



Wednesday, March 20, 2024

**STATEMENT OF EDWARD A. CABAN  
POLICE COMMISSIONER  
NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL  
MARCH 20, 2024**

Good Morning Speaker Adams, Chair Salaam, and all members of the Council. It is my pleasure to come before you today to explain and answer questions regarding NYPD's portion of the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for the 2025 fiscal year. I am also honored to speak about the incredible work being done by the men and women I am privileged to lead. Joining me this morning are members of my executive staff, all of whom have key insights to share about their area of expertise.

Growing up as a Puerto Rican kid from the Bronx, I took inspiration from baseball, especially Roberto Clemente. Clemente was a hero of mine, a trailblazer whose life tragically ended far too early. But the impression he left on me and so many others - continues to this day. And there's one thing he said that has always stayed with me, which is: "If you have a chance to accomplish something that will make things better for people coming behind you, and you don't, you are wasting your time on this earth."

That sentiment is one of the main reasons I became a cop. It is something all of us in the field of public service can relate to. Throughout my 33-year career, I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of like-minded leaders on behalf of the residents of this city – including many elected officials from this body – all of whom have brought passion to their purpose. And while we may not agree on everything, we have certainly worked on projects that have brought cops and community closer together in the name of public safety.

Fast forward to this morning, sitting before you for the first time as New York's top cop, I can honestly say I have never been more amazed at just how far New York's Finest will go to help someone in need – and, indeed, to make things better for those who are coming up behind us. It is with that spirit of devotion, and a commitment to the greater good, that I now share some details about the department and our collective work toward improving public safety.

When this administration came into office over two years ago, our city was experiencing a surge in violence. Shootings had been rising since 2018 and had doubled in 2020 alone, and by 2021 we were at a 15-year high. Murders reached the highest levels in the last decade. There was a sense of lawlessness. We had to act quickly and decisively. We had to bring down the violence.

And 27 months later, violence is no longer at the forefront of our conversation regarding public safety. How did we get here? The answer to that question is a theme that resonates across all

aspects the NYPD: the members of the NYPD are relentless in their work.

In driving down violence, our first priority was to go after illegal firearms. We marshalled our resources. Analyzed the data. Identified hot spots, and implemented shooting plans. In 2022 alone, your NYPD cops made over 4,600 gun arrests, which is the highest number in 27 years. And when you add in last year and the first few months of 2024, New York's Finest have taken more than 14,500 guns off the streets of New York City since this administration began.

The cascading effect of this precise work has contributed to a dramatic drop in shooting incidents. Building on the momentum we gained in 2022, the number of shootings across New York City in 2023 was pushed down another 25%. This is the fourth lowest year for shootings in the modern era. In fact, shooting incidents were down in all five boroughs, for the second year in a row.

Of course, fewer shootings often yields fewer people struck by gunfire. As such, there were 416 fewer people hit by a bullet last year. These are lives saved. Lives not torn apart by violence. And as the data tells us: these are also lives that come almost entirely come from our most economically challenged – and largely minority communities. Fewer shootings also contribute to fewer murders. We all remember when murder had been on the rise for years prior to this administration. We stopped that trend in 2022 – and last year, murder fell another 12%.

Besides knocking down violence, your officers – last year alone – made more than 53,000 felony arrests, ensuring we keep a narrow focus on drivers of crime across all major categories. This is a 24-year high. To me, each arrest is a step toward pushing back on what has sometimes felt like a sense of lawlessness. This proactive posture led to additional declines in the crimes of robbery, burglary, and grand larceny in 2023.

One negative outcome of driving down violent crime is that officers have experienced an uptick in assaults against them. As your cops go about arresting those who drive violence, their interactions with criminals willing to evade capture or resist arrest also increases. In fact, assaults on officers contributed to the overall increase in felony assaults in 2023.

If there is anything I take away from this outcome it is that New Yorkers demand law and order in their city – and the men and women of the NYPD remain focused on delivering just that, upholding an oath to help even when it means going in harm's way. Bolstered by continued support from our Mayor, myself and the entire NYPD leadership team, your cops have continued the work in 2024 as well.

So far this year, shooting incidents are down 16%, and murder has dropped 18.8%, while burglary has been reduced by 12.7%, and overall crime is down 1.6% citywide.

One crime that has been especially challenging across our city has been grand larceny auto. We finished 2023 up by 15%, due in part to a social media challenge encouraging young people to steal a car by way of a security loophole. I am proud to report that, thanks to a number of initiatives – including the catalytic converter etching bill passed by this Council – and the establishment of our grand larceny auto plan, we have reduced the crime of stolen vehicles by nearly 10% so far

this year.

In recent weeks, there has been a great deal of focus on transit crime. After reducing overall crime in the transit system by 3% in 2023, including an 8% drop in December, we experienced an uptick in January. Putting statistics aside, we saw a number of absolutely terrible acts of violence play out in the media, including: shootings, murder, and a number of unprovoked attacks.

These are not statistics – these are real people. They are New Yorkers with kids, jobs, families. What they experienced and suffered is real – but it still must be said that despite servicing upwards of 20 million riders a week, the total number of transit index crimes for the month of January equates to barely 1.5% of total citywide crime.

So, no matter how traumatizing even a single act of violence can be, our transit system is not actually being overrun by crime. Rather, some very real acts of violence are driving a legitimate perception of danger. As I have already mentioned, your NYPD cops are out there every day. They are engaged. And nowhere has our commitment to public safety been more apparent than in our transit system.

We are flooding the system with roughly an additional 1,000 officers every single day. We have deployed them where crime typically happens – on the platform, and even riding the train. This was evident last week during that senseless shooting on the A Train in Brooklyn. The moment the doors to the train car opened, your cops were there to address the condition.

Additionally, our Transit Bureau officers are now working what is called “the modern chart.” This means they work 10 to 12 hours a tour. This will allow for ongoing extended coverage within the system. And when they are out there, they are working. All told, they have driven total arrests up by more than 50%, with fare evasion arrests increasing by more than 135%. Summons activity is also up by more than 50%. I want to commend our officers for their continued hard work within the system.

But there is also another, more invasive problem at play here that we have heard a great deal about over the past few weeks. Within our transit system, and quite frankly across the entire city, the texture of public safety, the perception of public safety is being tested by ongoing recidivism for known criminals, the worst drivers of violence. Despite all of our efforts, which often includes catching a suspect in the act of committing a crime, there is little accountability on the back end. And while there may be a lack of consequences for the criminal – that is not the case for straphangers or MTA employees.

We saw this play out multiple times recently, where an individual with an extensive criminal history was arrested for assaulting a train conductor or an artist on the platform, only to be released and go on to victimize yet another innocent New Yorker. It seems unthinkable, but a recent analysis showed that the 40 or so people we have arrested for assaulting MTA employees have accumulated over 1,100 total arrests between them. At least three of those people had been arrested about 100 times or more. Any one of those criminals could single-handedly drive the total increase in crime we are experiencing in transit. This is a revolving door and the NYPD cannot stop it by itself.

From my perspective, our officers are where they need to be and they are making their presence felt. Nevertheless, it is a tremendous system and we can't be everywhere at all times – which is why we gladly welcome the additional coverage being provided by the governor. Together, the added presence will go a long way as both a deterrent to those willing to commit a crime, and as a measure of comfort to innocent, law-abiding straphangers.

It is important to note that recidivism is not limited to the transit system. It affects neighborhoods and businesses across the five boroughs, especially when it comes to retail theft crimes. In 2023, we estimate that 542 people were arrested over 7,600 times. Many of those people had in excess of 50, 60, 70 arrests. While almost half have prior felony convictions, less than 30% are currently in custody for pending cases. And by the way, this is for 2023 alone. When you zoom out and look at their total lifetime arrests, 60 of the 542 have been arrested more than 100 times.

Unfortunately we are already seeing similar trends in 2024, with more than 30 people having accumulated 10 or more shoplifting arrests. Those people, taken together, have more than 2,200 arrests across their lifetimes. Now, these trends are by no means intended to diminish the positive outcomes that recent reforms have achieved, especially for low-level or first-time offenders. However, when it comes to those driving crime in our city, when it comes to career criminals, recidivism is not only having an adverse effect on public safety, but it also a detriment to the perception of public safety. Addressing these issues will require the hands of many and I assure you the NYPD remains a committed partner in that necessary work.

Switching to our kids, when you look at the data over the past few years, the most disturbing trend I have seen – as both police commissioner and as a father – is the fact that the age of perpetrators and the victims of violent crimes has become younger and younger. This is a call to action if there ever was one.

Looking back to 2017, 30% of our total youth arrests were for a major felony. Today, that number has more than doubled to 62% and over that same time period, the percentage of youth gun arrests has more than tripled. In the five years from 2017 to 2022, the number of juveniles who were identified as shooters jumped 156%. And when we drill down even further, we see that one-in-four young people arrested with a gun in 2020 were involved in another shooting incident within two years, up from less than one-in-ten prior to 2018.

And, as I previously mentioned, the same pattern is true when we look at young victims of crime. In 2017, there were 75 shooting victims under the age of 18. Five years later, those young victims more than doubled, to 153. Today, kids under the age of 18 represent around 10% of all shooting victims in New York City. And while the overall number of victims has gone down, the number of kids being struck by gunfire continues to go up.

These disturbing trends coincide with changes to the law that increased the age of criminal responsibility. As a result, gangs and crews began recruiting younger and younger members – directing them to carry the guns, sometimes even referring to these children as their “holsters.” Clearly, these are serious problems facing our city's young people and the NYPD remains at the



forefront of finding solutions. We are working closely with our partners at the Department of Education the Metropolitan Transit Authority to ensure safe passage for kids to and from school. Additionally, our Community Affairs Bureau, School Safety Teams, and Youth Coordination Officers, to name a few, will continue to provide opportunities, foster connections, and secure resources for our city's young people.

Another challenge facing our city that also has crossover into public safety is the ongoing influx of migrants. As far as the police department is concerned, our position remains the same: whether you have been here 30 days or 30 years, if you break the law, we will seek to hold you accountable. And while the vast majority of migrants are here to improve their lives and provide for their families, there is a small group that is actively breaking the law.

We are seeing crime patterns in which identified perpetrators are directly connected to migrant shelters, often involving the same groups of people committing the same types of crimes. These patterns are the focus of ongoing investigations and, just like any other crime pattern, we will work to identify all those involved and bring them to justice.

Shifting to quality-of-life issues facing our city, when we look at some of the most persistent indicators of disorder and lawlessness, I know most New Yorkers have grown frustrated with the abundance of scooters and ghost cars operating recklessly across the five boroughs. In fact, many of you have voiced your displeasure to me directly. And while we are not looking to target anyone using a scooter to earn a living, there is also a criminal element to this behavior. Scooters, ATVs, unregistered vehicles, missing license plates and the lack of insurance. The data shows these violations are often connected to other, more serious crimes. Some criminals are even clever enough to hide in plain sight by imitating a delivery person while committing other crimes. The NYPD once again needed to take action, and once again your officers went to work.

In the last two years, we have removed more than 51,000 illegal scooters and ghost cars from our streets – including more than 4,500 since 2024 began. Added to this already significant enforcement, we recently launched a multi-agency task force with the MTA, New York State Police, New York City Sheriff, Port Authority Police Department, and the New York State DMV. Together we are going after unregistered vehicles, removing them from our roads and holding the people driving them accountable. We believe this steady and ongoing enforcement has been, and will continue to be, an important factor in our ability to drive down other major crime categories.

I would also like to mention a few of the innovations we have implemented to help carry out this type of enforcement as safely and effectively as possible. The use of a dedicated radio frequency for the sole purpose of coordinating the real-time response of a citywide apprehension team was a game changer. No longer can a fleeing car benefit from passing through multiple precincts or boroughs, creating challenges for patrol units. Additionally, the use of drones and the Aviation Unit has been a tremendous help – allowing our officers to monitor the actions of a fleeing vehicle without having to engage in a pursuit. The NYPD will continue to push the envelope when it comes to technology, especially when it comes to improving safety for all.

When it comes to managing the workforce of the NYPD, we have a comprehensive system

overseeing discipline. This is among the most serious of responsibilities. As commissioner, it is my job to ensure the process operates without undue delay, disruption or prejudice – balancing the need for due process for the accused while also ensuring a thorough case is presented on behalf of the complainant. Since assuming the role of commissioner, I have made it a priority to finalize any and all pending cases that were ready for review.

In years past, it would not be uncommon to have hundreds of such cases pending in the Police Commissioner's Office. Today, that number has been reduced to about a dozen or two. This vast improvement is historic in nature, and benefits all parties involved. From the accused employee to the public trust that is on the line, New Yorkers deserve nothing less, and neither does our workforce.

Speaking of our workforce, I want to spend a moment on something that is part the fabric of our city – and that is our diversity. The NYPD is a global department – and the cops who protect this city, reflect this city. It was not always so, but now – it is among our greatest strengths.

I have often said that when I was coming up, the leadership photos hanging on the wall of my precinct never looked like me. Today, our young officers can see themselves at every level of leadership. We continue to break glass ceilings as we elevate hard-working, talent throughout the department. Those advancements will continue on my watch.

And with all of the effort being put forth by our dynamic workforce, it is also the responsibility of leadership to look after our people. To ensure they are in a healthy frame of mind – in addition to all of the care they give to others. This is why we have developed a comprehensive health and wellness program. We provide support structures, anonymous counseling for both the officer and their families, extra-curricular clubs and activities, and other programs to uplift and inspire our workforce. These are vital services that I am especially proud of.

Now, taking a closer look at the figures when it comes to the Mayor's preliminary budget:

The NYPD's Fiscal Year 2025 Expense Budget is \$5.75 billion, the vast majority of which – 92% – is allocated for personnel costs. Let me run those numbers back for a second: 92% of our budget goes to personnel costs.

In other words, some 5 billion dollars goes to the salaries of the officers who have driven down these crimes, removed these guns, and cared for the community. You get what you pay for. The remaining 8% is dedicated to non-personnel costs, which includes technology that provides officers with immediate access to critical safety equipment, tools, and applications.

As part of this November Financial Plan, the NYPD – like most agencies – reached the 5% PEG target which was nearly \$280 million each year (\$561 million for the 2024 and 2025 fiscal years combined). In order to achieve this reduction, the department underwent changes and cuts, including: uniformed recruit class delays (\$331 million over two fiscal years), civilian salary accruals (\$107 million over two fiscal years), vehicle budget reduction (\$73 million over two fiscal years), the cutting of 325 non-safety civilian positions (\$19.5 million in FY25 and the out-years),

a School Safety Division vacancy reduction of 322 positions (\$17 million over two fiscal years), and a reduction of 99 part-time positions in our Cadet program (\$2 million annually).

While the original recruit class delays had assumed no April 2024 class, funding for this specific hiring was restored in the Preliminary Budget. However, the budget still assumes no recruit class hires in fiscal year 2025.

Since our last budget hearing, the NYPD's fiscal year 2025 budget has increased by over \$700 million due to uniformed collective bargaining agreements, namely agreements with the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (\$583 million), the Detective's Endowment Association (\$94 million), the Lieutenant's Benevolent Association (\$35 million), and the Captain's Endowment Association (\$13 million). A final agreement between the City of New York and the Sergeant's Benevolent Association is still pending.

For the current fiscal year, 2024, the NYPD did receive new, necessary funding for the Domain Awareness System and Mobility Initiative, totaling \$42 million and a PS Adjustment, totaling \$249 million for overtime.

The department's ten-year capital budget is \$1.4 billion for fiscal years 2024 to 2033. This funding is critical for facility construction projects, including: a renovated firearms training facility (over \$685 million, or 49% of the capital budget); communications and other information technology infrastructure (over \$388 million, or 27% of the capital budget); and lifecycle replacement for large vehicles including Emergency Service Unit trucks, tow trucks, boats, and helicopters (\$295 million, or 21% of the capital budget).

Additionally, the preliminary budget included a \$222 million funding reduction to the NYPD's capital budget. Of this amount, \$172 million, or 77%, was outside of the immediate 5-year window (fiscal year 2029 to fiscal year 2033).

The department will continue to work with the Office of Management and Budget to ensure funding is available to address all life safety systems, including communications equipment and facility improvements (such as boilers, HVAC, roof and façade work, and others).

Today, I have shared some of the most critical work being done by New York's Finest, addressed some of the challenges we face, and presented some of the solutions and strategies behind what we do. More than anything, what I want to make clear is just how blessed I am to lead this amazing team. From the executive staff joining me up here, to our cops in the precincts, and all of the many units in between, this team is relentless in its work to improve public safety.

We don't always get it right, but we know success is a collective effort. We have many vital partners – including all of you – and, together, we will continue to collaborate as we reach new milestones in our many shared goals on behalf of every New Yorker.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak before you today. At this time, we would welcome your questions.



ERIC L. ADAMS  
MAYOR

**CIVILIAN COMPLAINT REVIEW BOARD**  
100 CHURCH STREET 10th FLOOR  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007 ♦ TELEPHONE (212) 912-7235  
www.nyc.gov/ccrb



ARVA RICE  
INTERIM CHAIR

**Full Testimony of Arva Rice, Interim Chair of the Civilian Complaint Review Board,  
before the Public Safety Committee of the New York City Council March 20, 2024**

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Chairperson Salaam, members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am Arva Rice, I use she/her pronouns and I am the Interim Chair of the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB). I am joined by the CCRB’s Executive Director Jonathan Darche. I joined the CCRB in June of 2021 and was named the Interim Chair of the Board in February of 2022. Prior to joining the CCRB I served as Co-Chair of the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative commissioned by Governor Andrew Cuomo. In that role I spoke with NYPD leadership, rank and file, and community members on how to strengthen police-community ties and increase accountability. In my two years as Interim Chair, I have witnessed firsthand the exceptional level of work being produced by our small team. Executive Director Darche and I are here today to emphasize the critical importance of the CCRB to public safety in this city and the risks that could arise if the CCRB continues to be underfunded namely, not being able to investigate complaints, police misconduct going unaddressed, and the public losing faith in our public safety system.

The CCRB was created to ensure civilians had a recourse for justice and accountability if police officers abused their power. For decades, many New Yorkers felt police officers operated above the law and NYPD could not be relied upon to discipline their own officers. The CCRB was created as a vital part of public safety, to enforce officer accountability and ensure all New Yorkers felt the city was working to protect them. The CCRB is a vital component of New York City’s public safety ecosystem, and if it is not adequately funded, that ecosystem collapses.

30 years ago, New York City was at an inflection point. The City Council was faced with the decision to reimagine what safety and accountability should look like in this city and determined that the people of New York deserved more. Together that City Council and Mayor Dinkins created the CCRB. Today, this city is facing another inflection point. There is a fork in the road. One path leads us down the same trajectory we have followed for 30 years, incremental changes that still leave us with a chronic issue of misconduct and lack of accountability. The other path would allow this city to realize the vision that this council and Mayor Dinkins had 30 years ago when they went out on a limb to create this agency.

**HISTORIC UNDERFUNDING AND FY25 BUDGET REQUEST**

New York City has continuously underfunded the CCRB, making it almost impossible to keep up with the ever-increasing workload. With adequate funding, we would be able to close

cases more efficiently, clear backlogs, promote investigators to retain talent, raise awareness, increase transparency, analyze data, educate and serve more people, and keep New Yorkers safer.

In order to function as a truly independent police oversight agency, the CCRB needs \$37.7 million and 376 personnel. This is \$13 million more than last year's budget and \$15 million more than OMB's proposed budget. This is just over 0.5% of the budget of the agency we are tasked with overseeing. The NYPD's proposed budget is \$5.4 billion with 35,000 uniformed officers.

We do not have enough funds to investigate all the complaints within our jurisdiction. A priority for the agency was to reduce investigation timelines, which last year, we were able to bring down by 22%. Yet, in 2023, civilians filed 50% more complaints than in 2022, a ten-year high. So far in 2024, we have received even more complaints, 14% more than the already increased rate of last year. We are on pace to receive 6,300 complaints in 2024 which will inevitably cause timelines to increase again, which is worse for officers and civilians alike.

In December, the CCRB announced for the first time that due to the cuts, we did not have the funding to investigate all complaints within our jurisdiction. This was a last resort and if it were possible, we would continue investigating all civilian complaints within our jurisdiction. Unfortunately, we know it is unfair to provide subpar services to the public, so we decided to focus our resources. Starting January 1, 2024, the CCRB stopped investigating the following allegations when they are not accompanied by other allegations within our jurisdiction: Failure to provide Right To Know Act cards; Refusal to provide name or shield number; Discourteous words or actions; Threats with no action; Refusal to process a civilian complaint; Forcible removal to a hospital; Untruthful statements; And any complaint that has only the above referenced allegations. I want to be very clear that if one of these allegations is part of a larger complaint that includes any other allegation outside this list, the agency will still investigate it. Thus far, the agency has had to close 459 complaints as budget closures and refer 73 cases back to NYPD. These might be only the first-round cuts if our budget is not restored.

The proposed cuts undermine the important role that civilian oversight plays in public safety. For people to trust in the police, they must have faith that there is a system that holds police officers responsible for misconduct. The CCRB is an unbiased, independent, civilian voice in the police disciplinary system, and failing to adequately fund the CCRB shortchanges public safety in this city.

## **EXPANDED RESPONSIBILITIES**

Over the years, the CCRB's responsibilities have grown exponentially, while the budget and staffing levels have not kept pace. This council has been instrumental in enacting some of the most meaningful changes in the CCRB's jurisdiction. In 2019, 74% of New Yorkers voted for a proposition that gave the CCRB jurisdiction to investigate untruthful statements. In 2021, this council passed a bill that shifted the responsibility of investigating Racial Profiling and Bias-Based Policing from the police department to the CCRB. In the 8 years leading up to this bill, NYPD investigated 3,480 cases of bias and only found four officers guilty, highlighting the necessity of having an outside body investigate these allegations. In 2020, the City Council even

passed a resolution calling on Albany to give us final disciplinary authority in the complaints that are substantiated by the Board.

The CCRB also voted internally to change the rules that define our jurisdiction. In 2021, we voted to begin investigating Untruthful Statements made to other entities and Sexual Misconduct as Abuses of Authority. In 2022, we voted to implement the charter changes regarding Profiling and Bias-Based Policing and investigate Body-Worn Camera (BWC) misuse as an Abuse of Authority.

These changes are all key steps toward improving accountability in New York City and ensuring all police misconduct is addressed. Yet with these expanded powers, some of which are charter mandated responsibilities, comes the need for more budget and staff.

Since 2021, the CCRB investigated 305 allegations of untruthful statements, 160 of which it substantiated. Additionally, the agency received 1,127 allegations of sexual misconduct during that time and substantiated 67 of those allegations. Since October 2022, we investigated 1,388 allegations of BWC misuse, 56 of which were substantiated. During that same period, the CCRB investigated 1,005 allegations of racial profiling or bias-based policing.

### **BUDGET NEEDS BY TEAM**

The 50% increase in complaints last calendar year overwhelmed investigator's dockets, causing the number of cases assigned to investigators to increase. As stated earlier, the trend continues, as January and February 2024 saw a further 14% increase in complaints compared to the same period last year. This would put the CCRB on track to receive 6,300 complaints in this calendar year, numbers not seen since 2010. This makes it hard for investigators to meet the 18-month statute of limitations, let alone reduce investigation timelines. We need 73 additional investigators of a variety of experience levels to manage the current workload. This does not account for the 20 investigators who have had their promotions and pay raises delayed due to budget cuts. Without timely promotions and fair compensation, we are at risk of losing many of our most experienced and talented investigators.

In 2020, when New Yorkers filled the streets and exercised their right to protest in the wake of George Floyd's murder, police officers responded en masse. The CCRB was inundated with hundreds of cases in just a few days. We found 146 officers committed misconduct during the protests, but many officers were not held to account because of statute of limitations disputes. If the CCRB received the same influx of cases now, the agency would not be able to investigate those complaints. New Yorkers continue to protest across this city and they deserve to know that the agency created to protect their rights is actually able to do so.

When this Council passed the bill empowering CCRB to investigate racial profiling and bias-based policing, the Council also agreed to fund the creation of a dedicated team to conduct these investigations. The CCRB's testimony before the Council regarding the bill explained the agency would need a team of 50 investigators, attorneys, and data scientists to conduct this work properly. The FY2022 budget funded a new unit for these investigations with 33 positions. OMB only authorized us to hire 19 people. Just in 2023, the RPBP unit received 364 cases. These are



extremely complicated cases that require a comprehensive team. 19 people is not sufficient. We need budget and headcount to hire a minimum of ten additional qualified investigators, attorneys, and data scientists to do this work.

In 2012, the CCRB and the NYPD signed a memorandum of understanding that the CCRB would prosecute cases with the highest level of misconduct, referred to as charges and specifications. This created the Administrative Prosecution Unit or the APU. The APU takes on some of the most serious cases of misconduct that come through this agency and prosecutes them in an administrative trial before an NYPD trial commissioner. We need to be able to offer competitive salaries to attract high quality talent to take on these cases.

The APU needs additional prosecutors. The CCRB and the NYPD signed a memorandum of understanding a few years ago agreeing to abide by NYPD's disciplinary matrix, which led to the Board recommending that many more members of service receive charges & specifications. In 2019, the Board only sent 82 members of service to the APU. In 2023, that number was 282 officers, an increase of more than 300%. Currently, the APU has 8 prosecutors, and each prosecutor has approximately 83 cases on their docket. In order to close these cases in a timely fashion and keep up with the growing docket, the APU needs to hire two more prosecutors. It is unfair to officers and civilians to have cases languishing for years because the CCRB is not funded for an appropriate number of high-level prosecutors.

The Case Management Unit (CMU) is responsible for the coordination of all CCRB complaints. It facilitates and records Board panel votes, manages case closures, and communicates the final disposition of investigations to both complainants and officers. The CMU is in need of extra support to manage the thousands of extra cases that came in last year.

While the CCRB's Outreach team connected with more New Yorkers than ever last year by implementing strategic planning, fostering meaningful partnerships, building community trust, and embedding diversity in our outreach methods. These initiatives display a holistic approach to outreach that involves creative methods of providing information, canvassing, volunteerism, and the use of dynamic settings. This includes our CCRB Courtside initiative where we interact with New Yorkers on basketball courts and other organized sports games; CCRB Barbershop and Salon Series where outreach coordinators connect with New Yorkers in their local barbershop; CCRB Cares, a volunteer initiative where CCRB staff partner with community-based organizations to provide public education while physically engaging in charitable activities that serve the public, including community cleanups and food pantries; CCRB Block by Block; and more. Community feedback through our outreach efforts emphasizes the need for further education and awareness around the city to ensure New Yorkers are aware the CCRB exists and know their rights when interacting with police officers. This success only emphasizes the need for further education and awareness around the city. The agency needs more outreach coordinators and additional budget to host events in order to maintain and enhance public education for New Yorkers.

We are also requesting \$1,000,000 for advertising. It is the city's responsibility to reach New Yorkers and meet people where they are. And that means advertising on social media, on

radio, on city streets and more. People don't know to file a complaint of police misconduct if they don't know an agency exists to investigate police misconduct. Some people are not even aware of their right when interacting with a police officer. The city must invest in educating New Yorkers. Only once most cases of misconduct receive a complaint will New York City understand the full scope of police misconduct that we are facing and be able to address it. We are also requesting 100,000 in language access services to ensure we can reach New Yorkers of all languages and accessibility levels. And, of course, increased public awareness and accessibility will further increase the agency's workload.

The Civilian Assistance Unit (CAU) has become an integral part of CCRB services offered to New Yorkers. The CAU is staffed by victims' advocates, licensed social workers, and trauma services professionals who provide free and confidential assistance. They work diligently to connect our most vulnerable civilians with desperately needed city resources, such as social and psychological support services. Last year, the CAU helped over 800 New Yorkers. It is important to remember that some of these New Yorkers are in need of trauma care because of their encounters with the criminal justice system while others might have entered the criminal justice system due to previous, unresolved traumas. CAU helps people address their needs from the root causes, hopefully preventing further need for law enforcement intervention. The CAU is a key component of the CCRB, yet two members of the CAU are currently funded by a grant, which means the employees are given no benefits and the grant is not guaranteed beyond 2026. As the agency is moving towards implementing a trauma-informed approach and services, CAU needs one full-time therapist that can allocate time to work with civilians and internally with staff. There has been a high need to assist civilians who struggle with the aftermath of trauma and staff internally who suffer from vicarious trauma and burnout as a result of interacting with traumatized civilians and viewing hundreds of hours of graphically violent video in the ordinary course of their work. Currently, we have a grant-funded therapist, but her hours are limited to 7 hours a week and the grant doesn't allow the specialist to meet the demand for these kinds of services.

Since the repeal of New York State's Civil Rights Law 50a, the CCRB has put a large emphasis on transparency. We created a member of service database where civilians can look up all NYPD officers' CCRB history. We have created data tables that allow civilians to search through the number of complaints and type of allegations the CCRB is receiving on a day-to-day basis. In the last year, we started publishing closing reports from cases online along with NYPD departure letters, letters which explain why the Police Commissioner is rejecting the CCRB's disciplinary recommendation. While we are being incredibly proactive to increase transparency, redacting documents to protect civilians takes a huge amount of work and time. We have only scratched the surface of what we can share because we have so many years of documents to redact before we can publish them. We also receive hundreds of complicated and time-consuming Freedom Of Information Law (FOIL) requests a year and we are now down to one staff member responsible for all this work. We identified a candidate and submitted them to OMB in November and are still waiting for that approval. In order to fulfill FOIL requests in the timely manner that the Freedom of Information Law intended, the CCRB needs several more staff members working to redact and publicize our documents.

We are also asking for \$600,000 in funding for software licenses, subscriptions, data processing software and more. In order to get the most out of the data and information the CCRB has access to, we need adequate tools to help us analyze and maintain our information systems. The NYPD is considered of the most technically advanced police departments in the world. In order to serve as their oversight body, we need technological advancements to keep up.

### **NOTABLE CASES AFFECTED BY LEGAL OBSTACLES**

In April of 2023, the APU finally tried the case of Kawaski Trawick, the young man who was killed in his home in April 2019 by two NYPD officers. This case was particularly complicated because it took the NYPD over a year and a half to fulfill the CCRB's request for BWC footage and other evidence. The NYPD would not share evidence while they were concurrently investigating the incident, and this made it impossible for the CCRB to complete the investigation within the statute of limitations. We therefore had to use the crime exception to try the case. This means that we no longer had to prove that the conduct was a violation of the NYPD patrol guide but that it actually violated criminal law. While the CCRB believes it was able to prove the crime exception and that both officers should face discipline for their conduct, the Deputy Trial Commissioner recommended no discipline for both officers on all counts. She did, however, note that the officers' conduct and the NYPD's investigation into the incident thereafter were concerning. Essentially, the NYPD did not thoroughly investigate the killing of Kawaski Trawick, cleared the officers of any wrongdoing, refused to share evidence until it was beyond the statute of limitations, and then has once again tried to avoid holding the officers accountable because the case was not closed within the statute of limitations. This circumvention of the disciplinary system is unacceptable and further proof why the CCRB is such an important entity for public safety. We hope that Commissioner Caban will still hold these officers accountable as we wait for his final decision. Largely due to this incident, the CCRB and the NYPD have now signed a memorandum of understanding that the NYPD will share evidence within 90 days of a CCRB request, whether or not they are still investigating the incident.

Another high-profile case that is at a standstill is the killing of Delrawn Smalls. In July of 2016, Officer Wayne Isaacs killed Delrawn Smalls in his car, in front of his four-month-old baby, stepdaughter and girlfriend. While Officer Isaacs was cleared in criminal court, the CCRB has found that he violated the patrol guide and committed misconduct when he killed Mr. Smalls. After this case was substantiated, the CCRB requested the court documents and evidence involved in Officer Isaacs' trial. Unfortunately, these documents were sealed which required the CCRB to file an unsealing motion in court to access the necessary evidence to prosecute this case. We then waited over a year and a half for the judge to make a decision and in March of last year, he granted the CCRB's unsealing motion and determined that we should access the evidence. However, the PBA immediately filed an appeal which blocked the unsealing motion, and this case continues to stall as we await another court decision. Delrawn Smalls' family has been waiting nearly eight years to see accountability for their son's death and this unnecessary delay of the disciplinary system should not be allowed. Unfortunately, this problem cannot be solved by an MOU but needs legislative change. The CCRB has long advocated to be exempt from sealing statutes and we hope for your support as we ask for the state legislature to pass a

bill that would exempt the CCRB from sealing statutes. This would guarantee us access to all relevant evidence for our cases and avoid needless delays.

Last year, Speaker Adams introduced legislation that would allow the CCRB to access NYPD's full BWC database. NYPD's main criticism of the bill was that it would be illegal to share sealed evidence with the CCRB without proper unsealing motions. If the CCRB is exempt from sealing statutes, it will make access to BWC footage faster and more efficient, allowing whatever budget is allocated to the CCRB to go further.

BWC footage is crucial to CCRB cases. More so than any other type of evidence, the presence of BWC footage allows the CCRB to close a case based on the merits 75% of the time. Without BWC, cases are closed on the merits 29% of the time. Being closed on the merits means there is a definitive conclusion as to whether or not there was misconduct. This is better for civilians and officers alike. While we have worked closely with NYPD to improve the BWC footage request process, direct access would be revolutionary to the efficiency of our investigations and agency as a whole. Investigators, who have the most detailed understanding of what footage they are looking for, should be the ones to search for the video they need.

Other cities such as Chicago and Washington DC have already given direct access to their oversight bodies. Relying on the Police Department for all documents and BWC footage necessary to completing our investigations compromises our independence. We are supposed to be a completely independent entity from the NYPD, yet we are dependent on them for access to any paperwork, transcripts, evidence, and footage. With direct access, investigations and the agency would be more efficient with its time and resources. We appreciate the City Council taking this issue on last year and we hope you will continue to work for such important reforms.

## **CONCLUSION**

The CCRB conducts oversight of the largest police force in the United States. There are over 34,000 members of the New York Police Department (NYPD). Other cities such as Chicago and Miami have their budget tied to their local police department's budget. They are guaranteed to maintain at least 1% of the budget of the entity they are overseeing. If New York were to adopt this same rule, the CCRB's projected budget for FY25 would be \$54 million, more than double what the proposed budget is. Even other cities in New York State commit to higher levels of funding for police oversight. Rochester's Police Accountability Board has a staff of 30 and a budget of \$3.5 million to conduct oversight over a police force of approximately 850 officers. The NYPD is 43 times the size of Rochester Police Department, which is appropriate given New York's population is 41 times greater than Rochester. If the CCRB's budget was 41 times the size of Rochester's Police Accountability Board, our budget would be \$146 million, 7 times our current size. While we are often looked to as a national leader in police oversight, we fall starkly behind when it comes to direct access and budget.

While I understand our city is facing a difficult fiscal situation, this is a pivotal moment for public safety in New York. If the city sets the CCRB's budget at the level requested – \$37.7 million, an increase of more than \$15 million over the proposed budget – we will follow through on the promises made when this agency was created, the promises made in 2020 when I sat on a

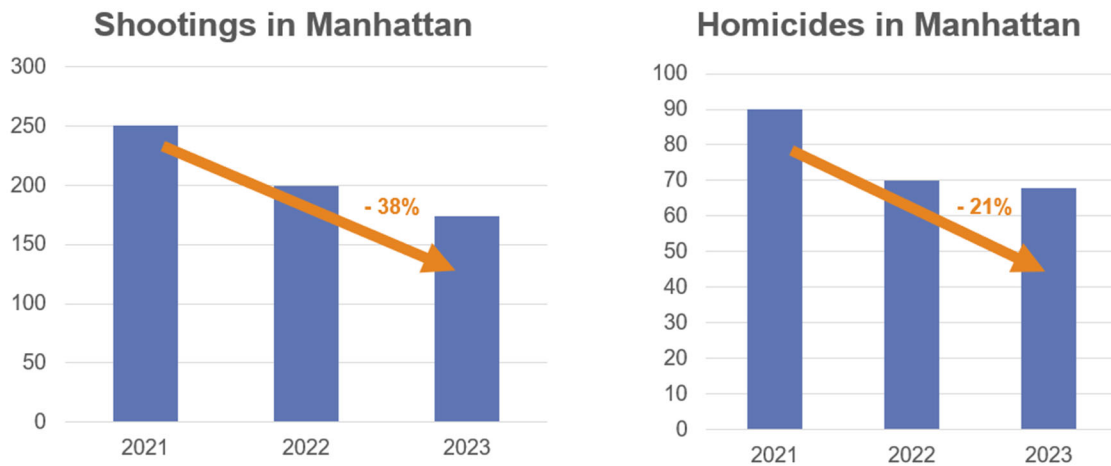
police reform commission within the NYPD, and the promises made in 2021 when this council passed the racial profiling bill. New Yorkers should not be policed differently because of their zip code or their skin color. Adequately funding the CCRB is necessary to give the people of this city confidence that misconduct will not be tolerated. Thank you for your time. Mr. Darche and I are happy to answer any questions you might have.

**New York County District Attorney's Office  
Testimony before City Council Public Safety Committee  
FY 2025 Budget & Oversight Hearings  
March 20, 2024**

Good afternoon, Chair Salaam and members of the Committee on Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding our Office's Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget. We thank the City Council for its past support, the other four District Attorneys for their collaboration, and know that a safer and fairer city requires all of us working together.

