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**Testimony of Eliana Golding, Policy Analyst  
At the Budget Oversight Hearing on the  
Metropolitan Police Department  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
June 10, 2021**

Good morning, Chairperson Allen and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Eliana Golding, and I am a policy analyst at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute (DCFPI). DCFPI is a non-profit organization that promotes budget choices to address DC's racial and economic inequities in the District of Columbia, through independent research and policy recommendations.

Today I would like to focus my testimony on:

- Passing a budget that demonstrates an intentional reallocation of funds from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) into health, social services, housing, and other programs for community safety and care;
- Increasing budget transparency to improve accountability; and,
- Removing police from public schools and reallocating the \$12.3 million spent on school police toward care and community-based positions, as recommended by the DC Police Reform Commission.

**Implement Meaningful and Intentional Reallocation of Resources Away from Policing and into Communities**

DC over-polices Black residents. Although Black individuals make up 46 percent of DC's population, roughly 70 percent of police stops,<sup>1</sup> over 90 percent of all stop and frisks, and 89 percent of reported use of force incidents involve a Black individual.<sup>2</sup> Last year, thousands of DC residents submitted testimony to this committee, speaking out against the damaging effects of policing in their communities and asking the DC Council to move funding from MPD's massive budget into programs that better serve the health and safety of DC residents, particularly in DC's Black and brown communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Stop Police Terror Project DC, "[No More Stop and Frisk](#)," June 9, 2021.

<sup>2</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](#)," June 9, 2021.

Despite continued resounding calls for transparency and reallocation of resources away from policing, the Mayor’s proposed budget does not meaningfully or intentionally cut the MPD budget. Instead, it demonstrates her intention to bolster the police force and prevent it from further shrinking. Additionally, the MPD budget chapter of her budget proposal, as reported by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, remains convoluted and opaque, obscuring the realities of force size and creating barriers to accountability.

The Mayor’s FY 2022 budget proposal for MPD reflects an operating budget that is \$31 million less than what the Council approved for FY 2021. However, that budget reduction does not reflect an intentional shifting of resources from policing to other community safety programs and services. That budget reduction is a result of an anticipated rate of attrition that will outstrip the agency’s ability to recruit and hire additional officers—in other words, officers are leaving the force faster than the city can replace them. Other elements of the budget proposal indicate that the Mayor is concerned about this rate of attrition and intends to counteract this trend with the following investments:

- A \$3.8 million enhancement to support hiring in Patrol Services;
- A \$3.4 million enhancement to expand the Police Cadet program from 100 to 200 cadets; and,
- An increase of \$2 million in federal grants funds and an addition of 19 full time equivalents (FTEs) to “primarily support the Cops Hiring grant award.”<sup>3</sup>

We urge the Council to reject these enhancements.

### **Accountability to Community Requires Improved Accuracy and Transparency in Budget Reporting**

The lack of clear reporting in the MPD budget chapter is an obstacle to transparency and accountability. According to information received from the Mayor’s budget office, the MPD budget includes more than 300 unfunded sworn officer FTEs. The presence of so many unfunded FTEs obscures the fact that the size of the actual force is diminishing. Keeping unfunded FTEs in a budget also allows the Executive to fund those FTEs throughout the year, either through underspending within the agency or reprogramming from other agencies. The Committee should remove these unfunded FTEs from the MPD budget so that the budget chapter more transparently reflects the size of the agency.

DCFPI urges the Committee to put forward a police budget demonstrating an intentional reallocation of resources away from policing and into systems of community safety and care. This includes removing unfunded FTEs that would allow for substantial mid-year reinflation of the police budget. DCFPI also joins Black Swan Academy in calling for a complete reallocation of the

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<sup>3</sup> Metropolitan Police Department, “[FY 2022 Proposed Budget Chapter](#).” May 27, 2021.

proposed enhancement for the cadet training program into other career pipelines for DC residents to become educators, mental health professionals, librarians, medical professionals, child care professionals, and other careers that strengthen communities.

