

Testimony for Taxpayer Night FY 2021-2022

Good folks of the City Council,

My name is Quentin Gibeau and I currently work in District 12 in Baltimore City, in an apartment building. The Community in which I work is in transition, which is the nice way that we say gentrifying. Having worked in this neighborhood for at least 10 years in some capacity, I have seen these changes slowly unfold, and the stress that structural inequality places on the residents of such communities. Often with more money comes more police, and more security culture, whether it is part of an institution or not, and in my current vocation I am also part of that economic reality. I would like to point out that with the gentrification and increased police presence that Greenmount West often receives, the neighborhood with its challenges has not been made “safer,” or “more stable” during this pandemic. Often, when trouble arises, it is up to me and the residents of my building, as well as neighbors, to safely address the issue, which we often do before the police ever get there. In short, the police have never been a viable solution for many of the neighborhood's problems, moreso an administrative hurdle.

The pandemic, as it has often been echoed, has exposed the cruelty that has become inherent in our way of life. Now it is unavoidable to see that one cannot have a stable and safe neighborhood without mental health resources, social services tailored around providing economic stability and safe social environments, access to work, access to food, and access to healthcare and healthy living. By addressing the root causes of our many social issues our good city faces, and funding said solutions, we can arrive at safety. Instead, we have a proposal to treat the symptoms with a \$555 million dollar hammer.

The goal of a government for the people and by the people in 2021 should be to make our harmful past as a nation obsolete. Increasing our police budget is no way to address that past. I echo Organizing Black and CJSJ's demand that \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black Communities, the cretion of a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process, and the removal of the police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues.

Thank you,

Sincerely,
Quentin Gibeau