The twin goals of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office are delivering safety and fairness, and we know that we cannot have one without the other. We are achieving these goals with a targeted strategy focusing on the drivers of violence, addressing the underlying needs of those who commit crimes, and investing in preventative measures, all of which will keep our communities safe today and in the long term.

We are proud of the downward trend of serious crime over the past two years of DA Bragg's administration, including a 21% drop in homicides from 2021-2023 and a 38% decline in shootings over the same period.



Similarly, we are encouraged by the drop in almost every index crime in Manhattan from 2022 to 2023, including an 8% reduction in robberies, 23% reduction in burglaries, and 28% reduction in rapes.

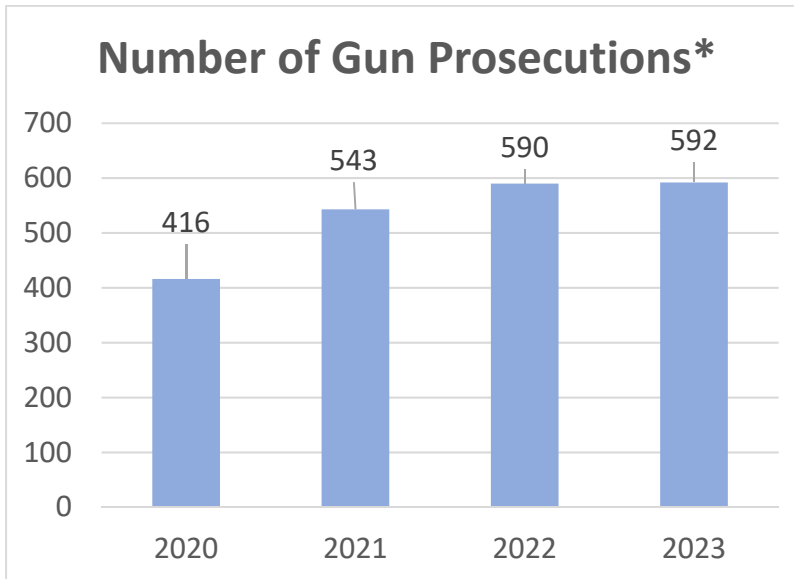
We are proud of our accomplishments, but we know we have more work to do. We will continue our targeted enforcement efforts through continued partnership with the community, elected officials, and other law enforcement agencies, and remain focused on driving these incidents even lower in the years to come to make Manhattan even safer.



## **HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR EXISTING WORK**

### **GUN VIOLENCE**

Fighting the devastation of gun violence is one of the highest priorities of our office. As shown in the graphs above, in the years since DA Bragg took office, shootings have declined 30%. We are encouraged by the continued impact of our efforts this year: as of March 17, 2024, shooting incidents this year are down 43% compared to the same time period in 2023. A great deal of credit needs to be given to Manhattan's tireless community leaders and community-based organizations for the work they do to prevent gun violence before it occurs. Of course, credit is also due to the hard work of the NYPD, and to our ADAs, who take on the fight through gun possession and gun use investigations and prosecutions. For example, our gun prosecutions have increased from 416 in 2020 to 592 in 2023.



\*Cases with where the gun possession charge is the most serious (top or underlying) VFO or Class A non-drug felony on the case. Includes NA indictments.

To date, our Ghost Gun Initiative has prosecuted cases involving the seizure of over 104 ghost gun parts, 90 firearms, 442 high-capacity magazines, 47 silencers, and other gear including scopes and rapid-fire modification devices. Earlier this month we announced that our investigation into an East Village ghost gun factory uncovered an alleged burglary and alleged conspiracy to defraud the Pandemic Unemployment Insurance (PUA) program by government employees. Many of the victims were unhoused residents who were targeted by the conspirators through their positions as DHS employees with access to shelter residents' digital and paper files.

We are also using white collar investigative tools to hold those who commit gun violence accountable. In one notable case, we identified a suspect in several gang motivated incidents, including a gunpoint robbery in August 2022 where an innocent bystander was grazed with a bullet to his head. During our investigation, we observed that the suspect's social media included posts

attempting to recruit others to deposit stolen checks. Our Financial Frauds Bureau then initiated an investigation into the alleged check fraud and, using wiretaps to intercept his cellphone and social media messages, we were able to secure a search warrant for the suspect's apartment. During that search, a loaded 9 mm handgun was recovered which ballistics testing showed to be the same weapon used in the August 2022 shooting. The suspect was then indicted for the alleged shooting, gun possession, and check fraud.

In November, we announced the indictment of 5 individuals in connection with an alleged conspiracy to commit shootings and robberies, as well as the accidental murder of their own friend who was killed in the crossfire during one incident. In July, we announced the indictment of 3 individuals for the alleged drive-by shooting death of an innocent bystander in Washington Heights, a new grandfather only in town for the birth of his grandson. And the 2022 Own Every Dollar (“OED”) prosecutions are ongoing—we announced indictments of 10 individuals in August and another 7 in October in connection with an alleged string of shootings, gunpoint robberies and a murder, stretching from Washington Heights to Midtown, the Lower East Side, and the Bronx.

Our Men of Color Response Team has also played a critical role in building relationships in Manhattan communities, building a path to long-term safety in the wake of gun violence. According to NYPD data, 96% of shooting victims in New York City are Black or Latino and most of them are male. This team was formed in recognition of the reality that men of color may be reluctant to participate in the court process based on a variety of reasons, including possibly having had negative interactions with law enforcement, a lack of access to mental health care, direct or vicarious trauma from neighborhood violence, or a fear of retribution. Not only do the advocates and counselors support victims of gun violence as their case moves through the court process, but their trauma-informed work engages with men of color as they move forward in their lives to address the complex challenges they face, preventing future victimization or harm.

### WORKER PROTECTION UNIT

We are very grateful for the additional \$626,000 in baseline funding we received from the Council last year, which helped us hire full-time staff for our Worker Protection Unit. We are still actively recruiting to grow this critical piece of our Office. With this additional staffing and prioritization of resources, we are expanding and enhancing our investigations and prosecutions into wage theft and other crimes committed by employers.

For example, we indicted two brothers and their company for allegedly exploiting two Spanish-speaking day laborers, refusing to pay them approximately \$7,000 they had earned. When the workers demanded their money, one of the brothers assaulted them. This case underscores the public safety nature of our work – a worker was *physically assaulted* after confronting his boss. No one should be attacked because they asked for what they were owed.

The work of the Worker Protection Unit is also protecting the city itself from corruption and theft of resources. Samco is a licensed union electrical company that had multiple subcontracts with the School Construction Authority (“SCA”) and the NYC Housing Authority (“NYCHA”). These city contracts required Samco to pay prevailing wages and supplemental benefits to its workers, but Samco instead used non-union workers and paid its workers less than half the prevailing wage rate. Samco then stole the difference, which amounted to \$1.7 million dollars. They set up shell companies, falsified payroll records, and issued fake IDs to workers to cover it up. They also bribed

an SCA inspector who had learned of their criminal practices. In the end, they pled guilty, paid back \$900,000 to workers, and were barred from bidding on lucrative SCA and NYCHA contracts for 5 years. The foreman was also sentenced to 6 months in jail.

We were also able to return \$50,000 in stolen wages to seven now-defunct Ampak Electrical Services employees who performed electrical work at the site of the midtown Virgin Hotel through the Manhattan District Attorney's Office's Stolen Wage Fund. While we always try to secure restitution for workers through our criminal prosecutions, we have repeatedly seen victims of wage theft not made whole through criminal prosecutions. Sometimes additional victims come forward after a criminal case is closed and case-related restitution has already been distributed. Other times, the company goes bankrupt and has no assets to pay the workers. So, we are piloting a Stolen Wage Fund, using forfeiture funds that were seized through previous white collar crime investigations, to compensate Manhattan victims of wage theft who were not part of the original case.

Our unit goes beyond wage theft as well to address all manner of public safety as it intersects with Worker Protection. Last month, we brought charges against Valor Security and Investigations, a construction safety company that, for years, allegedly provided fake OSHA safety training certifications to more than 20,000 workers, sadly leading to a death at a job site. By falsely certifying that the workers were fully trained to undertake dangerous construction jobs, they allegedly put all the workers on the site at risk, as well as all of the pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists who navigate around construction sites every day. By holding those that commit this level of fraud accountable, we ensure public safety as well as fair and safe conditions for all workers.

### SURVIVOR SERVICES BUREAU

We are grateful for the additional funding we received last year for our Survivors Services Bureau ("SSB"), formerly known as the Witness Aid Services Unit. The SSB improves public safety in several ways. First, it helps hold accountable those who commit crimes by supporting victims through the court process. Second, by seeking to heal trauma experienced by crime victims, it prevents future violence and revictimization. And third, SSB builds trust with communities and boosts the legitimacy of the justice system, which encourages more people to come forward to report crime as well as obey the law.

Prioritizing this facet of our Office has led to an increase in crisis responses, from 386 responses in 2021 to 2183 in 2023. This is more than a 500% increase in the use of immediate survivor-centered support care.

Historically, SSB has worked primarily with survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, or homicides. Survivor Services has increased outreach to those involved in domestic violence cases, from an outreach total of 3877 in 2021, to 5276 in 2022, and 6611 in 2023. However, it is the District Attorney's vision that all victims of violent crime are supported by a team, including a prosecutor and victim's advocate from the very beginning of their case. To this end, the office has developed and implemented a HEAT ticket system that connects a victim advocate to a case when the case is being drafted. Recently launched and still in pilot phase in one trial bureau, the HEAT system has expanded our advocacy exponentially to survivors who could benefit from help connecting to housing resources, safety planning, counseling, accessing reimbursement from New York State's Office of Victim Services. Already we are seeing a substantial increase in referrals

from the pilot, and the corresponding increase in individuals going through SSB intake is equally impressive. Historically, individual trial bureaus would refer approximately 10 individuals to SSB per month. Since HEAT was introduced to one trial bureau, that number increased to 64 referrals in a single month. Of those referrals, approximately 20 individuals have gone through intake. Given these encouraging statistics, we expect that once the HEAT system is expanded to cover all 6 trial bureaus, the number of trial bureau referrals will increase to over 2,200 per year – more than doubling 2023's total of 1,022 intakes.

The demand for SSB services has greatly increased. Half of the roles we are actively filling are for licensed therapists. When a survivor comes to us, they are offered individual therapy at no cost and no time limit, with a maximum wait time of two weeks. In 2021, DANY therapists held 1912 of these free therapy sessions, and in 2023 that number jumped to 2726 sessions. For those survivors who prefer receiving help elsewhere, we also make referrals and offer to conduct sessions until a referral is available.

We have also made a concerted effort to expand the Survivor Services Bureau with advocates and counselors who speak the same languages as members of our Manhattan communities. As a result, non-English speaking witnesses who had previously been difficult for attorneys to connect with are increasingly engaging with our Office. Specifically adding team members who speak Mandarin, Cantonese, and Korean has gone hand in hand with our focus on addressing hate crimes against the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in Manhattan. The increase in direct community outreach to SSB proves how critical language facility is for providing resources. For example, on top of providing ongoing counseling and court accompaniment, in one case, one of our advocates helped the non-English speaking family of a hate crime victim apply for compensation through the state's Office of Victim Services to cover funeral costs, accompanied them to be present at the sentencing of the defendant, and helped them form a relationship with a prominent community advocate. We routinely refer victims to this State office, and with better language access we expect these referrals to increase. Having someone there as not just an interpreter but an actual advocate, who speaks the survivor's language, and is able to explain what is going on is pivotal for helping survivors and family members navigate complex court proceedings without feeling alone and confused.

Due to the increased trauma experienced by survivors, and families of victims, of these familial crimes, the services we provide begin shortly after the case begins and often continues through sentencing and beyond. One example was the involvement of several of SSB's staff sitting down with DA Bragg soon after an arrest was made to meet with a family of a woman murdered by her cousin. Several members of the family were quickly connected with SSB advocates and counselors to begin counseling, and one of our Men of Color advocates specifically started to work with the decedent's son, brother, and male cousins to address their needs stemming from their trauma. He and other advocates accompanied the family to all court dates providing emotional support through the verdict and also accompanied them when they gave their witness impact statements.

Though emotional support and counseling is an important part of the services offered by SSB, for some domestic violence survivors, the assistance from our advocates and counselors directly result in their ability to reestablish their lives safely away from their abuser. After providing hotel placement, meal money, and safe transportation, one of our SSB advocates helped a mother and her three children make a safety plan, coordinated with NYPD for police escort to retrieve belongings from the home they shared with the abuser, helped establish emergency shelter

placement, and then worked with a community-based organization to establish a plan for permanent housing. The survivor has specifically reached out to her SSB advocate expressing her gratitude and pride in her ability to now support and protect her children independently as they are now settled in their new home and established at work, school, and daycare.

Again, all these efforts make us safer: by supporting victims in the justice process, we increase the chances that we can hold people accountable for serious crimes; and by addressing the trauma of survivors, we help prevent future criminal justice involvement. We want to specifically thank the City Council for joining us in prioritizing a survivor-centered focus and for the funding we received last year to support our Office's expansion of survivor services.

### DISCOVERY

The sheer volume of discovery material that we must produce and the timeline for producing it remain a huge issue for our office. As a result of voluminous discovery we receive and the short timelines for compliance, thousands of cases, particularly misdemeanors, are dismissed because of an inability to turn over "all material that relates to" the case in short time frame—even materials that are not directly relevant to the crime itself, such as the receipt from the car service that brought the victim to testify in the Grand Jury.

Before 2020, DANY used approximately thirty-two (32) terabytes of storage, but by early 2023, three years after the passage of the discovery reform statutes, DANY consumed approximately nine hundred and six (906) terabytes of storage, a 2,700% increase. As of today, DANY consumes 1,513 terabytes.

Much of this growth is tied to the video and digital evidence that is now part of every investigation. Currently, our office does not have direct access to NYPD files nor do our data collections systems communicate precisely with the NYPD's data system, so we do not receive notifications or alerts when any NYPD document updates or an additional document is added to the file. Employees at DANY and the NYPD must periodically check their respective databases for updated files, then transfer that data between the agencies, often duplicating files previously shared. It will take years to develop the systems and hire the staff necessary to make this transfer of data seamless.

Last year, we requested \$13 million to help chart a path to a seamless discovery sharing process. We thank the City Council for providing \$926,000 for Discovery related Information Technology (IT) funding during the FY24 Adopted Plan that will allow us to seamlessly share information both internally and externally. We are also grateful for the \$2.2 million in baseline personnel funding starting in FY25 which will allow us to hire additional Legal (23 headcount) and Legal Support (11 headcount) staff. We appreciate the support of the Council and the Administration in working with our State partners in Albany to secure additional funding for our Office as well. Those efforts, and the funding from the State, are vital to our ability to comply with discovery timelines.

### HOUSING & TENANT PROTECTION UNIT

There is no question that stable housing is a cornerstone for public safety. Thanks to the \$460,000 this Council provided to the Manhattan DA's Housing and Tenant Protection Unit, we have been able to grow this team of specially trained ADAs and continue actively recruiting attorneys and investigators to support the work. This Unit prosecutes landlords who engage in large-scale systemic harassment to push people out of their affordable homes and developers who line their

pockets by defrauding government subsidy programs and failing to fulfill their obligations to provide affordable housing.

Since this Unit was formed in 2022, we have received 457 complaints, increasing dramatically from 85 in 2022 to 310 in 2023, with another 65 in 2024 as of March 11. We have numerous active investigations currently pending against both landlords and developers. Our case against six real estate developers and their corporations for allegedly defrauding New York State's 421-a affordable housing tax exemption program is still pending. These developers allegedly took tax breaks for a number of years and instead of providing what was meant to be desperately needed affordable housing for New Yorkers, rented units in six different buildings at market rate. This sort of case is a clear example of the targeted approach we take to address the complex criminal activity that results in harm to working class New Yorkers and unearned financial gain for developers.

We're encouraged by the number of community members who have come forward and made us aware of activity that threatens their or their neighbors' ability to stay in their homes. To ensure that everyone in our community is aware of their rights, and aware of how we can help, we have increased our community outreach and are more frequently visiting various Manhattan neighborhoods to give presentations, provide information, and share resources with our neighbors. This is an ongoing effort, but is a critical part of addressing the root cause of what threatens public safety while ensuring a fair and equitable system for all.

### PSYCHIATRIC LITIGATION

Three months ago, with an understanding that public health is an integral part of public safety, our Office created a Psychiatric Litigation Unit and appointed a Counsel for Psychiatric Litigation to refine the Office's practices involving those whose mental health issues are so severe that they are legally unfit for trial: implementing detailed monitoring systems, providing intra-office reviews and consultation, facilitating policy discussions, and leading training sessions. In turn, the establishment of these procedures led us to reexamine best practices as the number of these cases continue to rise.

The number of orders of unfitness issued by courts statewide has nearly doubled since 2011. In just the last two years alone, there has been a 35% increase in the number of felony orders throughout the state. Further, in just these first three months of 2024, the rate of felony orders has already increased in comparison to 2023. As of March 11, our office has reached a record 223 open cases with a finding of unfitness, with a staggering 45% of these being violent felony offenses. It is an unfortunate reality that public safety concerns within New York County are intrinsically tied with an ongoing, ever-worsening public mental health crisis.

Navigating these cases requires an attentive and fact-driven approach. In particular, the emergence of Psychiatric Litigation has highlighted the importance of integrating and adequately examining the psychological root at the core of these matters. Though fitness for trial is a distinctly legal concept, it is a fundamentally scientific concept that takes scientific expertise to understand. As such, collaborating with forensic specialists over the course of a case is extremely valuable. We are currently hiring forensic professionals to work with our office on a permanent basis. Our goal with all these cases is a successful path forward through treatment and eventual reintegration into



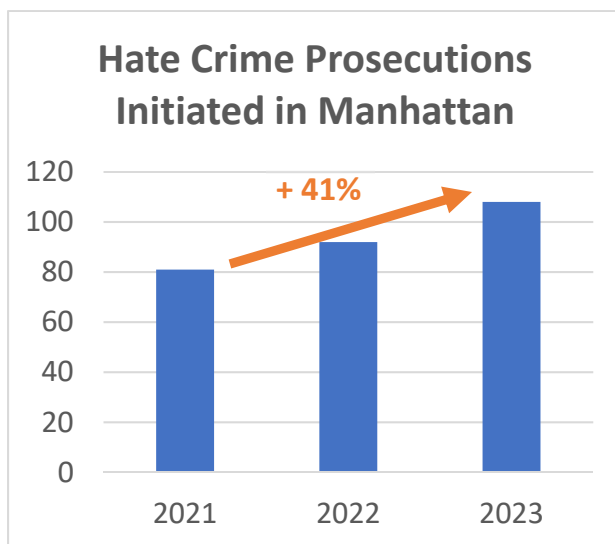
the community. By monitoring individuals after they are returned to fitness for concerning patterns of recidivism, not by attorneys but by mental health professionals, we will be better positioned to address the root cause of psychological issues and offer the appropriate support. We will also better be able to compile data of each of these misdemeanor and felony cases, and pointedly address misdemeanor cases where an individual found unfit will have their case dismissed as an operation of law, and potentially released from observation or care in 72 hours. Having a forensic professional available will allow for fruitful evaluations of fitness reports and screening cases with the specialized attorneys who currently staff our Pathways to Public Safety Bureau so that there is immediate consideration for the case to be sent to Mental Health Court. We look forward to working with our partners as we continue to evolve this practice.

### HATE CRIMES

In 2022, our Office received an additional \$1.7 million in baseline funding from the City Council to hire full-time staff, train assistant district attorneys across the office to specialize in these cases, and expand our hate crime investigations, victim services, community engagement, trainings and education on cultural and linguistic competencies.

This additional funding was necessary to combat the unprecedented rise in hate crimes that we experienced in Manhattan and continue to see at an alarming rate. In 2020, there were 86 reports of bias motivated crimes, a number that more than doubled to 224 in 2021. The number has continued to rise ever since, to 256 in 2022 and 266 complaints in 2023.

In response, our hate crime prosecutions have reflected this increase, and the additional funding we received has supported our ability to handle the influx of cases we received. In 2020, DANY prosecuted 28 hate crimes, that number rose to 81 in 2021 with a sharp increase in anti-Asian hate crimes, then in 2022 we prosecuted 92 hate crimes. Last year, our workload rose even higher, as we prosecuted 114 hate crimes.



By the beginning of 2023, we successfully expanded the Unit from having one Unit Chief, Deputy Unit Chief, and one analyst, to having 20 cross-designated hate crime ADA's, four investigative hate crime analysts and two investigators with law enforcement experience, both fluent in Cantonese. We also work closely with both our Survivor Support Bureau and DANY's

Community Partnerships Unit to engage and collaborate directly with existing community partners to organize hate crime presentations and trainings. We recently trained campus security and safety officers and title IX officers for 22 of the 25 CUNY schools on what constitutes a hate crime and how we handle them. We continue to hold hate crime trainings in the community to arm the public with the requisite knowledge so they can feel confident in reporting these crimes to the NYPD and to us. And, of course, after our testimony last year, we have continued to hold several hate crime defendants accountable for their conduct.

During March 2023, Jarrod Powell pled guilty to Manslaughter in the First Degree as a Hate Crime and was sentenced to 22 years in prison for brutally assaulting Yao Pan Ma, a 61-year-old Chinese immigrant, for no other reason than his race – leading to his death 8 months later.

In December 2023, Brandon Elliot pled guilty to Assault in the First Degree as a Hate Crime and was sentenced to 15 years in prison for brutally assaulting and making anti-Asian statements to a 65-year-old woman of Filipino descent in broad daylight while she was on her way to church.

Beginning in October 2023, we began to see a steady increase in reports of Antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes. That month, Lenny De La Rosa was indicted on four hate crime counts for allegedly defacing three synagogues and a Jewish volunteer ambulance. Then, in November 2023, Stuart Seldowitz was charged with Stalking in the Fourth Degree as a Hate Crime and other related charges for allegedly approaching a food truck where an Egyptian man was employed on three separate dates, making anti-Muslim statements and refusing to leave when told to do so.

However, there are other bias-motivated offenses that remain unchecked under our current laws. For that reason, we partnered with Senator Hoylman-Sigal and Assemblymember Lee to introduce the Hate Crimes Modernization Act that closes several loopholes in the statute by adding 31 new offenses, including gang assault, among others. With a robust Hate Crimes Unit and the addition of offenses where the hate crimes statute may apply, we will be more equipped to enhance safety and fairness in our city.

### COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS

We recognize that the District Attorney's Office plays a very specific role in the criminal justice system, and as a result, we need to support the community organizations that are more able than we are to form trusting relationships within neighborhoods. This is why we have invested \$6 million in asset forfeiture funds into our Neighborhood Navigators program with our partners at The Bridge. This program involves community members with lived experiences building relationships with our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness, substance or mental health disorders, or simply require assistance to connect with available services or resources. These navigators meet people where they are, in the neighborhoods in which they reside, to build the long-term trusting relationships that are essential to reaching our most difficult-to-reach community members.

We have also invested \$3 million in a similar program for individuals leaving arraignments. Last October with the Fortune Society, we announced the court-based navigators program. Similar to the neighborhood navigators, these individuals will meet people after arraignments to offer a connection to services in an effort to facilitate stabilization and prevent recidivism. Resources will range from a ride home, a hygiene kit, something to eat to emergency housing.

All of this money comes from our rapidly draining asset forfeiture fund, which under the new laws will not be replenished. But we know that this work is critical to providing stability, preventing recidivism and bolstering public safety, and in the future will be looking to our partners in City and State government to pick up this funding.

## **NEW REQUESTS**

### **ATI'S/PROBLEM SOLVING COURTS**

Our only request for new funding is not for our office, but for our partners in problem-solving courts without who we could not do our jobs. We make our communities safer every day by connecting people with resources that lead to stabilization in the community - resources like healthcare, education, treatment, housing, job training, and employment to address some of the underlying issues that drive harmful behavior, including substance use disorder, untreated mental illness, joblessness, housing instability, and trauma. Of course, not every case is appropriate for an alternative to incarceration resolution. There are some violent crimes where a period of incarceration is necessary for accountability and safety. But incarceration has a cost, for those incarcerated, for their families and our communities. The data is clear that incarceration in New York City has a criminogenic effect – it makes those who are incarcerated more likely to recidivate upon their release, so we know that incarceration is not always the best outcome to make our communities safer.

Our Office reviews every felony case to identify and assess whether the person charged can be safely supported in the community and appropriate cases can be diverted. In so doing, we see that many of the people who come through our doors are suffering from substance use disorders, untreated mental illnesses, joblessness, housing instability, and/or trauma, and those issues are clearly driving their harmful behavior. In those cases, treating those underlying issues can do more to prevent causing further harm than incarceration.

That's why we created the Pathways to Public Safety Division, to center the question of safety in all our work. We have Pathways Deputies embedded in each Trial Bureau to assess every felony case within 48 hours of arraignment, because we know that the sooner we get people into treatment, the more likely they are to stabilize.

The results from these efforts speak for themselves: Since 2022, in the 12 months after their felony problem solving court graduation, 96% of graduates have not been re-arrested for violent felony offenses, 91% have had no new felony arrests, and 86% have had no new arrests at all. Although there is no direct control group for comparison, these recidivism rates are dramatically lower than similar rates for those people released from city jails or state prisons, and the result is a safer City.

Our office funded the creation of a “Felony ATI” court in June of 2019 to fill the gaps in traditional problem-solving courts, and the court has become an integral part of our system: the number of people accepted into the Felony ATI track annually has increased by over 50% since 2021, from 108 people accepted in 2021 to 168 people accepted in 2023. At every graduation ceremony, we

hear a few consistent themes from the graduates: that they deeply regret the harm they caused, that the work they had to do on themselves to complete their mandates was difficult—perhaps more difficult than going to prison would have been—and that it was worth it.

Manhattan recognized the need, created, and funded a “mental health track” in our Judicial Diversion Court for drug and drug-related offenses. Unlike our other problem-solving courts, the Judicial Diversion court is statutory and as such is funded by the State. Those that are statutorily eligible can nominate to participate in diversion. However, our Office noticed that a large number of people in this court have co-occurring mental health issues, and the staff who are trained to address drug issues were not always adequately trained or prepared to support those presenting serious mental health issues. Therefore, we funded the creation of the Judicial Diversion “mental health track” to provide these individuals with specialized treatment.

To date, our Office has funded both our Felony ATI court and Judicial Division Mental Health track in our Judicial Diversion Court almost exclusively, using our asset forfeiture funds to create and pilot these courts, spending close to \$3 million on these two courts in last year alone. Now that we are seeing positive outcomes from our problem-solving courts and have data that proves this is an effective enforcement strategy, we need other actors to continue this funding, as our asset forfeiture funds are dwindling and will not be replenished. The failure to fund these courts would be abandoning a viable enforcement strategy that saves hundreds of years of incarceration and enhances safety. At current funding levels, Felony ATI costs approximately \$2.1 million per year, and the mental health track in Judicial Diversion costs approximately \$700,000 per year. Relative to the ballooning costs of jail and prison, not only are these problem-solving courts an excellent investment in people and safety but, they are an excellent fiscal investment.

Not only do we need this responsibility to be assumed by government and receive baseline funding, we need to expand the reach of these courts. Since 2022, we have more than doubled annual referrals and acceptances to problem-solving courts. This has brought greater fairness and safety to Manhattan but has also strained existing resources. At present, individuals detained on Rikers Island can wait up to 6-8 weeks just to be assessed. Those who are not detained wait even longer. This poses a genuine public safety risk, as those who remain untreated without receiving resources are more likely to recidivate the longer they wait for treatment, and those incarcerated in our city jails languish there needlessly. As our referrals and acceptances grow, our system must also grow to support this increased volume. Doubling the existing funding to \$4.2 million for Felony ATI and \$1.4 million for the mental health track would be proportionate to the number of people who could stabilize in their communities with the benefit of these court mandates and resources. Not only would this save the City money overall, it would help deliver safety and fairness to our City.

Similarly, Manhattan’s Mental Health Court is not funded sufficiently to meet the needs of the increasing number of people who enter our system with significant mental health needs. That court plays a critical role in our mission to deliver safety and fairness, providing court-monitored, community-based treatment to help prevent recidivism and prevent unnecessary incarceration. This court is not funded by our Office and receives its funding from Health and Hospitals, but that funding is only sufficient to handle 50 cases at any given time. This is insufficient to meet the needs of a City in which over half the jail population has a mental health diagnosis and almost

20% have a serious mental health diagnosis. Our Office screened almost 50,000 arrests last year and has an active daily caseload of more than 9,500 cases; given that volume, funding for 50 cases in our mental health court is simply not enough. We estimate that expanding that court's capacity from 50 to 200 cases would cost approximately \$3.3 million and encourage the Council, Administration, and all stakeholders to work together to help us deliver our goals of safety and fairness in our mental health court.

Testimony

of

**Bridget G. Brennan**  
Special Narcotics Prosecutor

Before

**The New York City Council**  
Committee on Public Safety

## **Fiscal Year 2025**

Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 20, 2024  
Council Chambers  
City Hall

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL NARCOTICS PROSECUTOR



I am grateful for the leadership of the New York City Council, and for your support of the five District Attorneys and my office. I congratulate Yusef Salaam, the new chairperson for the Committee on Public Safety, and look forward to continued collaboration with all of you. I am committed to working together to promote public safety by reducing crime and ensuring the criminal justice system is fair for all.

The Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) is at the forefront of efforts to curb the opioid epidemic, the most serious health crisis we face as a nation. Record high numbers of lives are lost each year to drug poisonings. Fentanyl is the leading cause of deaths for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Deaths among teens have sharply escalated in recent years.

In New York City, an estimated 3,300 people fatally overdosed between September of 2022 and 2023, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The city is a hub for narcotics trafficking, and our drug market is more unpredictable than ever. SNP's mission is to save lives through innovative strategies that stem the flow of lethal drugs. The office focuses on high-level trafficking organizations, often with international ties, while addressing open-air drug markets that destabilize neighborhoods and lead to overdoses and violence.

Any drug poisoning is tragic, but this past year brought particularly devastating losses. In September, a one-year-old boy died after being exposed to fentanyl at a Bronx day care center that doubled as a drug stash location. Then, in November, a 14-year-old freshman at Brooklyn Technical High School died from drug poisoning due to fentanyl. The teen's mother recently met with members of my office to explore ways in which she can educate parents about how accessible deadly drugs are to children and help prevent teen deaths.

Roughly eight out of 10 fatal overdoses in New York City involve fentanyl. It is found mixed with an expanding number of substances. Analysis of drugs seized from high-level distributors and in street markets indicate mixtures may contain as many as five different substances, including the narcotics like heroin or cocaine, and other synthetic drugs, such as xylazine (a non-opioid animal sedative) or methamphetamine (a stimulant).

The cocaine supply in New York City is increasing. The reason for that is beyond our control. The government of Colombia has discontinued aerial eradication of cocoa plants and there has been a dramatic increase in cultivation. As a result, we are seeing a higher volume of the drug in New York City, often converted into crack and sometimes mixed with fentanyl.

Drug mixtures containing fentanyl are sold in powder form and pressed into counterfeit pills. Last year, SNP investigations resulted in the seizure of over 700 pounds of fentanyl and drug mixtures, and more than one million fentanyl pills. SNP

investigations and prosecutions depend upon collaboration with local, state, federal and international law enforcement agencies. We work closely with the city's District Attorneys.

Whenever appropriate, we seek to facilitate treatment and supportive services for those facing criminal charges and suffering from substance use disorders. SNP strives to reduce demand for narcotics by raising public awareness, and also facilitates alternatives to incarceration, working closely with providers in the field.

Prevention efforts are especially crucial for young people. Last year, the office established an Educational Outreach Committee and partnered with the Department of Education (DOE) to serve as a resource for schools. SNP attorneys offer presentations on the dangers of fentanyl for high school health classes, DOE teachers and staff, and parents.

For FY 2025, we are asking for the City Council's support for three funding requests. We are seeking additional funds for treatment and diversion programs. Beginning in 2020, we extended the reach of our alternatives to incarceration offerings to encompass the Manhattan Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court (ATI Court), which assists individuals who were not served by previously existing programs. SNP collaborates with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and Center for Justice Innovation's (CJI) Manhattan Justice Opportunities. So far, SNP has self-funded this ATI expansion. We are asking the City Council to support our request for City funds in the amount of \$218,841 to hire two social workers and to cover other associated costs.

We are also requesting \$148,500 in capital funding to replace 26 radios used by members of our Investigators Unit. Our existing equipment is out of date. The upgrade will facilitate compatibility with the new radio system being rolled out by the New York City Police Department in the coming years. The investment will ensure smooth interagency communication.

We also anticipate requesting support for the acquisition of new software necessary to comply fully with City Council-mandated annual reporting of prosecution-related data on our public website.

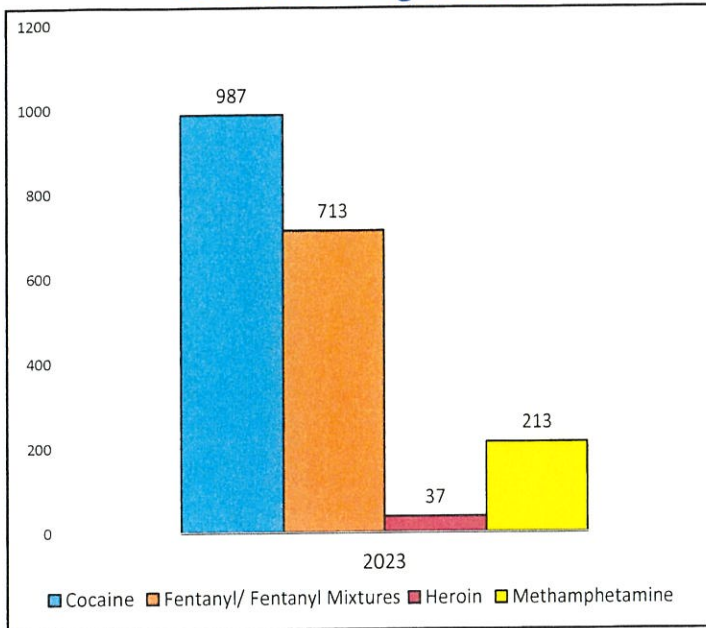
I appreciate the close relationship my office has with the Council. I have met with members throughout the year, learning about your specific concerns and talking with you about how to address them. Schools across the city have reached out and invited us to provide much needed information to students and parents. We look forward to continued collaboration leading to safer communities and lives saved.

*Bridget G. Brennan*  
Special Narcotics Prosecutor  
for the City of New York



# Strategic Approach to Prosecutions

2023 SNP Drug Seizures



SNP employs a strategic approach to curbing the flow of deadly narcotics into New York City and throughout the region. Investigations focus on high-level trafficking organizations, often with international ties.

In 2023, SNP investigations resulted in the seizure of over 700 pounds of fentanyl and fentanyl mixtures, and more than one million fentanyl pills. Roughly 35 percent of SNP fentanyl seizures for 2023 involved mixtures with other substances, including narcotics like heroin or cocaine, and other synthetics, such as xylazine or methamphetamine. Cocaine seizures also remain high, with nearly 1,000 pounds recovered in SNP cases last year.

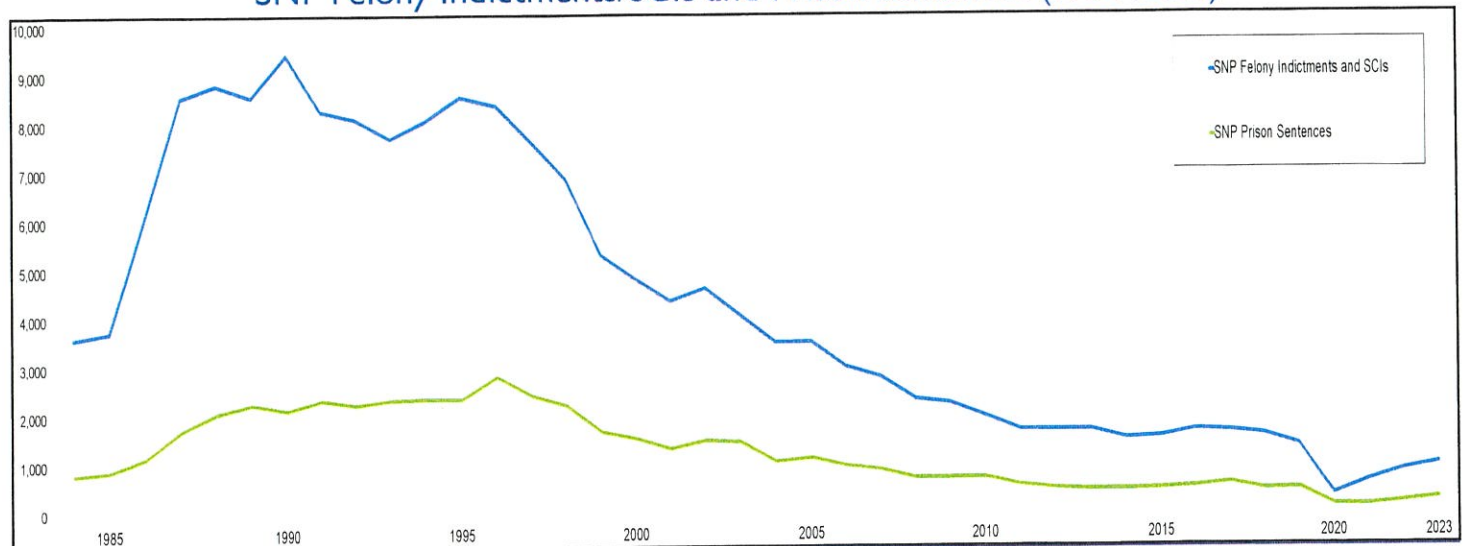
The primary source for cocaine in the U.S. is Colombia, where there has been a dramatic increase in cultivation since the government of Colombia has discontinued aerial eradication of cocoa plants.

