiences of those close to them, they were greatly impacted which often did not allow them alternatives when faced with potentially dangerous situations. There were situations when staff from the agency where I worked would request that the police leave so that we could deescalate the situation.

From my vicarious exposures to the trauma of my clients by police offers, I would like to amplify the following:

- Black and Brown people, and all Baltimoreans deserve respect and the ability to live long and healthy lives. We deserve care not cops, jobs not jails, and books not bars.
- Instead of giving additional funding for police to expand technology and personnel to over-police already over-policed communities, money should be invested in after-school programs, crisis centers that help those who need help, felony-diversion initiatives, youth centers and many more community-centered programs that will actually address public safety and developmental community concerns.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

**Holly Powell
Canton, 21221
SURJ Baltimore**

Stegman, Matthew

From: Carter Richardson <carter.richardson@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 3:23 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: Support - City Budget FY22 – Public Comment for Taxpayers' Night

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Hello,

I am 16 and live in east Baltimore. I hear gunshots everyday. The only people that help us are the police. Nobody from the city ever visits my neighborhood except the police. The bad guys leave when the police come around. I am frightened that the Mayor and city council want to cut police funding next year. Please raise police funding this year and next year. If the police don't have more help more people in my part of the city will die.

Sincerely,
Carter Ricahrdson

Stegman, Matthew

From: Jacob Richardson <jacob.richardson@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 2:38 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: Support with Amendment - City Budget FY22 – Public Comment for Taxpayers' Night

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Dear City Council,

The Baltimore city police budget should be increased by at least 25% this year. Baltimore is on pace for record violent crime this year. How many people have to suffer before the Mayor starts giving the police the support they deserve? And now the Mayor and Bill Henry are promising to cut the police budget next year. The city is being destroyed block by block by criminal gangs and the mayor and city council do nothing to help the suffering citizens of Baltimore. We demand that the city council increase by at least 25% the police budget and hire more officers.

Concerned citizens of Baltimore, Jacob Richardson

May 27, 2021
Dan Richman - Baltimore, MD 21224
FY2022 City Council Taxpayers' Night

Dear members of the City Council:

My name is Dan Richman, I live in the Patterson Park neighborhood in council district 1.

I am testifying in support of substantially decreasing funding for the police department and reallocating to increase funding for community-based safety and wellness programs, youth programs, affordable housing, and other helpful services. I'm sick of having so much of my tax dollars spent on the police and still needing workarounds for public safety because the police department is so destructive and ineffective for most of the problems we face.

For one example, I'm currently volunteering with other members of my neighborhood and district to implement public safety programs that avoid calling the police. This is because I don't want children or adults swept into the incarceration system, I want skillful and nonviolent ways of responding to behavioral or substance abuse issues, and I want problems solved by community members and I don't want the criminalization of poverty.

The city is working against us when it hardly funds the scale of community-based safety programs that we need, and it funds the police department that is worsening the problems we're trying to solve.

The specific amendments I request are:

- Cut \$100 million from the proposed BPD budget
- Reallocate \$30 million to a community wellness trust fund governed by community members
- Reallocate \$70 million for affordable housing, public education, universal healthcare, jobs and universal basic income programs, and other community programs
- Create an alternative to 911 that connects people in crisis with mental health, housing, treatment, and harm reduction resources and removes police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues
- Add \$2.5 million to fund renters' Right to Counsel when facing eviction
- Add \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program

Sincerely,
Dan Richman

Stegman, Matthew

From: Paul Robinson <paulrob626@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 7:43 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: Support for City Budget FY22 Public Comment for Taxpayers' Night

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To the City Council,

I support increased funding for the police department. Crime is out of control in Baltimore. I also support bigger increases for the police of Baltimore budget next fiscal year.

Thank You,
Paul Robinson

Dear City Council members,

First, I want to express my gratitude to you for the hard work that you devote to our city, and for taking the time to listen to different points of view about the budget.

I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice, which works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs. I am testifying to ask that you shift the city's resources away from the police department and towards Black and Brown community-led programs that contribute to the safety and wellbeing of Baltimore City residents. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested. The communities who are most impacted by violence should be at the forefront of what these solutions should look like.

The safest communities are the ones with the most resources, and Black neighborhoods in our city have been systematically divested for decades. A more equitable distribution of resources will make this city a better place for all of us to live.

