



Nick J. Mosby
President,
Baltimore City Council

400 City Hall • Baltimore Maryland 21202
410-396-4804 • Fax: 410-539-0647

Baltimore City Council

Fiscal 2023 Taxpayers' Night Testimony Submissions

Compiled by the Office of the City Council President

The Ways & Means Committee of the Baltimore City Council hosted the Fiscal 2023 Taxpayers' Night on Thursday, May 26, 2022. This event was hosted in a hybrid format. To ensure access for residents to provide testimony, Council staff collected testimony via webform and email through June 7, 2022. This document compiles all testimony provided on the Fiscal 2023 Ordinance of Estimates via the webform and email. Please note that some of these submissions have been edited for clarity and ease of reading.

TESTIMONY SUBMISSIONS

Submitted By: Rae Lucas

Submitted Via: Email

Hello my name is Rae Lucas and I am a resident of the Patterson Park Neighborhood in district 1. I'm a teacher and a musician of 14 years. Mayor Scott, upon your transition into office many of my colleagues and mentors on the Arts and Culture Committee spent time and care in advocating for economically accessible artists spaces, equitable arts funding for Black and LGBTQ+ arts spaces, and creative programming and resources for youth that would change the face and wellbeing of this city. Instead of investing our city's funds into the creative livelihood of its people you are yet again increasing the Baltimore City Police Department Budget. Instead of choosing to pour into a city where our children are held by a creative future that expands possibilities you are investing into their arrest. As a Black musician and an arts teacher it's insulting to see the lack of care towards the vision that was created by the task force. It's insulting to see homelessness criminalized when homes for artists and creative workers are completely inaccessible in this city. many of my fellow artists have no space to be artists in this city. It's insulting to see our kids over-policed instead of provided accessible spaces to explore the many creative gifts they naturally hold. We deserve better.

We demand that funding to police be reallocated to the people of this city via community programming that put this city on the map and give it life. With every dollar you invest in police, you drain the life blood from this city.

Submitted By: Gregory Bailey

Submitted Via: Email

My name is Gregory Bailey and I am the Senior Objects Conservator at the Walters Art Museum, where I have worked for seven out of the past ten years. I am a resident of Mount Vernon, and a voter in district 40. The Walters brought me here to Baltimore, and I am proud to be one among the large majority of workers who are seeking to form a union with AFSCME Council 67 to increase transparency and accountability, ensure that we have a voice in matters relating to health and safety, and build sustainable ladders of opportunity for all members of staff.

The Walters Art Museum, a publicly supported agency of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, must be held to account for expending money to thwart workers' efforts to establish a clear path to an inclusive union election open to all eligible employees. For the past year, the museum leadership has steadfastly refused to meet with any members of staff to discuss labor

issues and has paid to retain the services of Shawe Rosenthal, a legal firm that prominently advertises its services as “keeping non-union workplaces union free.”

As workers at the Walters seeking to form a union for the betterment of staff, our families, and our wider communities in Baltimore, public trust in the institution is important to us. It is therefore a concern that the wife of a partner at Shawe Rosenthal sits on the Walters Board of Trustees, and Shawe Rosenthal has donated a considerable sum of money to the museum. This contributes to the appearance of impropriety and undermines public trust in the museum.

Moreover, the Walters Art Museum’s payments to Shawe Rosenthal potentially violate Maryland House Bill 13, passed in 2021, which prohibits any unit of state, county, or municipal government from knowingly using public funds to influence the decisions of county or municipal employees in a unionization process.

More pertinently, the Baltimore City Municipal Code provides that the Museum and endowment funds may be used “only for the benefit of the public.” (Mun. Code ART. 18, § 14-8(c). The Walters receives payments from the endowment “on behalf of” the Mayor and City Council. (Mun Code 14-8(d). City law dictates that these endowment funds be used solely for a public purpose. Use of any funds to prevent or delay the union election process cannot be construed as beneficial to the public and are in violation of the municipal code.

The Walters Art Museum, as a free, public institution and tax-exempt agency of the City of Baltimore, receives an average of 20% or more of its total revenues from public money. Over the past three years, the city alone has budgeted over \$5 million for personnel and another \$700,000 for general expenses at the Walters. The majority of the artworks and the buildings of the museum are owned by the city, which also provides workers’ healthcare and retirement benefits.

