

Bonnie Weissberg  
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Baltimore, MD 21209  
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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.

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