Additionally, I hope that the city government will pursue options for making the budgeting process more participatory. While Taxpayers' Night is a meaningful opportunity to hear from residents, it seems to me that it comes too late in the process for our voices to significantly impact the budget.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Thank you for your time.

Sandy Robson
2108 Erdman Ave
Baltimore, MD 21218

Dear City Council Members,

I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you divest \$100M from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

I am a 15-year resident of Waverly and Baltimore, and a member of the Charles Village synagogue Hinenu. SURJ works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

While I have personally been the victim of burglary and robbery — I still know that it is not the police that can keep us safe, and the portion of the budget locked up in BPD is in the way of what we need to keep us ALL safe.

Policing as we know it does not work. Putting more and more of our budget into policing hasn't made anyone any safer. You can't solve violence with more violence. Instead of giving additional funding for police to expand technology and personnel to over-police already over-policed communities, money should be invested in after-school programs, crisis centers that help those who need help, felony-diversion initiatives, youth centers and many more community-centered programs that will actually address public safety and developmental community concerns.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Jonathan Rochkind
Waverly
SURJ Baltimore

Members of the Baltimore City Council,

As a founding member of Scan the Police, my colleagues and I have listened to the Baltimore City Police Department's failure to live up to its own propaganda over the last year. Our conclusion has been that this department — 80% of which does not live in Baltimore City, with 10% of that 80% not living in Maryland at all — does not have Baltimore's best interests at heart.

Scan the Police shares Organizing Black's demands:

1. We demand the defunding of the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD).
2. We demand the creation of a Community Wellness trust fund.
3. We demand investment into Black communities.
4. We demand the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.

Most calls police officers in Baltimore say they are responding to are business checks, which are actually proactive attempts by officers to go around and observe businesses on their patrols. They also perform a nearly equal number of vehicle stops, which are different from traffic stops in that the stops are not performed for any specific reason; they are largely "investigative stops," which, when performed on the street, have been known as stop and frisks. When Baltimore City police officers do perform traffic stops, they have been required to turn over the racial demographics of those stops to the state since 2013 and, eight years later, have still failed to do so. We also repeatedly hear officers responding to possible overdoses without naloxone — and without calling for medical assistance until after they arrive.

On Sunday, April 18th, the day before the six-year anniversary of Freddie Gray's death from injuries sustained following police officers brutally attacking him, we heard cops joke about a call about a woman's partner stabbing her with a screwdriver. One cop said, "There used to be such a thing as marriage counseling; now they just call the cops on their spouse," while another cop laughed and responded, "And they want to defund us."

This is not an isolated incident. The police in Baltimore City are not protecting Baltimore residents — they are mocking us.

In June 2015, Keith Davis, Jr., was misidentified as a robbery suspect by four BPD officers who chased him into an enclosed garage and shot at him dozens of times. He was acquitted of the robbery after a trial in which the **robbery victim testified that Keith wasn't the person who had committed it**. The police and SAO Marilyn Mosby's office then claimed that a gun found near Keith in that garage had been used to murder Kevin Jones several hours earlier that same day.

It was determined that:

- **The gun was never fired that day.**
- **There is no DNA link between Keith Davis Jr. and Kevin Jones.**
- **One of the officers who shot Keith was even investigated by the FBI for interstate drug trafficking.**

Despite these glaring problems with the case, Marilyn Mosby has chosen to repeatedly prosecute him. These trials have resulted in two mistrials and two overturned guilty verdicts. These trials have also cost taxpayers over a million dollars without being able to render an ounce of justice. From the cost of judges, witnesses, DNA (which was outsourced by the state), police officers, court clerks, bailiffs, law clerks, utilities and operations, and juror

payments - Baltimore residents are directly paying for the unjust prosecution of a police brutality victim. Taxpayers must challenge this abuse of power and understand that silence implicates us all.

On May 13, 2021, Keith Davis, Jr. was granted a new trial, making way for him to be tried **a fifth** time. Please call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

None of this is protecting anyone, and any other agency committing acts that are remotely as negligent would have been defunded a long time ago. Please defund the Baltimore City Police Department and invest in housing our neighbors and building up Black communities the city has long divested from.