Today, I once again call upon the City Council to compel Walters leadership to cease wasting funds on union prevention efforts and agree to an inclusive, efficient union election process through an accredited neutral third-party such as the American Arbitration Association. Workers and leadership at the Baltimore Museum of Art have signed such an agreement, proving this is a legitimate path forward for the Walters and for Baltimore. I ask you to do your utmost to ensure that public money allocated to the Walters Art Museum is not misspent on union avoidance, but instead is spent to help achieve the museum’s vision of being a transformative force for good in Baltimore and the museum field. Public money and support must uplift us all and must not be used to prevent democratic participation, economic equity, or social justice.

Submitted By: Lex Reehill
Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Lex Reehill and I live in city council district 12. I've worked at the Walters Art Museum for over five years, and am part of the dedicated group of employees pushing for unionization at the Walters. We formed our union in response to the lack of pay equity, transparency, and workplace harassment we experienced at the Walters. Our voices deserve to be heard and respected as employees, and as people.

In the year since our union went public, we have requested to meet with our director and board, to discuss having our union recognized, and have been refused every time. Just this week, the Baltimore Museum of Art Union has come to an election agreement with their museum leadership. They will be able to have an election that is wall-to-wall, precisely what Walters employees have been asking our own leadership to do.

Walters leadership has employed Shawe-Rosenthal LLP as consultants, a group that prides itself on keeping workplaces "union free." The Municipal Code states that the Museum and endowment funds may be used "only for the benefit of the public." (Mun. Code ART. 18, § 14-8(c) How is stalling a fair and fully inclusive election, wanted by so many employees, benefiting the public?

We, Walters Workers United, are asking the city council that you bring us in the room with Walters' director Julia Marciari-Alexander, the Board chair James DeGraffenreidt, and Board president Guy Flynn to get an election agreement signed.

It is time for Walters leadership to be held accountable for dismissing their employees and misusing public funds.

Thank you for your time.

Submitted By: Jen Simonds

Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Jen Simonds and I am a resident of the Hamilton Hills neighborhood.

The increasing amount spent on the police budget in the last 10 years is not decreasing the crime rate. The budget has gone up while crime rates are staying the same. As a newer resident of Baltimore City, I am troubled by the way these graph lines keep diverging. .

Funds need to go toward community supports that are shown in study after study as elements that decrease crime rates. In a recent review I read, a reliable predictor of decreased crime rates was housing and rehabilitation of run-down properties. In another study, providing functional family therapy not only decreased recidivism in court-involved youth, but the cost of services for these youths went down.

As a Baltimore city resident and believer that we can and must do better, I unequivocally support and stand with CJSJ and Organizing Black to demand that: \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities; 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 all 'crimes of poverty.'

I urge you to vote down the budget as it stands.

Submitted By: Nae Jones
Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Nae and I'm a resident of the 4th district in Baltimore. I am displeased with how the Mayor and the city council are approached the police budget. I don't like how they're doing things because their decisions are showing that they don't care about the people in Baltimore. It feels like year after year we go through the same issues and they're voiced time after time and it seems as if no one cares enough to actually make a change here in Baltimore. We can give millions and millions to the department of people that the people of Baltimore actually fear when there's vacant homes on every street, a broken school system, homelessness that varies in all ages, etc. There are so many things to account for and to fix, and frankly the last thing we need is for the one of many things that is designed to hurt the black community to be funded, yet again millions of dollars.

Submitted By: Krysten Garcia
Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Krysten Garcia. I moved to Baltimore 6 years ago to attend Johns Hopkins. Since graduating, I've spent the past 2 years working as a research assistant at a substance use treatment center in Baltimore. Every day I hear stories from patients that can't find housing, can't afford to feed their families and can't afford to treat their medical conditions. It is common for many of the women to have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence, and the death of a family member, often a child, by gun violence. The persistence of their substance use disorders is directly a result of these challenges. Yet we can do little to change their circumstances because Baltimore continues to pour money into a police department that only perpetuates harm. If we want our communities to thrive, we need more investment in housing, education, healthcare, employment and environmental justice initiatives. This is the only logical and moral solution.

Submitted By: Tisha Guthrie
Submitted Via: Email

Thank you members of the CC and fellow residents. My name is Tisha Guthrie, a native daughter of Baltimore city whom, at this juncture, is beyond weathered and fatigued. For decades I have not watched our city fall into disrepair but have actively witnessed those in position to act for the good and prosperity of City residents do so with an equation, an equation which year after year has proven itself ineffective at best, if the conditions of our housing, education, public and mental health are measures, this equation is not just ineffective but deadly.