SNP's strategies are consistent with the City's goal of reducing incarceration. By focusing on high-level traffickers, and drug organizations linked to overdoses and violence, we can have a greater impact with fewer arrests. In 2023, 261 individuals prosecuted by SNP received prison sentences, a roughly 90 percent reduction from those sent to New York State prison on SNP cases each year in the 1990s.

Over the past two years, SNP has worked closely with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) in Midtown South and the 28th Precinct to address open air drug markets that destabilize neighborhoods and lead to overdoses and violence. Suspected drug fatalities have shown marked declines in Midtown South during this time frame.

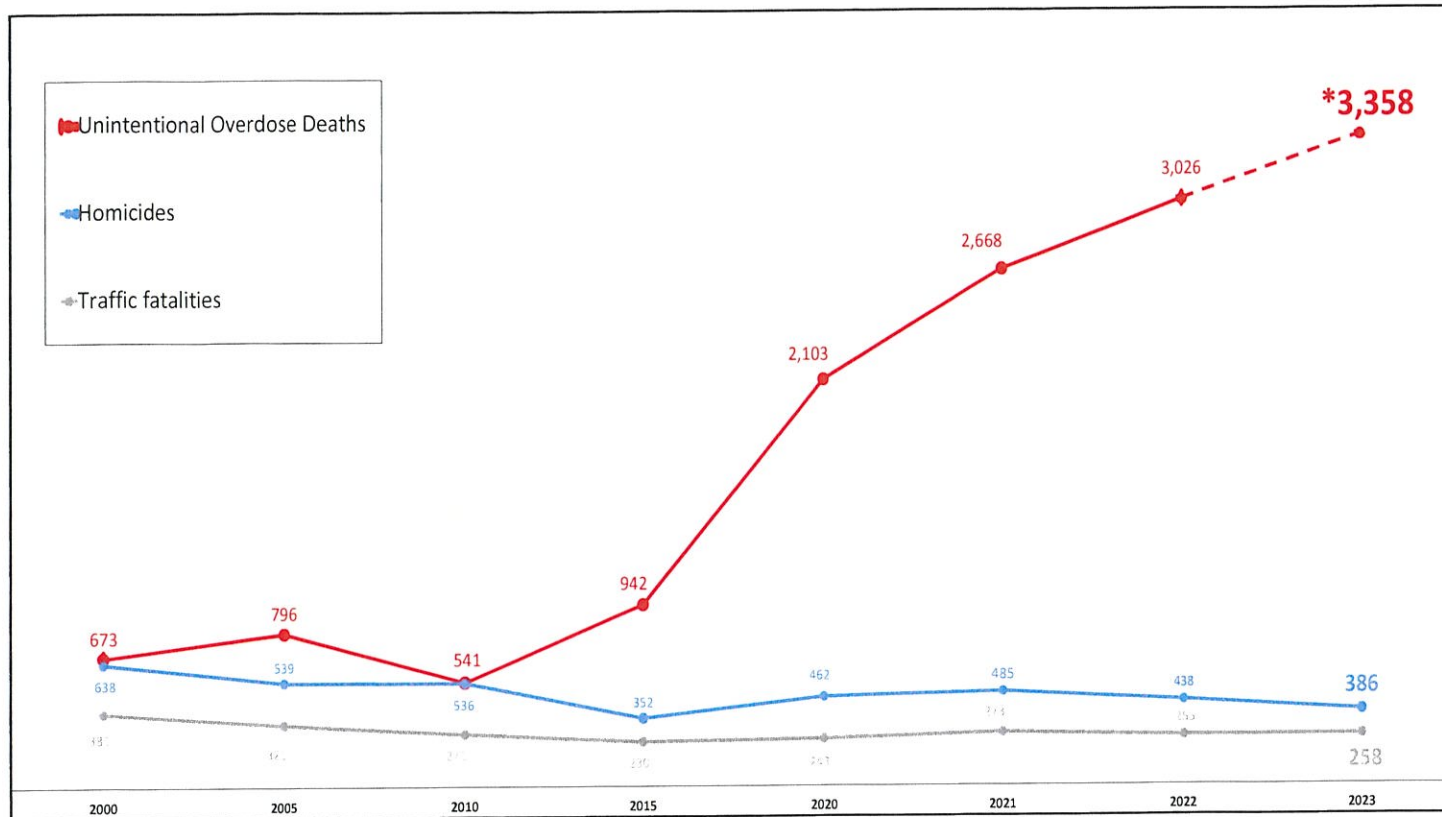
SNP is committed to connecting individuals with Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programs, when appropriate, with the goal of promoting public safety and reducing recidivism. In 2020, SNP joined the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in assessing individuals facing felony charges for a wide array of treatment and social service referrals through the Manhattan Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court. Participants receive supportive services within the community under a court-supervised plea agreement.

SNP Felony Indictments/SCIs and Prison Sentences (1984-2023)



# Fentanyl and Drug Mixtures

## NYC Fatal Overdoses Far Exceed Homicides and Traffic Fatalities



Source: \*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), predicted data for Sept. 2022-Sept. 2023; NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOMHM); New York City Police Department (NYPD); Vision Zero New York City

The illicit drug supply has never been more deadly or unpredictable than it is today. Deaths from drug poisoning in the U.S. are estimated to have topped 111,000 during the 12 months ending in September of 2023, according to the CDC. Fentanyl, a shape-shifting synthetic opioid, is fueling the opioid crisis. Fentanyl is the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and overdose rates among teens have escalated.

In New York City, more than 3,300 people are estimated to have fatally overdosed during that same 12-month period ending in September, the equivalent of someone dying every three hours. Fentanyl is involved in roughly eight out of 10 drug deaths in New York City.

Drug seizures in packaging mills and street markets across the city show fentanyl is found mixed with an

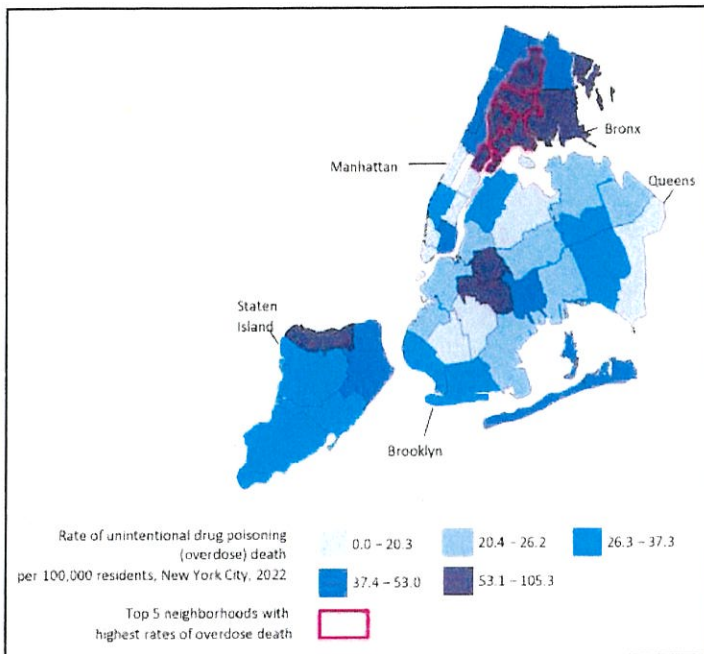
increasingly wide range of substances. Due to this unpredictability, drug users do not know what they are purchasing, putting them at grave risk of overdose and death. The danger is extreme for the opioid naïve, who have not built-up a tolerance.

Further complicating matters, some substances, such as xylazine (a non-opioid sedative known as “tranq”), are not responsive to the most common overdose reversal drug naloxone (brand name Narcan). SNP cases in 2023 resulted in the seizure of at least 42 pounds of xylazine. But because xylazine is not a controlled substance in New York State or federally, seizure amounts are based on DEA testing only. The NYPD does not test for its presence or include it in reports if detected. Prosecutors are not able to bring charges related to the sale or possession of xylazine.



# Dangers of a Surging Supply

## NYC Overdose Rates by Neighborhood: 2022



Source: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)

In New York City, four of the top five neighborhoods for drug fatalities are in the South Bronx, and the other is East Harlem in Manhattan. Black and Latino/a New Yorkers continue to have the highest rates of overdose deaths.

DEA New York Division recovered over 1,100 pounds of fentanyl powder in 2023. Many of the largest fentanyl seizures occurred in the Bronx. SNP frequently partners with DEA and is prosecuting many of these cases. SNP investigations resulted in seizures of fentanyl and fentanyl mixtures totaling approximately over 700 pounds.

A surging supply of fentanyl has tragic consequences beyond the record numbers of overdose deaths among drug users, and the impact on family members. Sadly, we are seeing more drug poisonings among those who never sought to use drugs, young children. In September, the shocking death of a one-year-old boy due to fentanyl exposure at a Bronx day care center shook the city. Three other children at the day care were treated at a hospital after being reported unresponsive

and were administered Narcan. Officers subsequently executed a search warrant and discovered a secret compartment underneath the floor of a play area containing more than 10 kilograms of fentanyl and other drugs. The Bronx District Attorney's Office charged the day care owner, her husband, and the husband's cousin with murder. Federal prosecutors brought additional drug trafficking charges.

Eleven days after this tragedy, SNP uncovered a fentanyl and cocaine stash location and packaging mill in an apartment on Heath Avenue in the Bronx, just six blocks away from the day care center. Over 40 pounds of cocaine and fentanyl with an estimated street value of \$5 million were seized. Agents and officers tracked the man who allegedly operated this drug location as he travelled by subway with a suitcase containing 13 kilograms of narcotics. The man fled, abandoning the suitcase, when agents and officers stopped him. He was later apprehended while leaving the drug packaging location with another suitcase in tow, this one containing approximately 50,000 glassine envelopes containing mixtures of fentanyl, heroin and xylazine. More cocaine, fentanyl, heroin and xylazine were found in a search of the apartment.

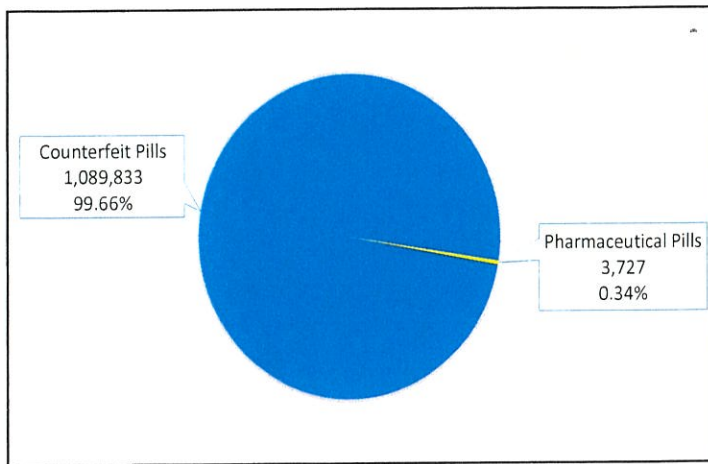


Over 50,000 glassines wrapped in bundles containing mixtures of fentanyl, heroin and xylazine were seized from drug mill six blocks away from a Bronx day care.



# Spike in Deadly Counterfeit Pills

SNP Seizures of Counterfeit Pills vs. Pharmaceutical Pills



In 2023, we witnessed an explosion in the supply of counterfeit pills containing fentanyl. SNP cases involved the seizure of more than one million counterfeit pills. According to DEA New York Division, seven out of 10 fake pills seized in 2023 had lethal amounts of fentanyl, and most contained various mixtures of fentanyl, methamphetamine, xylazine and/or other synthetic drugs. DEA New York Division seized 4.2 million fake fentanyl pills in 2023, a 119% increase over 2022.

Fentanyl pills are increasingly pressed in Mexico and smuggled over the U.S.-Mexico border inside trucks or other vehicles. They are frequently made to resemble a certain type of 30 mg oxycodone, which are blue and imprinted with the marking M30. Trafficking organizations go to great lengths to conceal shipments of pills. A short-term investigation in May of 2023 resulted in the seizure of approximately 300,000 fake oxycodone pills containing fentanyl, plus over 11 pounds of powdered fentanyl, from inside the gas tank of a Ford Expedition stopped in the Bronx.

While the vast majority of those who suffer fatal drug poisonings are adults, fentanyl is killing American teens in record numbers. Teen overdose deaths are largely driven by fentanyl in the form of counterfeit pills, which played a role in nearly 25 percent of these deaths. Studies suggest the increase in teen overdose

does not appear to result from more drug use, but rather from a deadlier drug supply.

Many adolescents accidentally take fentanyl in the form of pills that they believe are prescription opioids or stimulants, or other illicit drugs that are mixed with fentanyl. Fentanyl is increasingly found not only in counterfeit oxycodone, but in benzodiazepines (such as Xanax), Adderall and other prescription pills. Young people have access to counterfeit pills containing fentanyl in their neighborhoods, schools, and through social media.

Teen drug poisonings more than doubled in the U.S. between 2019 and 2021, according to the CDC, with an average of 22 young people between the ages of 14 and 18 suffering fatal overdoses each week in 2022. Most teens who use drugs are seeking to relieve stress, according to the CDC.

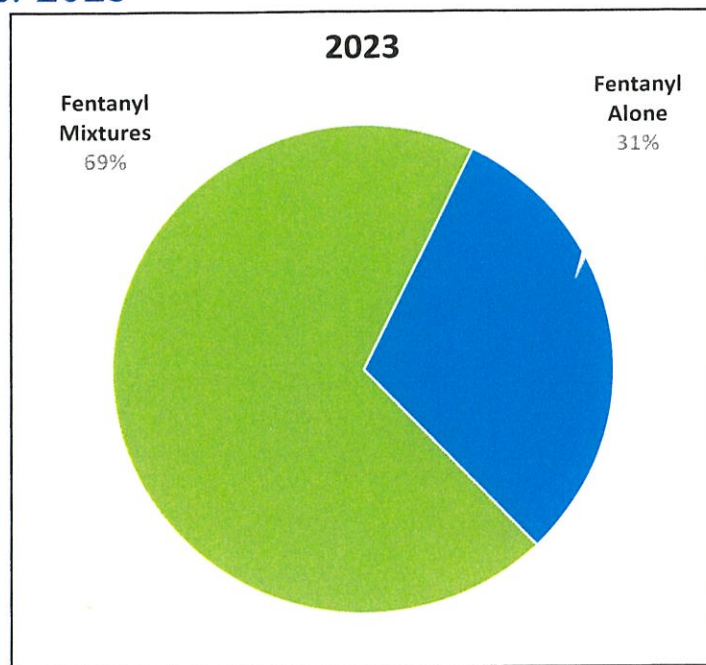
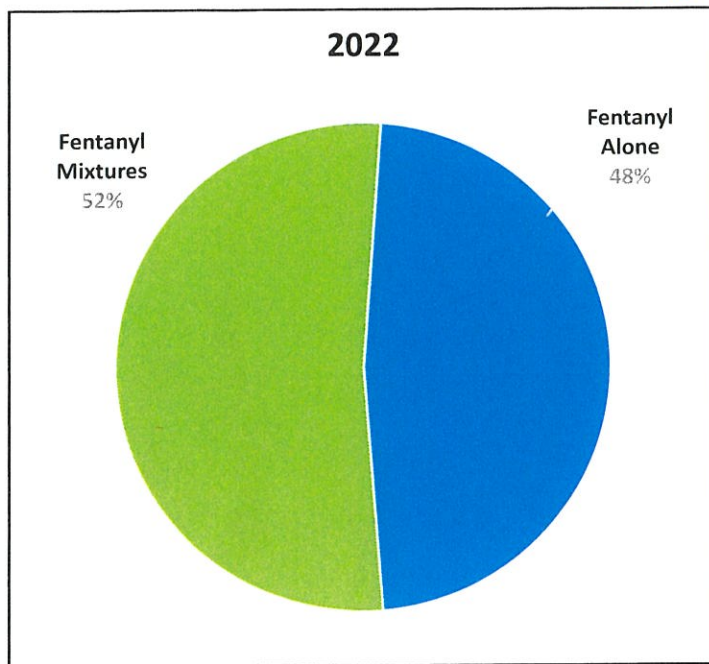


The Washington Post, February 17, 2024



# Data Driven Enforcement

## NYPD Seizures of Fentanyl Mixtures Increase in Midtown South: 2022 vs. 2023



In support of SNP's targeted enforcement strategy, we analyze data from a host of sources to identify patterns, such as geographic areas where clusters of overdoses, gun seizures, and narcotics trafficking are concentrated. SNP partners with the NYPD, elected officials, and community groups to develop strategies that support public safety.

One of the most troubling drug trends we are seeing in New York City is an increase in fentanyl mixed with other substances. While fentanyl alone is extremely dangerous, fentanyl mixed with other drugs presents enhanced uncertainty and an increased risk of overdose as drug buyers don't know what is contained in the substance they are buying. By analyzing drug seizures, we can identify new substances entering the city's street markets and craft a targeted response through enforcement, legislative efforts, public health, and prevention.

In the NYPD's Midtown South Precinct (MTS) for example (see visual), approximately 48% of the B felony drug seizures containing fentanyl in 2022 were found to contain fentanyl alone, and 52% were found to contain fentanyl mixed with other drugs. In 2023,

by contrast, only 31% of B felony drug seizures containing fentanyl were found to contain fentanyl alone while the percentage of seizures containing fentanyl mixed with other substances rose significantly to 69%. Similarly SNP citywide seizures of fentanyl mixtures far outpaced seizures of fentanyl alone in the fourth quarter of 2023.

And it is not just the amount of fentanyl mixtures which is increasing. At the same time that we have seen an increase in the percentage of fentanyl mixture overall we have also seen an increase in the number of unique combinations of drugs that are being mixed with fentanyl.

In MTS for example the number of unique combinations of drugs which were mixed with fentanyl doubled from 2022 to 2023. In some precincts we have seen an increase in cocaine mixed with fentanyl and other substances. At times up to five different substances have been analyzed in a single fentanyl street sale seizure. While fentanyl and heroin mixtures are still the most common, we have also seen the emergence of fentanyl mixtures containing methamphetamine, alprazolam and oxycodone.



# Alternatives to Incarceration

The goal of SNP's Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) Unit is to promote public safety and reduce recidivism. Through ATI, participants are offered supportive services within the community under a court-supervised plea agreement. For individuals charged with felony drug crimes, an effective drug or mental health treatment program and access to other important social services can mean the difference between repeated contacts with the criminal justice system and the ability to lead a healthy and law-abiding life.

SNP joined the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in expanding its offerings to encompass the Manhattan Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court (ATI Court) beginning in 2020. The ATI Court, which is led by Administrative Judge Ellen Biben, seeks to forge a new response to individuals charged with felonies by linking them to community-based social services. The Court is the first of its kind, providing an innovative model for other jurisdictions seeking to develop and implement meaningful post-conviction sentencing options for individuals facing felony charges.

The ATI Court serves individuals who are charged with felonies and may not be eligible for existing drug and mental health courts. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis, and treatment is individualized to the specific needs of the participant.

SNP partners with the Center for Justice Innovation's (CJI) Manhattan Justice Opportunities to conduct clinical assessments, develop treatment recommendations, coordinate referrals, and perform compliance monitoring and reporting. ATI Court offers an array of individualized services, including substance abuse treatment, mental health services, cognitive behavioral therapy, educational and vocational training, case management, and various types of prosocial programming.

So far, SNP has self-funded this ATI expansion. We are now asking the City Council to support our funding request for the hiring of two social workers, employed by CJI Manhattan Justice Opportunities and assigned to our office, and other expenses associated with the management and coordination of ATI programs.

Social workers provide neutral, third-party assessments and case management services to the ATI Court. They conduct independent clinical assessments, provide referrals to community-based services, offer comprehensive clinical case management, and monitor participant compliance.

SNP ATI Unit ADAs and Case Coordinators perform screenings of potential participants to determine whether a case is appropriate for a programming disposition. If it is decided that a defendant's case is appropriate, a referral will be made to CJI or other monitoring agency to begin the clinical assessment process.

Once the monitoring agency submits their proposed assessment and treatment recommendations to all legal parties, a mid-assessment conference is held to review/discuss recommendations and set a plea date. The plea agreement mandates participation in services and/or completion of agreed-upon benchmarks for a set period of time.

## Judicial Diversion

Beginning in 2009, the New York State Legislature empowered judges to place defendants in court-sponsored diversion programs. SNP continues to offer its expertise in screening and monitoring. When individuals enter treatment through one of these paths, their sentences are deferred. Upon successful completion, charges may be dismissed.

## Prosecutor-Led Diversion Programs

Our office is proud to have been at the forefront of developing ATI programs for more than 35 years. SNP and the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office were pioneers in diverting those whose crimes (often street sales of drugs) were motivated by their own substance use disorder.



# Educational Outreach



*Chief of Investigations, Bernice Ordonez, led a workshop on the dangers of fentanyl at a NEST+m school in lower Manhattan.*

SNP is committed to educating young people and their families about the opioid crisis, and in particular how fentanyl has made New York City's drug market more deadly than ever before. In 2023, SNP formed the Educational Outreach Committee, comprised of members of the executive, legal, managerial, and professional staff. Through this effort, SNP serves as a resource for schools by offering presentations to teens in classrooms, training teachers and Department of Education (DOE) staff, and educating parents.

Designated SNP attorneys lead workshops on the dangers of fentanyl, what it is, how it gets to New York City, and why teenagers are dying without even knowing they are taking it. SNP staff explain the types of mixtures found in the city's highly unpredictable drug market, including counterfeit pills containing fentanyl. Discussions include the role of social media in teen overdose deaths and how teens can stay safe.

Stories from grieving families and recent headlines are included in SNP's workshop materials to drive home the real risks associated with drug use today. On average, someone in New York City dies from a drug overdose every three hours. Tragically, a Brooklyn Technical High School freshman was among those who suffered

fatal overdoses linked to fentanyl in 2023. Members of SNP recently met with this student's mother to explore how to reach out to other families, so that her terrible loss can help save other kids.



*Christopher Edel, Senior Attorney for Special Projects, offers an Educational Outreach presentation at La Guardia High School in Manhattan's Upper West Side.*





An English version of SNP's fentanyl PSA is displayed on a LinkNYC kiosk.

This academic year...

- SNP attorneys presented at a DOE professional development day attended by approximately 100 teachers. SNP trained teachers, inviting them to offer our presentation to students in their classrooms. Teachers are also invited to request that SNP staff members visit their classroom.
- Senior SNP attorneys presented to DOE staff, including 45 student service managers from across New York City public schools.
- Since October, SNP attorneys have visited seven high schools across the city, offering presentations in multiple health classes per school.
- A senior attorney presented at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.
- A Spanish-speaking staff member is available to present workshops in Spanish. Workshops are offered both in-person and virtually.

The Educational Outreach Committee also seeks to collaborate with nonprofit organizations to inform its work and provide resources for teens, teachers, and parents. One such organization is Song for Charlie, a national family-run nonprofit founded by a couple who lost their son to an overdose on fentanyl pills.

In addition to this work with DOE schools, in 2023 the committee developed a public service announcement about fentanyl for display on LinkNYC kiosks in English, Spanish, Mandarin and French. Palm cards and posters are also available.

On a separate and complementary track, Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan is partnering with DEA New York Division, New York/New Jersey HIDTA, the NYPD and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to offer a series of workshops for youth coordinated by Teaching a Generation (T.A.G.). In December of 2023, young participants gathered for the first such panel discussion, titled "The Truth About Fentanyl." SNP and its partners are working with T.A.G. to roll out a series of 15 workshops in high schools in an assembly format.



Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan and Frank Tarantino, DEA NY Division Special Agent in Charge, participated in a panel of experts for a T.A.G. Youth event, "The Truth About Drugs: Fentanyl."



# Community Initiatives



*Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan attended the opening of the Police Athletic League (PAL) Summer Playstreets at the West 124th Street Harlem location.*

SNP seeks to leave a positive footprint on communities where major drug enforcement actions have occurred, by collaborating with the District Attorneys' offices to support youth programs and strengthen communities disrupted by persistent crime.

In the summer of 2023, SNP sponsored two Police Athletic League (PAL) initiatives in Manhattan: a Playstreet at West 124th Street, Lenox to 5th Avenues, in Harlem, and the McCaffrey Playground PAL Playsite, in Hell's Kitchen. Playstreets utilize parks and other public areas throughout New York City to give children free and safe supervised places to enjoy fun recreational opportunities, as well as year-round programs. Police officers support PAL programs by engaging in youth interactions that help to promote positive relationships in the community.

Also in 2023, SNP sponsored cooking equipment for the PAL Webster Center Healthy Cooking Club in Fordham Heights, Bronx, and community exercise equipment for youth at the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) Tilden Houses in Brownsville, Brooklyn.

Saving lives by reducing overdose deaths is the top priority of SNP. As part of an effort to educate the

public about dangers associated with New York City's unpredictable drug market, Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan presented on the topic of fentanyl for various community groups including a virtual conversation series hosted by Council Member Erik Bottcher of District 3, and at Harlem's 32nd Precinct Community Council meeting. She served on a panel of experts at a youth event coordinated by Teaching a Generation (T.A.G.).

Bridget Brennan also participated in the Staten Island Fentanyl and Overdose Task Force and the Mayoral Fentanyl Summit.

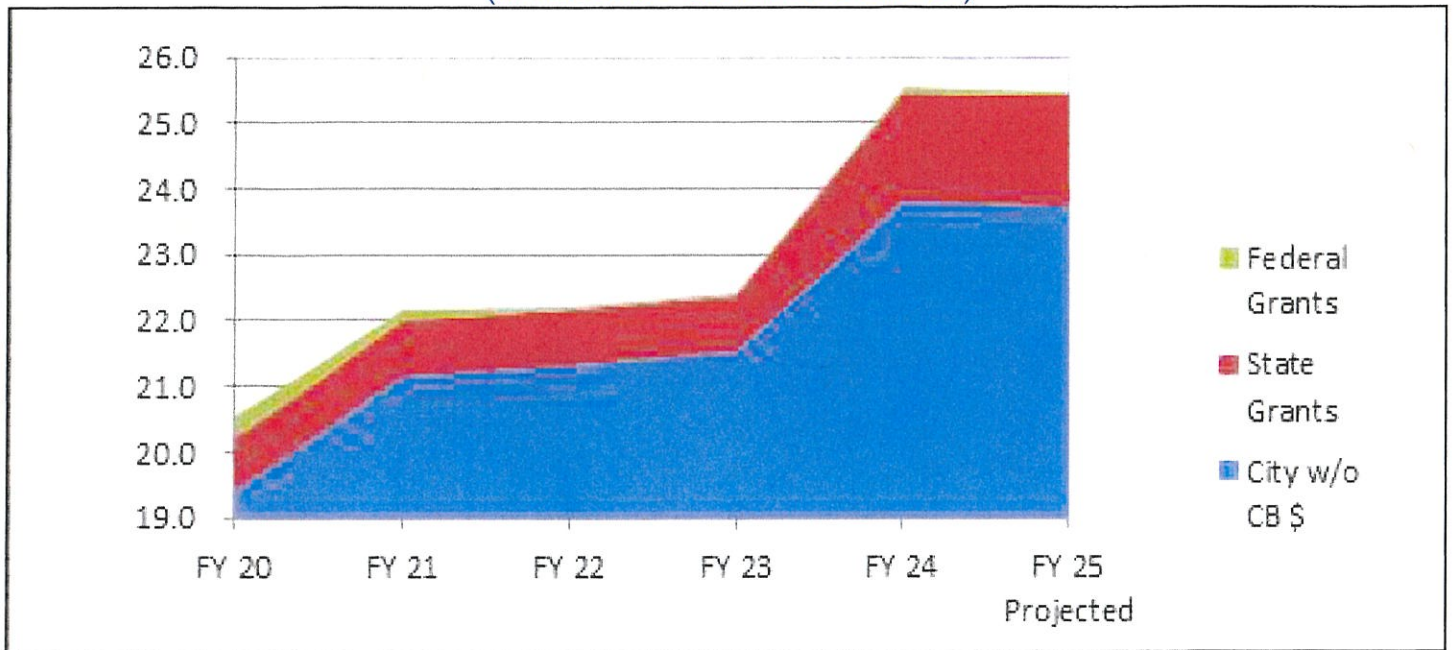


*Staten Island DA Michael E. McMahon invited Bridget Brennan to share expertise on narcotics trends and crime strategies.*

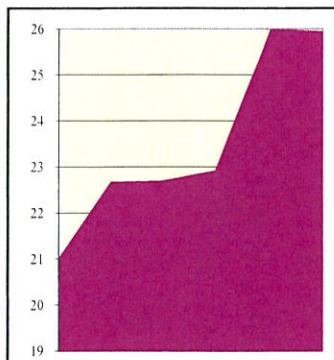


# Funding

Special Narcotics Prosecutor  
 Fiscal 2020 Modified To Fiscal 2025 Projected  
 (in millions - CB funds excluded)



## Overall Funding Outlook



FY 2020 Modified To FY 2025 Projected  
 (in millions - CB funds excluded)

According to the City's Preliminary Budget proposed for the next fiscal year, FY 2025, our City funding will remain approximately the same as current fiscal year. We also expect our grant funds to be renewed in FY 2025 at about the same level as in FY 2024.

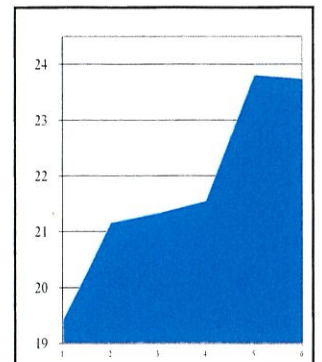
For FY 2024, we received nearly twice as much in grant funds as we did in FY 2023. Our City funding also increased by over 10 percent compared to the prior year. This increase consists of collective bargaining funds received per union contract settled in early 2023, as well as Discovery funding received in the adopted plan.

## City Funding Needs

Since 2020, we have been challenged by the significant changes made to the New York State discovery laws and worked tirelessly to ensure we comply with the new Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) discovery requirements. The additional work required has proven to be much more time-consuming and costly than originally anticipated. At the same time, we have also experienced unprecedented difficulties recruiting new staff and retaining current staff.

We are very grateful for the support of the City Council during this difficult time. With your assistance, we received \$2.2 million in Discovery funding for FY 2024-FY 2025. (We had requested \$10.8 million.) These funds have helped us with recruitment and retention, while supporting our efforts in complying with Discov-

### City Funds





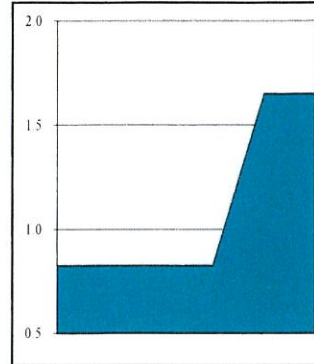
# Funding

ery and CJR requirements. However, State funding has not been distributed equitably and we are seeking a remedy. We understand the City requested Discovery funding from the State on behalf of all city prosecutors' offices, and while the five District Attorneys' offices received substantial State funding, we received much less by comparison. We have expressed our concerns to the State and have been working with them to obtain additional funds in FY 2025. We are waiting for further information on the outcome of our discussions. Should we fail to obtain sufficient State funding, we will submit a new need budget request to the City.

For FY 2025, we are renewing our funding request for alternatives to incarceration programs, which were expanded in 2020 to encompass the Manhattan Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court (ATI Court). SNP collaborates with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and the Center for Justice Innovation's (CJI) Manhattan Justice Opportunities to assist individuals who were not served by previously existing programs. Despite repeated requests for City support of our treatment and diversion offerings in FY 2023 and FY 2024, we were required to self-fund ATI programs for these two years. We are now requesting \$218,841 in FY 2025. These funds will be used to hire two social workers, employed by CJI Manhattan Justice Opportunity and assigned to SNP, and to cover costs associated with managing and coordinating the program with the Office of Court Administration (OCA). We are also requesting \$148,500 in capital funding to upgrade radios for our investigators to facilitate compatibility with the new radio system being rolled out by the NYPD in the coming years.

## State Funding Changes

State funds



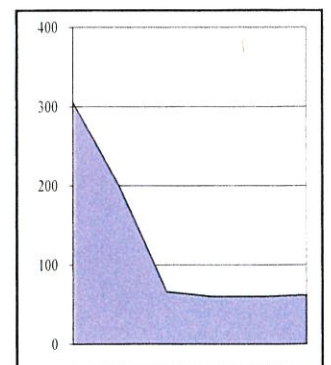
As mentioned above, in FY 2024 we were short funded as compared to the five District Attorneys' offices. State Aid to Prosecution funding for the District Attorneys' offices across the state increased by 300%, while our SNP (Aid to Prosecution) program funding remained the same at

\$825,000. This is despite a request from the City for Discovery funding from the State on behalf of all city prosecutors' offices. We have since received an additional \$825,000 in Discovery funding from the State to help us recruit and retain staff. However, our State funding is still not proportional as compared with other offices. We have expressed our concerns and hope that the State will provide additional funding to cover our shortfall in FY 2025.

## Federal Funding Updates

Our federal funding declined drastically over the years, from \$843,059 in FY 2013 to slightly over \$60,000 in FY 2024. In FY 2018 and FY 2019, we did not receive any federal funding due to our sanctuary city status. We received \$304,921 in FY 2020 from JAG programs and for COVID reimbursement combined. For FY 2025, we expect to receive about the same amount as in current fiscal year.

Federal funds





# Case Highlights

---

## Fentanyl and Lethal Mixtures

### Over 100 Lbs. of Fentanyl, Xylazine, Cocaine and Meth Seized

An investigation into fentanyl trafficking in New York City resulted in a seizure of over 25 pounds (13 kilograms) of fentanyl powder and pills, over 25 pounds (13 kilograms) of cocaine and more than 50 pounds (25 kilograms) of methamphetamine. The large stash of narcotics, worth an estimated \$10 million, was recovered from an apartment located on Grand Avenue in the University Heights neighborhood of the Bronx. DEA laboratory analysis revealed that nearly 20 pounds of the fentanyl, including some pills, were mixed with xylazine, a veterinary, non-opioid tranquilizer that is unresponsive to the most common type of overdose reversal drug. One individual was arrested after agents with DEA New Jersey Field Division observed him leave 2478 Grand Avenue carrying a bag, which he placed inside a vehicle. The bag allegedly contained a kilogram of fentanyl.



*Fentanyl powder and pills, cocaine and methamphetamine worth an estimated \$10 million*

### Cocaine and Fentanyl Seized Near Tragic Bronx Day Care

Over 40 pounds of cocaine and fentanyl, with an estimated street value of over \$5 million, were recovered in the Bronx. The seizure occurred six blocks from a day care center where, less than two weeks earlier, a one-year-old child had died from fentanyl exposure. Three other children were also taken to the hospital. During the investigation that led to the drug seizure, members of DEA New York Division, the NYPD, the NYSP and SNP conducted surveillance at an apartment building at 2800 Heath Avenue and observed a suspect leave with a rolling suitcase. They tracked the man to the Kingsbridge Road subway station where he got on a southbound train and later made a northbound return trip by subway. Agents and officers approached this individual after he left the Kingsbridge Road subway station, but the man fled, allegedly leaving behind the suitcase, which proved to contain 13 kilograms of cocaine. A few hours later, agents and officers allegedly spotted the man exiting the Heath Avenue apartment building with another suitcase. Agents and officers arrested him and recovered approximately 50,000 glassine envelopes containing mixtures of fentanyl, heroin and xylazine. A subsequent court authorized search of



2800 Heath Avenue, Apt. 1J, resulted in the seizure of over six additional pounds of cocaine and fentanyl, including 10,000 filled glassine envelopes containing a mixture of fentanyl, heroin and xylazine. The apartment was outfitted with all the equipment and paraphernalia necessary for packaging bulk quantities fentanyl.



*Over 50,000 glassines containing mixtures of fentanyl, heroin and xylazine and 13 kilograms of cocaine labeled "RZ" and "Glock" laid out on table*

### **Money Laundering Probe Nets 44 Lbs. of Fentanyl/Xylazine**

Nearly 20 kilograms of fentanyl (over 44 pounds), some of which was mixed with xylazine, was recovered during a money-laundering investigation by the El Dorado Task Force (EDTF), led by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York. The large stash of drugs was found inside CubeSmart storage units associated with the subject of the investigation. Members of EDTF followed the subject from his home in Jamaica, Queens, to a La Quinta Inn & Suites located on Queens Boulevard. In a search of his white Lexus, agents found more than \$50,000 cash that was vacuum packed with heat sealant in clear plastic bags. A court-authorized search of his residence yielded bullets, a money counter, and money laundering records. Members of EDTF identified CubeSmart storage units linked to the subject and obtained court authorization for a search. Nearly 20 kilograms of fentanyl, some laced with xylazine, and nearly 20 pounds of marijuana were seized.