Thank you,
Caitlin Goldblatt, District 12 Resident

Dear City Council Members,

I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you divest \$100M from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested. SURJ works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

I am a Towson University Alum living in Lauraville, MD. I am a childcare worker, a community advocate, a sister, a daughter, and a healer. At Towson, I studied Family and Human Services and learned that **preventative measures are more effective at serving the community and more cost effective than reactionary services**. The fact that the Baltimore Police Department, tasked with responding to crime, not preventing it, has more funding than schools, housing, violence prevention initiatives, substance abuse treatment, and parks and recreation combined, departments that reduce crime before it occurs, is extremely poor budgeting IF the goal is to heal and restore the community. Right now, it appears that the goal is to criminalize poverty and fill the jails and prisons with black and brown bodies. **I do not consent to having my tax dollars fund the destruction of Baltimore Cities black and brown communities.**

The first 13 years of my life, I survived constant domestic abuse and repeated sexual assault. Not once did I think calling the police was a good idea, and this was before I heard anything about police brutality in the media. **The police are not trained or advertised to respond to this kind of interpersonal violence**. They “fight bad guys”, so what happens when the bad guy is sometimes loving and good to you? What happens when he is the main provider? **Throwing him away is not an option, so we survive and tell no one**. There must be an alternative, and that alternative costs money! Police departments are a parasite sucking up a disproportionate amount of my taxes and leaving holistic healing programs scrambling for funding and staff. **We need a change!**

I escaped and my healing came from a private school for girls that had extra funding to pay my way. My graduating class was 30 girls, many of whom were abused like me. The school challenged me to achieve academically and I received a full ride to college. It kept me active in sports. It gave me structure and a community of girls to heal among. **Fund programs that build up the community, instead of waiting for crime to happen and then throwing our loved ones away.**

As a white woman, there is a lot of privilege in my story that brought me to a place of healing and restoration. **I demand that the opportunity to heal and restore be made available to black and brown people too. They deserve respect and the ability to live long and healthy lives. They deserve care not cops, jobs not jails, and books not bars.**

It is for these reasons that I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and

his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Christina Simmons
Lauraville
SURJ Baltimore

Dear City Council,

In June 2015, Keith Davis Jr was misidentified as a robbery suspect by four BPD officers who chased him into an enclosed garage and shot at him dozens of times. He was acquitted of the robbery after a trial in which the **robbery victim testified that Keith wasn't the person who had committed it**. The police and Marilyn Mosby's office then claimed that a gun found near Keith in that garage had been used to murder Kevin Jones several hours earlier that same day.

It was determined that:

- **The gun was never fired that day.**
- **There is no DNA link between Keith Davis Jr. and Kevin Jones.**
- **One of the officers who shot Keith was even investigated by the FBI for interstate drug trafficking.**

Despite these glaring problems with the case, Marilyn Mosby has chosen to repeatedly prosecute him. These trials have resulted in two mistrials and two overturned guilty verdicts. These trials have also cost taxpayers over a million dollars without being able to render an ounce of justice. From the cost of judges, witnesses, DNA (which was outsourced by the state), police officers, court clerks, bailiffs, law clerks, utilities and operations, and juror payments - Baltimore residents are directly paying for the unjust prosecution of a police brutality victim. Taxpayers must challenge this abuse of power and understand that silence implicates us all.

On May 13, 2021, Keith Davis Jr. was granted a new trial, making way for him to be tried **a fifth** time. Please call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you,
Mekdes A Sisay

Good evening members of the City Council,

My name is Natalia Skolnik. I live in Baltimore City, District 11.

I'm writing tonight as an educator and advocate for better opportunities for our youth and as a mother of a Baltimore City Public Schools student. Baltimore youth deserve to grow up in a city that invests heavily in them, not in the police.

First, I want to honor a bright and amazing fifteen year old youth leader from East Baltimore who showed my colleagues at CLIA and me such a beautiful and healing vision for Baltimore. Devonte Friedman joined us for our Summer Leadership Institute the summer of 2016. By the time I met him, half of his close friends, had been lost to gun violence. He didn't want that for himself; was thirsty for leadership and educational opportunities, and he begged for help finding after school programs that he could join so he didn't meet the same fate. He was delightfully curious about everything. I called everyone I could think of and could not find an after school program, apprenticeship program or internships he could join. On December 1st, 2018, he was killed. Baltimore City, Devonte didn't need to die. This was a preventable death, as are the hundreds of other young men and women we lose every year.