The logic employed, which is evidenced by not only this budget but that of the last decade or so; namely that change will result from the use of an equation proven to be flawed, is by nature illogical. The numbers are undeniable. Increased investment in policing has not resulted in the mitigation of crime, violence, increased safety, employment, population growth nor the beautification in any way of what once stood as a legendary flower of the East Coast. Plugging in different quantities/numbers without as much as changing a factor not a variable, does not result

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in a qualitative difference, only the QUANTITY, at best. Refusing to revisit prioritizing ONE particular variable, the only variable that has received ever increasing funding, an approach which has undeniably resulted in the perpetual atrophy of our city, having reached a historic low population. If we as city residents are to hold in good faith that our representatives work as such with the intention to establish a fertile ground for our children, youth, families elders and communities to flourish, innovative approaches are mandatory.

Submitted By: Sonia Eaddy

Submitted Via: Email

We would like the City to stop with the heights depths and density over populating our neighborhood with modern luxury apartments that will be future projects. The City has already demolished the Lexington Terrace Projects that has been replaced with homeownership and affordable rentals.

This action will bring housing equity stability to our community where as now these apartments are drawing our property values down.

Submitted By: Zackary Berger

Submitted Via: Web Form

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am a primary care physician in Baltimore. Many of my patients are poor African-American residents of east Baltimore or undocumented immigrants, many of whom do not speak English. Crime is a socially determined category, and we have determined -- during this pandemic as much as before - -who is to be praised for amassing wealth on the backs of the poor, and who is to be blamed for doing what they need to do to survive.

In a word, the police are a violent instrument of control and are not a necessary or sufficient instrument of justice or equity. It is a great disappointment that my vulnerable patients will be put at additional risk of interaction with our carceral-legal system if this budget is passed. The Baltimore police get over \$500M a year, and we are to give them even more money? I stand with the recommendations made today, to divest from a police centered approach and center community health, mental health, jobs, housing, and food.

My patients thank you for putting their needs first. They value their physical safety as much as anyone, but they know, as do I, that more police funding does not mean safer living.

Submitted By: Anita Handy

Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Anita Handy. I live in District 13 and work at Johns Hopkins Hospital. I'm a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, the largest healthcare workers union in the United States. I have 5,000 1199SEIU union comrades in Baltimore City. I support

repurposing funds from the Baltimore City Police budget to instead fund much needed community services that will improve quality of life in our beloved City.

I have a 19-year-old daughter who is about to graduate high school. When I envision my ideal version of Baltimore for her and my family to thrive in, I see a city with clean streets; affordable & livable housing for all; a fire department with more funding; no gun violence; and more opportunities for youth including better parks & recreation centers and well-funded public schools. These are the services that are required to create strong, safe communities. Sadly, our city keeps raising our police budget while not properly funding the programs and services that can create the ideal Baltimore I envision.

The current budget proposal is outrageous. For every \$1 spent on police, public schools get \$0.61. Housing gets \$0.15. Homeless Services gets \$0.12. Recreation and Parks gets \$0.11. Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services only receive one cent.

We shouldn't keep throwing more money at a police department that isn't keeping our communities safe. We need housing, healthcare, and education. I urge the Council to reject the budget as written and reject any budget that increases funding for the police at the expense of our communities.

Submitted By: Arielle Branch

Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Arielle Branch and I am a Baltimore City resident in Council District 14. I'm an outreach advocate with a community organization that serves working families in our city who are struggling to meet their basic needs, and I am a parent educator for children with disabilities. I want my taxpayer dollars to go towards programs that will actually make our communities safer --- like public education, parks & recreation, housing, and services for young people with disabilities -- instead of feeding an ever-growing police budget.

I am the mother of a six-year-old son, who has a disability. People with disabilities are at a much higher risk of being the victims of police violence than people who do not have a disability. That is a really scary fact. I want my son to be safe and have access to services that will help him thrive.

Through my work I learned that by looking at the reading scores of children at age three, you can predict whether that child will end up in prison. When we don't properly fund our education, we are setting our youth up to fail. Better funding for schools, after school programs, and parks & recreation will keep kids on the right path.

