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**Testimony of the DC Fiscal Policy Institute  
At the Public Budget Hearing of the Metropolitan Police Department  
DC Council Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
June 15, 2020**

Chairman Allen, and other members of the Council, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. DCFPI is a non-profit organization that promotes budget choices to address DC's economic and racial inequities and to build widespread prosperity in the District of Columbia, through independent research and policy recommendations.

Black lives are precious. Our District and the nation have watched in horror as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor were among the latest Black people killed by the police. This violence is not new, but it highlights how entrenched brutality and unaccountability is within the police state. Every year, police shoot and kill nearly 1,000 people in the US—a disproportionate share of them are Black.<sup>1</sup> It is past time to analyze how public dollars contribute to this racist violence, starting with our city's budget.

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute acknowledges that we have not historically focused on the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) budget. But the demands for accountability from thousands of people in the streets over the past two weeks make clear that policymakers need to act boldly and rethink the role and presence of police in DC. This includes identifying and reducing unnecessary, ineffective spending in the police budget and reinvesting the savings in people. At a minimum, the DC Council should reject the Mayor's fiscal year (FY) 2021 proposed MPD budget increase of \$17.5 million in local dollars and the \$4.6 million cut to community-centered violence interruption services. Our District should prioritize investments in housing, education, social services, and violence interruption for public safety.

Rethinking the role and presence of police starts by evaluating the jobs we ask police to do, determining whether they are effective at increasing public safety, and reallocating funds and power accordingly. While we applaud the DC Council for passing Councilmember Allen's "Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Emergency Amendment Act of 2020," we are clear-eyed that for decades, reform alone has simply not worked. Moving forward, policymakers should take an honest look at the MPD budget to identify savings that should be reinvested in alternatives to policing for public safety. As Councilmember McDuffie said, "It's not working, and we need to change the approach."<sup>2</sup>

*Many organizations and individuals have laid the groundwork for our thinking and we are drawing on their work and grateful for their wisdom. Some of these organizations include: Black Lives Matter DC, ACLU DC, Bread for the City, the Black Swan Academy, Stop Police Terror DC, and the Movement for Black Lives.*

## **Racist Roots of the Police Help Explain Continued Over-Policing of Black Communities**

Any analysis of the role of and financial support for the police today must first center its racist roots.<sup>3</sup> The very first public police forces in this country were slave patrols—organizations of white men paid to capture Black people who fled from enslavement and who used terror and corporal punishment to deter revolt and maintain order and discipline on plantations. The slave patrol system was intentionally designed to protect white wealth and empower poor white men by driving a racist wedge between poor Black and white people – a classist tool of white supremacy that continues today.

The surveillance, torture, and state control that Black people were subjected to did not end after the Civil War. New forms of policing and control emerged—Black Codes, convict-leasing, Jim Crow laws, the Ku Klux Klan, etc. We have never reckoned with these roots of modern-day policing as a nation and as a result, its legacies continue to pervade our society: from white vigilante murders of Black men like Ahmaud Arbery to racist profiling by police officers across the country.

Policing has become *more* pervasive in our society over the past three decades as police budgets have grown, while budgets for vital social services have not kept up with the need. The MPD budget has grown by 12 percent since 2015 and is larger than each of the budgets for affordable housing, employment services, physical and behavioral health, and human services.<sup>4</sup> This growth is reflected in the size of MPD's police force, which had 3,863 officers, approximately 55 per 10,000 residents last year—double the national average and well above cities of DC's size.<sup>5</sup> DC is the most policed jurisdiction in the country, yet the Mayor has a goal to increase the police force to 4,000 officers by 2023.

Rethinking the role of police must acknowledge how DC over-polices Black residents. Although Black individuals make up 46 percent of DC's population, roughly 70 percent of police stops,<sup>6</sup> over 90 percent of all stop and frisks, and 89 percent of reported use of force incidents involve a Black individual.<sup>7</sup> MPD had to be sued to comply with stop and frisk reporting requirements in the law,<sup>8</sup> evaded transparency in the 2018 murders of D'Quan Young,<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Price,<sup>10</sup> and Marquese Alston,<sup>11</sup> and has a disturbing pattern of sexual assaults in its stop and frisk practices.<sup>12</sup>

## **Mayor's Budget Proposal Fails to Meet Human Needs First**

The Mayor's FY 2021 proposed budget increases spending on police while reducing investments in some programs that help address critical human needs, such as home visiting programs and homeless street outreach.<sup>13</sup> Targeted spending on human needs is critical at a time when DC's low-income people who are mostly Black or Latinx are facing increased stress, trauma, and grief from the pandemic, the resulting economic downturn, and the ongoing public displays of state-sanctioned and vigilante violence against Black people.

The Mayor's proposed budget allocates \$540 million in local funding, \$33.8 million in Intra-District funds from other agencies to pay for MPD services, and nearly \$4 million in federal funding. This reflects a \$17.5 million increase in local funding from FY 2020. The increase includes personnel costs and an expansion of the MPD Cadet Program.

Safety comes in many forms, including: stable housing, healthy living conditions, the ability to participate fully in school, and the ability to find and keep a job. As residents and policymakers make calls to defund or divest from the police, we want to highlight investments in community safety,

physical and mental health, housing, and public education that the Mayor's proposed budget fails to sufficiently fund, with most only costing a fraction of MPD's local budget.

