

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 reimagining 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.