As articulated by the Defund MPD coalition, “the root causes of harm and violence are inequitable and inaccessible systems of care.” A better solution for that harm and violence is to “invest savings from [a] reduced MPD budget into services and programs, including reparations, that lift up DC’s working-class and low-income communities and make [them] safer.”<sup>4</sup> Another essential element of a strategy to reduce policing and increase community safety is to remove police from schools.

## **DC Students Need Non-Law Enforcement Supports to Promote Student Safety and School Security**

DCFPI is a member of the Police Free Schools DC (PFS DC) Coalition and joins coalition members in their demand to remove school resource officers (SROs) from DC’s public schools. The data is clear: police presence in schools is especially harmful for the physical, mental, and educational well-being of DC’s students, particularly Black youth and students with disabilities. In school year 2018-2019, Black youth made up 92 percent of school-based arrests, and a disproportionate percentage of students with disabilities were also arrested.<sup>5</sup> Further, many students are arrested at school for non-school based offenses, potentially discouraging students from feeling as though school is a safe place to be and contributing to higher truancy rates among youth of color and other vulnerable youth.<sup>6</sup>

We support PFS DC’s call to reallocate the Mayor’s proposed \$12.3 million for SROs toward community-led initiatives such as school-based violence interrupters, the expansion of roving leaders and credible messengers, and other programs recommended by the Police Reform Commission.<sup>7</sup> Further, the Mayor’s proposal to provide \$500,000 to the Deputy Mayor for Education to fund “enhanced training” for security guards, SROs, and the Metropolitan Transit Police Officers is excessive and should be reallocated to support non-law enforcement efforts such as Safe Passage in Wards 1,5,6,7, and 8.<sup>8</sup>

DC already invests a significant amount in DC Public Schools (DCPS) school security and policing—the Mayor is proposing to spend roughly \$30 million in FY 2022. And while the Mayor’s proposal would invest more dollars in Safe Passage and create new micro-transits to get students to

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<sup>4</sup> Defund MPD, “[Fund Our Communities](#),” June 9, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Office of the State Superintendent, “[2019 DC School Report Card and Star Framework Cross-Tabulated Data File](#),” DC School Report Card.

<sup>6</sup> Eduardo R. Ferrer, Policy Director, Georgetown Juvenile Justice Initiative, Visiting Professor, Georgetown Juvenile Justice Clinic, “[Testimony at the Metropolitan Police Department Performance Oversight Hearing](#),” March 11, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> DC Police Reform Commission, “[Decentering Police to Improve Public Safety: A Report of the DC Police Reform Commission](#),” *Section III: Back to Normal: Reestablishing Police-Free Schools*, April 1, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Across the financial plan, the Mayor is proposing a \$1.5 million investment for enhanced training between FY 2022 and FY 2024. As Councilmember Christina Henderson noted during the Education Government Witness budget hearing on June 8, 2021, it is unclear why this investment is necessary when DCPS and MPD and MPTD already invest money from their respective budgets in training for guards and officers.

and from school safety, it wouldn't offset the harm caused by school policing. In addition, funding gaps in student safety and mental and physical well-being exist in the Mayor's proposal. For example, the Mayor's budget is \$841,000 less than what is needed to adequately fund the expansion of the District's school-based mental health program to all remaining DCPS and public charter schools.<sup>9</sup> This gap could be filled if Council were to reallocate funding for school security and police.

Since May 2020, 33 school districts around the country have eliminated SROs with more districts developing plans to reimagine student safety and school security.<sup>10,11</sup> With the Mayor expecting a full return to in-person learning in the fall, DC should follow close behind those districts that have eliminated their SRO programs and invest more in care- and community-based resources that better promote student safety and well-being in racially equitable ways.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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<sup>9</sup> Strengthening Families Through Behavioral Health Coalition, "[How the Strengthening Families Through Behavioral Health Calculated Its SBMH Asks for FY 2022](#)," June 4, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Schwartz et al., "[These Districts Defunded Their School Police. What Happened Next?](#)," EducationWeek, June 4, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Maya Riser-Kositsky and Stephen Sawchuk, "[Which Districts Have Cut School Policing Programs?](#)," EducationWeek, June 2, 2021.