Second, I recently attended our daughter's Baltimore public school's budget meeting for next year. It became quickly apparent that the school can barely offer our students the barest minimum requirements in terms of staffing with current funding levels. I'm sure many Baltimore City schools are in worse positions than ours, but it's dire. We are an "IB Candidate school" and up for certification next year for a program that our teachers have lovingly been working for years to build, but with the lack of funding, I am doubtful we'll pass the requirements because we're told they cannot afford to hire the necessary staff required to fully implement the program. Baltimore, we can do better. Baltimore, we must do better. For all of our kids. We cannot do this as individuals. We can only decide this as a city. And the time to do that is now.

It is said that our budget reflects what we value. Let me add: it shows *who* and *what* we value. Why do we intentionally give millions more each year to our police department than we invest in our children's education – in school and after school programming? We all know after school programs keep kids off the streets and teach valuable life skills. If we continue to budget to deny school programming and other enrichment opportunities for the youth of our city, we are blatantly deciding their lives don't matter. We might as well write that on a banner. Writing "Black Lives Matter" on a banner on a building or on a t-shirt only means something when we put our resources into action.

If our city wants different outcomes (families to stay here, youth to thrive and a reduction in youth crime), the formula is simple. Our kids need OUR CITY to CHOOSE THEM (not the police department). Our kids need our city to invest in their growth, their education, their lives. We need to support, protect, love our kids. We need to insist our resources go to them, not flushed away by handing millions upon millions to the police department. The future of the children who are alive today depend on this.

Baltimore, we can do better. Baltimore City Council, please *do* better.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Natalia Skolnik

Dear City Council Members,

I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you divest \$100M from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

I am speaking here today after a decade of living in Baltimore, a current resident of the Better Waverly neighborhood, and a data analyst by trade. SURJ works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

In 2019, 851 people died of opioid-related deaths. In FY2022, the city is set to spend about \$1,563,356 in General Fund dollars on Substance Abuse and Mental Health. In 2019, 348 people died by homicide. In FY2022, the city is set to spend \$521,725,791 from its General Fund on the BPD. This shows the city has budgeted 816 times as much per life lost responding to homicides as it plans to spend preventing opioid-related deaths. As it stands, this budget prioritizes punishing crime over saving lives.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Jonathan Smeton
Better Waverly
SURJ Baltimore

5/26/2021

To the City Council:

It is not prudent at this time to decrease the decrease the budget for the Police Department. The consent decree requires additional funding. We should also be aware that there is a huge increase in crime in our city. Please pass this budget with a greater increase in funding for the Police Department.

Sincerely,

Brandon Smith

SARAH F. G. SMITH

427 George Street, Baltimore MD 21201 | sarahfgsmith@gmail.com

5/25/2021

To the Baltimore City Council:

A year after the murder of George Floyd, a national reckoning on policing and race in America, and Baltimore is moving in the WRONG direction. I am writing to demand the city council refuse to increase funding to BPD.

As it stands, the city budget calls for a \$27M increase in BPD's budget and a \$12M cut to our public schools. This is a travesty! I feel the City Council should defund BPD by \$100M and instead, invest in Black communities.

Six years after the murder of Freddie Gray & the Baltimore Uprising that followed, a DOJ investigation, years of consent decree implementation, 4 police commissioners, and over \$3 billion dollars spent, it is clear that BPD is beyond reform.

Poverty, poor education, lack of affordable housing, and health inequities drive crime and harm. Police do NOTHING to stop crime or deter it, and they take valuable resources away from proven harm-reduction strategies.

I would like to see 100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget. **The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and Brown communities.**

Further, I would like to see a \$30 million-dollar investment into a Community Wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process. Baltimoreans are more than capable of identifying what public safety look like, without increased police presence or surveillance tools. And we need the funding to do so.

In addition, I would like to see \$70 million dollars be allocated to support quality, affordable housing, high quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

We should work to remove police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues.

Finally, I would like to see Baltimore create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

Thank you for taking the time to review my testimony.

Regards,
Sarah S.

I am writing to urge Baltimore's City council to reduce funding for the Baltimore City Police Department. We should be supporting the communities that need it more. Providing necessary services and support to those that have been excluded from those opportunities will create more productive members of our society. If aggressive policing was the solution to Baltimore's crime problem it would already have been fixed. Take money from the police and give it to the people.