Another area where we need more funding is for affordable housing. My son has a lot of classmates whose parents cannot be involved in supporting their education because they have to work so many jobs and hours just to keep a roof over their families' heads. When parents can't help their children learn, they are more likely to have low reading scores.

It is disturbing that, under this proposed budget, for every dollar Baltimore City spends on police, we spend:

- 61 cents on education
- 15 cents on affordable housing
- 12 cents on homeless services
- 11 cents on parks & rec
- 1 cent on mental health and substance dependence services

I call upon the council to reject the proposed budget and reallocate \$100 million from the Baltimore City Police Department to instead fund disability services, more opportunities for youth, and affordable housing.

Submitted By: Charlene Rock-Foster

Submitted Via: Web Form

I took the opportunity to listen to B.O.E. taxpayer's night on April 27th to hear directly from my fellow Baltimore City residents about their concerns. From what I have heard, most of those who were able to testify in real time made it very clear that they are in opposition to the increased budget of BCPD. I strongly agree with their testimonies that were presented because I, myself, was thoroughly appalled and frustrated with the proposal of putting more money into an agency that has not produced the positive outcomes this city deserves and has cost us, the taxpayers, a whopping \$18 million dollars in settlements. Today, I still am in opposition of the 3 million dollars increase and am stating what I believe how that amount can best serve the city:

- Invest more in the public schools
- meet the needs that the students, teachers, staff, and parents know exists but have not been addressed. Add more mental health counselors and implement a curriculum for mental health awareness/conflict management.
- Conversion of those schools that have been closed due to declining enrollment and not slated for 21st Century Schools into multi use cultural and recreation centers for youths and seniors.
- Funding for firefighters and EMS response.
- Creation of more placemaking projects in areas like the Belair Rd corridor to reduce speeding and crashes.
- Creation of, funding, and support for neighborhood associations to assist in the continuous upbuilding and sustainable family/individual and property care in neighborhoods. At 4/27's tax night, Ms. Truehart, Mr. Butler, and everyone else stated what their neighborhoods were lacking and believe that the funding needs to go towards building healthy neighborhood infrastructure.
- Better water systems and relief with water bill. Baltimore City's water bill is too high and yet still not drinkable in some neighborhoods.
- More individuals have died from overdose than from homicides (in 2020, 964 individuals died from overdose and 337 individuals died from homicide) yet it seems the city is still behind the curve in addressing the steady climb in opioid overdose deaths in a way that this too is a public health crisis that is equally as important to pay attention to as homicides. Funding is needed to reduce the current drug problem this city has.

I'm a resident that lived in this city for a total of 33 years and have yet to see the positive outcome of throwing more money at a police department on the backs of divesting from education and neighborhood stability because it simply does not work.

Submitted By: Deborah Edmonds

Submitted Via: Email

I have lived in Baltimore for almost 70 years. Each year I struggle to pay my real estate taxes. These proposed increases are making it harder and harder to stay in Baltimore city. We need a break. Paying sky high property taxes in a city with so much violence makes Baltimore a much less desirable place to live. Something has to give.

Submitted By: Ethan Hasiuk, Jews United for Justice

Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Ethan Hasiuk. I live in the 12th district in Charles Village. I am a member of Jews United for Justice, which organizes more than 1,600 people in Baltimore City to support social, racial, and economic justice.

JUFJ is proud to stand with Organizing Black and our coalition partners in the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs in supporting the following amendments to the FY23 Baltimore City Budget. These are the same demands that we have made since 2020.

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.

Additionally, JUFJ would like to see \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program.

Baltimore is my adopted home. It is where I had my first job, found community, and met my fiancée. It is the place where I want to build a career and grow old. However, I am extremely discouraged that Baltimore City government continues the failed pattern of increasing investment in police, and I believe that it is a pattern that ultimately fails all residents. Baltimore has the highest per-capita spending on police in the U.S. by far, and continual increases in police funding have failed to make our city safer. In fact, police have committed violence and civil rights abuses against our city's most vulnerable residents with impunity, resulting in irreparable harm and trauma at a cost of millions in lawsuit settlements, paid by taxpayers.

Affordable housing, quality public education, universal healthcare, living-wage jobs, and universal basic income are proven to reduce crime and harm. Every dollar spent on police is a dollar taken away from these basic priorities that will ultimately make our safety safer and more just.