- To restore funding cuts to community-centered, public health approaches to violence interruption, it would cost \$4.6 million, 0.85 percent of the proposed FY 2021 MPD budget.
- To reverse devastating cuts to community-based behavioral health services in the Department of Behavioral Health, it would cost \$9.4 million, 1.7 percent of the proposed FY 2021 MPD budget.
- To meet the Permanent Supportive Housing need this year and end homelessness for 1,652 households it would cost \$47.2 million, 8.7 percent of the proposed FY 2021 MPD budget.
- To meet advocates' calls for sufficient funding for public housing repairs and maintenance, it would cost \$60 million, 11 percent of the proposed FY 2021 MPD budget.
- To ensure every kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade student in DC Public Schools (DCPS) has a laptop or mobile device to participate in a hybrid learning model next school year, it would cost \$17.9 million, 3.3 percent of the proposed FY 2021 MPD budget.

To sufficiently fund DC's critical human needs, DC Council should identify and reduce unnecessary, ineffective spending in the MPD budget and raise revenue to cover remaining needs.<sup>14</sup> The Council could repurpose the \$17.5 million increase to MPD's budget by investing these dollars in community-centered approaches to violence reduction. The city could also end MPD's contract with DCPS, freeing up nearly \$23 million to reinvest in social-emotional and mental health services and academic supports for students. Currently, there is a 1-to-129 security guard and school resource officer to student ratio in DCPS. Yet, the social worker to student ratio is 1-to-217—way above the recommended national ratio of 1 social worker to 50 students in high-needs schools.<sup>15</sup>

Budgets are about choices, and with smart choices the DC Council can create opportunity, advance racial justice, put people first, and build a just recovery.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Berman, John Sullivan, Julie Tate and Jennifer Jenkins, "Protests spread over police shootings. Police promised reforms. Every year, they still shoot and kill nearly 1,000 people," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/protests-spread-over-police-shootings-police-promised-reforms-every-year-they-still-shoot-nearly-1000-people/2020/06/08/5c204f0c-a67c-11ea-b473-04905b1af82b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/protests-spread-over-police-shootings-police-promised-reforms-every-year-they-still-shoot-nearly-1000-people/2020/06/08/5c204f0c-a67c-11ea-b473-04905b1af82b_story.html).

<sup>2</sup> Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie, "Council of the District of Columbia Committee of the Judiciary and Public Safety Budget Oversight Hearing," *DC Council*, June 9, 2020, [http://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=5475](http://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=5475).

<sup>3</sup> National Public Radio, "American Police," *Throughline*, June 4, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/03/869046127/american-police>.

<sup>4</sup> Muriel Bowser, "DC Budget Comparison," June 10, 2020, <https://twitter.com/MayorBowser/status/1270730791933411331>.

<sup>5</sup> David Grosso, "Councilmember Grosso to offer amendments to demilitarize and reduce MPD," June 8, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/03/869046127/american-police>.

<sup>6</sup> Stop Police Terror Project DC, "No More Stop and Frisk," <https://www.sptdc.com/nomorestopandfrisk>.

<sup>7</sup> Government of the District of Columbia Police Complaints Board Office of Police Complaints, "Report on Use of Force by the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department 2018," [https://policecomplaints.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/office%20of%20police%20complaints/publication/attachments/UOF%20Report%202018\\_Final\\_1.pdf](https://policecomplaints.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/office%20of%20police%20complaints/publication/attachments/UOF%20Report%202018_Final_1.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Elliot C. Williams, "New Stop-and-Frisk Data Still Shows Wide Racial Disparities in D.C.," *DCist*, March 5, 2020, <https://dcist.com/story/20/03/05/new-stop-and-frisk-data-still-shows-wide-racial-disparities-in-d-c/>.

<sup>9</sup> Mitch Royals, "Nine Months After an Off-Duty Cop Shot D'Quan Young We Still Don't Know the Officer's Name," *Washington City Paper*, February 20, 2019, <https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/loose-lips/article/21048131/nine-months-after-an-off-duty-cop-shot-d-quan-young-we-still-dont-know-the-officers-name>.

<sup>10</sup> Evan Lambert, "Report sheds light on dirt bike rider's deadly crash with police vehicle, but raises more questions," *FOX 5 DC*, June 15, 2018, <https://www.fox5dc.com/news/report-sheds-light-on-dirt-bike-riders-deadly-crash-with-police-vehicle-but-raises-more-questions>.

<sup>11</sup> Esther Ciammachilli, "More Details Emerge About Man Killed In Shootout With D.C. Police," *WAMU*, June 14, 2018, <https://wamu.org/story/18/06/13/details-emerge-man-killed-shootout-d-c-police/>.

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<sup>12</sup> Elliot C. Williams, “New Lawsuit Alleges MPD Officer Committed Sexually Abusive and Warrantless Search of D.C. Man,” DCist, January 13, 2020, <https://dcist.com/story/20/01/13/new-lawsuit-alleges-mpd-officer-conducted-sexually-abusive-and-warrantless-search-of-d-c-man/>.

<sup>13</sup> Doni Crawford, Eliana Golding, Qubilah Huddleston, Tazra Mitchell and Alyssa Noth, “A Deeper Dive Into the Mayor’s Budget Proposal,” DC Fiscal Policy Institute, May 22, 2020, <https://www.dcfpi.org/all/a-deeper-dive-into-the-mayors-budget-proposals/>.

<sup>14</sup> Mussab Ibrahim, “DC Council Should Put Revenue on the Table to Build a Just Recovery,” DC Fiscal Policy Institute, June 3, 2020, <https://www.dcfpi.org/all/dc-council-should-put-revenue-on-the-table-to-build-a-just-recovery/>.

<sup>15</sup> Based on budget analysis from Eduardo Ferrer, Policy Director at Georgetown Juvenile Justice Initiative.