*Nearly 20 kilograms of fentanyl mixed with xylazine recovered from storage units*



## Large-Scale Fentanyl Packaging Mill Dismantled



Packaging table with thousands of fentanyl glassines ready for distribution

An active fentanyl packaging mill poised to pump hundreds of thousands of individual dose envelopes onto the city's streets was dismantled in an apartment building on Grand Concourse in the Bronx. Up to 25 pounds (12 kilograms) of fentanyl, including nearly 100,000 filled glassine envelopes, were recovered following a month-long investigation. Members of NYDETF Group T-22 and SNP investigators arrested 11 individuals associated with the drug packaging operation, many of whom attempted to flee as agents and officers entered the apartment building. Seven individuals were apprehended on the roof, including four who were hiding together underneath solar panels. In a court-authorized search of the mill apartment, agents and officers

recovered nearly 100,000 filled glassines from tabletops and from bags on the couch and the floor, as well as quantities of loose powder yet to be processed. Hastily abandoned workstations featured everything necessary for packaging fentanyl, including thousands of empty glassine envelopes, grinders, scales, stamps, and other paraphernalia. The fentanyl is estimated to be worth millions of dollars.

## Fentanyl Pills and Powder Found in Vehicle's Gas Tank

Approximately 300,000 blue fake oxycodone pills containing fentanyl, plus 11 pounds (five kilograms) of powdered fentanyl, were recovered from a Ford Expedition stopped in the Bronx during a short-term investigation. The pills and powdered fentanyl were discovered inside the vehicle's gas tank. Agents and officers with DEA New York Division and the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force arrested the driver, a resident of Columbus, Ohio. Initially, an NYPD K9 detected the presence of narcotics in the vehicle, but agents and officers were unable to identify the precise location. Further investigation revealed a hidden access to the gas tank from inside the vehicle in the rear floor area. The pills and kilograms of powdered fentanyl were contained in vacuum sealed packages and submerged in the gas. The fentanyl carried an estimated street value of approximately \$5 million.



Approximately 300,000 fentanyl pills and five kilograms of fentanyl were hidden in a car gas tank



## Counterfeit-Pill Manufacturing and Interstate Trafficking

A long-term wiretap investigation into the manufacturing and interstate trafficking of fentanyl pills made to look like oxycodone resulted in the indictment of eight alleged co-conspirators. The charges stem from narcotics-related activity that allegedly occurred in Manhattan, the Bronx, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. Over 26,000 pills containing fentanyl and nearly 50,000 pills containing methamphetamine were recovered, along with over four pounds (two kilograms) of powdered fentanyl and over six pounds (three kilograms) of cocaine. The main subject of the investigation and his brother allegedly trafficked narcotics and used a pill-pressing machine in manufacturing counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl. The majority of the pills seized in the case were recovered from a boiler-room area of a residential apartment building on Woodycrest Avenue in the Bronx. The building superintendent was also among those charged as a result of the investigation by DEA New York Division, the NYPD and SNP's Investigators Unit. Members of the alleged conspiracy communicated by phone and by text message, using coded language as they discussed delivery of pill-pressing materials, pill manufacturing and imprints, and the possession and sale of narcotics. Records and communications indicate two pill-pressing machines were ordered to be delivered by mail to Manhattan. Methamphetamine pills were in various shapes, including a silhouette of former President Donald J. Trump, Bitcoin and Mickey Mouse.



*Over 70,000 multi-colored fentanyl and methamphetamine pills in various shapes and three kilograms of fentanyl powder laid out on table next to police dog*



## Drugs and Violence

### Accused Major Trafficker Nabbed in Mexico; Indicted in Kidnappings, Assaults

An accused major trafficker charged with orchestrating kidnappings and assaults in New York City was arrested in Jalisco, Mexico after more than a year and a half evading law enforcement. An investigation revealed that two kidnappings and assaults stemmed from the theft of multiple kilograms of narcotics. An indictment also alleges plans for a third kidnapping. Portions of the incidents were captured in audio and video recordings. Videos revealed that the trafficker, working with others, allegedly placed a heated iron and melted a plastic bottle over the first victim's exposed buttocks while the victim was held against his will inside an apartment on Bronxdale Avenue in Morris Park, Bronx. Other videos, recordings, and text communications allegedly revealed that the trafficker also coordinated with two other individuals to kidnap a second victim, who was also assaulted with a heated iron and held against his will inside of the same Bronx apartment. A subsequent court-authorized search of the apartment resulted in the seizure of over nine pounds of fentanyl, cocaine, heroin, and para-flourofentanyl, as well as drug paraphernalia, and a handgun. The accused major trafficker fled New York following the arrests of three alleged co-conspirators. He was arrested on a federal warrant in Jalisco and deported to the U.S. as a result of the investigation by DEA NY Division, the NYPD, U.S. Customs and Border Protection New York Field Operations and the NYSP. The U.S. Marshal's Service and Mexican authorities also provided assistance.



Left photo: Four kilograms of fentanyl mixtures, heroin and cocaine, plus kilogram presses and two guns



Right photo: Kilograms of fentanyl mixtures, heroin, and cocaine, duct tape and respirator masks displayed



## Violent Drug Trafficking Gang Dismantled in Brooklyn

A long-term wiretap investigation dismantled a violent drug trafficking gang in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Four individuals were charged in conspiracies to commit murder, assault, and weapons and narcotics crimes. Nine firearms and quantities of cocaine, heroin, oxycodone, and fentanyl were seized. The investigation, led by SNP and the NYPD's Gun Violence Suppression Division (GVSD), Gun Recidivists Investigations Program (GRIP), unveiled plots to murder and assault rivals, which were prevented by swift law enforcement response. A street crew engaged in extensive drug trafficking in and around residential buildings located at 7 Hegeman Avenue and 538 Amboy Street. During the investigation, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) responded to an overdose death inside one of the apartments, coincidentally on the same day that NYPD officers were executing multiple court-authorized search warrants inside the building in connection with this case. Multiple apartments were used to cook and package crack cocaine for sale, to store and sell cocaine and heroin/fentanyl, and to store firearms. The wiretap investigation revealed that one of the main subjects had been shot at and was planning to shoot a rival in retaliation. A series of actions by law enforcement disrupted multiple murder and assault attempts and resulted in the seizure of nine firearms.



*One of nine firearms recovered in an investigation that disrupted multiple murder and assault attempts*

## Forty-one Guns Seized in Manhattan and the Bronx



*41 guns and quantities of fentanyl and cocaine were recovered*

A long-term investigation disrupted a gun and narcotic trafficking network in Manhattan and the Bronx and resulted in the seizure of 41 guns, as well as quantities of fentanyl and cocaine. Three individuals were arrested and indicted as a result of the investigation by DEA New York Division, the NYPD and SNP's Investigators Unit. Between June 2022 and February 2023 two individuals sold a combined total of 40 guns, mostly handguns, that were obtained from a source in South Carolina and transported to New York by car for illegal resale. At the time of the arrests, an additional firearm was recovered along with ammunition.



## Three Charged in Gun and Drug Sales: 27 Firearms Seized

An undercover investigation disrupted a gun and narcotic trafficking network in the Bronx, and involved the seizure of 27 guns, as well as nearly a pound of cocaine (over 400 grams). Two brothers and a third individual were indicted as a result of the investigation, which was conducted by the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Bronx, and ran from October 2022 to March 2023. Initially, one of the brothers allegedly sold cocaine to an undercover officer, and then transitioned to selling both cocaine and guns. A total of five firearms were sold by this individual, including a pistol with a defaced serial number. Meanwhile, the second brother began selling firearms to the undercover. This second individual sold a total of 17 guns, including 16 pistols and an assault weapon. Ballistics linked one of the firearms to a homicide that occurred in the preceding month, although the defendants are not suspects in the homicide. Finally, the undercover received a phone number for a third gun trafficker, who sold an additional five guns, including one "ghost" gun. In total, the cocaine and 27 guns sold for \$43,000.



27 guns and nearly a pound of cocaine were seized

## Cocaine

### Nearly 90 Lbs. of Cocaine Seized in Queens



Kilogram packages labeled "JMY2"

An investigation into narcotics trafficking in Queens led to the seizure of nearly 90 pounds of cocaine (40 kilograms) and the arrest of an accused major trafficker and a second individual. Agents and officers with DEA New York Division Group D-43 were conducting surveillance outside a residential building at 37-63 81st Street in Jackson Heights when they observed a suspect leave the building allegedly carrying a green reusable shopping bag that appeared to contain kilogram-shaped objects. The suspect entered a blue Chrysler and drove off, with agents and officers following. The car stopped and a second individual allegedly exited the car

from the passenger side with the bag in tow. This second individual climbed into a silver Toyota Sienna and drove away. Agents and officers stopped the Toyota and recovered the bag with three kilo-



gram-sized packages inside. Later that afternoon, agents and officers arrested the individual originally seen with the bag. A subsequent court-authorized search of 37-63 81st Street, Apt. 4R, led to the seizure of numerous kilogram packages and ziplock bags allegedly containing over 80 pounds of cocaine. There were matching labels that read "JMY2" found on kilograms recovered from the apartment and the car. Laboratory analysis by the DEA and NYPD yielded positive results for cocaine.

### Over 45 Lbs. of Cocaine and Heroin; Manhattan and Yonkers

Members of NYDETF seized over 45 pounds of cocaine and heroin (21 kilograms) and arrested three individuals in Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan and in Westchester. Agents and officers tracked suspects as they allegedly transported narcotics from a Storage Post storage facility on Saw Mill River Road to a residence at 86 Livingston Avenue, both in Yonkers, and finally to Hell's Kitchen. Six kilograms of cocaine and one kilogram of heroin were transported by a Chevrolet Traverse and were seized by agents and officers on 10th Avenue. A subsequent court-authorized search of a storage unit at Storage Post-Yonkers resulted in the seizure of 14 kilograms of cocaine that appeared to match some of the kilograms recovered from the Chevrolet. Additional quantities of cocaine were recovered from one of the defendants' residences at 127 Randolph Road in White Plains, where agents and officers retrieved a firearm hidden inside a cooler in a gazebo in the backyard.



Over 45 pounds of cocaine and heroin recovered from storage facility and vehicle

### Open Drug Activity in Washington Square Park Targeted



Table used for selling mushrooms, cocaine and crack cocaine in front of memorial

Ten individuals were arrested following an investigation into the sale of cocaine and psychedelic psilocybin mushrooms in Washington Square Park. The NYPD's Narcotics Borough Manhattan South launched the investigation in July of 2023 in response to community complaints about open drug activity inside the busy public park, located in Greenwich Village. The investigation revealed the majority of the defendants were associated with a loosely affiliated street crew operating in afternoon and evening shifts to sell psilocybin mushrooms, cocaine and crack cocaine. In total, the defendants made more than a dozen sales to undercover officers.



## Suffolk County DA Charges 30 in Drug and Gang Case



Suffolk County DA Raymond Tierney holds a press conference about a large-scale narcotics trafficking and gang investigation

SNP assisted the Suffolk District Attorney's Office in a long-term narcotics trafficking and gang investigation that culminated in three indictments charging a total of 30 individuals in connection with drug trafficking, money laundering and gun possession. The investigation centered on the distribution of cocaine and fentanyl throughout Suffolk County, tracing the source of supply to New York City. Members of SNP's Investigators Unit were instrumental in securing arrests and an indictment related to the sale of large-scale quantities of cocaine and fentanyl, in amounts ranging from \$3,500 to \$10,000 per transaction.

Another of the three indictments brought by the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office contains charges linked to a drug sale that allegedly resulted in a fatal overdose. An autopsy revealed the victim had fentanyl, cocaine and xylazine in her system.

## Methamphetamine

### Vehicle Carried 40 Lbs. of Meth in Hell's Kitchen

An investigation into interstate drug trafficking led members of the NYDETF to seize 40 pounds of methamphetamine in Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan. Three men were arrested after agents and officers observed a box that allegedly contained the large load of methamphetamine passed from one vehicle to another. The transfer occurred in the vicinity of a hotel on 10th Avenue. Agents and officers recovered the box and found it contained 19 cylindrical heat-sealed packages, each weighing approximately one kilogram. One of the three men charged is a resident of Arizona and the other two reside in Virginia. Because possession of methamphetamine in any quantity is not a bail eligible offense under New York State law, all three men were released on supervised release at their arraignments with no bail set.



40 pounds of methamphetamine packaged in heat-sealed cylinders



**Testimony of Kings County District Attorney Eric Gonzalez  
Before the Committee on Public Safety  
City Council Budget Hearing  
March 20, 2024**

Good afternoon. Thank you to Chairman Salaam and the members of the committee for the opportunity to address you today alongside my colleagues regarding the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Plan, and the needs of the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office.

It is my honor to lead a dedicated team of more than 1,100 attorneys, investigators and staff serving New York's most populous borough. Working together with our law enforcement partners, we continue to make great progress improving the safety of the communities we serve and improving the fairness of our system.

Since the pandemic-era peak in 2020, Brooklyn has seen a 47% decrease in homicides and a more than 50% reduction in shooting victims. Hundreds fewer families have been victimized by gun violence and countless lives have been spared. Last summer was Brooklyn's safest on record, and we will continue to surgically

focus our efforts on the drivers of crime who cause the most harm while working to prevent violence using every tool at our disposal.

In last year's budget request, my office sought funding to continue the innovative work that is engaging communities, making them safer, and reducing the footprint of the criminal legal system. We sought funding for the staff, technology, and the services to meet ever-expanding needs, amid rising costs. Many of these needs remain unmet, straining our ability to do the vital work that is so critical to the people of Brooklyn. While the City's fiscal picture has improved, funding challenges continue to place a higher burden on our already overworked staff.

I also want to offer some background as to how the Brooklyn District Attorney's budget differs from our peer DAs. Brooklyn's asset forfeiture resources are much less than some other counties, and uniquely, we are the only District Attorney's Office that pays a significant portion of our budget--\$22 million—to rent our office space from a private landlord. This leaves us with much less to support our programs and staff. When rent is subtracted from our topline budget number, the disparity with our peer offices is very clear.

While my colleagues work in City-owned space mostly rent-free, the decision to lease space at 350 Jay Street in the 1990s. While this decision was made decades ago to centralize our operations and it continues to pose a budgetary challenge unique among our peers. I ask that you keep this in mind as you consider the



evaluating fairness of our budget, and our ability to serve Brooklyn's 2.7 million residents.

My colleagues and their offices deserve every penny they get. But while Brooklyn serves the largest population, and prosecutes the largest case volume, our budget lags behind our peers.

To illustrate this, when factoring in our rent, the Preliminary Fiscal Year 2025 appropriation would leave Brooklyn with just \$2,932 per adult disposition, about 20% less per case than the citywide average of \$4,097. And nearly 47% lower than Manhattan.

I offer this background to provide context to our funding request and ask the Council to work with us to remedy the inequities that constrain our operations and limit our ability to adapt to the challenges on the horizon.

**Project Restore:**

Some of you joined me at my legislative briefing last month at Brooklyn Law School. We were joined by Jason Bostic, a graduate of Project Restore Bedstuy. Jason told us about his path from life as a gang member with little hope, to his success this year as a student at Columbia University looking forward to what I know is going to be a very bright future. As part of this 15-month pilot program launched in the wake of takedowns of two rival gangs in Bedstuy in 2021, Jason was one of 30 young men who participated in this first-of-its-kind restorative justice initiative



to address the generations-long gang rivalries that have caused violence in their neighborhoods for decades.

The program offered these young men not just a way out, but a path forward, through internships, job opportunities, intensive healing circles, and the invaluable guidance of mentors and case managers. With support from The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, my office collaborated with Bridge Street Development Corporation, Inside Circle, and Columbia University, to help guide these young men, to address their trauma, to learn the skills they need to support themselves and their families, and to reject violence. The pilot program ended recently, and I feel strongly that Project Restore played a significant part in the reductions in violence that we have seen in the 79th and 81<sup>st</sup> precincts. Project Restore illustrates what we know, which is that traditional law enforcement responses alone are not enough to make our communities safe; for that we need to engage with communities as partners in determining for themselves what they need for their communities to thrive. The improvements to public safety we saw with this project are beyond what we hoped for, and the participants' stories are inspirational. I welcome the chance to share them in more detail with any of you, because I know you will agree that this is a program that deserves the funding not only to continue, but to be replicated in other neighborhoods in Brooklyn. To do that we're asking for \$3 million this year, and I hope that you will advocate with OMB for this amount to be baselined in our budget

to ensure shortfalls do not leave young people without the support they need to continue on the positive path they have chosen.

### **Domestic Violence**

Last year, I told this committee about the establishment of Brooklyn's Division of Gender-Based Violence, with about 20% of our employees dedicated full-time to investigating and prosecuting these cases and supporting victims and their families. Our battle against domestic violence in Brooklyn is both a moral imperative and a key pillar of our public safety strategy. A significant portion of our domestic violence cases arise from open complaint reports. This means that the police are making arrests weeks or months after the crime has occurred, but before the case comes to the District Attorney's Office. To help us better serve these vulnerable victims, I am requesting \$750,000 to hire additional staff to gather evidence and discovery material proactively so when cases reach our prosecutors, they have all essential information to proceed efficiently, and to engage victims proactively.

To ensure we can continue this vital work, I am also asking for your continued support of the Domestic Violence Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative and the Brooklyn Rising Against Violence Everyday (BRAVE) Program. These programs which are tailored to help communities facing cultural and linguistic barriers. They are not just about prosecution, but empowerment, healing, and community

resilience, ensuring every victim has access to justice and support. To continue these programs, we are requesting \$35,000 and \$458,000 respectively.

### **Cannabis Civil Enforcement Unit**

Cannabis sales by unlicensed retailers continues to be a source of tremendous public concern in Brooklyn. There are hundreds of these shops in Brooklyn alone, many of which are located near day care centers, schools, and other places where young people gather. The Governor and the State Legislature recently enacted a law that expressly authorized DA's Offices to engage in civil enforcement, such as seeking injunctions and evictions of commercial tenants, and we are renewing our request for funding to establish a new Cannabis Civil Enforcement Unit to take civil actions against these illegal shops. This unit would be comprised of one unit chief, two ADAs, and one paralegal, requiring \$470,000 funding.

### **Data & Analytics**

As we work to improve fairness and transparency in our work, and to build public trust, robust data collection and analytics capacity is essential. Reliable and clear data allows us to analyze our work, refine strategies, evaluate program success, and maintain transparency with policymakers and the public.

As part of my Justice 2020 initiative, we collaborated with CUNY's Institute for the Study of Local Government, to identify potential bias at key discretion

points in our work and to guide corrective strategies. While the study offered great insight into the effectiveness of reforms we have implemented and areas for improvement, it also highlighted the need for additional personnel and technology to enhance our data collection, analysis, and dissemination capabilities. These needs were underscored by the challenges we faced complying with the comprehensive data reporting requirements pursuant to Local Law 161 of 2021, which required our first Annual Report of Prosecutions earlier this month.

While we have made significant investments in the technology we use to investigate and prosecute cases, our data and analytics capabilities lag behind, and we are seeking \$750,000 to fund and equip a Data & Analytics Unit within the Brooklyn DA's Office.

**Hate Crimes:**

Finally, because hate crimes have seen an alarming spike in Brooklyn, we are seeking funding to hire three additional prosecutors for our Hate Crimes Bureau. These horrific offenses not only traumatize the victim, but entire communities, and they demand a robust and multifaceted response. Our comprehensive approach includes community education and engagement, as well as robust investigation and prosecution. To ensure we have sufficient staff to broaden the impact of our work, we are seeking an additional \$300,000 to combat hate crimes.

**Fairness in Funding:**

As I mentioned when I began, while my office serves New York's most populous borough, we handle the largest case volume. And yet because of our high rent and limited asset forfeiture funding, we are woefully underfunded relative to the other offices.

For these reasons, we're left with far less funding available for the programs and personnel that are essential to continuing the progress we have made. While we have received assurances in the past that these inequities would be addressed, they have not been, and I ask for the Council's support and advocacy to address them.

**Closing:**

I know that each of you cares deeply about the safety of our city, about the fairness of our system, and I am grateful for your past support of the work we do.

I thank you for the opportunity to discuss this year's budget priorities with you today, and for your consideration of the forthcoming written submission that details this request more comprehensively. I look forward to our continued work together to build on our successes, innovate in our approaches to justice, and improve safety and fairness in our city.

Thank you.

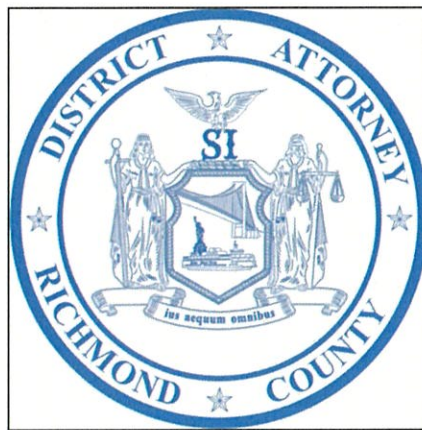
---

# OFFICE OF THE RICHMOND COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

---

FISCAL YEAR 2025 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

---



**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

MARCH 20, 2024

**MICHAEL E. McMAHON**

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

---

## **I: OVERVIEW**

Good afternoon. It is an honor and pleasure to appear before the City Council today. I hope you and your families are well and safe and I look forward to continuing our work together to improve our criminal justice system in line with our shared goal of better protecting and serving the people of the City of New York.

Mayor Adams has said time and again, “public safety is the prerequisite for prosperity.” I agree with that sentiment, as I know many of you do as well. However, as Staten Island’s chief law enforcement officer, I remain deeply concerned that the public safety challenges facing all five boroughs, particularly those unique to my home borough, are not being addressed with the seriousness, urgency, and creative thinking necessary to restore both public safety and peace of mind for all New Yorkers.

While I am incredibly proud of all the work we have done in my office, together with our partners in the NYPD, neighboring law enforcement agencies, and those who call our borough home, unfortunately, crime rose 10% on Staten Island last year. With the notable exception of an 11% decline in stolen cars, Staten Island saw increases in six of the seven index crimes in 2023.

These statistics beg the question: what caused these disturbing increases in New York City’s safest borough? During my testimony before you last year, I warned the Council that Staten Island was facing a dire shortage of uniformed police officers patrolling our borough. During the first six months of 2023, our borough had 40% fewer cops than we did in 2019. In fact, for the majority of last year there were fewer cops deployed on Staten Island than there were in 1968, when our population was half of what it is today. Fortunately, our call for more uniformed personnel was answered in the second half of last year, and although we are still short of what our appropriate staffing should be, it is no surprise that our crime numbers began to fall and move in the right direction after this deployment was made. This is a trend that has continued so far this year.

Despite these decreases, Staten Island continues to face significant public safety challenges, frustrating law enforcement professionals and causing crime victims and hard-working Staten Islanders pain and suffering. Grand larcenies, spurred by omnipresent and increasingly sophisticated scams, increased 13% in 2023. In fact, over \$2.6 million dollars was scammed from elderly Staten Islanders in 2023. These scams are no longer just innocuous, easily identified phone calls, texts, and emails, but cleverly disguised attempts to rob innocent New Yorkers of their life savings and retirement funds in the blink of an eye or the click of a link. While my office does all we can to identify and aggressively prosecute these fraudsters and recoup stolen funds for victims, the City can and must do

more to ensure New Yorkers are better protected against these threats. I urge you all to invest resources in awareness and prevention public awareness campaigns.

Another significant driver of crime on Staten Island is domestic violence, a terrible reality that impacts far too many families and we know goes widely underreported. These insidious crimes drove felony assaults up by more than 20% in 2023. While we will always support survivors and hold domestic abusers accountable in the courtroom, we once again ask that our City Council Members support the lifesaving work of our Domestic Violence Bureau and Victims Services Bureau with DOVE funding.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the overdose crisis that continues to rage, claiming the lives of over 150 of our neighbors in 2023, a record number that should shock all of us to our core. A five-alarm fire that shows no signs of abating has been ignited further by the omnipresence of fentanyl in the illicit drug supply, now found in at least 80% of fatal overdoses on Staten Island. We are also concerned with the growth of xylazine, a dangerous animal tranquilizer which is mixed with fentanyl, heroin, and cocaine and does not respond to naloxone. This substance deserves the attention of the Council as it is the latest development in our years-long fight against the overdose crisis.

I am also gravely concerned with the rise in violence among our young people. Incidents of violence perpetrated by and against our young people skyrocketed in 2023; felony juvenile arrests increased by nearly 40%, 11 shootings were committed by perpetrators under the age of 18, compared with just 1 the year before, and we lost four young Staten Islanders under the age of 18 to unspeakable acts of violence in 2023. Simply put, we are failing our kids, and they are not alright. Well-intentioned yet recklessly naïve and unfunded criminal justice reforms do nothing to serve these young people and instead, protect youth offenders from ever facing accountability in the courtroom and leave them as prey to adult gang members who use them to carry out their dirty work. Combine this with a dearth of meaningful programming post-arrest, and we are witnessing our young people never receive the care, compassion, and support they need to move past their trauma and lead meaningful, productive lives.

It is for these reasons and more that my office remains dedicated to addressing the underlying conditions of crime while encouraging supportive programming that builds families up. However, for far too long, the Richmond County District Attorney's Office has done this critical work with one arm tied behind its back. Staten Island is the only borough without a Community Justice Center, and while we have received funding for expanded programming and identified a site, the former Criminal Court building on Targee



Street in Stapleton to house the future facility, capital funding is needed to correct this inequity and bring this dream to fruition.

Similarly, our office seeks to continue and expand our Ripples of Hope Program, which started with funding from a federal grant. This important program connects children impacted by substance use disorder in their households to therapeutic services at the YMCA so that we can end the cycle of trauma and addiction. With grant funding expiring at the end of last year, this incredibly meaningful program is in need of your support.

And lastly, I continue to forcefully advocate for this body's support of a Mental Health Support and Diversion Center on Staten Island and the screening of those arrested at police precincts. As a 21<sup>st</sup> century prosecutor, I fully understand the inherent connection between mental illness and crime and the fundamental truth that we cannot prosecute our way out of every issue. These initiatives would make clear from the very beginning of a case whether a defendant is potentially suffering from a mental illness, and then would give law enforcement and their assigned counsel a place for them to go instead of being sent to already overburdened emergency rooms, examined, and released back onto the street with little to no connection to services.

As my office continues to work tirelessly to combat these challenges, our success depends entirely on us working together to make our City as safe as possible. We have remained vigilant and consistent in our dedication to the rule of law, the protection of victims of crime, and the overall improvement of public safety on Staten Island, but I must reiterate in the strongest possible terms: we need your help.

With that said, I will focus the remainder of my testimony on detailing our greatest challenges as well as our priority budget needs for Fiscal Year 2024.

### **Fiscal Priorities & Requests for Public Safety on Staten Island**

#### **1. Staten Island Community Justice Center: Total Cost - \$30,000,000 Capital Funding over multiple fiscal years to renovate and open Staten Island's Community Justice Center at 67 Targee Street (Capital)**

Last year we were grateful to receive the green light from City Hall and DCAS to house Staten Island's Community Justice Center at the city-owned 67 Targee Street, as well as the baselined support of \$635,000 from the Administration and this Council, and an additional \$125,000 in one-time FY24 discretionary funding from Council Member Hanks for programmatic and staffing needs for the Center for Justice Innovation to bring this

initiative to life. However, the critical and necessary next step to making the Staten Island Community Justice Center a reality is to obtain the capital funding necessary to move forward with the renovation of the brick-and-mortar site embedded in the community that will house its programming.

DCAS recently estimated that the cost to renovate 67 Targee Street would be \$1,000 sq/ft, amounting to roughly \$30 million dollars for the 30,000 sq. foot building. This capital funding can be provided across several fiscal years. The planning process for the renovation will also involve collaboration with the city and state (as the building is a city owned building) as well as community input and perspective, which is vital to the success of this project.

**It bears repeating that Staten Island is the only borough without a Community Justice Center of its own. This is an inequity which the City Council cannot continue to look past.** We know that Community Justice Centers and the vital supportive programming they house these have proven effective in reducing crime, building trust in the criminal justice system, and strengthening neighborhoods that have historically been at risk to violence and high volumes of crime and we ask that the Council fully support this budget request.

**2. Extend Ripples of HOPE (Federal Grant ended at the end of 2023): Total Cost for RCDA & YMCA: \$230,000 annually (mix of PS & OTPS)**

RCDA received a federal grant to start the Ripples of Hope Program in October 2020 but the funding expired at the end of last year. The program focuses on children as unspoken victims of the opioid crisis. Our team connects with parents and caregivers of children who have someone in their life with a substance use disorder and links the family to trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy at our local YMCA. These referrals can come from anywhere – following an overdose, an arrest, or a community referral. **Since its launch, hundreds of Staten Island families have been served by this program.** With overdose levels higher than ever in the city, in large part due to the pervasive availability and accessibility of fentanyl, this program is vitally important to preventing the trauma experienced by these young people from negatively impacting their life in the years to come.

We ask that the City allow us to continue this life-changing program and potentially expand it to also include children impacted by violence. Funding for this program supports staff at

RCDA and the services and staff provided at the YMCA's Little Steps Program. The total cost is \$230,000 annually (PS/OTPS split).

### **3. Advocate for Staten Island to Develop a Mental Health Support and Connection Center**

As we have expressed numerous times to various members of the Adams Administration, the NYPD, and our elected delegation: Staten Island is the perfect place to serve as a petri dish for new, innovative approaches to our city's most stubborn problems. Establishing a Mental Health Support and Connection Center or a Crisis Intervention Center on Staten Island would provide a location for NYPD, EMS, or concerned family members to bring someone experiencing mental distress to receive an evaluation and be given a treatment regimen tailored to their needs. Currently, many of these Staten Islanders are brought to Richmond University Medical Center and quickly discharged if they do not pose an immediate threat to themselves or others, or are simply allowed to remain on the streets without their clear needs being met. These types of Centers have opened in other locations in the country, and are proving to be an innovative and meaningful approach to respond to the needs of this difficult to work with population. We are in contact with the New York State Office of Mental Health and many other partners about this initiative, and we encourage the Council to provide funding and support in identifying a site to making this vision a reality on Staten Island.

#### **Conclusion:**

I thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. It would be my pleasure to answer any questions you may have, and I look forward to working with this body and its members to achieve these goals and further our shared mission of a safer and more just New York for all.

Thank you.

Office of the District Attorney, Bronx County

---

**Fiscal Year 2025 Budget**

**The Council of the City of New York  
Committees on Finance and Public Safety**

**March 20, 2024**



*Pursuing Justice with Integrity*

---

**Darcel D. Clark  
District Attorney**

We have been entrusted with the important work of protecting the public. With your help and the help of our criminal justice partners, we endeavor every day to make our community safer and to make procedural justice and fairness a greater reality as we pursue justice with integrity. Violence is our highest priority. Although the Bronx has only 17% of the City's population, 30% of the violent crime in our City occurs in the Bronx and this significantly impacts the quality of life and the chance for success for everyone who lives and works here. Our borough is traditionally under-resourced and underserved. That remains true today. To tackle the outsized share of violent crime that Bronx residents and businesses experience, our community needs more resources. We are not asking for extra money to prosecute and punish. Not every risk to public safety can or should be solved by prison or jail. Our goal is to address violence and the conditions that lead to a cycle of violence and recidivism by bringing critical resources to our Bronx community so that we have the kind of wraparound services, treatment, training, and job opportunities that are healing, preventative, and ameliorative, not punitive. We want to build our community up and help people get the skills and support they need to improve their lives so that crime and violence are not an option. And with your help, we can do it.

We thank the Mayor and City Council for their continued support of our Office and the work we are doing to serve the community. Since the FY2024 Adopted Plan, the Office has received an additional \$9.3M and an increase of 78 positions starting in

FY2025. This amount increases to \$10.3M in the baseline. Besides funding for various collective bargaining adjustments, these new resources will support many Information Technology initiatives as well as the hiring of Early Victim Engagement Liaisons, Domestic Violence Advocates, paralegals, and additional attorneys. We recognize that the past year has been financially challenging for the City and appreciate our Office's exclusion from the City's Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) as we work to maintain our baseline budget.

### **BRONX CRIME DATA**

To provide greater context to our requests, let us take stock of the year that has passed. In 2023, the NYPD submitted 42,668 arrests to our Office for prosecution. This is a 22% increase since 2022. 8,369 arrests were for violent felony crimes, which is a 12% increase from the prior year (*See Attachments 1 and 2*).

As a group, the incidence of index crimes—murder, rape, robbery, felony assault, burglary, grand larceny, and grand larceny auto—has grown over the past five years. These crimes totaled 29,844, which is a 6% increase over 2022 and a 41% increase since 2019. The numbers for violent offenses are also startling. In 2023, there were 121 homicides, which is a 2% increase from the number of homicides in the borough just five years ago but less than in 2002. There were 4,829 arrests for violent felony assaults. There were 2,146 violent felony robbery arrests. Last year in the Bronx, there were 1,434

arrests for gun offenses. There was a decrease in shootings from 2022, but 375 people were shot and that is unacceptable. (*See Attachments 3,4,5*).

Bronx County has been disproportionately affected by the increase in violent crimes. The county has approximately 1.4 million residents, a 17% share of New York City's population. The 2023 crime levels indicate the Bronx's per capita share outpaces the rest of the City. The Bronx had 31% of citywide homicides, 27% of citywide rapes, 29% of all robberies, 30% of all felony assaults, and 32% of all shooting incidents in New York City.

Last year, 93% of homicide victims and 97% of all non-fatal shootings were Black or Hispanic (Homicide victims - 47% Black, 46% Hispanic; non-fatal shooting victims – 51% Black, 46% Hispanic). (*See Attachment 6*).

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Every year, we face countless unnecessary tragedies that involve individuals who are suffering from varying degrees of mental illness and mental health challenges. In 2022, 78,600 people called 911 about emotionally disturbed persons in the Bronx. We know that individuals who have a mental health disorder are more likely to be victims rather than the perpetrators of crimes. However, when people with serious mental health disorders engage in conduct that is criminal or dangerous to others, the result can compromise community safety.

As prosecutors, we come into contact with someone who is suffering from mental illness when that individual has been arrested. The arrest generally occurs when all other systems—education, housing, behavioral health for example—have failed. Because of these failures, the criminal justice system is left to figure out what to do. For years, Rikers Island and state prisons were treated as the City’s mental health hospitals of last resort. Individuals with mental illness who commit low-level crimes cycle in and out of the system. They may receive some treatment but are released to the community where they decompensate and re-offend because the systems are not in place to support them.

Punitive measures are not the answer for people who are seriously mentally ill. If an individual commits a crime or engages in violent behavior due to unmet serious mental health needs, jail or prison is not going to make the community safer. And, even if some measure of incarceration is appropriate in a particular case, it is likely that the individual will leave jail or prison with the same unmet mental health need. We simply cannot prosecute our way out of this problem. The real solutions are complex and layered. It is time for us to come together to do the work that is sorely needed and that will prevent future tragedies humanely and empathetically.

In New York City, there are various “points of interception” between the systems in place and people with mental health problems. We wanted to understand what everyone else in the system was doing and what was possible. So, as an important



first step, we convened a Mental Health Summit. At the summit, City mental health stakeholders discussed various mental health interception points in our system, including 911/988 calls, mobile crisis units, co-response teams consisting of police and social workers, law enforcement officers trained in crisis intervention, the charging and arraignment process, supervised release programs, specialized mental health courts, re-entry services, and community treatment options through parole, probation, and community providers.

Second, we looked for models so that we could learn more about how other cities were dealing with these problems. We visited a nationally known mental health court in Miami, Florida, observed their processes first-hand and brought back to the Bronx the know-how, insights, and best practices.

Third, we created a Community Justice Bureau that has the skill and knowledge to identify those criminal cases that are appropriate for resolution by treatment programs and alternatives to incarceration. Our policy is to conference every case with an eye towards seeking out the kind of programs, services, and non-carceral resolutions to criminal cases that will have the most meaningful impact on public safety.

Fourth, whenever appropriate, we utilize a specialized Mental Health Court. The partnerships between our Office, the judges, the defense bar, and service providers are the key to success for this problem-solving court. The Mental Health Court, which has unique training and resources, accepts individuals who suffer from serious mental

illness. Most persons also have co-occurring substance use disorders, which the court is also equipped to handle. Under the supervision of the court, an individual receives treatment for 18 to 24 months. If the participant completes the program and the service provider reports positive updates to the court, and if there are no new arrests, then the participant can plead guilty to a reduced charge and receive a sentence that includes no jail or prison. In 2023, we had over 100 participants. The Mental Health Court accepted 60 new pleas. 31 of the cases are still being assessed.

As it stands now, we have only one dedicated Mental Health Court. That court is a huge asset, but it faces challenges. In short, we need additional Mental Health and problem-solving courts. The Bronx has more defendants in need of mental health treatment than one court can handle. Judges in various parts across the courthouse have cases involving a treatment disposition, but often they do not have the treatment staff or the specialized training needed to assess and manage those cases.