Of course, gun violence and public safety are real and urgent issues in Baltimore City, and I am encouraged that this budget decreases funding to some traditional police functions and increases funding to effective public safety alternatives such as Safe Streets. However, this budget does not do enough to divest from police and invest in public safety alternatives.

Submitted By: Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH – Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Dr. Gwen DuBois and I live in Mt. Washington in the 5th district. I was educated in the Baltimore public schools as were my four children and practiced as a primary care physician here for 30 years. Too many of my patients 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. And divert it to programs that are 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 in 2020 we spent \$840 per resident, more than 71 other major cities. Now, \$560 million is proposed, and the per person figure keeps rising without seeing an impact on the level of serious crime.

Meanwhile, In 2018, 83% of arrests were made for low level, non-violent crimes where black people were 2.6 x as likely to be arrested as whites. For disorderly conduct blacks were arrested at a rate 7 x higher than that of whites. This is not new. In 1920's, the Urban League did surveys and found Blacks were being disproportionately arrested for minor infractions. Harvard Law Professor Alexandra Natapoff describes "arresting people for low level crimes sends them down a devastating personal path. In addition to overexposing Black people to police violence. Being swept into the criminal justice system, causes many to lose jobs, makes it hard to find housing, lose wages during incarceration, and hurt families. This is what over- policing can do." Until The culture of policing changes, I believe we will see more violence in this city.

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. The result too often is in falling into the criminal justice system, the loss of potential income and quality of life due to loss in IQ. It 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, and many of these homes are substandard contaminated with lead paint, and mold infestations.

We should be diverting a more dollars from policing into programs devoted to housing, education, recreation, and social services. Imagine reconfiguring 911 to identify situations where police are not appropriate and send professionals to identify mental health problems and use skills of de-escalation and reconciliation.' That is what happens in Eugene , Oregon with the

decades old CAHOOTS program. which dispatches mobile teams consisting of an EMT, nurse and crisis worker through the 911 system withdrawing law enforcement from mental health emergencies. Working with the police in 2017 they received 25,000 calls only 250 of which required police.

I support investment into Black communities; 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 all 'crimes of poverty. We should reject the police budget which continues the dysfunctional, racists model of how to protect Baltimoreans and re-imagine a system where my black brothers and sisters in Sandtown-Winchester are offered the same protections I and my white neighbors expect in Mt. Washington .

Submitted By: Iya Jackson

Submitted Via: Web Form

My name is Iya Jackson, and I am a resident of the first district.

In the past year since I moved to Baltimore, I've worked in Lakewood Elementary School & Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School with students ages three to ten. I've visited countless schools & connected with educators all over the district. While most educators tell of the daily joys of the classroom with the children of this city, we also must talk about the daily struggles of being a teacher in Baltimore City Public Schools.

Everything the police promise to do, education actually does. While the Baltimore Police Department receives 560 million dollars in funding this year, our kids will receive 340 million dollars. Education deters crime, promotes health, and serves the community. Each day, Baltimore City students & educators face solvable problems. Basic needs like drinkable water, functioning bathrooms, and updated literature. Solvable problems like equipping classrooms, which are presently unequipped, to deal with learning differences, mental health struggles, & behavioral needs with the necessary tools & educators. This includes paying educators a wage that reflects the work we do each day of working with the city's youth.

As a Baltimore city resident and believer that we can and must do better, I unequivocally support and stand with CJSJ and Organizing Black to demand that: \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities; 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 all 'crimes of poverty.'

I urge you to vote down the budget as it stands.

Submitted By: Rabbi Ruth Smith
Submitted Via: Web Form

I am Rabbi Ruth Smith From Radnor/Winston in the 4th District. I am testifying on behalf of Jews United for Justice which organizes more than 1,600 people in Baltimore City to support social, racial, and economic justice. I am speaking to amplify the demands of the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs coalition and Organizing Black.

The concept of b'tzelem elohim — the idea that all people are created in the Divine image and therefore are equally precious and worthy — is central to Judaism. It is so central that our sacred texts declare that destroying even one life is akin to destroying a whole world. Unfortunately, we know that in Baltimore, lives are destroyed, especially Black and brown lives, We should not increase funding to our police department when we know that there are more community-centered and life-saving solutions we should be funding instead.

As a chaplain in a local hospital, I or one of my team members are present when doctors tell a family that their loved one has been killed by a gun. I also sit at the bedside with mothers watching the life drain from their sons. I have comforted a man grieving the death of the mother of his two young children. He last saw her lying motionless in a pool of her own blood.

