

As a special educator at Baltimore City Schools, as a resident of Upper Fells in District 1, and as a queer woman living in Baltimore, I am testifying today to demand that the Mayor and City Council reallocate resources from the current budget away from the police.

As countless researchers have demonstrated, time and time again, increasing police budgets does not decrease crime. Instead, providing housing, quality education, youth programming, and access to food, transportation, and healthcare for people reduces the circumstances that lead to crime in the first place. Budgets show priorities. Right now, the Mayor is showing that he cares more about providing surveillance technology and deadly weapons to police officers than he cares about investing in Black neighborhoods, families, and kids.

As a teacher in Baltimore City, I work in a building that does not have potable water due to lead pipes, that does not have reliable heating or air conditioning, that has classes of over 40 students, that has mice, cockroaches, and other pests living in the walls, and that is armed with surveillance cameras, metal detectors, and a school-based police officer instead of adequate funding for social workers, special educators, or reading interventions. I have spent countless hours this year talking with my students who are mourning the Black people killed by police across the country and who remember the Uprising from 6 years ago. Each day, my students walk into a building that reminds them that the city cares more about policing them than investing in their education or future.

Carceral punishments do not provide justice. Arresting people does not right any wrongs. Please reduce the funding from the police department and instead fund our communities to stop injustices from happening in the first place. I endorse the demands of Organizing Black that you cut \$100 from the BPD budget to be allocated to a community wellness trust fund and Black communities. Additionally, it is imperative for Baltimore to begin developing alternatives to 911 to cut police from responding to mental health, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other sensitive calls that are continually escalated by police. While the Mayor's program to divert calls from the police might seem like a positive step, it is necessary for the program to exist outside of 911 or existing infrastructure that is so fundamentally tied to the police.

Additionally, I testify today in support of the calls to free Keith Davis Jr. His trials have resulted in two mistrials and two overturned guilty verdicts. These trials have also cost taxpayers over a million dollars without being able to render an ounce of justice. From the cost of judges, witnesses, DNA (which was outsourced by the state), police officers, court clerks, bailiffs, law clerks, utilities and operations, and juror payments - Baltimore residents are directly paying for the unjust prosecution of a police brutality victim. Taxpayers must challenge this abuse of power and understand that silence implicates us all.

I am testifying today as somebody who voted for Mayor Scott and was incredibly excited that Mayor Scott would champion the progressive values he purported to hold. I am extremely disappointed in the Mayor and his budget, and I reject the idea that we must maintain the status quo before reallocating funds. I point to Mayor Jones in St. Louis as an example of a progressive mayor whose budget immediately reallocated funds away from carceral punishments. Do better, Mr. Mayor.