Along those same lines, courts need additional case assessment and management staff. Lawyers are not mental health professionals. A proper assessment of participants and cases should be done by trained specialists and experts, including psychiatrists, who are best situated to evaluate patient needs, formulate treatment plans, make appropriate referrals, and evaluate patient progress. As it stands now, the initial assessment of a potential program participant takes weeks, or even months to complete.

This results in the delay of court proceedings and case resolution and is contrary to best practices.

We have asked the State Office of Court Administration and the Chief Judge of New York for these resources. In fact, on October 23, 2023, Chief Judge Rowan Wilson visited our Mental Health Court and saw the important work the court performs on a daily basis. Chief Judge Wilson invited our Office to provide him with a list of resources the Bronx needs to sustain and improve programming for defendants with co-occurring disorders and we have done that. We are asking you now to support us in this request.

There is also a need to expand the capacity for residential programs that are alternatives to incarceration. Currently, there is a wait list at Harbor House, which is the primary City-wide residential program for individuals with co-occurring disorders (serious mental illness and substance abuse). Samaritan Village, which also provides these services, is overwhelmed. The Greenburger Center has broken ground on the construction of Hope House—a 16-bed residential semi-secure program located in Crotona Park in the Bronx—which will open in 2025. Only four beds, however, will be dedicated to persons who have cases in the Bronx. More are needed.

We further recommend support for Bronx County's new FACT (Forensic Assertive Community Treatment) Team, which will be serviced by CASES. FACT teams provide the highest level of mental health treatment on an outpatient basis. The FACT team members literally and figuratively meet people where they are. For example,



if a person is homeless, they will meet that person on the street. If the individual is too sick to see a doctor at an office, they will prescribe and fill a prescription on the spot.

## BRONX YOUTH AND GUN VIOLENCE

In 2023, 31% of the City’s shooting incidents involving youths (persons who were seventeen years old or younger) occurred in the Bronx. 32% of all gun arrests involving youths were in the Bronx. 28% of the victims in shooting incidents that occurred in the Bronx are youth (*See Attachments 7 and 8*). These figures are higher than expected because the Bronx comprises 17% of the City’s population.

Despite the urgency to curb youth gun violence, we cannot and do not treat adolescents as fully formed adults. Generally speaking, the culpability of a young person is different. After all, the area of the brain that controls judgment and decision making—including weighing long-term consequences and controlling impulses—takes longer to develop. “[R]esearch shows that full psycho-social maturity and adult-like decision making competence does not completely develop until the twenties.” Kevin Lapp, *Taking Back Juvenile Confessions*, *UCLA Law Review*, 902, 915 (May 2017). Because teenagers “lack the experience, perspective, and judgment” of adults, they are the “most susceptible to influence” and “outside pressures.” *J.D.B. v North Carolina*, 564 US 261, 275 (2011)(internal quotations omitted), *citing Roper v Simmons*, 543 US 551, 569 (2005); *Eddings v Oklahoma*, 455 US 104, 115-16 (1982). In other words, in many situations,

adolescents may not be responsible for their criminal conduct in the same way and to the same extent that adults are.

Additionally, the impact of incarceration is different on the young. There is growing evidence that incarceration is an ineffective means of steering youth away from violent or criminal behavior. Incarceration can be traumatizing and can expose youth to abusive and traumatic environments. Incarceration interrupts development and makes it less likely that an individual will be able to obtain the skills needed to become employed, to pursue educational goals, or to succeed in life. In many instances, incarceration is setting youth up to fail in the future, and that is no recipe for improving public safety. Studies show that, in general, adolescents respond more positively to rehabilitative measures than to punitive ones and, therefore, we believe that incarceration should be reserved only for the most violent, egregious conduct by out youth.

Accordingly, our Office examines every case involving a 13- to 17-year-old—and the cases that come to us involve serious, violent conduct, including shootings and gun offenses—to determine whether treatment or programming is the best resolution instead of incarceration. Despite the high incidence of youth-involved violence and gun crimes, the Bronx Youth Part currently does not have the infrastructure to appropriately support programming. Currently, the lawyers gather information and arrange for treatment. This means that the information that will form the basis of the Court's

opinion, including critical details about pending Family Court matters, is incomplete and often inadequate. Similarly, the proposed treatment plan may reflect partisan preferences without addressing an individual's actual needs or the interests of community safety.

There should instead be a neutral, third-party expert entity in the Youth Part that evaluates potential program participants, gathers information about pending Family Court cases, provides other relevant background information on the youth, assesses an individual's risks and needs, and makes referrals. In addition, the Youth Part should have case managers to navigate programming for youths and provide updates to the court. This approach will lead to better outcomes because the court will be able to rely on information that is more complete, party-neutral and without bias, and grounded in youth expertise. It should also result in cases being resolved with greater efficiency and speed.

### **A BRONX COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER**

A Community Justice Center endeavors to improve public safety by investing in local residents, transforming public spaces, and re-imagining the criminal justice process. A Center of this kind provides neighborhood-focused programs that address local public safety problems. The programs and services offer a better response when a crime has occurred because they connect persons to judicially supervised behavioral health treatment, educational and job development programs, housing and other



community-based services. A Community Justice Center can provide innovative initiatives that help solve complex neighborhood problems and build stronger communities.

In 1993, a Community Court was opened in midtown Manhattan to respond more effectively to quality-of-life offenses. The goal was to combine punishment and help, by linking participants to community restitution projects and on-site social services. From that came a Community Justice Center in Harlem. Brooklyn has had a Community Justice Center in Red Hook since 2000, and opened a second one in Brownsville.

Our Bronx community needs a full-service Community Justice Center much like the one that is in Brownsville. Ideally, this would be a centrally located space that would be home to a rich circle of wraparound community-based programs and services aimed towards a restorative approach to justice that promotes public safety and avoids incarceration. In addition, the on-site programming would include parole and probation satellite offices, in order to allow easy access to appointments. Moreover, the co-located service providers would provide programs for drug and alcohol treatment, behavioral health therapies, housing resources, educational opportunities and job development classes, workforce recruitment information, community service and restitution options.

Currently, in the Bronx, we have only two problem solving courts that are equipped to handle cases where the sentence involves programming. Apart from our

Mental Health Court, there is a Gun Diversion Court, among the first of its kind in the nation, which provides alternatives to incarceration for young adults facing gun possession charges. The two problem-solving courts in the Bronx need more support to serve our community. We need additional problem-solving court judges, psychiatrists, social workers, and peers.

Like so many other communities, we want to help our young people make better choices and avoid involvement with the criminal justice system. Our gun diversion program is one way we strive to achieve that goal. Additionally, in 2023, we held an inaugural Youth Summit and we have an ongoing Youth Advisory Council, where we hear directly from our young people about what they need. A Bronx Community Justice Center could augment this focus on youth programs that teach peacemaking, community service, and a youth court where teenagers are trained to resolve real-life cases involving their peers.

Additionally, our Office has hosted several job training and employment fairs. At one event, 40 community organizations and providers offered job training—including coaching on interviewing and resume writing. Participants could apply for jobs, and some came away from the event with a real job in hand. But these kinds of re-entry services are too few and far between. A Community Justice Center would prioritize re-entry and post-incarceration support. In short, Bronx County would greatly benefit from a Community Justice Center that is dedicated to resourcing these problem-

solving approaches and infusing our community with growth and positivity as a path away from crime and violence.

A Community Justice Center would also benefit crime victims. At the Bronx District Attorney's Office, we focus our energies and efforts to support crime victims. We have expanded our victims' services. Anyone who has been the victim of crime—even if they never came forward to press charges—can come to our Office to receive therapeutic services. A Bronx Community Justice Center could expand our existing work with victims by having an on-site victim assistance program and other opportunities to engage in restorative practices that empower survivors to achieve stability and safety in their lives.

Finally, a Community Justice Center would have a healing impact on the community as a whole. Everyone plays a part in public safety, and putting resources towards preventative and restorative programs is the best measure to ensure that court-based intervention and incarceration is not necessary. A Community Justice Center envisions roles and resources for everyone: residents, local merchants, neighborhood institutions, social service providers, and justice partners, such as police, prosecutors, defenders, and the courts. The people who live and work in the Bronx deserve a thriving Community Justice Center.



## VICTIM SERVICES

### Rape Crisis Center

For decades, the Bronx District Attorney's Office was the only District Attorney's Office in New York State that had a Rape Crisis Center accredited by the NY State Department of Health (DOH). The Center had been accredited since the 1980s. It was one of only two accredited rape crisis centers in the Bronx and the only one that served the South Bronx, which is one of the poorest communities in the state<sup>1</sup> and nation.<sup>2</sup> Our center, the larger of the two in the Bronx, served 389 sexual assault survivors in 2022. Most of these individuals, who resided in households with a median income of \$47,036,<sup>3</sup> lack the resources to travel outside the community for services.

When DOH recently changed its rules and guidelines to exclude any District Attorney's Office from running a Rape Crisis Center, our Center lost its accreditation, leaving the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center as the sole remaining Rape Crisis Center located in Bronx County. Significantly, the Bronx has one of the highest incidents of reported rapes in NY State and has the least number of resources available to our sexual assault survivors. We request that the City support the establishment of

---

<sup>1</sup> See *New Yorkers in Need: A Look at Poverty Trends in New York State for the Last Decade*, Office of the New York State Comptroller (based on 2020 census, Bronx poverty rate was 24.4%).

<sup>2</sup> The South Bronx is the poorest district in the nation, the US Census finds that 38% live below the poverty line (nydailynews.com).

<sup>3</sup> See US Census Bureau Quick Facts: Bronx County New York: As of 2022, per capital annual income is \$25,845 and 27.6% live in poverty.

additional Rape Crisis Centers in the Bronx to help provide free and confidential services for sexual assault victims, survivors, and their close family and friends. Every other Borough in NYC has at least one Hospital-based Rape Crisis Center, Manhattan has six, but the Bronx has none. While a Hospital-based Rape Crisis Center does not operate at a profit, it is vital that at least one or more hospitals in the Bronx step up to meet this challenge.

### **Crime Victims Assistance Bureau**

We are very proud of the work that we do providing a robust suite of services to crime victims. In 2023, our Crime Victims Assistance Bureau (CVAB) successfully provided referrals and services to over 5,890 new clients, delivered follow-up care and emotional support to approximately 44,442 established clients, and processed over 30,738 unique services to crime victims and witnesses. Our diverse team of general advocates, liaisons, specialized coordinators, and therapists assisted crime victims and witnesses with advocacy, crisis intervention, and comprehensive support throughout the complex and at times overwhelming criminal justice process.

Last year, CVAB received City funding to hire two additional Early Victim Engagement (EVE) Liaisons to bolster supportive services and referrals available to survivors of intimate partner and gender-based violence. In 2022, operating with only two liaisons, the EVE Program provided outreach and support to 3,324 new clients and ongoing follow-up care to 4,199 survivors. With the increase in staff, CVAB is working

to alleviate the extensive workload of the EVE Liaisons and extend support to survivors whose cases were deferred or declined for prosecution.

Last year, CVAB requested and received City funding to hire two additional Domestic Violence Advocates to provide survivors with concrete services and advocacy, especially after arraignment when relocation, financial support, and safety assessments are critically needed. The Domestic Violence Advocate position was also revised, and the advocates now work exclusively on the distinctive needs of domestic violence survivors to enhance the overall quality of care and services. We currently have four DV Advocates serving our community.

### **Homicide Advocate Program and Violence Response Team**

With funding provided by the City, CVAB has established both a Homicide Program and a Violence Response Team to assist victims and their families, regardless of whether there is a prosecution. The Homicide Advocate program provides comprehensive and long-term support to the families of homicide victims. Immediately after the program receives a referral, either directly from Bronx Homicide or from the assigned Homicide prosecutor, a dedicated advocate is assigned to connect with the victim's family and offer a range of services. These services include assistance with compensation for funeral expenses, which can be a significant financial burden during a difficult time, and support with the Office of Medical Examiner, if necessary.

In addition to practical assistance, the program provides advocacy services to help survivors navigate the complex legal system and connect them with other resources to support them in their grief. Once an arrest has been made, the program follows up with the Homicide Detective for updated information and keeps clients abreast of the court process/proceedings. The Homicide Advocates also connect survivors to the assigned assistant district attorney, who provides legal guidance and support throughout the trial process. In 2023 our Homicide Advocates provided support to 193 unique cases and 397 individuals (multiple members of one family).

Our Violence Response Program engages victims of non-fatal shootings, robberies, serious assaults and attempted murder and their families soon after the crime to provide comprehensive services as well as an immediate connection to our Office. Cooperation with the investigation and prosecution of the crime is not required to receive services or assistance from our team.

The Violence Response Team consists of three Violence Response Advocates, a Senior Advocate, and a Supervisor, who manages both the violence response and homicide programs. The team provides victims services seven days a week. In 2023, the Violence Response Team, serviced 311 unique clients.

We receive referrals from sources inside our Office as well as from attorneys, hospitals, community-based organizations, and cure violence programs. The advocates establish contact with victims and their families at the earliest practical time after the



crime—usually within 24 hours and even before there has been an arrest—to provide support and concrete services using a victim-centered trauma-informed approach and psychological first aid. The initial contact is primarily made by telephone, however, the advocate will meet the victim where it is most convenient for them, including at hospitals, precincts, and in some instances at homes or other private settings.

The services provided include but are not limited to, safety assessments, relocation assistance, on-site therapy referrals, Office of Victim Services compensation, criminal justice navigation support and court accompaniment. In addition to providing emergency and extended supportive services, the Violence Response Team also conducts community/street outreach via community response rallies, vigils and marches providing an immediate connection to those seeking services. The violence response team has also facilitated preventive workshops in local schools. The team has collaborated with The Bronx High School for Law Government and Justice to educate the students on CVAB services, the role of The District Attorney's Office and its various bureaus.

Both the Homicide Advocate Program and Violence Response Program are staffed with specialty advocates who receive additional and specialized training. Our Housing Specialist works very closely with both teams, and the work that they have done has been a great success. However, there are still certain gaps that need to be addressed.

## **Housing and Relocation**

Bronx residents continue to be challenged by the lack of housing available and the difficulty in securing vouchers. The resource that is most requested by victims/witnesses to violent crimes is relocation. Funding and resources are similarly needed to assist DV victims in paying for suitable emergency housing or shelter placement. The ability to assist DV victims with relocation is critical in ensuring victim safety and gaining victim cooperation in prosecutions. For at least two years, there has been a significant backlog in the approval of housing vouchers and a reduction in available housing and shelter space. When housing is available, victims often lack the resources to pay the upfront costs for moving. When a victim remains in housing that they either shared with an abuser or in housing that is known to an abuser, they are vulnerable to harassment by the abuser's family members, friends or by the abuser himself. This often causes a victim to be reluctant to participate in the prosecution for fear of reprisal and puts the victim's safety in jeopardy. In FY2023, the Office received funding from Council Member Velazquez for victim services. Of the \$50,000 granted, \$21,000 was used for victim relocation/witness protection. Additional funding appropriated to our Office will allow us to continue to assist victims who are in similar dire situations.

Furthermore, the Bronx needs more child and family therapy programs for undocumented crime victims who typically lack the financial resources and health

insurance needed to access trauma-informed care to help them rebuild their lives in the aftermath of their victimization. Additional programs and services are also needed to address the immediate needs of individuals dealing with the dual diagnosis of substance use and mental health disorders.

## **Safe Horizon**

Safe Horizon helps survivors, their families, and their communities heal by providing assistance such as shelter, food, immediate financial support, and more. Yet victim service providers like Safe Horizon are facing funding cuts. We support Safe Horizon's proposal to the New York City Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) Request for Proposal (RFP) titled "Court Programs" (EPIN 06924P0015).

Safe Horizon and the Bronx District Attorney's Office have a long collaborative history to provide advocacy services to victims/survivors of domestic and gender-based violence and other crimes in the Bronx. This collaboration with Safe Horizon dates back to its inception in 1978. Experienced Safe Horizon case managers work throughout the civil and criminal justice system, including in police precincts and domestic violence court parts, to provide advocacy referrals, safety assessments and risk management, as well as concrete services such as food vouchers and transportation.

One of the most admirable aspects of Safe Horizon's work is its comprehensive approach to addressing the complex needs of survivors. From legal assistance and

counseling to shelter and advocacy services, Safe Horizon offers a holistic support network that enables individuals to rebuild their lives with dignity and resilience. Their efforts not only ensure that survivors receive the justice and protection they deserve but also foster healing and recovery in the aftermath of trauma.

Safe Horizon plays a unique and critical role in the Criminal and Family Courts of NYC—providing survivors with high quality services, effective advocacy, and assistance navigating complicated systems. With a deep understanding of trauma, racism, and gender-based violence—and a deep respect for the survivors they work with—Safe Horizon’s staff take a compassionate and culturally-responsive approach. With many years of experience, and a commitment to growth and change, Safe Horizon has an established and important presence in the NYC and Bronx Courts.

We are proud to support Safe Horizon’s Court Programs proposal. We believe that Safe Horizon is uniquely qualified to provide these services for the City in the years ahead.

## **FENTANYL**

Fentanyl is a powerful, lab-made (synthetic) opioid that is 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin. A very small amount can be lethal and even unknowing contact with fentanyl can have tragic results. This year, we saw four children poisoned when they were exposed to fentanyl that was being stored at a licensed home daycare center in the Bronx. A 22-month-old boy died, and three



other children became seriously ill. An investigation revealed that a kilo of fentanyl was in a closet in the daycare, and six kilos of fentanyl, heroin and other controlled substances were under a trap door in the floor, under a padded mat where children napped. Kilo presses and other drug paraphernalia were there as well.

This deadly narcotic drug is flooding the Bronx and we are working to ensure that a tragedy such as this does not happen again. We have been conducting a proactive long-term investigation with the NYPD into drug trafficking and we have focused, in particular, on fentanyl and any possible connections to residential daycare centers, to ensure the safety of our children. I also support the legislation by Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez and Senator Gustavo Rivera improving training and inspections for home daycares.

In addition, our Special Investigations Bureau has conducted numerous intensive investigations to identify major fentanyl traffickers. The evidence we collected, in cooperation with the NYPD, enabled the police to seize—pursuant to duly authorized search warrants—large amounts of fentanyl in various cases, including A-1 weight. Furthermore, in partnership with the NYPD, we successfully prosecuted cases where large quantities of fentanyl were sold to undercover officers. For example, in one case, an individual sold one kilo of fentanyl to an undercover police officer. In another case, we indicted three individuals for Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, an A-1 felony, for operating a fentanyl mill in the Bronx. The persons

running the operation brought the fentanyl here from Pennsylvania and Connecticut, and then packaged the drug for sale and distribution throughout the NYC metropolitan area. The fentanyl seized at the Bronx location was valued at approximately \$300,000 on the streets. A loaded handgun was also recovered. I want to thank Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan for her office's work in seizing numerous kilos of fentanyl and prosecuting high-level distributors.

### **NEW DNA TECHNOLOGY FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT COLD CASES**

Last year a Florida man was charged in separate indictments for raping a woman in the Bronx and a woman in Manhattan two decades ago, after new DNA technology linked him to the brutal attacks. These are the first sexual assault cases in the state solved with Investigative Genetic Genealogy. With the help of a DOJ grant, we provided justice for two women who survived terrifying attacks. Our Bronx victim said she had been waiting more than 20 years to hear that her alleged rapist was caught. We will also use IGG to identify John Doe homicide victims to give closure to their families.

### **THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

In July 2023, we created a Construction Fraud Prosecution Initiative (CFPI). The mission of this initiative is to combat fraud in the construction industry by holding companies and executives accountable when they exploit their workers, either by stealing their wages, or jeopardizing their safety. In 2023, CFPI collaborated with the New York City and the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, and the

New York State Department of Labor to investigate and prosecute construction enterprises that employ “off-the-books” workers and, thereby, underpay withholding taxes, unemployment insurance premiums and workers’ compensation premiums, and commit wage theft.

In line with our focus on worker safety, in 2023, the Investigations Division investigated the circumstances leading to work-related fatalities. In one case, we conducted a comprehensive investigation surrounding the August 29, 2019, death of Segundo Manuel Huerta Mayancela, a construction worker who died of blunt force trauma after being crushed by 1,000 pounds of debris at a construction site located at 94 East 208<sup>th</sup> Street in the Bronx. As a result of that investigation, in a first-of-its-kind case in the Bronx, building contractors were charged with Manslaughter in the Second Degree and Criminally Negligent Homicide for a construction related fatality. In another case, Joseph Rosa, a 25-year-old apprentice mechanic was killed when an elevator car plunged six stories crushing him. Following an intensive investigation, a senior elevator mechanic on the job was charged with Criminally Negligent Homicide for failing to adhere to safety protocols thereby causing Rosa’s death.

We are also investigating the circumstances that to the partial building collapse of 1915 Billingsley Terrace on December 11, 2023, to determine whether there is any potential criminal liability by the building’s owner, the contractor who worked on the building, or by the engineer who approved the construction work. Thus far, we have

interviewed numerous witnesses, reviewed voluminous records and are consulting with expert witnesses involved in the construction industry.

## **RETAIL THEFT**

Thefts from retail stores—which can include robberies, assaults, and the use of weapons and violence—continue to have a significant impact on the financial health of businesses, on the morale of their workforces, and on the quality of life for the residents in our communities. The possibility of encountering thieves in a store discourages shoppers and creates an untenable and unsafe situation for workers. Even inexpensive goods are under lock and key, which makes shopping inconvenient for merchants and customers alike. Stolen goods are resold online or at other establishments, which makes the financial repercussions even worse.

This year we utilized various strategies to address thefts and the patterns of thefts at retail stores. First, from our Office, we brought together a multidisciplinary team to tackle the problem. Our team worked closely with NYPD, large retail stores—including the Burlington Coat Factory and Rite Aid—and an association of independent grocers and family-owned stores, and the Collective Action to Protect Our Stores (CAPS) to devise and implement an effective strategy. Planning sessions led to new and strengthened partnerships where the businesses and NYPD shared information on high priority recidivists and our Office advised the stores on what we needed from them to build better cases and to obtain outcomes that would reduce the incidence of theft. The



loss prevention officer for one retail chain has credited our Office as a model for how retail thefts should be handled.

Several prosecutors from our General Crimes Bureau are specifically trained to handle the highest priority recidivist defendants. In addition, once we gather the evidence and put a case together, we consider whether the person charged could benefit from a diversion program that would address the root causes of the shoplifting or theft, including issues related to mental health and substance abuse. If the individual has committed multiple thefts, we determine whether it is appropriate to aggregate the incidents and charge a more serious offense, like grand larceny. Even before an arrest is made, we try to have our evidence and discovery material prepared so it is ready to go when the case commences. We also occasionally use no trespass notices for individuals who have repeatedly targeted particular stores.

### **GRAND LARCENY AUTO, CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT**

The theft of vehicles is on the rise in the Bronx and nation-wide. Cases were becoming difficult to prove because the traditional indicia of theft were often lacking. Gone are the days of using a screwdriver to break into a car or hotwiring the vehicle to get it to start. Now, thieves need only to reprogram a key fob. When someone is caught driving the stolen car, he has the key fob for the car, so there is little proof that he knew or should have known it was stolen. Additionally, a number of cases involve organized rings of thieves. We have seen some cases where individuals are caught with multiple

car key fobs on their person. We have seen cases where thieves create new VIN numbers and fake ownership records so that the cars can be sold to unsuspecting buyers, often on sites such as Facebook Marketplace.

Under a grant through DCJS, we have a team of trained detective investigators and prosecutors working on car cases. Our detective investigators partner with local precincts to combat these thefts. The police have created a new auto larceny unit and are working with us to identify high priority recidivists and to enhance the investigations. “Bait car” operations have yielded fruit and, overall, the cooperative effort to address auto theft has been successful. In 2023, we recovered 264 stolen cars worth over \$7 million.

We have done multiple events with the NYPD to etch serial numbers on catalytic converters to help prevent theft of these expensive components, and provide Apple AirTag tracking devices to Kia and Hyundai owners to stem theft. At the same time, we are continuing investigations of organized converter theft rings.

### **CRIME ON THE SUBWAY AND BUSES**

Many members of our community rely on public transportation and the increase in crime—or even a perceived increase in crime—on the subway and throughout mass transit is a source of concern. We are working to address crime in the subways and on buses, including assaults and recidivist larcenists. We have worked with the Special Counsel to the MTA and the NYPD to share information and develop meaningful

coordinated strategies. Our approach overall is multifaceted. We prioritize cases involving assaults on MTA employees and recidivist offenders. When someone has been assaulted, we scrutinize the case thoroughly to determine whether a felony prosecution is both viable—based on the available evidence—and the best path. Because the perpetrators of these crimes often have significant mental health issues, we work with our expert team to assess whether mental health treatment is appropriate.

## **TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY**

We know how important it is to build community trust and empowerment through transparency and accessible data and information. At the beginning of 2024, we released on our website interactive data dashboards and reports analyzing arrests and prosecutions.

We hired a vendor (Luminosity) who worked with our Strategic Planning & Analytics Unit to create a new data warehouse and data processing pipeline. Once the requisite infrastructure was in place, we built the systems needed to create and maintain standardized analysis files that link data from multiple sources, standardize definitions, and accurately measure and report on office performance and outcomes of our cases. Moreover, we purchased an additional tool (Power BI) and the Office is now able to reshape the way that data will be visualized moving forward, through the creation of public-facing interactive dashboards on our website at [Dashboards \(nyc.gov\)](https://dashboards.nyc.gov).

The dashboards, which are easy to access and user-friendly, feature data from 2019 through the present and the data is updated every three months in order to provide the most complete information available on arrests, prosecution charging decision, arraigned cases, pretrial release and bail, case disposition, sentencing, and defendant and victim demographics. We included a supplemental data and legal glossary, and an illustration of the criminal case process, to make the dashboards easier to use and understand. These dashboards are filterable by year and comply with the reporting that is mandated under Local Law 161 (New York City Council Int 1392-2019).

Additionally, our website contains information that further reflects our commitment to accountability and transparency, including data stories that contain reports entitled, Serious Crime Trends 2018 - 2022, Bronx Arrests and Arrestee Demographics, Trends in Prosecutor Charging Decisions 2018 – 2022, Arraigned Cases & Most Common Charges 2022, Trends in Pretrial Release Conditions and Bail Setting 2018 – 2022, and Case Dispositions Outcomes and Sentencing 2022.

We are proud of what we have accomplished. We believe that our efforts to improve transparency and accountability will give the members of our community a greater understanding of how the criminal justice system is working for them and how it is delivering justice to crime victims and to everyone we serve.



## CONVICTION INTEGRITY

In 2016, only months after taking office, District Attorney Clark created the Office's first Conviction Integrity Bureau. The Bureau, which is headed by a former defense attorney and staffed by a team of experts in post-conviction review, is dedicated to improving the quality and integrity of prosecutions. The purview of the bureau is wide in scope, and throughout the past year, it provided critical services in multiple areas.

First, in 2023, the Conviction Integrity Bureau conducted an independent review of post-judgment claims of actual innocence and wrongful conviction in dozens of cases. The review was generally fact-based and extra-judicial. Even if no apparent relief was due under the laws, the bureau reassessed cases and evidence based on principles of equity and fairness. As part of its review, the bureau conducted a thorough reinvestigation in at least twelve cases. One investigation, which was done jointly with the Innocence Project, resulted in the vacatur of a 1999 conviction for attempted murder.

The Conviction Integrity Bureau also independently audited cases connected to an NYPD detective Joseph Franco who had been indicted for committing perjury before a Manhattan grand jury and for falsifying information in police reports in narcotics cases. The detective was terminated from the NYPD following departmental disciplinary proceedings. Before these episodes of misconduct, the detective had

previously worked for years as an undercover narcotics officer in Bronx. The Conviction Integrity Bureau identified hundreds of affected cases and notified the defense. Many of the cases had ended in a conviction by guilty plea. All of the convictions predated the detective's misdeeds. Nevertheless, in our view, the detective's credibility was so compromised, in cases where there were similar circumstances and where the detective's credibility was critical to the determination of guilt or innocence, we agreed the conviction could not stand. Last year the last of 324 Bronx cases connected to Franco were dismissed. Similarly, the bureau helped to identify and disclose cases affected by an erroneous identification that had been made and approved by NYPD Latent Print detectives.

The bureau also helped to review clemency applications that were before the Governor as well as applications for relief under the Domestic Violence Survivor Justice Act and the START Act. In this regard, the Conviction Integrity Bureau brought to bear its unique perspective and voice, and a willingness to give cases a fresh look.

## **CONCLUSION**

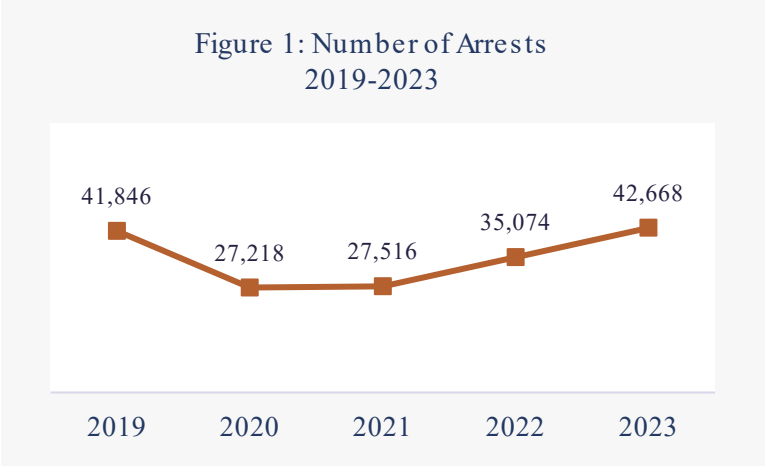
We hope you will see the need for providing vital resources to help improve the lives of Bronxites, which will lead to a decrease in violent crime and the betterment of the community.

# **Appendix**

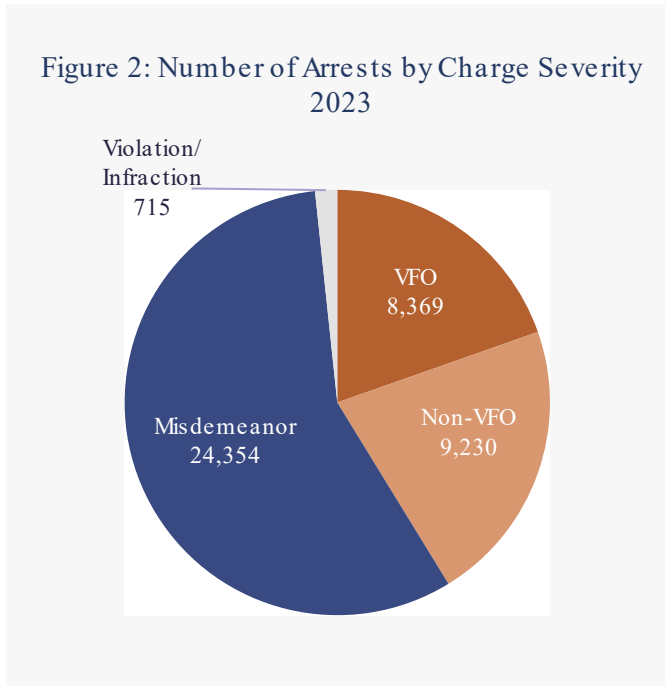
# ARRESTS

In 2023, NYPD submitted 42,668 arrests to the Bronx District Attorney’s Office (BXDA). The number of arrests fell in 2020 but has been rising steadily since and surpassed 2019 levels in 2023.

Arrests are defined as all criminal complaints submitted by NYPD to BXDA on the same date (within 24 hours) for the same defendant.<sup>1</sup> If a defendant is arrested one two separate occasions in the same year, two arrests for that defendant will exist in the given year. Similarly, NYPD might file multiple complaints for the same defendant in a 24-hour time frame, in which case only one arrest for that defendant will be counted.



## Arrest Charge Severity



Arrests are categorized by the severity of the top charge submitted by NYPD. Felonies are further classified as violent felony offenses (VFOs) or non-violent felony offenses (non-VFOs).<sup>2</sup>

In 2023, misdemeanor charges were the top charge at arrest for 57.1% of arrests.

Felonies were almost evenly split between violent (47.6%) and non-violent (52.4%).



# ARRESTS by TOP CHARGE CATEGORY

- Felony and violation arrests have surpassed 2019 levels in 2023.
- There was an especially large uptick (157% higher than 2022) in the number of arrests for violations.



- Resource-heavy VFO cases continue rise, adding to the workload.
- The increase in violation arrests is almost entirely comprised of vehicle traffic law offenses.
  - There may have been a policing change for VTL offenses in 2023.

Top Charge on Arrest	Total	Total	Total	1-Year Change	5-Year Change
	2019	2022	2023	22 vs 23	19 vs 23
Misdemeanor	25,326	19,285	22,907	+19%	-11%
Non VFO	8,471	7,448	9,230	+24%	+8%
VFO	6,196	7,499	8,369	+12%	+26%
Violation	1,853	842	2,162	+157%	+14%
Total	41,846	35,074	42,668	+22%	2%

# ARRESTS: FOCUS ON PRIORITY OFFENSES

- Property crimes, drugs, and motor vehicle theft increased more than priority offenses in 2023.
- All index crime rates are up from 2019 with property crime rates increasing the most.
- There were declines for murder and rape crimes and arrests over the prior year.

Felony Index	Arrests in 2022	Arrests in 2023	+/-	Crime 2022-2023 +/-	Crime 2019-2023 +/-
Murder	182	101	-45%	-8%	+2%
Assault *	4,575	4,829	+6%	+10%	+29%
Robbery	1,803	2,146	+19%	-3%	+23%
Rape	249	242	-3%	0%	-
Burglary	735	993	+35%	0%	+55%
Grand Larceny	695	841	+21%	+1%	+62%
Motor Vehicle Theft**	258	395	+53%	+27%	+138%
<b>Other Priority Offenses</b>					
Controlled Substances (Felony)	2,608	3,303	+27%	-	-
Petit Larceny	2,482	3,443	+39%	-	-
Assault-Related (Felony)	1,176	1,617	+38%	-	-
Possession of a Weapon (Felony)	1,401	1,434	+2%	-	-



➤ Arrests for felony property crime increased from 2022, but the crime rate did not rise as much in that same timeframe.