Our citizens are literally being killed in our streets. This is not a time for business as usual. The real question is why are there so many shootings? I believe it is because of a lack of options and despair about the future.

The 100 million dollars that are being demanded are a drop in the city bucket, but they could lead to new directions for our city. Our young people need optimistic expectations in order to have positive aspirations. This money buys opportunity and hope, and a way out of this cycle of doom in which we now find ourselves. The social problems we face can't be policed away.

This City Council has the opportunity to reprioritize funding that can eventually stop the cycle of violence that is killing Black and Brown people in this city. The community is advocating for their priorities. We should support them. I urge you to vote no to the budget as it stands and to follow recommendations of CJSJ and Organizing Black to reprioritize 100 million dollars into community solutions.



Testimony

Baltimore City Taxpayers Night

Topic: Defund the Police to **Refund Our Communities!**

Good Evening, members of the Baltimore City Council. My name is Ricarra Jones and I live in Council district 5. I am testifying today as a City resident and as the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation, representing over 5,000 members in Baltimore City alone. 1199SEIU is a member of the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs (CJSJ). Our union supports CJSJ's demands to:

- Divest \$100 million from the Baltimore Police Department Budget to invest those funds in Black & Brown, low-income communities that have been systemically underserved and over policed;
- Allocate \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process;
- Remove of police entirely from responses to mental health crises, substance dependence, sex work, homelessness, and all crimes of poverty.

Between Fiscal Year 2021 and the Fiscal Year 2023, there has been a \$32 million budget increase for police, despite the fact that the Mayor ran on a campaign platform which promised to reinvest funds from the police budget in to other life saving programs that will increase public safety, including **healthcare, housing, and education**. It is inappropriate and irresponsible to continue raising the police budget at the expense of all other city services.

Baltimore City spends \$956 per resident to fund police, which is hundreds of dollars more per person than any other jurisdiction in the United States spends on policing. The current budget allocates too much funding to police and not enough money for life-saving resources that police are not qualified to address. For every \$1 spent on police, public schools get \$0.61. Housing

gets \$0.15. Homeless Services gets \$0.12. Recreation and Parks gets \$0.11. **The most egregious example of underfunding is in mental health and substance dependence services, which only get one cent for every dollar given to Baltimore City Police.** This is particularly concerning to healthcare workers, especially as we face a major staffing shortage in healthcare. People with mental illnesses and substance dependence must be able to access *preventative* care so they don't end up in the hospital or a nursing home in the first place.

Our union envisions a city where everyone feels safe and can get the housing, education, and healthcare everyone needs to thrive. This would improve quality of life for everyone in our city and uplift entire communities. We cannot achieve that goal as a city if our leaders continue to increase funding for the Baltimore City Police Department and underfunding community services. We urge the City Council to reject the current budget as written, and instead create a budget that will **refund our communities**.

In Unity,

Ricarra Jones
Political Director
1199SEIU UHW E.
ricarra.jones@1199.org



May 26, 2022

Fiscal 2023 City Council Taxpayers' Night

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council,

Blue Water Baltimore's mission is to restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams, and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. We are writing to urge you to prioritize investments in water and sewage infrastructure in the FY23 budget.

We know the consequences of not properly investing in our water and wastewater infrastructure, from sewage backing up into thousands of Baltimoreans' homes every year¹ to health advisories warning residents not to touch the water in Back River.² This is unacceptable. Clean water is a human right.

Baltimore City has a duty to invest in its sewer pipes and treatment plants without further burdening residents with water rate increases that disproportionately affect Black residents.³ The City must also increase its investment in its two programs that are meant to help residents who experience sewage backups in their homes, the Sewage Onsite Support (SOS) program and the Expedited Reimbursement Program (ERP). The FY23 preliminary budget indicates that the City will continue supporting the \$2.5 million dedicated for the SOS pilot program,⁴ but this is far from enough, particularly given that the limited scope of the program leaves most residents without critical resources during what can be dangerous and traumatic events.

Currently, the SOS and ERP programs only provide support to residents who can prove that their backups happened as a result of a wet weather event. But far more residents are impacted by sewage backups that occur in dry weather,⁵ meaning that the majority of residents who experience sewage backups are not eligible for the City's support programs.