Name - Jason Teague
Affiliation - Citizen of Baltimore
Email - jasontt333@gmail.com
Phone -
Position - Oppose

The City of Baltimore should be increasing the police budget by more than it is this year and should increase it next year. The mayor is promising to cut the police budget next which is a horrible plan. Baltimore will have record number of homicides this year.

Testimony Opposing City Budget FY22
Taylor Smith-Hams
May 27, 2021

My name is Taylor Smith-Hams and I am a homeowner in Better Waverly and a registered voter in the City's 14th district. **I am writing to urge the City Council to oppose the proposed City Budget FY22. Baltimore City must defund the Baltimore Police Department, not add to its already bloated budget.**

The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and brown communities. Instead of increasing funding for the department as proposed in the FY22 budget, Baltimore City should cut BPD's budget by \$100 million. This money should be reinvested in Black communities:

- \$30 million should be invested in a Community Wellness Trust Fund aimed at reimaging public safety through a participatory budgeting process.
- \$70 million should be allocated to support affordable housing, education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

Additionally, police must be removed from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues. The 911 diversion pilot program is a great start, and more funds should be invested in connecting people in crisis with the resources they need to live with dignity.

As an artist, I think it's critical to imagine and visualize what alternative futures can look like. I hope this painting can inspire you to fight for the investments in communities we need by defunding BPD.



Dear City Council members,

I am writing as a Baltimore city resident in Belair-Edison, within the city's 13th District. I oppose the current FY22 budget with its increase in spending for the Baltimore Police Department and decrease in spending on public schools. A year after the police killing of George Floyd, nearly five years after the attempted police killing of Keith Davis, Jr., and nearly eight years after the police killing of Tyrone West, our city continues to move in the wrong direction. We must change course now.

I fully support the demands of Organizing Black to defund BPD and invest in Black communities. Here are the demands:

Defund the Baltimore City Police Department. We demand that 100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget. The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and brown communities.

Create a Community Wellness trust fund. We demand a \$30 million dollar investment into reimagining public safety trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process. Baltimoreans are more than capable of identifying what public safety without increased police presence or surveillance tools looks like for them.

Invest in Black communities. We demand that \$70 million dollars be allocated to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

Remove police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues. We demand Baltimore create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

I also call on Mayor Brandon Scott and all members of City Council to do all within your power to demand that the State's Attorney's Office drops all charges against Keith Davis, Jr. Our city has already spent over a million in taxpayer dollars to prosecute an innocent man rather than seek actual justice in the killing of Kevin Jones.

In June 2015, Keith Davis Jr was misidentified as a robbery suspect by four BPD officers who chased him into an enclosed garage and shot at him dozens of times. He was acquitted of the robbery after a trial in which the **robbery victim testified that Keith wasn't the person who had committed it.** The police and Marilyn Mosby's office then claimed that a gun found near Keith in that garage had been used to murder Kevin Jones several hours earlier that same day.

It was determined that:

- **The gun was never fired that day.**
- **There is no DNA link between Keith Davis Jr. and Kevin Jones.**
- **One of the officers who shot Keith was even investigated by the FBI for interstate drug trafficking.**

Despite these glaring problems with the case, Marilyn Mosby has chosen to repeatedly prosecute him. These trials have resulted in two mistrials and two overturned guilty verdicts. These trials have also cost taxpayers over a million dollars without being able to render an ounce of justice. From the cost of judges, witnesses, DNA (which was outsourced by the state), police officers, court clerks, bailiffs, law clerks, utilities and operations, and juror payments - Baltimore residents are directly paying for the unjust prosecution of a police brutality victim.

On May 13, 2021, Keith Davis Jr. was granted a new trial, making way for him to be tried **a fifth** time. Please call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

You have the opportunity to move our city in a new direction. There is much more work to do to create a true participatory budgeting and planning process that focuses on investment and development in the Black neighborhoods that have been harmed the most by systemic racism and oppression. Supporting the demands of Organizing Black and ending the unjust prosecution of Keith Davis, Jr. are an excellent place to start.