# Index Crime Report

## Bronx & City Wide

Bronx County	2023 (12/31)	2022 (12/31)	% Change ('23-'22')	% Change ('19-'23)
Murder	121	131	-8%	2%
UCR Rape	651	653	0%	***%
Robbery	4,988	5,163	-3%	23%
Felony Assault	8,260	7,508	10%	29%
Burglary	2,890	2,892	0%	55%
Grand Larceny	8,118	8,061	1%	62%
Grand Larceny Auto	5,107	4,008	27%	138%
Total	29,844	28,148	6%	41%

City Wide	2023 (12/31)	2022 (12/31)	% Change ('23-'22')	% Change ('19-'23)
Murder	391	438	-11%	2%
UCR Rape	2,422	2,587	-6%	***%
Robbery	16,910	17,411	-3%	17%
Felony Assault	27,876	26,061	7%	24%
Burglary	13,773	15,745	-13%	8%
Grand Larceny	50,586	51,566	-2%	13%
Grand Larceny Auto	15,795	13,750	15%	80%
Total	126,786	126,588	0%	20%

Attachment 4



# City-Wide Violence Overview

Homicides	2023	2022	% Change ('23-'22')	% Change ('19-'23)
<b>Bronx</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>-8%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Manhattan	73	78	-6%	-5%
Brooklyn	128	140	-9%	-9%
Queens	50	78	-36%	-35%
Staten Island	19	11	73%	27%
Citywide	391	438	-11%	-9%

Shooting Victims	2023	2022	% Change ('23-'22')	% Change ('19-'23)
<b>Bronx</b>	<b>375</b>	484	<b>-23%</b>	<b>-17%</b>
Manhattan	186	251	-26%	-22%
Brooklyn	<b>399</b>	544	<b>-27%</b>	<b>-32%</b>
Queens	161	252	-36%	-35%
Staten Island	29	35	-17%	-19%
Citywide	1150	1566	-27%	-26%

Shooting Incidents	2023	2022	% Change ('23-'22')	% Change ('19-'23)
<b>Bronx</b>	<b>316</b>	408	<b>-23%</b>	<b>-17%</b>
Manhattan	162	211	-23%	-20%
Brooklyn	<b>338</b>	449	<b>-25%</b>	<b>-29%</b>
Queens	131	198	-34%	-34%
Staten Island	27	28	-4%	-16%
Citywide	974	1294	-25%	-25%

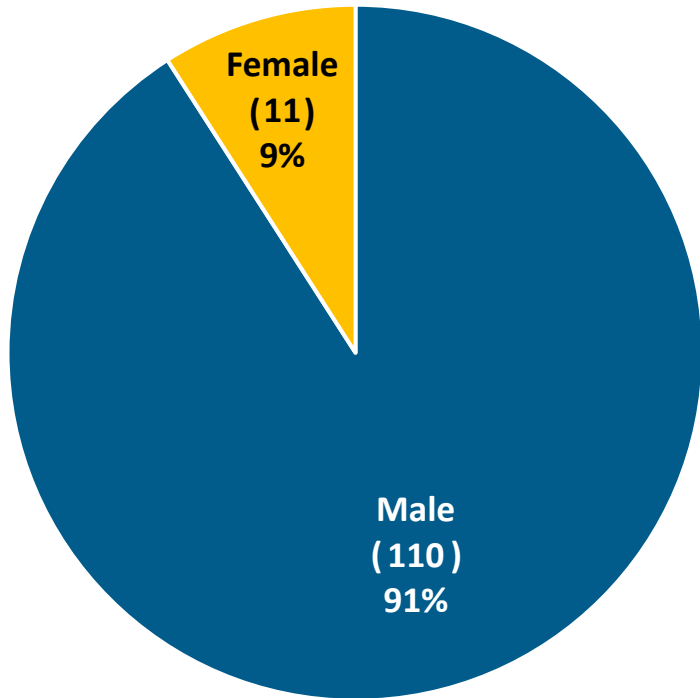




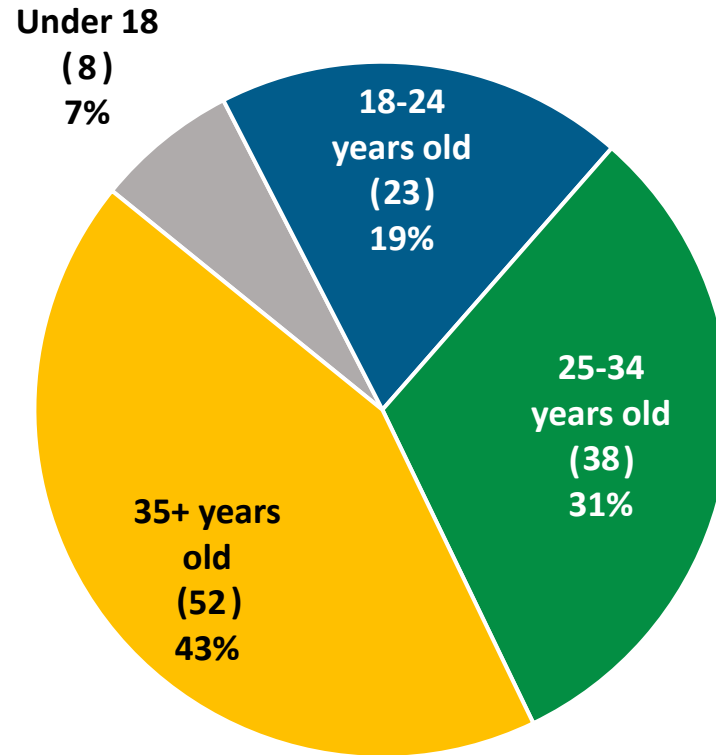
# 2023 Homicide Victim Demographics

Total Victims: 121

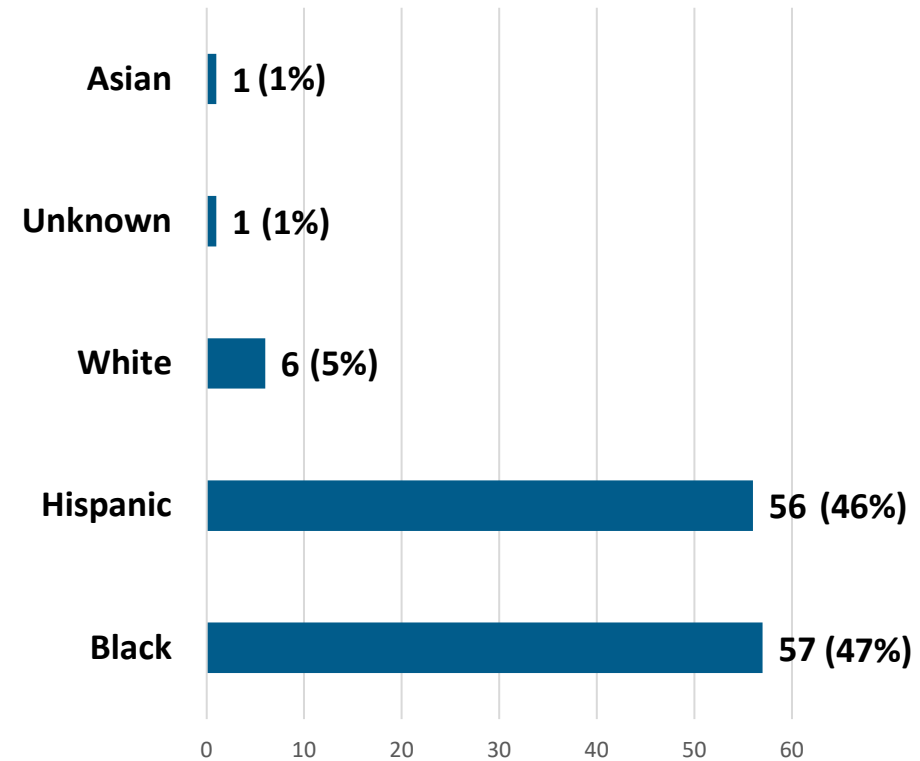
### Gender



### Age



### Race

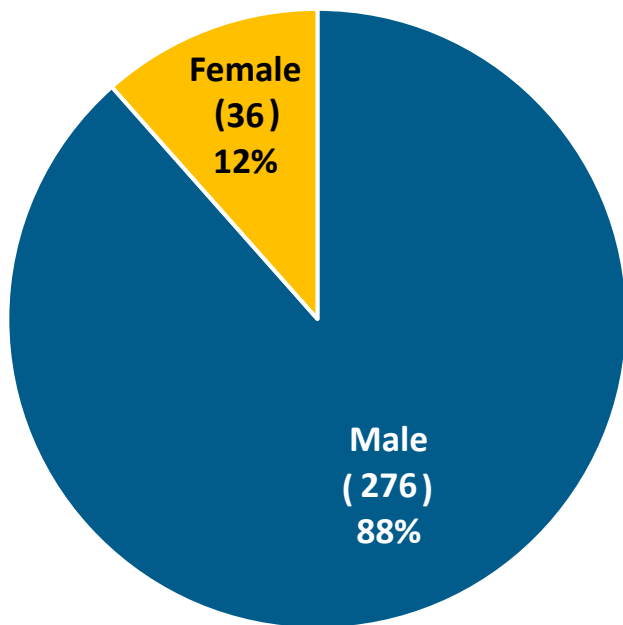




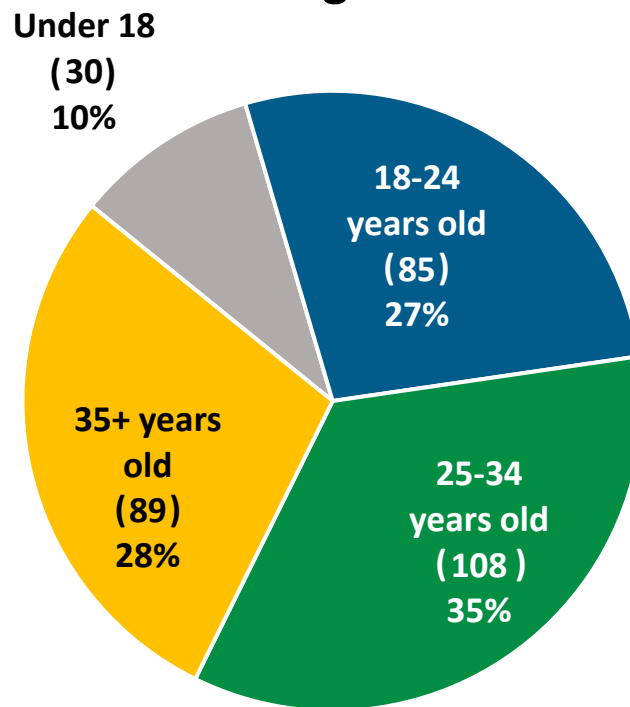
# Non-Fatal Shootings Victim Demographics

Total Victims: 312

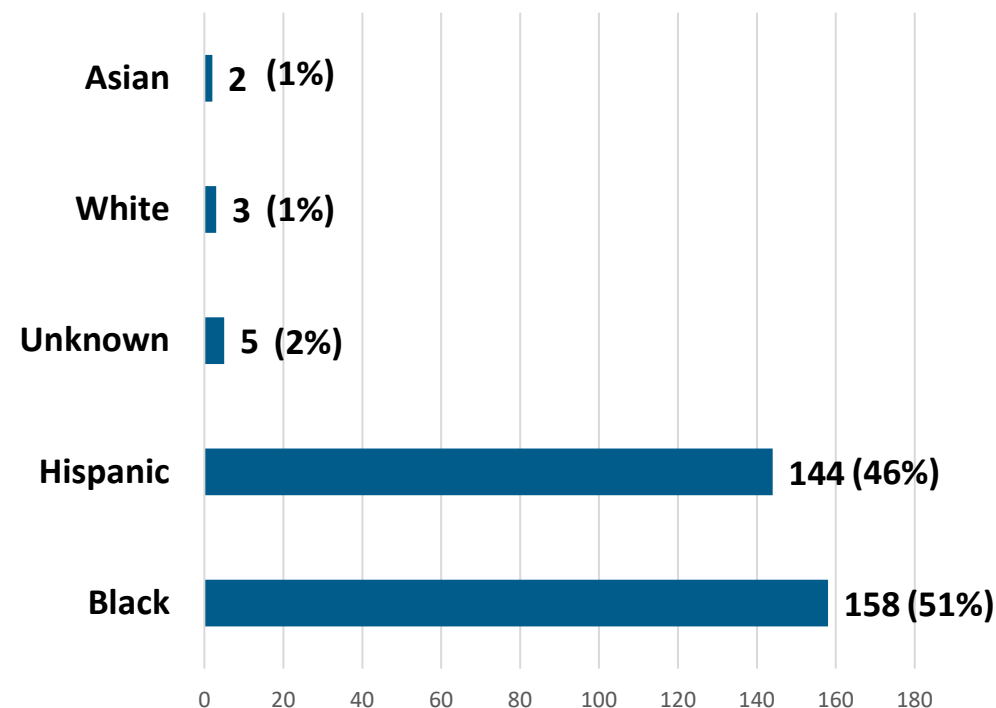
### Gender



### Age



### Race





# 2023 Youth Gun Arrests & Violence

	Citywide (YOUTH)	Bronx (YOUTH)	Bronx Percent of Citywide (YOUTH)	Total Citywide (All Ages)	Total Bronx (All Ages)	Bronx Percent of Citywide (Total- All Ages)
Gun Arrest	457	144	32%	4,391	1,261	29%
*Shooting Incident Perpetrators*	90	28	31%	***	***	***
Shooting Victims	112	31	28%	1,150	375	33%



**Testimony of Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz  
New York City Council Committee on Public Safety  
Preliminary Budget and Oversight Hearing FY 2025  
March 20, 2024**

Good afternoon, Chair Salaam and members of the Committee on Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding my office's Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget.

I first took office four years ago, at a time when longstanding concerns about fairness undermined confidence in our criminal justice system. We faced an unprecedented series of challenges, from the overhaul of our bail and discovery laws, a global pandemic, civil unrest, and increased crime that seemed to unravel the social fabric of our city, state, and nation.

My office faced these challenges head on, and we continue to implement new programs and policies to keep our neighborhoods safe, defend the rights of our residents, and give the people of Queens County the District Attorney's Office they deserve.

As I begin my second term as Queens County District Attorney, we continue to pave the way toward a more balanced criminal justice system. One in which we process a record number of arrests and arraignments, closely evaluate and expedite cases to just resolutions, and review past convictions with a new perspective to ensure justice is served. The funding allocated over the last several months by both the city and state has and will continue to support this vision and will enable my office to achieve the staffing levels and acquire the tools necessary to best do our jobs. For this, I am very thankful and would like to express my gratitude for your support.

In the last year, my office continued to work tirelessly to address the multitude of crime issues in Queens County. In 2023, there were over 49,000 arrests including approximately 22,000 felony arrests and 27,000 misdemeanor arrests. We conducted approximately 38,850 Criminal Court arraignments and were able to maintain the second lowest complaint sworn and arrest to arraignment times in the city. We place a strong focus on addressing violent felony crimes and in the last year, ADAs prepared 810 search warrants and cell-site warrants, 85 of which were for homicide-related cases.



We have focused on the drivers of crime and holding violent criminals and recidivists accountable. This approach has produced impressive results. NYPD 2023 Compstat statistics, compared to 2022, indicate that while shootings declined 25% in the city, in Queens they are down 34%; and murders, down 12% citywide, have declined by 39% in Queens. In addition, there were 52 homicides in Queens County in 2023. This is the lowest number of homicides in Queens County since 2018.

While shootings, murders and homicides have all decreased, Queens still saw a slight increase in major crimes in 2023, driven by an increase in automobile larcenies, felony assaults, and robberies. Hate crimes also increased by 35% in Queens from 2022 to 2023 and we continue to see a variety of ethnic and religious hate crimes including those against people who are Jewish, Muslim and other groups.

We continue to address these issues head on, while also targeting specific crime trends as they emerge. In particular, over the last year, we continued to combat the proliferation of illegal cannabis shops in our communities. Shops that often sell unregulated and untested cannabis flower and gummies packaged to look like brand-name candy, target our children and deprive them of their potential. Since our initiative began in November 2022, joint law enforcement operations have resulted in the prosecution of 186 individuals for felony-level charges related to the sale and/or possession of cannabis or controlled substances in Queens County, and the initiation of dozens of eviction proceedings to permanently remove the illegal proprietors from these retail locations.

Gun violence also continues to plague our communities. My office has consistently placed a strong focus on removing illegal guns from our neighborhoods, parks and streets and we have made significant strides to curb the tide of gun violence in Queens County. We continue to do everything we can to reduce the out-of-state flow of guns into Queens and get illegal weapons off our streets. We have seen significant progress to date. Shooting incidents have decreased by 34% from 2022 to 2023. And in 2023, we prosecuted over 3,000 cases involving firearms and other dangerous weapons.

Furthering our efforts in this area is the work of our Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau. For the third year in a row, we have led New York City in the total number of ghost gun recoveries through the successful investigation and prosecution of numerous ghost gun manufacturers and traffickers. In addition, our Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau continues its progress of suppressing violent crime in Queens County by identifying and prosecuting drivers of violence engaged in organized crime, including members of street gangs and firearms dealers.

We continue to utilize all of the tools at our disposal to hold the drivers of crime accountable and eradicate the deadly use of weapons. We are committed to working with our law enforcement partners, legislative leaders, community members, faith-based institutions, violence interrupters, and youth development organizations on comprehensive solutions to end the epidemic of gun violence. We have found this multi-pronged approach to be highly effective in combatting this serious issue.

We continue to place an increased focus on at-risk youth and alternatives to drugs and guns through our Community Partnerships Division. Staff in this division attended over 770 public events last year, increasing awareness of the office as a community resource. We work with community-based organizations to reinvest in our most vulnerable communities. We have held nine gun buyback events and have taken over 460 guns off Queens streets with this program.

Our Rehabilitation Programs and Restorative Services Bureau has bolstered alternative dispositions and paths of diversion from jail and prison by implementing new programming to meet the myriad of needs of our population. During the past year, the bureau has expanded offerings and collaborations with local community-based organizations and stakeholders to provide services to crime victims, witnesses, survivors, and defendants charged with criminal offenses.

The Rehabilitation Programs and Restorative Services Bureau oversees pre-arraignment diversion programs for misdemeanors, specialized court parts, post-arraignment diversion programs and our Crime Victims Advocate Program. These programs have been highly successful to date. For example, last year my office referred 505 people and 302 people completed services prior to an arraignment on their criminal charges, successfully diverting them from the criminal justice system as part of Project Reset.

In addition, we have several specialized court parts to provide resources and services to defendants, including mental health, DWI, veterans, treatment and drug diversion courts, as well as a diversion court for gun possession cases. These specialized court parts operate to help defendants with felony and misdemeanor charges. In 2023, more than 100 defendants successfully graduated from their programs.

A crucial component of our efforts has been to explore alternative dispositions and paths of diversion from jail. We continue to search for appropriate dispositions for young offenders, evaluate potential adverse immigration issues, and support the victims and witnesses of crime.

Our Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU), the first of its kind in Queens, continues to reinvestigate and resolve credible claims of actual innocence, wrongful conviction, or other circumstances of a case which undermines confidence in a just outcome. Since its inception in 2020, the CIU has vacated 102 convictions, 86 of which were based on the unreliable police work of former detectives later convicted of crimes committed on the job that undermined their credibility.

Our Human Trafficking Bureau has implemented a victim-centered and trauma informed approach while connecting survivors of trafficking with meaningful services to empower them to escape their exploitation. The bureau provides extensive community outreach, education and information aimed toward preventing and identifying trafficking in our communities.

Our Immigration Unit acts as an office-wide resource on immigration matters and includes a non-prosecutor immigration lawyer to review motions on past convictions and advise on avoiding unintended consequences. Our Immigration Unit also provides specific case evaluations and plea alternatives; advises Assistant District Attorneys on immigration related post-conviction motions; and certifies U- and T-visa requests for current and former cooperating victims where appropriate. Just last year, the Immigration Unit certified and reviewed the greatest number of applications since the pandemic era. Over 300 certifications were made for current and former cooperating victims of qualifying criminal activity. Additionally, in 2023 our office consented to 17 requests for repleads for individuals who have shown significant contributions to our community, and who's removal would affect the community in a disproportionate manner.

Within the area of domestic violence, we are expanding the office's efforts to effectively address this issue and to eliminate the stigma attached to being a domestic violence survivor. To achieve these goals, we continue to build partnerships, increase community outreach, provide support for survivors, and utilize diversionary programs and education to change abusive behavior. But our paramount goal is to keep families safe by holding violent offenders and recidivists accountable.

In 2023, Queens ADAs reviewed approximately 1.7 million discovery files and 82,000 body worn camera videos, however, meeting the obligations of discovery reform continues to pose a significant and ongoing challenge. While early disclosure of evidence is an essential part of a fair system and discovery reform was long overdue, we now have the experience and insight of the past four years to examine the efficacy of the new discovery laws. Under the law as interpreted, cases have routinely been dismissed for wholly inadvertent and inconsequential error. For example, cases have been dismissed for a minor redaction of a single individual's name in 200 pages of

medical records, for the failure to provide a 20th body-worn-camera video which did not contribute anything of substance beyond the 19 videos that had already been provided, a missing black and white photo where a color version of the photo was disclosed, and failure to provide a “prisoner movement slip,” even though there was no showing of relevance. While these challenges persist, my staff works relentlessly to reduce these types of issues.

Now, I would like to turn to the topic at hand, our current budget and fiscal condition. First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the substantial funding support provided by both the city and state over the last several months. Your collective recognition of the important work of the District Attorney Offices, as well as the funding to support this work, is truly appreciated and will make a significant impact on my office.

First, and most importantly, the funding has been used to increase our ADA staffing. We are actively recruiting additional ADAs for our upcoming classes and hiring experienced attorneys who can provide much-needed expertise in specialized areas including domestic violence, special victims, FOIL and civil litigation, and many other areas. Increasing our ADA staffing has helped reduce high caseloads, which in turn helps us better meet our discovery timelines and obligations. We have made significant progress – since March 2020, we have increased our ADA headcount by 78. However, our average ADA misdemeanor caseload continues to be high (approximately 140 cases per ADA), so a continued focus on hiring is still needed.

A crucial component of recruiting and hiring additional ADA staff is being able to offer a competitive salary that is reflective of the scope and importance of their work. As we have discussed at previous hearings, our ADA staff have long been underpaid in comparison to our other government colleagues, and without question, to attorneys working at private law firms. The funding provided has and will continue to support a salary step program for our ADA staff. Having a salary structure in place is critical to showing a long-term commitment to our ADAs and allows them to envision and plan a continued career path with our office. It is my hope that this will help address the recruitment and retention issues that my office has faced over the last several years. Our ADAs work tirelessly to ensure that justice is being served each day and they deserve compensation that recognizes and reflects the value of their efforts.

The funding provided has and will continue to be used to hire additional paralegals, IT staff and other support staff professionals who work hand-in-hand with our attorneys to provide the support they need to ensure that the office runs smoothly and operates efficiently.

Discovery reform also had a significant impact on the IT services that we require to meet our obligations, including major changes to our internal processes and upgrades to our IT infrastructure and software. While significant progress has been made in this area, there are currently many large-scale IT projects underway, and many others being planned for the next several years. The funding provided will enable us to purchase much-needed IT software and hardware that will ensure that our IT infrastructure is safe and secure; will facilitate the sharing of discovery material and aid in compliance; support data-driven decision making so that crime trends are being actively addressed; and provide state-of-the-art discovery solutions. In order to accomplish this, we will need to increase our IT staff including service technicians, database administrators, data analysts, and IT security specialists, to just name a few. It is critical that we provide our staff with the right tools to do their jobs. Having upgraded systems and programs in place will enable our ADAs and paralegals to do their jobs more efficiently and will allow for more comprehensive data tracking and analysis.

In order to maintain and build upon the progress that we have made, we need to be able to rely on sustained funding at the level that is appropriate to support the needs of the office and the people of Queens County. I ask for your support and commitment to continue both the city and state funding enhancements received by my office. Any reductions or elimination of the funding will only set us back and will impede future progress.

Lastly, I would like to mention that my office continues to face a severe shortage in available office space. This ongoing problem hinders hiring and has prevented my office from moving forward on projects and initiatives simply because we do not have the space to put people. This need is especially critical in Queens where we require our staff to be present in the office every workday to ensure that they are sharing information; that they are focused on their work; and that they are receiving the training and mentoring they need to become the best advocates possible.

While my staff actively seeks out rental space in the vicinity of the courthouse, we often lose out on these opportunities due to the extended length of time that it takes to execute lease agreements. My office needs the city's help in expediting this process. In addition, while finding small, individual spaces to rent helps alleviate overcrowding in the short-term, what we really need is a comprehensive, long-term solution that can house all of my staff in one consolidated space. I ask for your support in moving forward on this important issue.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and appreciate your support. I look forward to working with you and your staffs on important criminal justice initiatives in the year ahead.





PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Jumaane D. Williams**

---

**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY  
MARCH 20, 2024**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I would like to thank Chair Salaam and the members of the Committee on Public Safety for holding this important hearing.

The NYPD is by far the biggest and most expensive police department in the country, and often is called for social service functions that everyone agrees are not most appropriately handled by the police. The NYPD is often called to address issues of homelessness and mental health crises. We know that dispatching police to remove people perceived as being homeless or experiencing symptoms of mental health and acute mental illness hasn't worked long-term in the past, and that we must invest in non-police responses to people in mental health crises to address those in crisis and to help address substance abuse.

There have been a few surveys that actually showed that most of us almost universally agree where it is best to use law enforcement and where it is not. The Adams administration did a survey I believe almost three years ago, asking what the best way was to address the crime that was going on. The first two answers were housing and mental health. The third was law enforcement. Another recent survey discussed what were the worst things that were happening in the city—affordability was number one. In January there was a statewide survey, the question was 'which of the following would you say is the single greatest cause of crime in New York?' It went—first was poverty, substance abuse, mental illness, breakdown of the family, migrant influx, inequality—lack of enforcement I believe came in seventh and that remarkably was across Democratic and Republican lines. It's skewed a little differently under the Republicans, but the end result was the same, which says to me there is a tremendous understanding of what we need to do to address crime and I believe having spoken to much of the leadership in the police department as well, there's also agreement there. Unfortunately, that agreement doesn't seem to lend itself to where our finances go, or where we need to focus to build infrastructure.

So what I'm hoping is that we have the courage in leadership to not just put money where it needs to go, but to build out an infrastructure of non-police responses that New York City's actually asking for. Hopefully this conversation doesn't continue to change and turn into 'anti-police' or 'non anti-police,' because I think everyone agrees, again, based on the surveys, based on the discussions that we have. But for some reason the NYPD is the only one who has

access to the type of overtime that they claim they need, and other agencies don't have the access to the resources they need to build out the infrastructure that we all say we need.

The mayor's harmful Subway Safety Plan has exacerbated a police overtime surge. It does not make New Yorkers safer to spend millions of dollars on overtime for police officers to remove people perceived as homeless or mentally ill from public spaces, or to stand around in subway stations looking at their phones. According to the City Comptroller, for FY 2024, the City has spent \$461 million through December on NYPD's uniformed overtime, \$109 million more than spent for the same period in FY 2023, and is on target to spend about \$925 million for the year.<sup>1</sup> There was a recent report, and I forgot the time frame, it was either six months or a year, where overtime went from \$4 million to, I believe, \$155 million. What was interesting about that is, crime decreased outside of the subway during that time period more than it did inside of the subway.

So what I'm hoping is that we have the courage in leadership to not just put money where it needs to go, but to build out an infrastructure of non-police responses that New York City's actually asking for. Hopefully this conversation doesn't continue to change and turn into 'anti-police' or 'non anti-police,' because I think everyone agrees, again, based on the surveys, based on the discussions that we have. But for some reason the NYPD is the only one who has access to the type of overtime that they claim they need, and other agencies don't have the access to the resources they need to build out the infrastructure that we all say we need.

Despite the recent deployment of New York State Troopers and the National Guard to the city's subways, a recent shooting occurred on the A train as it pulled into the Hoyt-Schermerhorn station—a station that houses a police station. It's an almost too on-the-nose example that public safety does not equate to simple proximity to police officers. This underscores the need for the city to increase investment in the things we know prevent crime: housing support, mental health services, employment opportunities, crisis intervention, credible messengers, and education. It doesn't mean that our law enforcement doesn't have a role to play and that all of us don't have a role to play, but it does say that we continually have an over-reliance on our law enforcement and we keep pushing to them solve these problems, which is not what everyone agrees is what we have to do.

The mayor and I may often disagree on the most impactful ways to address crime and violence in our city, but I applaud his support of alternative solutions to violence, including violence interrupters and cure violence programs. The city's Crisis Management System (CMS) is a network that deploys teams of credible messengers who mediate conflicts on the street and connect high-risk individuals to services that can reduce the long-term risk of violence. CMS provides non-punitive, wrap-around services including school conflict mediation, employment programs, mental health services, and legal services. We have evidence that these alternatives to policing work reduce violence: CMS data from 2010 to 2019 shows that the program has contributed to an average 40 percent reduction in shootings across program areas, compared to a 31 percent decline in shootings in the 17 precincts in New York City with the highest rates of

---

1

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/comments-on-new-york-citys-preliminary-budget-for-fiscal-year-2025-and-financial-plan-for-fiscal-years-2024-2028/>

violence.

Brownsville, Brooklyn's 73rd Precinct exemplifies the success and necessity of cure violence programs. In December 2020, the police withdrew from their regular posts on Mother Gaston Boulevard for five days. Instead of a police presence, a cure violence group called Brownsville In, Violence Out watched over the two blocks between Pitkin and Sutter Avenues. No valid 911 or 311 calls were made during this pilot. A second round of this experiment a few months later saw the cure violence group and their community partners finding a missing 4-year-old and intervening in a fight brewing between groups of teenage girls, all without the help of police. This is what public safety should look like: an investment in communities, robust support services, and allowing those closest to the problem to lead the solution.

When my mother, who had a bullet go through her window, when my sister is dealing with someone who is mentally ill, can't figure out who to call, that's an issue. If my mom calls law enforcement, I want someone to be able to provide the services she needs, but if she needs another service, she should be able to get that as well, and we have to be able to build that out.

It is also vital to adequately and robustly fund our public defender services. While free legal defender services for anyone who needs them are mandated by federal and local law, these organizations are consistently underfunded. It is low-income New Yorkers who ultimately face the consequences of a budget that favors district attorneys' offices, deprived of the robust legal representation that they need and deserve. In June of last year, the City Council sent a letter to the mayor asking for at least \$195 million for legal service providers to be added to the FY24 budget;<sup>2</sup> the proposed budget for FY25 only increases funding for city-supported lawyers by \$46 million.<sup>3</sup> The city budget must ensure a high standard of quality legal representation for low-income New Yorkers.

Lastly, in 2021, my office released a report on reimagining safety in our schools, including phasing out School Safety Agents and policing infrastructure. Prior to the pandemic, there were roughly 5,000 SSAs assigned to schools; as of late last month, according to a report released by the Independent Budget Office, that number had decreased to 3,900. The IBO also reported no indication the city plans to significantly expand the safety division to pre-pandemic levels over the next four years. The presence of SSAs and police more broadly serve only as a reaction to violence or criminal behavior and do not create safety. This natural attrition of SSAs provides an opportunity for the city to invest in creating safe school environments by hiring more guidance counselors and social workers, expanding restorative justice and violence interruption programming, implementing trauma-informed and healing-centered school environments, sustaining and creating new Student Success Centers, and increasing youth employment opportunities.

Thank you.

---

<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/06/19/nyc-council-urges-mayor-adams-to-increase-funding-for-legal-aid-providers/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2023/06/fiscal-year-2024-new-york-city-budget-numbers/388113/>



40 Rector Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10006  
[www.StopSpying.org](http://www.StopSpying.org) | (212) 518-7573

---

**STATEMENT OF  
CORINNE WORTHINGTON, RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY MANAGER  
SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY OVERSIGHT PROJECT (“S.T.O.P.”)**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY,  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

**FOR AN OVERSIGHT HEARING  
ON SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY SPENDING  
IN THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025**

**PRESENTED  
March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Salaam and members of the Committee on Public Safety. My name is Corinne Worthington, and I am the Research & Advocacy Manager at the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (“S.T.O.P.”), a New York-based privacy and civil rights group. S.T.O.P. advocates and litigates for New Yorkers’ privacy, fighting discriminatory surveillance. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, and specifically to speak about the NYPD’s overspending on surveillance technology.

Public Advocate Jumaane Williams said it this morning, we spend too much money on policing and not enough to social services. When it comes to surveillance technology, the New York Police Department (“NYPD”) has a track record of obscuring its spending, failing to comply with disclosure policies, and using technology in ways that threaten New Yorker’s constitutionally protected rights. While it is difficult to grasp the full extent to which the NYPD is overspending on and misusing unproven and dangerous technology, the tidbits of information we are able to glean from the budget confirm that our priorities are in the wrong place.

Commissioner Caban said this morning that “the NYPD will continue to push the envelope when it comes to technology” in reference to the \$2.6 million budgeted for drones in the FY 25 Preliminary Budget and the \$42 million budgeted for the Domain Awareness System. In the past year, the NYPD has used drones to police protests, neighborhood barbecues, and other events where they simply do not belong.<sup>1</sup>

## **I. Domain Awareness System**

The Domain Awareness System represents the worst of NYPD surveillance abuses, the secretive intelligence nerve center that pulls in data from 10 of thousands of cameras across the city and countless other data sources. With this multibillion-dollar boondoggle, the NYPD is able to turn countless innocuous data sources in a policing tool, whether its data from our subway trips, automated license plate readers tracking where we drive, or facial recognition systems that can watch where we walk. Alarming, the NYPD systematically circumvented laws like the POST Act to avoid even the most minimal oversight of this or well scheme, refusing to detail the capabilities of the system or how often it is being abused by individual officers. The NYPD likes to boast that they’ve put a intelligence agency in the pocket of every police officer, but they never confront how individual officers can abuse that power and I am terrified to think just how often officers are using these tools to track New Yorkers for things have nothing to do with NYPD’s mission, whether stalking romantic partners, surveilling their neighbors, or other unrelated personal uses.

These budgeted items are only the beginning of the NYPD’s surveillance technology spending. Two additional technology spending areas I would like to highlight are facial recognition and the gunshot detection software, ShotSpotter.

## **II. Facial Recognition**

A look through the NYPD’s publicly available contracts reveals that it has a \$5.98 million contract with the biometric technology vendor, Idemia. Facial Recognition Technology is biased and error prone. Artificial intelligence (“A.I.”) is the aggregation of countless human decisions, codified into algorithms. A.I. can learn to be just like us, exacerbating structural discrimination against marginalized

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/the-nypd-is-using-drones-3-times-more-than-it-did-last-year>



communities.<sup>2</sup> In the case of facial recognition, this leads to systems that can be 99% accurate for middle-aged white men under ideal lighting in laboratory conditions, but can be wrong more than 1 in 3 times for some women of color, even under similar conditions.<sup>3</sup> The same exact software, the same exact hardware— but dramatically different outcomes for Black and brown New Yorkers. Numerous people, disproportionately Black, are wrongly arrested after being misidentified through facial recognition.<sup>4</sup>

### III. ShotSpotter

In FY 24, the NYPD spent \$22 million on a contract with ShotSpotter.<sup>5</sup> The system uses microphones to listen for gunshots, but it sometimes fails to differentiate between muzzle blasts, the bang of fireworks, cars backfiring, and New York City construction noise.<sup>6</sup> Using inflated accuracy statistics, ShotSpotter courts police departments with misleading advertising.<sup>7</sup> In reality, all available evidence suggests that ShotSpotter fails the public, a costly and inept system with no apparent impact on gun violence.<sup>8</sup>

ShotSpotter alerts bring police to neighborhoods looking for active shooters, increasing the risk of police shootings in overpoliced Black and Latinx communities where ShotSpotter installations are concentrated.<sup>9</sup> The consequences can be deadly for residents caught in the crossfire.

Take the tragic story of Adam Toledo, for example.<sup>10</sup> Adam, just 13 years old, was chased, shot and killed by Chicago police within five minutes of a ShotSpotter alert bringing officers to his neighborhood. Rochester police offers shot another young man dead<sup>11</sup> in a traffic stop following a ShotSpotter alert. No less than ten NYPD officers<sup>12</sup> fired on and killed a man following a ShotSpotter alert in Crown Heights.

### IV. Surveillance Isn't Public Safety

The amount the NYPD spends on surveillance technology may seem like a drop in the bucket given its \$5.8 billion budget, but \$72 million (the minimum spending on the technologies I have discussed today) is not a small amount of money.

The reality is that surveillance technology isn't what keeps New Yorkers safe. Today, we've heard the NYPD talk about how they are the solution to shoplifting offences, transit crime, and the homelessness crisis, but this simply isn't true. When people steal basic necessities or hop the train

---

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Myers West, Meredith Whittaker, Kate Crawford, *Discriminating Systems: Gender Race and Power in AI*, AI NOW INSTITUTE, p 6.

<sup>3</sup> Joy Buolamwini, Timnit Gebru, *Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification*, *Proceeds of Machine Learning Research*, vol 81, 1-15, 2018 p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kashmir Hill, *Another Arrest, and Jail Time, Due to a Bad Facial Recognition Match*, N.Y. TIMES, Dec. 29, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/technology/facial-recognition-misidentify-jail.html>.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.checkbooknyc.com/smart\\_search/citywide?search\\_term=shotspotter!\\*domain=contracts](https://www.checkbooknyc.com/smart_search/citywide?search_term=shotspotter!*domain=contracts)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/2020/7/5/21312671/shotspotter-nyc-shootings-fireworks-nypd-civil-rights>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2021/07/its-time-police-stop-using-shotspotter>

<sup>8</sup> Doucette, M.L., Green, C., Necci Dineen, J. et al. *Impact of ShotSpotter Technology on Firearm Homicides and Arrests Among Large Metropolitan Counties: a Longitudinal Analysis, 1999–2016*. *J Urban Health* 98, 609–621 (2021).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.vice.com/en/article/88nd3z/gunshot-detecting-tech-is-summoning-armed-police-to-black-neighborhoods>

<sup>10</sup> <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/549612-police-technology-under-scrutiny-following-chicago-shooting>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.rochesterfirst.com/crime/police-investigation-underway-on-westside-of-rochester/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/nyregion/police-shooting-nypd-brooklyn.html>

turnstile, it's because they don't have the means to pay for these items any other way. What New Yorkers need is a safety net, and that starts with spending on social services, not surveillance technology.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these issues.

**Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY) Testimony to New York City Council's Public Safety Committee:**

**Disband the NYPD's Strategic Response Group**

My name is Lamyā Agarwala, and I am an attorney with the New York Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, known as CAIR-NY. CAIR is a leading Muslim civil rights organization that works on a range of legal advocacy and education related to discrimination targeting Muslim Americans. I urge the City Council to hold NYPD's Strategic Response Group accountable for its abuse, disband the unit, and invest in community programs that actually keep us safe.

NYPD's SRG is designed to meet protesters with force. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators." As a result, SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

The last few months are a prime example of the SRG's mandate: protesters calling for a ceasefire and peace in Palestine have been labeled terrorists and brutalized by the NYPD because they are holding our government accountable for its role in ongoing war crimes. Below we highlight just a few examples of its violence against protestors from the last 5 months alone:

- In October, video footage showcases SRG punching people and shoving trapped protesters to the ground.<sup>1</sup>
- In November, it was reported that the SRG handcuffed, knocked unconscious, and carried off a protester to a barricaded space and was not provided medical attention for over 30 minutes.<sup>2</sup>
- On Christmas Day, the NYPD was filmed beating people until they bled, separating fathers from their children, pepper spraying, and putting women wearing hijabs into headlocks.<sup>3</sup>
- In January, organizers were preparing to pray when the police attacked, violently throwing a minor to the ground and arresting him for sitting on a mailbox.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See New York Civil Liberties Union, *Report*, (October 22, 2023) available at <https://x.com/NYCLU/status/1716179959302021417?s=20>

<sup>2</sup> See Within Our Lifetime, *The Crackdown on Palestine*, (February 17, 2024) available at <https://wolpalestine.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Crackdown-on-Palestine-Feb17-2.pdf> (hereinafter "Palestine Report")

<sup>3</sup> See Palestine Report', page 41.

