

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.