The Department of Public Works published a feasibility study in November 2021 outlining what it would cost to provide relief to *all* residents who experience basement backups, in dry or wet weather. In that study, DPW estimated that it would cost \$14.7 million to provide direct cleanup assistance

¹ Eric Harkleroad & Matt McDonald. (2021). Deluges and denials: Baltimore reimbursement program leaves residents burdened with sewage backup costs. The Baltimore Sun. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-sewage-backup-costs-20210512-w6wvnrswuzhp5hobrzjzfbnunui-story.html>.

² Jay Apperson. (2022). Public health advisory and progress report issued for Back River. Maryland Department of the Environment. <https://news.maryland.gov/mde/2022/04/22/public-health-advisory-and-progress-report-issued-for-back-river/>.

³ Fern Shen. (2019). Study shows disparate impact of water rates on Black Baltimore. Baltimore Brew. <https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2019/06/10/study-shows-the-disparate-impact-of-water-rates-on-black-baltimore/>

⁴ City of Baltimore. (2022). Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget Plan. p. 74.

<https://bmr.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/FY23%20prelim%20final%20for%20web.pdf>.

⁵ Baltimore City Department of Public Works. (2021). A Report On Sewage Backup Expedited Reimbursement And Direct Assistance Program. p. 8.

[https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Ordinance%2021-044%20\(CCB21-0075\)%20-%20Basement%20backups%20feasibility%20study%20report%2012.03.2021.pdf](https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Ordinance%2021-044%20(CCB21-0075)%20-%20Basement%20backups%20feasibility%20study%20report%2012.03.2021.pdf).

through the SOS program for all sewage backups.⁶ For context, that is roughly 3% of the police department's proposed FY23 budget.⁷

The City has an enormous opportunity to direct state and federal resources, including money from the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, toward our water infrastructure to make sure that Baltimoreans have access to the clean water we all deserve.

We urge you to apply for and invest state and federal funds in sewer infrastructure improvements and into expanding the ERP and SOS programs. These investments will protect our waterways from pollution, reduce the number of sewage backups into people's homes, and ensure that Baltimoreans have support when they experience backups in their homes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taylor Smith-Hams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Taylor Smith-Hams
Advocacy & Outreach Senior Manager

⁶ Baltimore City Department of Public Works, p. 17.

⁷ City of Baltimore, p. 72.

Terrence Fitzgerald, MD, FASAM

1817 Sulgrave Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21209



Baltimore City Council Taxpayer Night Testimony May 26, 2022

President Mosby, Members of the Baltimore City Council.

I am Dr. Terry Fitzgerald, a voting resident of Mt Washington and a participant with Communities United and Jews United for Justice. I am also a physician specializing in Addiction Medicine. I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed budget..

I want to speak specifically to the very large portion of the operating budget that is proposed for the Baltimore City Police Department and to urge that this budget be cut by 25%.

The Baltimore Police budget has continuously grown over the past several decades. Adjusting for inflation, spending on police increased more than 170% between 1965 and 2005 (1), while the City population continuously decreased. By FYE 2020 spending for BPD reached \$840/resident, more than the per capita spending in the other 72 largest cities in the US (2). A rough estimate is that the per capita spending is even \$100 more in this proposed budget. If spending on police made us safe, then Baltimore would be one of the safest places in the US.

Let's face it. We spend too much on policing in Baltimore. And we are not getting our money's worth – because the solution to crime is not simply more guns and police. Moving 25% of the police budget to services for the community would bring our police spending in line with spending in other cities in the country (3) and would release funds for activities and institutions to repair the City. In this budget there are initiatives for non-armed persons performing services within the police department. Having non-armed investigators sounds like a good use of resources, but it does not change the fundamentals. And using appropriate professionals to respond to mental health crises is a great idea, as is developing crime prevention activities in the community, but these services should not be controlled by a police department, at least not while policing remains primarily something like a military activity. And that is perhaps the underlying problem: Viewing public safety as something that grows out of quasi-military activity.

We need to re-think public safety and rebuild it from the ground up. We must declare this to be a first priority and actively involve the community in a long-term discussion to develop a strategic plan. I have NOT seen that kind of commitment, and that is what I urge you to undertake.

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- (1) 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>.
 - (2) "What Policing Costs: A Look at Spending in America's Biggest Cities," The Vera Institute for Justice, accessed February 23, 2021,
 - (3) For per capita police spending in the biggest U.S. cities, see: "What Policing Costs: A Look at Spending in America's Biggest Cities," The Vera Institute for Justice, accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities>.

