

Dear City Council Members:

My name is Martha Schmitz, and I am testifying as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore. I ask that you divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget, which is over a half a billion dollars. Further, I ask you to encourage the Mayor to redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime and support real safety. In addition, I ask that you advocate for the creation of a trust which communities will be able to use to reinvest money where and how they see fit.

I was born and raised in Baltimore. I am a firm believer in and supporter of local solutions for peace and safety, including the Baltimore Community Mediation Center and SURJ, which works in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs.

Policing as we know it does not work. I believe that true safety does not come from calling more armed actors into a situation. When police arrive, Black and Brown communities are often less safe, as they face excessive, brutal, and violent policing tactics. Police do not prevent or deter crime, and they often respond in a violent manner.

Despite the ineffectiveness and violence of the police, their role in our society is far too expansive and appears to be ever-growing. Meanwhile, vital services like health and education see cuts. Baltimore spends more of its General Fund on the Baltimore Police Department than it does on schools, housing, violence prevention initiatives, substance abuse treatment, and rec and parks combined.

For these reasons, I ask you to divest \$100M from the Baltimore Police Department budget and redirect those funds to transparent and accountable community-led solutions that address the root causes of crime, including a trust that communities can dictate where and how the money is reinvested.

Additionally, as a member of SURJ Baltimore I stand in solidarity with Baltimore Safe Haven in their demands for financial support for LGBTQ folks experiencing homelessness, access to a building from the city, grant funds for trans-led orgs to provide direct services, and the creation of an LGBTQ office in city hall.

Finally, we believe that after over a million dollars spent, two mistrials, and two overturned guilty verdicts, that the relentless over-prosecution of Keith Davis Jr. has not made this city safer and only wasted precious resources that could be use saving the lives of many Baltimoreans, rather than ruining the life of one man and his family. We ask you do everything in your power to call on Marilyn Mosby and the Baltimore State's Attorney Office to drop the charges against Keith Davis Jr. and not continue with a fifth trial.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Martha Schmitz
Baltimore, MD
SURJ Baltimore