Sincerely,

Gretchen M. Tome

May 26, 2021

Dear City Council,

In reference to the Fiscal 2022 budget, I ask that 100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget. The constant growth of BPD's budget has not correlated into a decrease in crime or harm and has only fed surveillance and police violence in Black and brown communities.

Instead, I ask that \$70 million dollars be allocated to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs. As someone who works in a Baltimore City Public School, I have seen how the pandemic has economically devastated Baltimore families, but also emotionally and educationally taken a huge toll on students. Increased dollars need to be spent on supporting our Community Schools in Baltimore City more than ever, as Community Schools work to meet the needs of families far beyond the academic, from financial, housing, food and much more.

Furthermore, I ask for a \$30 million dollar investment into reimaging public safety with the creation of a Community Wellness trust fund, to be governed through a participatory budgeting process. Baltimoreans are more than capable of identifying what public safety without increased police presence or surveillance tools looks like for them.

And while we are moving in the right direction on this issue, I ask that you commit to removing police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality-of-life issues. We demand Baltimore create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police to connect people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment and/or harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

Finally I would ask you to bring your attention to the case of Keith Davis Jr. On May 13, 2021, Keith Davis Jr. was granted a new trial, making way for him to be tried **a fifth** time. Please call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

There have been glaring problems with the case and Keith has maintained his innocence throughout, being repeatedly tried. These trials have also cost taxpayers over a million dollars. Baltimore residents are directly paying for the unjust prosecution of a police brutality victim. As a taxpayer I challenge this abuse of power and understand that silence implicates us all.

Thank you,

Magdalena Tsiongas
5707 Cross Country Blvd
Baltimore, MD 21209

Bonnie Weissberg
2403 Rockwood Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21209
May 26, 2021

Dear City Council Members,

I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore to ask that you divest \$100M from the over-half-billion-dollar Baltimore Police Department budget and encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested. SURJ works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

I have been a resident of Mount Washington for 14 years with my wife of over 25 years and our adopted son from Guatemala, who is 16 years old. My wife and I are both retired. As a resident of Baltimore City, I have truly appreciated its diversity and culture. My neighborhood is very comfortable with good services. Police are available if needed and have open communication with the residents. Most of the residents of Mount Washington are caucasian and upper income. Such is the problem with Baltimore, where there is apartheid. The majority of black and brown Baltimoreans live in poor neighborhoods with less access to resources than their white, brothers and sisters, in more affluent areas.

I am horrified by the lack of opportunity in the poorer neighborhoods of Baltimore where the quality of education suffers, there are less employment opportunities, there is a lack of healthy and economical food, expedient and safe transportation and adequate, affordable, safe housing. There is also a lot of crime and lack of services for substance abuse issues and mental health.

- Instead of giving additional funding for police to expand technology and personnel to over-police already over-policed communities, money should be invested in after-school programs, crisis centers that help those who need help, felony-diversion initiatives, youth centers and many more community-centered programs that will actually address public safety and developmental community concerns.
- Baltimore spends more of its General Fund on the Baltimore Police Department than it does on schools, housing, violence prevention initiatives, substance abuse treatment, and rec and parks combined.
- In 2019, 851 people died of opioid-related deaths. In FY2022, the city is set to spend about \$1,563,356 in General Fund dollars on Substance Abuse and Mental Health. In 2019, 348 people died by homicide. In FY2022, the city is set to spend \$521,725,791 from its General Fund on the BPD. This shows the city has budgeted 816 times as much per life lost responding to homicides as it plans to spend preventing opioid-related deaths. As it stands, this budget prioritizes punishing crime over saving lives.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Bonnie Weissberg
Mount Washington
City Council District 5
SURJ Baltimore

May 26, 2021 at 7:12 PM

Does the Baltimore city school budget allow for an increase in funding for athletic programs across the city to be on par with other counties in the state?

Whether it's facilities, tournament availability, or transportation it seems the city players are having a more difficult time being recruited by colleges compared to the counties.



Stegman, Matthew

From: Josiah Williams <josiahwill2@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 8:48 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: City Budget FY22 Public Comment for Taxpayers' Night Support for Police funding

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Baltimore City IT Network Systems.
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5/26/2021

I support FY22 budget because it increases support for the Baltimore Police. The criminals run the city right now and we all need to support the police. Justice requires standing up for the police. Justice requires standing against criminals.

Josiah Williams