Name <i>Please print</i>	Neighborhood/Organization	Testifying? <i>If yes, check box.</i>
✓ TRUEHEART	HOWARD PARK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
BAR		<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ SHAO	REISTERSTOWN STATION	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ INDIGO	GREENMOUNT WEST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ SAMUEL L. SNOWDEN	KENSON LYANDELL HAKKEDIBE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Kim Truchant needs follow-up on pools reopening by tomorrow. BCRP has	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Name <i>Please print</i>	Neighborhood/Organization	Testifying? <i>If yes, check box.</i>
✓ HANNAH YOUNG	CHARLES VILLAGE / HARWOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Tamara Walsky	Ridgely's Delight	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Liz Simon-Higgs	Riverside	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Jayla Scott	Charles Village	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ ZACKARY BERGER	Charles Village / JUFJ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Baynard Woods	Seton Hill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Nicole King	Seton Hill / Organize Poppleton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Valera Pappas-Brown	Canton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Brige Dumais	Bolton Hill / 1199 SEIU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Name Please print	Neighborhood/Organization	Testifying? If yes, check box.
Matt Stegman	HEE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Gwen DuBois	JUFJ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Kerry Fitzgerald	Communities United JUFJ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ LeAnna Harrison	CASA / Mt. Vernon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ KFCU KFCU	Communities United	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ THERESA REYNOLDS	Communities United	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Name <i>Please print</i>	Neighborhood/Organization	Testifying? <i>If yes, check box.</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sonia Eaddy	Poppleton Non Community Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jon Manfred	Remington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Ashwin Tyenger	Better Waverly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
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		<input type="checkbox"/>
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		<input type="checkbox"/>

Name <i>Please print</i>	Neighborhood/Organization	Testifying? <i>if yes, check box.</i>
✓ FRANCINA WALKER	Representation Now Community Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
☐ DAN ZINK	WAVERLY O.B.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
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		<input type="checkbox"/>

Name <i>Please print</i>	Neighborhood/Organization	Testifying? <i>if yes, check box.</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patricia Nickerson	Pippleton New Community Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
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		<input type="checkbox"/>

Overview Room

Name Please print	Neighborhood/Organization	Testifying? If yes, check box.
J Dje'Rae Lucas	Organizing Black / Patterson Park	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
J Rob FERREN	ORGANIZING BLACK / PARK HEIGHTS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
D Royan Abbasi	Unite Here / local 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Neighborhood/ORG.	TERESA White	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Name <i>Please print</i>	Neighborhood/Organization	Testifying? <i>if yes, check box.</i>
✓ Lydell Hills	Truth to Power/Organizing Black	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
✓ Ruth Smith	Radnor-Winston / Jews United for Justice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Testify Before the Baltimore City Council
Submission Details

Which bill would you like to testify (Name		Affiliation	Position	Type of Testimony
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Ricarra-Jones	1199seiu	Support	Both
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Taylor Smith-Hams ✓	Blue Water Baltimore	Support With Amendr	Both
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Tisha Guthrie	Poppleton Now	Information	Oral
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Caitlin Goldblatt ✓	Scan the Police	Oppose	Oral
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Christopher ✓	Baltimore Courtwatch	Information	Oral
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Alexis Gray	Organizing Black	Support With Amendr	Both
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Boyd Dunbar	1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East	Oppose	Oral
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Alexis James	Organizing Black	Oppose	Written
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Gregory Bailey	Walters Workers United	Information	Written
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Carly Medonich		Information	Oral
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Swen DuBois Hadda DuBois	Chesapeake Physicians for Social Respons	Oppose	Both
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Amelle Branch	1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East	Oppose	Written
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Amira Handy	1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East	Oppose	Written
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Teddy Fitzgerald MD		Support With Amendr	Both
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Jan Simmons		Oppose	Written
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Jan Jackson		Oppose	Written
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Jan Reemil		Information	Written
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Bob Smith	Jews United for Justice	Oppose	Both
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Zackary Berger		Oppose	Both
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Ruby Waldo ✓	Walters Workers United	Information	Oral
FY 2023 Baltimore City Budget	Elan Haskin	Jews United for Justice	Oppose	Written

Pastor Emily Scott ✓

~~Christy Doherty~~

Babatunde Salaam