<sup>4</sup> See Palestine Report', page 49.

- In February, the SRG grabbed, punched, slammed and dogpiled multiple youth (including one minor) as they protested on the sidewalk.<sup>5</sup>
- In early March, an individual was left convulsing on the ground after being brutalized by the NYPD. The police refused pleas by credentialed healthcare professionals to provide treatment.<sup>6</sup>
- On International Women’s Day, NYPD’s SRG began arresting people at jail support and reportedly knocked a person unconscious by slamming their head onto the pavement.<sup>7</sup>

This violence is not a coincidence, but by SRG design. **We should not have to choose between safety and participating in our democracy by protesting, yet the SRG necessitates that protesters risk violence at the hands of police officers when they show up on the streets. This risks the safety of New Yorkers and the sanctity of our democracy.**

The mayor’s preliminary budget continues to fund the SRG’s abuses. An estimated total cost of the SRG is \$133.7 Million<sup>8</sup>, including an estimated \$65.6 Million from centrally allocated expenses. There is almost no transparency around the size, scope, and funding of the SRG. Because of this, the size of the SRG can fluctuate based on the NYPD’s desires. In 2020, 1,300 officers were reportedly added<sup>9</sup> to the unit to police protests across New York City. There is no transparency around the personnel funding required for that addition, or any system of accountability for how & when officers are arbitrarily added to the SRG’s command. We need a full accounting of the cost, size, and scope of the unit. Its tens of millions in funds should be reinvested into resources and programs that support New Yorkers.

While funding is poured into the SRG, the Mayor’s Office had made almost \$400 M in cuts to pre-k & 3-k programs since 2022 and the city plans to cut another 14% of that budget in FY25.<sup>10</sup>

In the November plan, the Mayor's Office had made significant cuts to language access and legal

---

<sup>5</sup> See Within Our Lifetime (February 21, 2024) available at <https://x.com/WOLPalestine/status/1760460081932488716?s=20>

<sup>6</sup> Reports, (March 9, 2024) available at <https://x.com/taliaotg/status/1766611885820882998?s=20> and <https://x.com/taliaotg/status/1766611806586322971?s=20>

<sup>7</sup> See New York Civil Liberties Union (March 8, 2024) available at <https://x.com/NYCLU/status/1766514793504968760?s=20>

<sup>8</sup> See Communities United For Police Reform, *Creating Safe and Vibrant Communities for All New Yorkers*, (June 2022), pp. 26, available at [https://www.changethenypd.org/sites/default/files/2022-06\\_creating\\_safe\\_and\\_vibrant\\_communities\\_for\\_all\\_new\\_yorkers\\_optimized.pdf](https://www.changethenypd.org/sites/default/files/2022-06_creating_safe_and_vibrant_communities_for_all_new_yorkers_optimized.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> See The Gothamist, *How An NYPD Anti-Terror Squad Became A Tool For Cracking Down On Protests*, (February 19, 2021) available at <https://gothamist.com/news/how-elite-anti-terror-squad-transformed-nypds-approach-protest-policing>

<sup>10</sup> See MSN, *In advance of Monday's hearing, parents rally to prevent cuts to New York City's preschool program*, (March 18, 2024) available at <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/in-advance-of-monday-s-hearing-parents-rally-to-prevent-cuts-to-new-york-city-s-preschool-program/ar-BB1k3I4m>



Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York  
80 Broad Street, Fifth Floor  
New York, New York 10009  
[www.cair-ny.org](http://www.cair-ny.org) | [legal@ny.cair.com](mailto:legal@ny.cair.com) | (646) 665-7599

---

services (\$600K); after school community programs (\$10M); library services (\$23.6M); cultural development and cultural institutions (\$8.6M); the participatory budget program, racial equity initiatives, and civic engagement efforts (\$643K), among other services. There are also significant cuts planned for Department of Youth and Community Development-related services in FY25.<sup>11</sup>

These proposals to cut crucial community services and continue to pour money into the NYPD are not in service of public safety. It is time to reinvest in our communities and help us to provide services that prioritize the true safety and well-being of New Yorkers. Thank you.

Sincerely,

*/s/Lamya Agarwala*

**Lamya Agarwala**

Supervising Attorney

Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY)

March 22, 2024

---

<sup>11</sup> See Nonprofit New York, *Nonprofit New York Statement on Mayor Adams's January Plan Budget Cuts*, (January 23, 2024) available at <https://www.nonprofitnewyork.org/2024/01/why15-nonprofit-new-york-statement-on-mayor-adams-january-plan-budget-cuts/>



**TESTIMONY**

The New York City Council  
Committee on Finance

Re: NYC Preliminary Budget: Eliminate Harmful Policing Units and  
Mental Health Co-Response Teams

Legal Defense Fund  
40 Rector Street, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10006

March 23, 2024

Dear Speaker Adams, Chairperson Brannan, Chairperson Salaam, and Councilmembers of the Finance and Public Safety Committees:

On behalf of the Legal Defense Fund (LDF),<sup>1</sup> we thank the committees for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding New York City's budget. Since LDF's inception, we have sought to remedy and prevent law enforcement violence and racial discrimination towards Black communities and have long worked to remove legal impediments to accountability for law enforcement misconduct. Throughout our longstanding work, we have seen how law enforcement violence and racial discrimination can threaten communities' safety.

Unfortunately, since Mayor Adams and Police Commissioner Caban took office, these threats have increased. Aggressive enforcement of low-level offenses is on the rise,<sup>2</sup> and racial disparities in police enforcement persist.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the current administration has refused to meet with families of victims of police violence<sup>4</sup> and vetoed City Council legislation to provide greater transparency for policing in our communities.<sup>5</sup> The New York City Police Department (NYPD) continues to be largely exempt from sweeping budget cuts that have impacted so many other city agencies.<sup>6</sup> We urge the City Council to end the NYPD's budget exceptionalism, divest from harmful policing entities that disproportionately target our Black communities, and increase funding toward health, housing, and youth services for communities that have been most negatively impacted by police practices in New York City.

### **1. Specialized NYPD units like Neighborhood Safety Teams and the Strategic Response Group continue to harm New Yorkers, while vital services are being cut.**

Aggressive policing is rampant in Black communities across New York City. Since the Mayor took office and established policing entities like Neighborhood Safety Teams (NSTs), the NYPD is making more arrests, mostly for non-violent offenses.<sup>7</sup> Most of this policing is highly concentrated in Black and Brown communities.<sup>8</sup> While Mayor Adams and the NYPD purport that

---

<sup>1</sup> LDF is the nation's first and foremost civil rights and human rights law organization. Since its founding over eighty years ago, LDF has worked at the national, state, and local levels to pursue racial justice and eliminate structural barriers for the Black community in the areas of criminal justice, economic justice, education, and political participation. As part of that work, LDF has also forged longstanding partnerships with local advocates, activists, and attorneys to challenge and reform unlawful and discriminatory policing in New York City.

<sup>2</sup> Fola Akinnibi, *Arrests for Low-Level Crimes Climb Under NYC Mayor Eric Adams*, Bloomberg (Aug. 30, 2022), [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-30/nyc-s-rise-of-low-level-arrests-worry-critics-of-broken-windows-era?embedded-checkout=true](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-30/nyc-s-rise-of-low-level-arrests-worry-critics-of-broken-windows-era?embedded-checkout=true).

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Katersky & Teddy Grant, *NYPD Safety Team Making High Number of Unlawful Stops, Mostly People of Color: Report*, ABC News (June 5, 2023), [www.abcnews.go.com/US/nypd-safety-team-making-high-number-unlawful-stops/story?id=99850699](https://www.abcnews.go.com/US/nypd-safety-team-making-high-number-unlawful-stops/story?id=99850699).

<sup>4</sup> *Family of Man Fatally Shot by NYPD Officer in 2019 Calls for More Action*, CBS News (Mar. 2, 2024), [www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/allan-feliz-rally-nypd-fatal-shooting-jonathan-rivera/](https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/allan-feliz-rally-nypd-fatal-shooting-jonathan-rivera/).

<sup>5</sup> Jeffery C. Mays, *Mayor Adams Vetoes Police Transparency and Solitary Confinement Bills*, N.Y. Times (Jan. 19, 2024), [www.nytimes.com/2024/01/19/nyregion/mayor-adams-veto.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/19/nyregion/mayor-adams-veto.html).

<sup>6</sup> Maria Cramer, *N.Y.P.D. Will Not Face Budget Cuts After All, Adams Says*, N.Y. Times (Jan. 10, 2024), [www.nytimes.com/2024/01/10/nyregion/budget-adams-nypd.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/10/nyregion/budget-adams-nypd.html).

<sup>7</sup> Chip Brownlee, *The 'Clearances Paradox': Could Less Policing Actually Reduce Gun Violence in New York?*, The Guardian (June 22, 2022), [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/22/nypd-fewer-arrests-reduce-crime-new-york](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/22/nypd-fewer-arrests-reduce-crime-new-york).

<sup>8</sup> See Katersky & Grant *supra* note 3.

these units are deployed to decrease gun violence, they have been used mostly to target Black and Brown New Yorkers for low-level offenses.<sup>9</sup> In the past, similar specialized police units were publicly criticized due to abusive conduct, and disbanded only to be re-established under different names by future administrations. For example, the NYPD plainclothes Street Crime Unit was initially disbanded in 1999 after the killing of Amadou Diallo and amid criticism that the unit was “unduly focused on black and Hispanic men,”<sup>10</sup> but a version of it was reinstated in 2015, disbanded again in 2020,<sup>11</sup> and then re-established under Mayor Adams.<sup>12</sup> Today, NSTs are placed in predominantly Black and Latinx communities,<sup>13</sup> and they repeat these patterns of aggressive and racially disparate policing. In 2023, the federal monitor overseeing the NYPD found that 97 percent of people stopped by NSTs were Black or Latinx, and that over a third of stops conducted by NSTs were unlawful.<sup>14</sup>

The conduct of the NYPD’s Strategic Response Group (SRG) has also led to stark racial disparities, and their involvement in police violence against Black people is well documented. Saheed Vassell, for example, was killed by SRG officers in 2018.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the SRG has used violent and aggressive tactics—including arrests, kettling, and use of force—against demonstrators who peaceably assemble to exercise their First Amendment rights,<sup>16</sup> including during the 2020 racial justice uprisings,<sup>17</sup> the 2023 protests surrounding the killing of Jordan Neely last year,<sup>18</sup> and recent protests calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Gaza over the last six months.<sup>19</sup> The deployment of the SRG to curtail peaceful protest is an unacceptable infringement on civil liberties, and this misconduct disproportionately harms Black New Yorkers. The New York Civil

---

<sup>9</sup> Sara Dorn, *NYPD’s Neighborhood Safety Teams Are Mostly Making Low-Level Arrests, Data Shows*, City & State (Apr. 8, 2022), [www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2022/04/nypds-neighborhood-safety-teams-are-mostly-making-low-level-arrests-data-show/365450/](http://www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2022/04/nypds-neighborhood-safety-teams-are-mostly-making-low-level-arrests-data-show/365450/).

<sup>10</sup> William K. Rashbaum & Al Baker, *Police Commissioner Closing Controversial Street Crime Unit*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 10, 2002), [www.nytimes.com/2002/04/10/nyregion/police-commissioner-closing-controversial-street-crime-unit.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/10/nyregion/police-commissioner-closing-controversial-street-crime-unit.html).

<sup>11</sup> Mark Morales & Peter Nickeas, *The NYPD Has Resurrected its Controversial Anti-crime Unit. Success Will Be Determined By Avoiding Mistakes of the Past*, CNN (Jan. 27, 2022), [www.cnn.com/2022/01/27/us/nypd-anti-crime-unit-eric-adams/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2022/01/27/us/nypd-anti-crime-unit-eric-adams/index.html).

<sup>12</sup> Corey Kilgannon, *N.Y.P.D. Anti-Crime Units Still Stopping People Illegally, Report Shows*, N.Y. Times (June 5, 2023), [www.nytimes.com/2023/06/05/nyregion/nypd-anti-crime-units-training-tactics.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/05/nyregion/nypd-anti-crime-units-training-tactics.html).

<sup>13</sup> Ben Brachfeld, *NYPD anti-gun teams using illegal, discriminatory stop-and-frisk tactics, says federal monitor*, AM New York (June 6, 2023), [www.amny.com/police-fire/nypd-anti-gun-teams-illegal-racially-discriminatory-stop-and-frisk-federal-monitor/](http://www.amny.com/police-fire/nypd-anti-gun-teams-illegal-racially-discriminatory-stop-and-frisk-federal-monitor/).

<sup>14</sup> Nineteenth Report of the Independent Monitor: Monitor’s Audit of the Neighborhood Safety Teams at 2, *Floyd v. City of New York*, No. 1:08-cv-01034-AT (S.D.N.Y. June 5, 2023), ECF No. 915-1.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Mueller & Nate Schweber, *Police Fatally Shoot a Brooklyn Man, Saying They Thought He Had a Gun*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 4, 2018), [www.nytimes.com/2018/04/04/nyregion/police-shooting-brooklyn-crown-heights.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/04/nyregion/police-shooting-brooklyn-crown-heights.html), 2014

<sup>16</sup> Ali Watkins, *An Unprepared N.Y.P.D. Badly Mishandled Floyd Protests, Watchdog Says*, N.Y. Times (Dec. 18, 2020), [www.nytimes.com/2020/12/18/nyregion/nypd-george-floyd-protests.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/18/nyregion/nypd-george-floyd-protests.html).

<sup>17</sup> Adam Gabbatt, *Saheed Vassell Killing Puts Policing and Gentrification in the Spotlight*, The Guardian (Apr. 7, 2018), [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/apr/07/saheed-vassell-policing-gentrification-brooklyn-nypd](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/apr/07/saheed-vassell-policing-gentrification-brooklyn-nypd).

<sup>18</sup> Kevin Gosztola, *NYPD Arrest Photojournalist Who Was Covering Their Response To ‘Justice For Jordan Neely’ Vigil*, Dissenter (May 9, 2023), [www.thedissenter.org/nypd-arrest-photojournalist-justice-for-jordan-neely-vigil/](http://www.thedissenter.org/nypd-arrest-photojournalist-justice-for-jordan-neely-vigil/).

<sup>19</sup> Lylla Younes, *The NYPD’s Escalating Crackdown on Pro-Palestine Protests Falls ‘Outside the Bounds of the Constitution’*, Hell Gate (Feb. 13, 2024), [www.hellgatenc.com/nypd-crack-down-pro-palestine-protests](http://www.hellgatenc.com/nypd-crack-down-pro-palestine-protests).

Liberties Union’s investigation into this unit found that, among all complaints filed against SRG officers with the Civilian Complaint Review Board from 2015 through 2021, 66 percent of complainants were Black, 21 percent were Latinx, and only 9 percent were white.<sup>20</sup> The SRG has also participated in “homeless sweeps” that have dismantled encampments of unhoused people and disposed of their belongings, with reports of excessive arrests and uses of force.<sup>21</sup> New Yorkers pay hundreds of millions of dollars, through both the NYPD budget and settlements of lawsuits filed for officers’ misconduct, to fund the SRG and its harmful activities.<sup>22</sup> According to January 2024 Departmental Estimates, the City is allocating more than \$75 million to the SRG in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025,<sup>23</sup> which is an approximately \$8 million increase from the previous year.<sup>24</sup>

While funding is being increased for these harmful policing units, the Mayor has proposed budget cuts to public health and social service agencies, whose services are truly necessary for the health and safety of New Yorkers. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) received a five percent cut during the January 2024 budget modifications, with another five percent cut scheduled for April 2024.<sup>25</sup> Recent budget cuts to the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) have hindered the agency’s ability to repair and rent out vacant apartments, exacerbating the ongoing affordable housing crisis in New York City.<sup>26</sup> The NYPD, by contrast, was exempt from cuts in the January 2024 budget modifications.<sup>27</sup> The persistent trend of prioritizing funding for the NYPD over necessary public services like housing and healthcare undermines public safety, and funds should be diverted from units like NSTs and the SRG to ensure that other vital agencies have adequate resources to serve New Yorkers.

## **2. The City should remove law enforcement from mental health responses and divert funds toward community-based mental health service providers.**

In the last few years, New York City has increasingly criminalized and involuntarily hospitalized people deemed in need of crisis intervention, rather than connecting them to long-term support or holistic, community-based services. In 2022, the Adams administration rolled out a widely criticized initiative that authorized first responders to forcibly detain New Yorkers for

---

<sup>20</sup> *Why We Must Disband the NYPD’s Strategic Response Group*, N.Y. Civ. Liberties Union, [www.nyclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/202109\\_nyclu\\_srg\\_2pager.pdf](http://www.nyclu.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/202109_nyclu_srg_2pager.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Marian Jones, *The Police Are Really Bad at Solving Crime*, AJ+ (May 7, 2022), [www.ajplus.net/stories/article-the-police-are-really-bad-at-solving-crime](http://www.ajplus.net/stories/article-the-police-are-really-bad-at-solving-crime); Samira Asma-Sadeque, *‘Fascism Works Like That’: Homeless New Yorkers Struggle Amid Police Sweeps*, The Guardian (May 11, 2022), [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/11/new-york-city-homeless-sweeps-eric-adams](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/11/new-york-city-homeless-sweeps-eric-adams).

<sup>22</sup> *Edwards v. South Carolina*, 372 U.S. 229, 235 (1963) (“[I]t is clear to us that in arresting, convicting, and punishing the [protesters] under the circumstances disclosed by this record, South Carolina infringed the petitioners’ constitutionally protected rights of free speech, free assembly, and freedom to petition for redress of their grievances.”)

<sup>23</sup> The City of New York, Departmental Estimates at 663 (Jan. 2024), [www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/de1-24.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/de1-24.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> N.Y.C. Council Comm. on Pub. Safety, Hearing on March 20, 2023, at 00:52:25, [legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=1081360&GUID=9BCBD908-D217-4E65-9032-0AA79767D289](http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=1081360&GUID=9BCBD908-D217-4E65-9032-0AA79767D289).

<sup>25</sup> Amanda D’Ambrosio & Jacqueline Neber, *The Biggest Health Care Takeaways from FY25 Budget Day*, Crain’s (Jan. 17, 2024), [www.crainnewyork.com/health-pulse/biggest-health-care-takeaways-fy25-budget-day](http://www.crainnewyork.com/health-pulse/biggest-health-care-takeaways-fy25-budget-day).

<sup>26</sup> Samar Khurshid, *NYCHA Officials Sound Alarm at City Council Budget Hearing*, Gotham Gazette (Mar. 14, 2023), [www.gothamgazette.com/city/11879-nycha-budget-rent-arrears-repairs-vacancies](http://www.gothamgazette.com/city/11879-nycha-budget-rent-arrears-repairs-vacancies).

<sup>27</sup> See Cramer *supra* note 6.

psychiatric evaluation if those individuals were deemed to lack the ability to care for themselves.<sup>28</sup> In testimony to the City Council, the NYPD Chief of Training stated that officers were trained on this new initiative with a mere 25-minute presentation during roll call and a video.<sup>29</sup> The administration has also increasingly exposed people in crisis to police enforcement by expanding Mental Health Co-Response Teams (CRTs), which deploy police officers alongside health professionals to respond to mental health incidents.<sup>30</sup> Studies have shown that this model does not have a positive impact on police encounters for people with mental illness, and that crisis intervention training for police officers generally does not correlate to better outcomes in police use of force against people with mental illness.<sup>31</sup>

Not only are these approaches ineffective;<sup>32</sup> they also subject people in crisis to potential harm. In 2021, at least 104 people nationwide were killed after police responded to someone “behaving erratically or having a mental health crisis.”<sup>33</sup> Nearly a third of New Yorkers with mental illness, and nearly a quarter of Black New Yorkers, experience direct exposure to police violence.<sup>34</sup> According to the NYPD’s own figures, 47 percent of people who are subjected to involuntary mental health removals are Black.<sup>35</sup> The NYPD is not equipped or suited to conduct mental health outreach services, and these alarming statistics establish the urgency to remove them from these responses. People experiencing a mental health crisis require a healthcare-centered response, with the mental health system taking the lead.

Rather than continuing to fund failed mental health response strategies that deploy police officers for mental health crises, the City instead should invest in proven public health solutions that utilize trained clinicians, psychiatrists, peer advocates, and health care and other professionals who have the qualifications and expertise for this role. Funding that is currently used to facilitate CRTs and involuntary removals should be eliminated from the budget, and the money should be used to increase the number of community-based mental health service providers and improve their services. Some worthwhile investments that the city should make include:

---

<sup>28</sup> Press Release, The City of New York, Mental Health Involuntary Removals (Nov. 28, 2022).

<sup>29</sup> Transcript of N.Y.P.D. Chief of Training Juanita Holmes Testimony at 60:14-16, Comm. on Mental Health, Disabilities & Addiction (Mar. 17, 2023), [www.nyclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/exhibit\\_h\\_1.pdf](http://www.nyclu.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/exhibit_h_1.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Press Release, Off. of the N.Y.C. Mayor, Mayor Adams Announces Plan to Provide Care for Individuals Suffering From Untreated Severe Mental Illness Across NYC (Nov. 29, 2022); *Co-Response Teams*, The City of New York, Mayor’s Off. of Cmty. Mental Health (Nov. 10, 2019), [mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/program/co-response-teams](http://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/program/co-response-teams).

<sup>31</sup> Legal Defense Fund & Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, *Advancing An Alternative to Police: Community-Based Services for Black People with Mental Illness*, at 16 (July 2022), [www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-LDF-Bazelon-brief-Community-Based-Services-for-MH48.pdf](http://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-LDF-Bazelon-brief-Community-Based-Services-for-MH48.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> See generally, Sema A. Taheri, *Do Crisis Intervention Teams Reduce Arrests and Improve Officer Safety? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*, 27 *Crim. Justice Pol’y Rev.* 76, 90 (2016) (“[T]here appears to be some evidence that CIT have no effect on outcomes of arrest, nor on officer use of force[.]”)

<sup>33</sup> Nicolas Turner, *We Need to Think Beyond Police in Mental Health Crises*, Vera Inst. for Just. (Apr. 6, 2022), [www.vera.org/news/we-need-to-think-beyond-police-in-mental-health-crises](http://www.vera.org/news/we-need-to-think-beyond-police-in-mental-health-crises).

<sup>34</sup> Brooklyn Movement Ctr., *Invest in Black Futures: A Public Health Roadmap For Safe NYC Neighborhoods*, at 11 (Apr. 28, 2022), [issuu.com/bkmovement/docs/bmc\\_blackfuturesreport\\_v5](http://issuu.com/bkmovement/docs/bmc_blackfuturesreport_v5).

<sup>35</sup> Matt Katz, *Despite New Directive, NYPD Isn’t Transporting More People with Mental Illness to the Hospital*, Gothamist (Mar. 20, 2023) [gothamist.com/news/despite-new-directive-nypd-isnt-transporting-more-people-with-mental-illness-to-the-hospital](http://gothamist.com/news/despite-new-directive-nypd-isnt-transporting-more-people-with-mental-illness-to-the-hospital).



- **Investing in peer-specialists.** There is a serious shortage of mental health workers, especially Black, Latinx, and other mental health workers of color that can provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care to New Yorkers in diverse communities.<sup>36</sup> New York City needs more peer-specialists who can draw on lived experience and have proven to be effective in helping individuals experiencing mental health crises.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the City should increase funding for peer-specialist training as a catalyst to increase the trauma-informed, mental health service workforce.
- **Increasing funding and professional development for mental health service workers.** Nonprofit human service organizations, which are often contracted by the city to provide healthcare and social services for vulnerable New Yorkers, need more funding for their workforce. Human service workers, including social workers, counselors, and assistants, are predominantly people of color and women.<sup>38</sup> Nonprofit human service workers are paid an average of \$34,000 per year, which is significantly less than workers in comparable positions in the government and private sector.<sup>39</sup> While the city should increase the salaries of government mental health service workers, it must also make funds available to improve the salaries of non-profit mental health workers with whom it contracts. The city should also increase its Human Service Career Advancement Scholarship,<sup>40</sup> which covers up to 50 percent of tuition costs for qualified employers of human service nonprofits working towards associate, bachelor's, or master's degrees at participating City University of New York (CUNY) schools.<sup>41</sup>
- **Investing additional funding in respite centers.** Respite centers are an alternative to emergency hospitalization for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis that are voluntary, residential environments that often include 24-hour support from peers and wraparound services. These programs have a documented success rate in helping individuals recover from psychiatric episodes and get connected to ongoing care.<sup>42</sup> They are also much more cost-effective than hospital-based care.<sup>43</sup> Currently, there are only eight respite centers in New York City, which is woefully inadequate given the number of New

---

<sup>36</sup> Jo-Ann Yoo, *New York City Must Get Mental Health Help to People of Color*, N.Y. Daily News (May 24, 2022), [www.nydailynews.com/2022/05/24/new-york-city-must-get-mental-health-help-to-people-of-color/](http://www.nydailynews.com/2022/05/24/new-york-city-must-get-mental-health-help-to-people-of-color/).

<sup>37</sup> Bazelon Center, *When There's a Crisis, Call a Peer How People with Lived Experience Make Mental Health Crisis Services More Effective*, at 7 (2024), [www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Bazelon-When-Theres-a-Crisis-Call-A-Peer-full-01-03-24.pdf](http://www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Bazelon-When-Theres-a-Crisis-Call-A-Peer-full-01-03-24.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Olivia Bensimon, *Amid Inflation and Increased Demand, Human Services Workers Struggle with Burnout*, City Limits (Sep. 5, 2022), [www.citylimits.org/2022/09/05/amid-inflation-and-increased-demand-human-services-workers-struggle-with-burnout/](http://www.citylimits.org/2022/09/05/amid-inflation-and-increased-demand-human-services-workers-struggle-with-burnout/).

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> Press Release, Off. of the N.Y.C. Mayor, CUNY Announce Scholarship Program to Advance Careers of city's Human Service Workers, Office of the Mayor (June 9, 2021).

<sup>41</sup> *Human Services Career Advancement Scholarship*, City University of New York (n.d.), [www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/ocip/students/human-services-career-advancement-scholarship/](http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/ocip/students/human-services-career-advancement-scholarship/).

<sup>42</sup> Ellen E. Bouchery et al., *The Effectiveness of a Peer-Staffed Crisis Respite Program as an Alternative to Hospitalization*, 69 Psych. Serv. (Oct. 1, 2018).

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

Yorkers in need of emergency psychiatric care. The number of respite centers should be increased to ease the burden on existing centers and expand access to communities in need.

- **Expanding community-based programs.** Community-based programs move beyond managing a person’s psychiatric symptoms toward providing a range of holistic services and leveraging peer relationships to restore a person’s dignity, agency, and self-determination, allowing them to reintegrate into their community and thrive. In 2023, LDF and the Bazelon Center for Mental Health released the report *Community-Based Service for Black People with Mental Illness: An Alternative to Police*, which outlines how alternative responses should be supplemented by a sufficient array of facilities that are available for crisis care.<sup>44</sup> We recommend developing resources, such as short-stay apartments, walk-in urgent care centers, and drop off centers throughout urban areas that are readily accessible to people in all neighborhoods, particularly in Black and Latinx communities. These approaches incorporate psychiatric and psychosocial support and a range of services that include long-term housing, intensive case management, peer support services, Assertive Community Treatment, and supported employment.<sup>45</sup> People with lived experiences working as peers are trusted experts who should be involved in—and lead—the delivery of these services. The city should also increase the number of hospital beds for those who need inpatient care and short-term detox facilities that offer treatment of substance use disorders upon and following discharge.

By investing in comprehensive community-based services for people with mental illness, New York City can create a lasting and positive impact on the health, safety, and wellness of our communities—particularly Black New Yorkers, who are too often subjected to harm while in crisis.

### **3. Increased funding for housing and youth services should also be prioritized over harmful NYPD units.**

Research-backed studies make clear that public safety is achieved not by aggressive policing strategies, but rather through policies that promote economic stability.<sup>46</sup> Instead of investing in failed policing strategies exemplified by the SRG and Neighborhood Safety Teams,

---

<sup>44</sup> See Advancing An Alternative to Police: Community-Based Services for Black People with Mental Illness *supra* note 31.

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*; Red Hook Initiative, Youth-Led Community Building is Violence Prevention: A 2023 Progress Report (2023), [www.rhicenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Youth-Led-Community-Building-is-Violence-Prevention-A-Progress-Report-1.pdf](http://www.rhicenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Youth-Led-Community-Building-is-Violence-Prevention-A-Progress-Report-1.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> 28 See C. Fritz Foley, *Welfare Payments and Crime*, 93 Rev. of Econ. and Stats., no. 1, 97-112 (2011), [www.jstor.org/stable/23015922](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23015922) (showing that disbursement of SNAP benefits correlates with reduced crime); Caroline Palmer et al., *Does Emergency Financial Assistance Reduce Crime?*, 169 J. of Pub. Econ. 34, 50 (2019) [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S004727271830210X](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S004727271830210X) (providing temporary financial assistance to people facing adverse income shocks can reduce violent crime up to 51%.); 1 Otto Lenhart, *Earned Income Tax Credit and Crime*, 39 Contemp. Econ. Pol’y 589, 591 (2020), [ideas.repec.org/a/bla/coecpo/v39y2021i3p589-607.html](http://ideas.repec.org/a/bla/coecpo/v39y2021i3p589-607.html) (higher earned income tax credit is associated with increased employment and reduced rates poverty and violent crime).

New York can advance real community safety by prioritizing investments in critical areas such as housing, as well as education and essential services for our youth.<sup>47</sup>

In recent years, unhoused people have been subjected to the criminalization of their mere presence in public transit facilities,<sup>48</sup> the dismantling of their shelters,<sup>49</sup> the disposal of their personal belongings,<sup>50</sup> and involuntary commitment to facilities,<sup>51</sup> as noted earlier. Instead of funding aggressive police enforcement against unhoused people, New York City should prioritize investments in housing security. The city must end the generational divestment from NYCHA housing, and provide financial investment and tangible resources to public housing residents, who have been disproportionately targeted by surveillance and “broken windows” policing.<sup>52</sup> The city’s staggering number of vacant units in supportive and public housing must be filled.<sup>53</sup> The City must also decrease the barriers to supportive housing and build on the gains of the Fair Chance for Housing Act by ensuring that New Yorkers with a history substance use or criminal legal system involvement do not endure housing discrimination.<sup>54</sup>

The city must also end its criminalization of young people, and instead invest in services that help them thrive. Black and other marginalized young people up to the age of 24 are at particular risk of contact with law enforcement,<sup>55</sup> and they are disproportionately subjected to heightened surveillance practices.<sup>56</sup> Instead of aggressive policing, these New Yorkers need youth educational and employment services so they can have the same opportunities to thrive as other youth. The proposed budget calls for a 15.40 percent reduction in youth and community

---

<sup>47</sup> Red Hook Initiative, Real Rites Research (Jan. 2019), [www.rhicenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/RealRitesReportFinal.pdf](http://www.rhicenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/RealRitesReportFinal.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> Gwynne Hogan, Adams, Hochul Roll Out Subway Safety Plan to Crack Down on Homeless People on Trains and in Stations, Gothamist (Feb. 18, 2022), [www.gothamist.com/news/adams-hochul-roll-out-subway-safety-plan-crack-down-homeless-trains-and-stations](http://www.gothamist.com/news/adams-hochul-roll-out-subway-safety-plan-crack-down-homeless-trains-and-stations).

<sup>49</sup> David Brand, *The NYPD Now Decides What Homeless Encampments Get Swept*, City Limits (Sep. 21, 2022), [www.citylimits.org/2022/09/21/the-nypd-now-decides-what-homeless-encampments-get-swept/](http://www.citylimits.org/2022/09/21/the-nypd-now-decides-what-homeless-encampments-get-swept/).

<sup>50</sup> Jeff Coltin, *New York City Workers Keep Throwing Out Homeless People’s Belongings*, City & State (Apr. 5, 2022), [www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2022/04/new-york-city-workers-keep-throwing-out-homeless-peoples-belongings/364018/](http://www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2022/04/new-york-city-workers-keep-throwing-out-homeless-peoples-belongings/364018/).

<sup>51</sup> Andy Newman & Emma G. Fitzsimmons, *New York City to Involuntarily Remove Mentally Ill People From Streets*, N.Y. Times (Nov. 29, 2022), [www.nytimes.com/2022/11/29/nyregion/nyc-mentally-ill-involuntary-custody.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/29/nyregion/nyc-mentally-ill-involuntary-custody.html).

<sup>52</sup> N.Y.C. Dep’t of Investigation, *An Analysis of Quality-of-Life Summonses, Quality-of-Life Misdemeanor Arrests, and Felony Crime in New York City, 2010-2015*, at 5 (June 22, 2016), [www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2016/2016-06-22-Pr18oignypd\\_qualityoflife\\_report.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2016/2016-06-22-Pr18oignypd_qualityoflife_report.pdf) (“Quality-of-life enforcement is not evenly distributed across the City. In 2015, the distribution of quality-of-life enforcement activity in New York City was concentrated in precincts with high proportions of black and Hispanic residents, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents, and males aged 15-20, based on data from the NYPD and the United States Census.”).

<sup>53</sup> Off. of the N.Y.C. Comptroller, *Housing First: A Proven Approach to Dramatically Reduce Street Homelessness* (June 2023), [www.comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Brief-Report\\_Housing-First.pdf](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Brief-Report_Housing-First.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> N.Y. City Council, Int 0632-2022 (2022).

<sup>55</sup> Thurgood Marshall Institute, *The Truth About Crime Statistics: Avoiding Distortions and Improving Public Safety* (Jan. 16, 2024), <https://tminstituteldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-08-03-TMI-Truth-in-Crime-Statistics-Report-FINAL-2.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., N.Y.C. Dep’t of Investigation, *An Investigation into the NYPD’s Criminal Group Database*, at 35 (Apr. 2023), [www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2023/16CGDRpt.Release04.18.2023.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2023/16CGDRpt.Release04.18.2023.pdf) (showing that approximately 48.5 percent of people in the NYPD’s Criminal Group Database are entered when they are age 22 or younger).

development services.<sup>57</sup> This is a huge disservice to our Black and Brown youth. The city must ensure that students with disabilities, students in foster care, and English language learners have the supports and services that they need. New York City schools need \$75 million to hire 500 community members into supportive positions including youth advocates, parent coordinators, paraprofessionals, community outreach coordinators, counselors, and social workers, as well as staff to greet students at the door and check-in visitors. Another \$75 million should be budgeted to baseline and continue to hire additional social workers at competitive rates to support the needs of all students, including newcomer asylum seekers, and achieve a ratio of 1:150 across schools and 1:50 for high-need schools.

These investments would go much further toward promoting public safety than current and failed policing strategies, and could be accomplished by eliminating funding for Neighborhood Safety Teams and the Strategic Response Group, along with other achievable measures such as commonsense reductions in NYPD overtime expenses.<sup>58</sup>

#### **4. Conclusion**

Rather than taking accountability for the failures of his administration, the Mayor seeks to cut 15 percent of social services, threatening the vital services that the most vulnerable New Yorkers rely on most. He has prioritized the restoration of funds to the NYPD over agencies that have faced consistent disinvestment for years, while ignoring the rampant policing practices that have harmed Black and Brown communities under his watch. The Legal Defense Fund urges the City Council to take a different, more effective path by investing in communities and developing effective strategies for public safety.

Respectfully submitted,

Obi Afriyie  
Community Organizer, Criminal Justice  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

Kimberly Saltz  
Legal Fellow, Justice in Public Safety Project  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

David Moss  
Legal Fellow, Justice in Public Safety Project  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

---

<sup>57</sup> N.Y.C. Off. of Management and Budget, Budget Function Analysis (Jan. 16, 2024), [www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/jan24-bfa.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/jan24-bfa.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Press Release, N.Y.C. Off. of the Comptroller, NYPD Overspending on Overtime Grew Dramatically in Recent Years (Mar. 20, 2023).

Good afternoon Chair Salaam and honorable committee members.

My name is Emily Reichard and I am a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner at CASES, one of the leading providers of alternatives to incarceration in New York City. We're honored to be here today.

CASES specializes in working with people with serious mental illnesses (SMI) and criminal legal system involvement. Every year, we provide hope and healing to almost 10,000 New Yorkers—most of them low-income Black and Brown people in overpoliced and under resourced communities.

I work on our Mobile Outreach & Crisis Program—MOCP—a voluntary support service for individuals experiencing Serious Emotional Disturbance, Serious Mental Illness, Criminal Legal System Involvement, and substance use disorders. We work to reduce unnecessary hospitalizations, navigate reentry into the community, and reduce future crises.

I'd like to share the story of Ben\*, a young Harlem resident that came to us while struggling with mental illness. During this time, he was sleeping on subway cars and cycling between arrests and hospitalizations. Once connected with MOCP, Ben pushed away help, instead testing our boundaries by avoiding appointments and dodging outreach.

"I can't believe you stuck around," he said later. "I can't believe you still wanted to help me." Before MOCP, he was routinely discharged from prior psychiatric holds without assistance in navigating follow-up appointments. He did not expect us to care.

