

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.