

Natalie Spicyn MD, MHS  
3933 Keswick Road  
Baltimore, MD 21211  
District 41

May 26, 2021

### TESTIMONY - FY2022 City Council Taxpayers' Night

Honorable members of the City Council,

I am a resident of the Wyman Park neighborhood and work as a primary care physician at a community health center in the Park Heights neighborhood of Baltimore. I am writing with the following concerns related to the proposed budget, which I hope you will address with amendments as appropriate:

1. Renters' issues: Housing, of course, is healthcare, and the COVID pandemic has laid bare how fragile this is for so many individuals. I was pleased that "Right to Counsel" was passed this year to help level the playing field between landlords and tenants in court, but was disappointed for this important program to potentially become an "unfunded mandate." I urge you to support an amendment dedicating **\$2.5 million to fund counsel for renters** facing eviction.
2. Police: To be blunt, we over-utilize police in circumstances where other community services would be better suited to help a Baltimorean in need - ranging from substance use concerns to other mental health crises. As a moral document, a budget should make clear our priorities as a society; in this vein, I request that you champion a **\$100 million cut from the Baltimore Police Department's existing budget** and reconsider how this money can be better used to support Baltimoreans in need.
3. Structural issues related to the democratic process: Please support the following amendments to the budget:
  - a. \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program
  - b. \$30 million investment into a community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process
  - c. \$70 million to support education, healthcare, jobs, housing, a universal basic income, and other values-driven community programs

Without these needed amendments, the FY2022 Baltimore City Preliminary Budget continues a pattern of divestment and underinvestment in our communities. We recently marked 5 years since Freddie Gray's death and 1 year since George Floyd's -- how many more lives need be lost before we have the vision and bravery to build a budget that protects and empowers minoritized communities, rather than investing in the same old same old?

Sincerely,  
Natalie Spicyn, MD, MHS  
Wyman Park, Baltimore (D41)