We worked with Ben for XYZ years, but it took consistent outreach from our peer specialists to earn his trust. Once built, he led the way to his own recovery. Ben finally felt empowered to ask for help – for exactly what he needed for the next stage of his life. Our case managers took him to his appointments at CASES Nathaniel Clinic and helped him stay consistent.

Today, he is properly medicated for his bipolar disorder and is holding down employment, rather than cycling through emergency rooms.

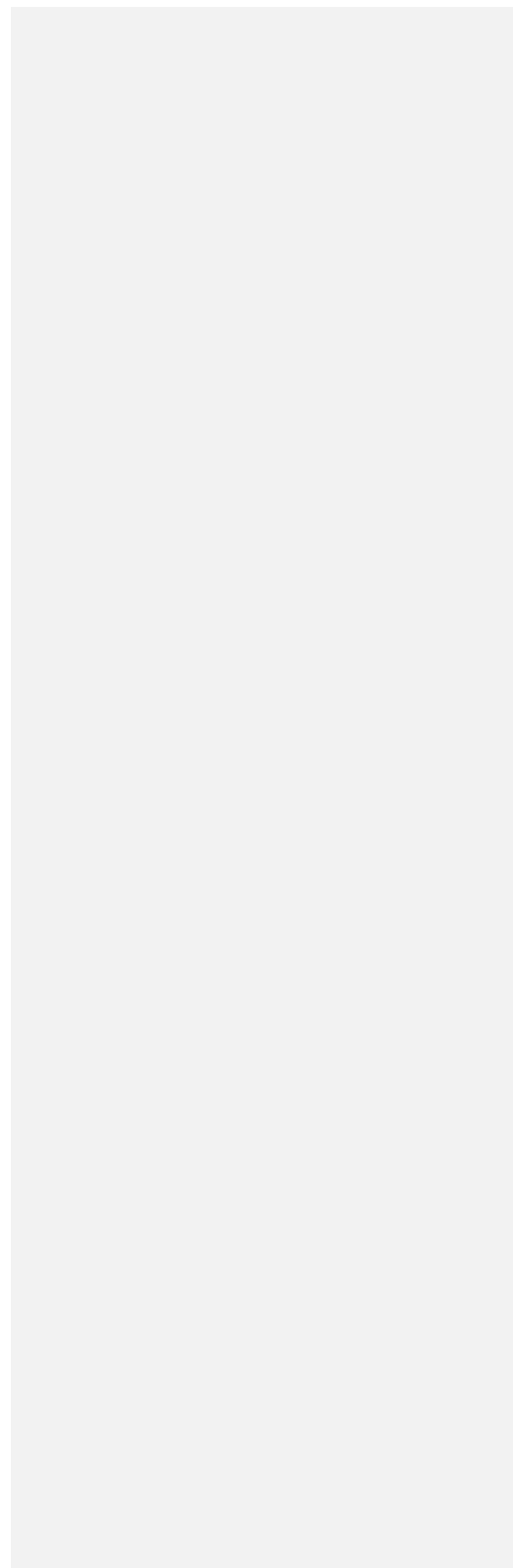
His story is no different than so many of the thousands of New Yorkers currently held on Rikers Island, where more than half are diagnosed with a mental illness. With the Rikers population growing, now is not the time to make new cuts to ATI, reentry, and supervised release programs.

As you know, public safety is not secured through a reliance on arrests and jail. CASES asks that the Council fully fund the ATI-Reentry Coalition Initiative request supporting programs like our Nathaniel Clinic and MOCP, so that instead of being cycled through



Rikers, community members like Ben have the support and treatment they need and deserve.

Thank you.



2 Lafayette Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10007  
T 212.577.7700 F 212.385.0331 www.safehorizon.org



Testimony of  
Jimmy Meagher, Policy Director  
Safe Horizon

On the Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget

Committee on Public Safety  
Hon. Yusef Salaam, Chair

New York City Council

3.20.2024

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Jimmy Meagher, and I am Policy Director at Safe Horizon, the nation's largest non-profit victim services organization. Safe Horizon offers a client-centered, trauma-informed response to 250,000 New Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or abuse. We are increasingly using a lens of racial equity and justice to guide our work with clients, with each other, and in developing the positions we hold.

Whether we are called on to provide expert testimony at an oversight hearing or to assist a constituent in crisis and in need of emergency services, we are proud to partner with the City Council in a collective effort to make our city safer for all. We look forward to helping you and your staff learn how best to support survivors and connect them to the resources available in your borough and community.

Over many years, the City Council has been a key supporter of our programs helping adult, adolescent, and child victims of violence and abuse. City Council funding fills in gaps where no other financial support exists and allows us to draw down critical dollars from other sources. Moreover, this funding demonstrates the value that you and your colleagues place in helping survivors of all ages access desperately-needed shelter, support services, legal assistance, and counseling.

The City Council has also championed the human services nonprofit sector. Our sector desperately needs your help to ensure that human services workers across our sector receive the compensation and support we need. To be frank – our sector is in crisis. Nonprofit human services organizations are shuttering as a result of delayed contracts and payments. And nonprofits across the sector are struggling to hire and retain staff as a result of an unjust wage structure largely determined by government contracts.

The City of New York contracts with nonprofits to deliver the essential services so many New Yorkers rely on – for food, for safety, for shelter, etc. However, the City too often asks our community of nonprofits to do more with less and to accept the bare minimum. This means that many - too many - nonprofit human services workers, the majority of whom are women and people of color, are barely surviving on the wages paid by underfunded City contracts. Because many survivors come into victim services work to help other survivors, City funding for the nonprofit victim services sector is an economic justice issue for survivors. To live up to our shared values of equity, equality, and supporting communities, our City must commit to fully funding a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) and other fair and just investments to our sector, to fully funding city contracts at appropriate levels to allow non-profits to offer competitive living wage salaries, and to paying organizations on time for the work we have already done. Pay equity is a racial justice issue, a gender justice issue, and an economic justice issue.

My testimony today focuses on the needs of the nonprofit human services sector, with specific focus on the #JustPay campaign. I also write about a \$3M MOCJ PEG we are deeply concerned about. I will highlight the City Council discretionary and initiative funding contracted through MOCJ that Safe Horizon and our community of providers rely on to provide essential services to survivors of violence and abuse across the five boroughs. Lastly, I will highlight Safe Horizon's policy recommendations to the current Administration. These policies promote housing justice,

economic justice, and public safety & criminal justice for survivors, their families, and their communities.

### **#JustPay - Invest in a 5% COLA for Human Services Workers**

Safe Horizon is a proud member of the [#JustPay campaign](#), which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers. The #JustPay campaign is demanding that sector employees under contract with New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%).

**We thank the Administration and the City Council for including a 9.27% wage increase for City-contracted human services workers, as this \$741 million investment is a significant step in fairly compensating frontline workers.** By committing to meaningful, yearly increases in salaries to help workers keep up with cost-of-living, the City has supported the sector in undoing decades of underfunding for human services. More must be done to achieve true livable wages and fair funding on government contracts, but this is a remarkable investment and acknowledgement of how important these workers are to New York. We look forward to working with the City for a seamless COLA implementation so that organizations receive their funding on time to distribute to the 80,000 City-contracted human services workers.

### **Restore \$3 million MOCJ PEG for "Crime Victim Services Re-estimate."**

The Mayor's FY25 Preliminary Budget inexplicably slashes services for crime victims by \$3 million, even as concerns about the impact of violence and abuse continue to be on the minds of many New Yorkers. The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) explains that the PEG is tied to underspending by contracted providers, when in reality the City either imposed a hiring freeze or was so delinquent in processing contracts that providers were unable to hire staff. Safe Horizon strongly urges the City Council to advocate with the Mayor to restore this PEG in the forthcoming FY25 Executive Budget and include this in the Council's Preliminary Budget Response.

### **Initiative and Discretionary Funding**

City Council initiative and discretionary funding typically contracted through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) supports the following Safe Horizon programs:

#### **Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative**

Since 2006, the New York City Council's DOVE Initiative has provided critical resources to communities impacted by domestic violence. Recognizing that survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence have varied needs and may not always access the criminal justice system, the City Council partnered with Safe Horizon to create the DOVE Initiative to provide a neighborhood-

based response to survivors and their families. The DOVE Initiative was funded at \$12,010,000 in FY24, with Council Members then allocating funding to local providers in their district.

Currently, over 150 organizations across NYC use DOVE funding to address domestic violence in the community by providing legal services, crisis intervention, case management, counseling, support groups, outreach, education, and training. **Safe Horizon oversees and administers this entire project and ensures program compliance.** We provide in-depth training on program development and evaluation to help organizations stay competitive in future funding environments, as well as networking opportunities to help DOVE-funded organizations learn from each other and coordinate services. DOVE has always been important, but it has literally been a lifesaver for New Yorkers in every neighborhood and every community who continue to navigate these uncertain times. As we advocate for options for victims and survivors both inside and outside traditional criminal justice responses, DOVE is pivotal. DOVE directs funds to the organizations rooted in community that provide necessary and life-saving supports to survivors.

We are very grateful to the City Council for supporting the DOVE Initiative for many years. We are seeking a restoration of **\$12,010,000** so our network of CBOs can continue to reach survivors in every neighborhood and every district across New York City.

### **Safe Horizon Policy Recommendations**

Finally, in September 2021 Safe Horizon published our “[Policy Recommendations for the Next NYC Mayor](https://tinyurl.com/2kc7m5my),” which you can read on our website: <https://tinyurl.com/2kc7m5my>

One of our key recommendations for our partners in city government is to approach public safety more broadly and comprehensively, beyond a myopic focus on criminal legal responses to violence. New Yorkers all want public safety. **For many of our clients, safety means health, mental health, economic stability, housing, and so much more.** The current Administration and City Council must intentionally invest in communities and work to end poverty when investing in public safety measures.

Survivors of violence and abuse understand their safety better than anybody. And safety, healing, and justice may look different for every survivor. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to public safety, survivors need the city to invest in a range of safe, viable options so they can make their own decisions and navigate their path forward. For example, survivors may define the words “accountability” and “justice” differently. For some, it includes an expectation of the criminal justice system to arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate the person who caused harm. For others, it includes a restorative justice process where the person responsible for the violence or abuse takes full ownership of their actions and commits to repairing the harm. A survivor-centered approach to public safety will create options for accountability and healing that match more closely with what survivors want.

While violence and abuse occur across socio-economic lines, the impact falls particularly heavily on low-income communities of color. The lack of adequate financial resources, limited access to safe, affordable housing, and generations of justified mistrust of law enforcement and the criminal justice system can leave survivors with few paths to safety. **A true public safety strategy must**



**include investments in under-resourced communities, including a dramatic increase in affordable housing and economic opportunities.** The City must invest in restorative justice programs, re-direct funding and responses from the NYPD to community-based solutions, build understanding of trauma with NYPD and communities, and create an economic recovery strategy that centers the health, well-being, and safety of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Throughout our history, we have partnered with law enforcement. Through those partnerships, we have worked with police officers and prosecutors to keep victims safe and hold those who cause harm accountable. We have advocated for policy and practice changes to make these systems more responsive to our clients. And we have prided ourselves on bringing greater respect, compassion, and self-determination to survivors involved in the criminal justice process through our client-centered approach to advocacy.

Yet the reality is that our law enforcement partners have also caused harm. Black and brown people, especially men and transgender women, are far more likely to be killed by the police and to experience violence at the hands of police officers. And they face bias and inequity in every aspect of the criminal justice system. Safe Horizon's mission is to provide support, prevent violence, and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families, and communities. We believe that confronting and ultimately dismantling systemic racism is necessary to fulfilling our mission because systemic racism denies justice and is rooted in violence.

Too many of the victims and survivors we serve, and too many of our colleagues and loved ones have had encounters with police officers that were dehumanizing. We know that these experiences are a profound barrier to safety and healing. It is because of this history and this experience that we continue to have major concerns with Mayor Adams' policies of having police officers involuntarily remove and hospitalize New Yorkers they deem too mentally ill to care for themselves, even if they pose no threat to others. The Administration approaches the homelessness crisis with the mindset that unhoused New Yorkers are refusing support rather than seeing and understanding that our current systems responses are vastly inadequate. **What unhoused New Yorkers need is not an expanded police response but a massive investment in housing and long-term treatment and care.**

Our current mental health system is itself in crisis. Across our programs, we have clients who **are** seeking mental health services and supports. Unfortunately, the mental health system has been plagued by underinvestment and cannot currently meet the demand. The Administration's plan is to involuntarily hospitalize unhoused New Yorkers. People who are hospitalized are usually discharged from the hospital within 24 hours back onto the street with a referral to an outpatient program. These programs are not accessible when street homeless. This system was already lacking before the pandemic, but now even fewer emergency psych beds exist for those who would benefit. Forcefully hospitalizing folks and cycling them through the system does more harm than good. In our experience, voluntary programs are more effective and generally much cheaper. We should be funding and expanding voluntary services rather than traumatizing already traumatized people.

We know that the NYPD's budget has continued to grow even when crime rates dropped dramatically over the last three decades, and that officers have been asked to respond to an ever-

increasing number of societal issues that are better addressed by mental health clinicians, social workers, and outreach workers. At the same time, our city, state, and federal governments have not prioritized investing in programming that more effectively addresses underlying issues and root causes of violence and trauma. We are seeing this same dynamic playing out again – the City is turning to the police to address NYC’s overlapping homelessness and mental health crises rather than prioritizing funding for housing and mental health.

Safe Horizon supports non-police responses to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness and mental health crises. Transferring these responsibilities would allow the police department to focus on incidents of violence where their presence is needed, while reducing the likelihood of harm to vulnerable New Yorkers. We do not believe that we need to or should turn to law enforcement to respond to every incident of an individual in mental health crisis and/or substance use crisis. In most cases, an outreach team consisting of peers and behavioral health specialists can help safely stabilize the individual and more effectively connect them with voluntary services and care. Of course, this also requires that the City sustainably invest not just in outreach but in the community-based services, mental health treatment programs, and housing options that New Yorkers in crisis need to heal.

Ultimately, unhoused New Yorkers need quality, safe, affordable housing and accessible mental health services. That is where we should be investing our resources.

### **Conclusion**

As the City Council and the Administration sets the budget for the next fiscal year, it's imperative that our city expand, perfect, create, and invest in programming that provides healing and support to people who have experienced harm, violence, and trauma. When we invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of individual New Yorkers, we invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of New York City as a whole.

And it is essential that the City invest in the nonprofit human services workforce that we collectively rely on to support our safety net. We urge you and your colleagues to listen to providers and our dedicated workforce. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony.

## Safe Horizon FY25 Expense Funding Requests



### **Speaker's Initiative – Restoration to FY23 level of \$150,000 for SafeChat (#173080)**

Safe Horizon's SafeChat is a live chat platform that allows victims of all forms of crime and abuse to access Safe Horizon services digitally. Crime victims utilize their computer, phone, or tablet to safely and confidentially engage in a one-on-one chat with trained Safe Horizon Live Chat Specialists through the Safe Horizon website ([www.safehorizon.org](http://www.safehorizon.org)). Specialists utilize a best practice, client-centered approach to engage with victims by providing information and referrals across NYC, supporting victims in fully assessing their safety, and collaborating with victims to develop comprehensive safety plans. One of our goals is to increase accessibility to needed services for young men of color. Research shows that young men of color are more likely to experience harm, yet Safe Horizon has found that young men of color are not accessing our services at a corresponding rate. This funding supports the salary of a SafeChat Live Chat Specialist and increases our ability to respond in particular to young men of color seeking help.

### **DOVE Initiative – Restoration of \$12,010,000 gross (\$859,000 to Safe Horizon) (#171946)**

Since 2006, Safe Horizon has successfully administered the City Council's Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DOVE) Initiative. Currently, more than 150 organizations across NYC use DOVE funding to address domestic violence in the community by providing legal services, crisis intervention, case management, outreach, education, and training. Safe Horizon oversees this entire project and ensures fiscal and programmatic compliance. We provide in-depth training on program development and evaluation to help organizations stay competitive in future funding environments, as well as networking opportunities to help DOVE-funded organizations learn from each other and coordinate services. DOVE has been a lifesaver for New Yorkers in every neighborhood and every community who are navigating these uncertain times. As we advocate for options for victims and survivors both inside and outside traditional criminal justice responses, DOVE is pivotal. DOVE directs funds to the organizations rooted in community that provide necessary and lifesaving supports to survivors.

### **Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault – Restoration and Enhancement to \$1,250,000 (#172004)**

Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are at the forefront of the city's response to child abuse. At Safe Horizon's CACs, child victims of sexual and/or severe physical abuse receive the help they need quickly and in one location. The police, prosecutors, medical professionals, victim advocates, clinicians, and child protective caseworkers are all under one roof in a child-friendly environment that minimizes trauma and facilitates healing. This allows us to facilitate a swift, comprehensive, coordinated investigation and multi-disciplinary team response to abuse. During the pandemic, our CACs remained open as essential programming and continued to provide critical supports to survivors of child abuse and their families. We are now serving more children than before the pandemic. We are requesting an enhancement to \$1,250,000 to sustain general operations in our CACs across the five boroughs.

### **Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade – Restoration of \$456,697 (#173030)**

Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project provides shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 16 to 25. This funding allows our team to respond more robustly to young people both in our drop-in centers and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trades. We connect them to supportive counseling, access to benefits and housing, and primary and mental healthcare as they navigate homelessness, violence, and other traumas.

**Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative – Restoration of \$275,000 (#172938)**

Safe Horizon's Domestic Violence Law Project (DVLDP) utilizes funding through the Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative to provide direct legal services to indigent victims of domestic violence in Family, Supreme, and Integrated DV Courts throughout the city. We assist with orders of protection, child support, custody, visitation, and uncontested divorce proceedings. We also run a legal helpline that provides information, referrals, and assistance to domestic violence survivors.

**Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations – Restoration of \$150,000 (#173053)**

The work of the Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative aligns with Safe Horizon's commitment to working with young Black and brown men who have experienced harm and violence. This funding increases our capacity to connect community members who have experienced harm, with a particular focus on young men of color, to our continuum of services, including counseling and mental health supports. Our Helpline and SafeChat serve as a first point of contact, linking to our Community Programs for ongoing coordination within Safe Horizon and beyond.

**Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative – Restoration of \$140,000 (#172959)**

The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative allows us to address the impact of traumatic experiences that are so often at the root of behaviors that precipitate involvement in family court of children and youth. There is growing recognition of the many types of traumas (interpersonal violence, community violence, historical racism, systemic violence, and daily experiences of racism and other forms of oppression) that impact young people. Our project enhances trauma-informed care for youth by creating and providing training for a short-term trauma-focused intervention that helps survivors identify trauma reactions and practice coping strategies for managing them.

**Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative – Restoration of \$115,385 (#172970)**

The Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative supports our work with infants and toddlers who are survivors of crime, as well as their families, through training of clinicians and staff in an attachment-based intervention that facilitates healing and supports healthy development. Our Counseling Center uses a curriculum on how exposure to domestic violence, the dynamics of domestic violence, and the systems of oppression families experiencing DV often encounter all come together in ways that can disrupt the bond between infants and their caregivers. By training a greater number of individuals who come into contact with these children, we can prevent lifelong developmental consequences while providing healing and relief.

**Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence – Restoration and Enhancement to \$100,000 (#172108)**

The Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative – part of the Young Women's Initiative (YWI) – allows Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project (ILP) to provide full representation and consultations to young immigrant victims of domestic violence from across NYC. The majority of these cases include clients or families where there is a survivor of domestic or sexual violence and where the victim is between the ages of 16 and 24. As a result of the steady transfer of recent arrivals at the southern border to New York City, Safe Horizon's ILP has seen an increase of survivors seeking our immediate assistance. In addition, the overwhelmed systems have left countless in tenuous circumstances—food and housing insecure and desperate for work—making them even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and in need of our support and services. Without additional resources, we are unable to serve everyone who seeks our help.

**Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) – Restoration and Enhancement to \$100,000 (#172917)**

Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project (ILP) utilizes funding through the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) to provide expert legal advice and representation to undocumented victims of crime, violence, abuse, trafficking, and torture. ILP staff help guide their clients through complex immigration proceedings and assist

them with applications for U-Visas, T-Visas, VAWA self-petitions, asylum, adjustment of status and citizenship, as well as in removal defense. ILP has experienced a significant increase in demand for legal assistance over the past several years. The steady flow of new arrivals to New York from border states, coupled with the fact that many New York-area immigration legal service providers are not accepting new intakes, drives many individuals and families desperate for immigration legal help to our office, which has remained open and serving clients even during the height of the pandemic. This funding allows ILP to serve more immigrant survivors. Without additional resources, we are unable to serve everyone who seeks our help.

**Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative – Restoration of \$44,560 (#173001)**

The Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative helps Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project increase our capacity to connect potentially Hepatitis C-affected clients to testing, medical care, treatment, and infection control services.

**Community Safety and Victim Services Initiative – Individual Member Awards (#173099)**

These awards support Safe Horizon's client-centered trauma-informed response to victims and survivors in individual districts. Awards in FY24 supported our Court Programs, Counseling Center, and Community Programs. We are seeking additional support for our Immigration Law Project (ILP) and Anti-Trafficking Program (ATP), given the dramatic increase of requests for our legal services and supports.

*For more information, please contact:*

*Michael Polenberg at [michael.polenberg@safehorizon.org](mailto:michael.polenberg@safehorizon.org) or 212-577-7735 or*

*Jimmy Meagher at [james.meagher@safehorizon.org](mailto:james.meagher@safehorizon.org) or 212-577-4370*





666 Broadway, 7th Floor  
New York, New York 10012  
212-614-6464  
ccrjustice.org

**TESTIMONY OF SAMAH SISAY  
CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY  
REGARDING THE NYC PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET AND OVERSIGHT HEARING**

**March 20, 2024**

My name is Samah Sisay, and I am an attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights. I am here today to provide the Center for Constitutional Rights' views on the City's Preliminary Budget as it relates to the New York City Police Department's Neighborhood Safety Teams and Mental Health Co-Response Teams.

The Center for Constitutional Rights and the law firm of Beldock, Levine, and Hoffman, LLP have served for over 12 years as plaintiffs' counsel in *Floyd v. City of New York*, the landmark civil rights class action that successfully challenged the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) racially discriminatory and unconstitutional stop, question, and frisk practices and resulted in the current supervision of the NYPD by a court-appointed Monitor ("Monitor") to implement long-needed changes to the Department, changes which, ten years later, the NYPD has yet to fully implement.

As civil rights attorneys, we have serious concerns about funding being provided to the NYPD to expand co-responder models that utilize officers as mental health crisis responders and the increase in resources to rebranded Anti-Crime Units like the Neighborhood Safety Teams.

**Neighborhood Safety Teams (Rebranded Anti-Crime Unit)**

Anti-crime units have a notorious history of racial profiling, violence, unconstitutional stops and the suppression of New Yorkers' rights. In February 1999, members of the NYPD's Street Crimes Unit fired 41 shots and killed Amadou Diallo, an unarmed Black immigrant from Guinea, at the entry of his home in the Bronx. In the early 2000s, the Center for Constitutional Rights and grassroots groups in the New York City police accountability movement, successfully won the dismantling of the Street Crimes Units. Since then, mayors and the NYPD have attempted to rebrand and retrain the units; however, the abuses remain. The Neighborhood Safety Teams are no different.

When he announced the creation of NSTs, Mayor Adams promised that "the Department must ensure that the best officers are selected for the position and that they are properly trained, equipped, and supervised." However, a June 2023 report by the Federal Monitor showed that officers on NSTs made illegal stops at higher rates than other officers. The Monitor team audited 184 stops reported by NST officers by looking at the body-worn camera video and reviewing stop

reports. The report found that one in four stops was illegal. Even more troubling, the Monitor found that nearly 97% of those stopped by NST officers were Black or Latino. Furthermore, reviewing supervisors approved every one of the stops that the Monitor team determined was illegal showing that the NYPD's internal reviews are failing.

By the end of FY24, there are slated to be over 500 officers on the Neighborhood Safety Teams, costing \$58.5 million in salaries and another \$56.4 million in central expenses, totaling \$114.9 million. This funding should be redirected to community-based safety structures that improve the health and well-being of New Yorkers.

### **NYPD Mental Health Co-Response Teams**

As was highlighted in various statements in opposition to the Governor's plan to deploy National Guard and state law enforcement personnel to conduct searches at New York City subway stations, New Yorkers who experience an emotional or psychiatric crisis need a response system that is based in public health principles and that can connect them to the services they need – not criminalization. In 2020, in response to #NYCBudgetJustice coalition demands, the NYPD Homeless Outreach Unit was disbanded.

However, the City now wants to invest in Mental Health Co Response Teams to train officers to respond to emotional distress calls and pair officers with mental health workers. This approach, including the expansion of the Subway Co-Response Outreach (SCOUT) program, is impractical. The NYPD is neither well-equipped nor well-positioned to conduct mental health outreach services. In 2021, at least 104 people were killed after police responded to someone "behaving erratically or having a mental health crisis."<sup>1</sup> I have also seen personally how, despite being paired with mental health workers, officers often take over encounters and resort to unnecessary violence.

### **Conclusion**

The NYPD is already the largest police department in the world with a bloated budget. Programs like the rebranded Anti-Crime Unit, Neighborhood Safety Teams, and Mental Health Co-Response Teams have been proven to be ineffective, lack adequate oversight and ultimately cause more harm than safety. Despite specialized training, we see these units continue to engage in a wide spectrum of racial profiling and unconstitutional policing. These programs should be disbanded, like the programs that existed before them, and the City should pursue more effective, research-backed strategies that will actually promote meaningful community safety for all New Yorkers. Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Nicolas Turner, *We Need to Think Beyond Police in Mental Health Crises*, Vera Inst. for Just. (Apr. 6, 2022), [www.vera.org/news/we-need-to-think-beyond-police-in-mental-health-crises](http://www.vera.org/news/we-need-to-think-beyond-police-in-mental-health-crises).

Courtney Bryan, Executive Director

## **Table of Contents**

---

### Page 1

- Center for Justice Innovation New York City Program Map

### Page 2 - Page 15

- Written testimony for submission to 3/20/24 City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing of the Committee on Public Safety

### Page 16 - Page 23

- Summary of FY25 Center for Justice Innovation Proposals

### Page 24 - Page 31

- Letters of Support;
  - Bronx County District Attorney
  - Kings County District Attorney
  - Manhattan District Attorney
  - Richmond County District Attorney

The Center for Justice Innovation is a non-profit organization that seeks to transform the policies and practices of the justice system to make it fair, effective, and humane. The Center operates the following sites throughout New York City.

- Family
- Criminal
- Community Development
- Civil/Housing

Click on the name of any program to learn more.

**STATEN ISLAND**

- 1. Staten Island Justice Center

**MANHATTAN**

- 2. Harlem Community Justice Center
- 3. Headquarters
- 4. Manhattan Justice Opportunities
- 5. Midtown Community Court

**MULTI-BOROUGH**

- 6. Legal Hand (Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens)

**BRONX**

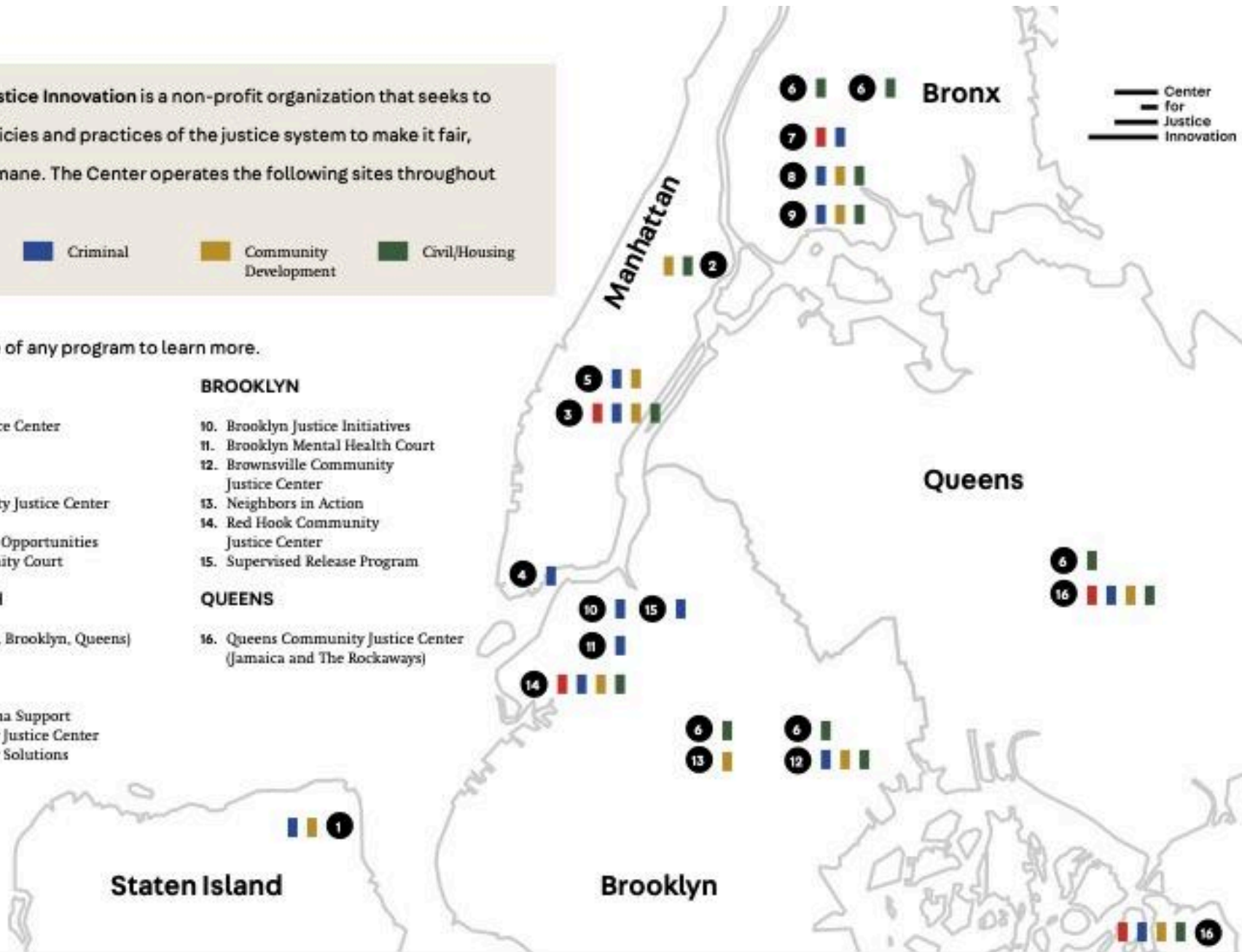
- 7. Bronx Child Trauma Support
- 8. Bronx Community Justice Center
- 9. Bronx Community Solutions

**BROOKLYN**

- 10. Brooklyn Justice Initiatives
- 11. Brooklyn Mental Health Court
- 12. Brownsville Community Justice Center
- 13. Neighbors in Action
- 14. Red Hook Community Justice Center
- 15. Supervised Release Program

**QUEENS**

- 16. Queens Community Justice Center (Jamaica and The Rockaways)



**Citywide**

- Access to Justice
- Alternatives to Incarceration
- Driver Accountability Program
- Gender and Family Justice
- Neighborhood Safety Initiatives
- Parent Support Program
- Project Reset
- Restorative Justice Practices
- RISE Project
- Strong Starts Court Initiative
- Youth Action Institute
- Youth Impact

For More Information  
Shane Correia  
correias@innovatingjustice.org

Courtney Bryan, Executive Director

**Center for Justice Innovation  
New York City Council  
Committee on Public Safety  
March 20, 2024**

Good morning, Chair Salaam and esteemed members of the Committee on Public Safety. Since the 1990s, the Center for Justice Innovation has worked to build public safety through holistic, sustainable, community-driven solutions inside and outside the legal system.

As the city faces budget constraints, we remain focused on the vision embraced by the Council of a fair, effective, and humane justice system through such targets as safely reducing the jail population at Rikers Island, which can happen by expanding and maintaining effective and proportionate alternatives to incarceration. Our firsthand experience operating direct service programs and conducting original research uniquely positions us to offer insights that Council can look to as it considers the development of initiatives that respond to the needs of all New Yorkers.

Traditional legal responses to crime, like over-incarceration, often fail to produce meaningful improvements to public safety while presenting an enormous cost for the city to bear. Unnecessary and overinclusive incarceration often entails expensive unintended consequences for the City and those involved, destabilizing individuals by increasing their risk of losing housing, employment, access to higher education, benefits, and even crucial treatment for mental illness or substance abuse disorder. This cannot be the path to a safer New York City. In addition, incarceration can sever close personal relationships, like those with one's children, parents, siblings and romantic partners, things we know can motivate lasting change. These relationships and systems of support can be difficult to replace once lost. The experience of incarceration can be deeply destabilizing, resulting in individuals returning to their communities without the resources and tools necessary to be successful. The outcome is a costly and largely ineffective revolving door justice system.

The cost of incarceration continues to grow, draining the city of its much needed resources while failing to produce meaningful and sustainable improvements to public safety.



The full annual cost per person of incarceration has nearly quadrupled from 2011 to 2021, coming in at \$556,539 per year per person held in jail.<sup>1</sup>

The Center applauds the City’s efforts to close Rikers Island and transition away from reliance on traditional carceral settings. However, in order to continue progressing on this path, we must continue to invest in alternative responses. The Center’s programming is backed by rigorous research and evidenced-based practices. By collaborating with communities and system actors, we work to advance public safety and produce sustainable, measurable change while protecting the city from the increasing costs of incarceration.

## **Community Development and Crime Prevention**

---

### **Neighborhood Safety Initiative (NSI)**

Neighborhood Safety Initiatives (NSI) supports the implementation of NeighborhoodStat (NSTAT), a resident-driven community organizing initiative and comprehensive strategy to enhance public safety and strengthen community well-being in 30 public housing developments.

NSI enlists residents, City agencies, and community-based partners to help move beyond enforcement and address the factors underlying safety – providing opportunities for work and play, health and well-being, and youth development; promoting activated, well-maintained spaces through community and human-centered design; and improving trust between neighbors with a responsive and just government. Their mission is to improve community safety in places impacted by historic disinvestment by creating opportunities for residents to identify key issues underlying crime and participate in the decision-making to address these priorities. Through NeighborhoodStat (NSTAT), we harness the collective expertise of residents, government, and community partners to drive meaningful dialogue, problem-solving, and, ultimately, create positive change at both the neighborhood and administrative levels.

NeighborhoodStat connects residents to social services and community resources; increases the security and quality of shared community space by working with residents to physically improve and maintain public space, thereby enhancing a positive sense of ownership; increases civic engagement; and enhances the capacity of residents to improve public safety and wellbeing in their communities. Adopting a participatory justice model, NeighborhoodStat works with local organizers to provide direct investment into historically underserved communities and ensures that those most affected and most marginalized, especially those who have been historically left out of these conversations, have a say in improving health and wellbeing, safety

---

<sup>1</sup> “Comptroller Stringer: Cost of Incarceration per Person in New York City Skyrockets to All-Time High.” *Comptroller.Nyc.Gov*, 6 Dec. 2021, [comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2/](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2/)

and justice, economic stability, physical space, and youth development policies that affect their lives.

The program has reached over 60,000 residents of the New York City Housing Authority utilizing the following strategies:<sup>2</sup>

- **Invest in Residents:** Neighborhood Safety Initiatives hires, trains, and supports community organizers; recruits and organizes resident leadership teams; designs and implements social programs; manages community action plans; and implements data collection and evaluations. Social programs include youth mentorship, coding courses, music mentorship, adult entrepreneurship training and support, intergenerational green space stewardship, healing and justice events, public education campaigns like those around COVID-19, summer time basketball series, economic mobility events, and more. Neighborhood Safety Initiatives also respond to residents' immediate needs. The program coordinates collaboration across city agencies and other non-profit partners to answer food needs, connect residents to resources, and host conflict resolution events. In 2023, more than 465 intergenerational residents were actively involved in resident stakeholder teams, taking the lead in identifying both the issues plaguing their communities and driving positive change.
- **Transform Public Spaces:** Neighborhood Safety Initiatives works with residents to re-envision public spaces to make them more welcoming and promote people's well-being. In the last five years the program has designed and implemented a series of community gardens and recreational public spaces, wayfinding projects, murals, creative lighting installations, and a pop-up outdoor program with movable kiosks where partner agencies can provide information and supportive services to the community. Since 2017, Neighborhood Safety Initiatives has overseen the co-creation and implementation of over 65 built environment projects and social programs. These initiatives include murals, open plazas, community gardens, pop-up modular resource hubs, music programs for youth, and adult entrepreneurship programs in collaboration with NYCHA community stakeholders.

### **Neighbors in Action**

Neighbors in Action (NIA) is a neighborhood institution that aims to improve community collaboration, foster local leadership, and make the neighborhoods of central Brooklyn safer and healthier for all residents. Staff work to reduce community violence and the negative impacts of the criminal justice system by addressing root causes such as poverty, trauma, and racism. Since its founding, Neighbors in Action has developed multiple programs ranging from anti-gun violence initiatives to therapeutic services and activities to cultivate youth empowerment through civic engagement and workforce development.

---

<sup>2</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. *Neighborhood Safety Initiatives*. New York, NY.  
<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/neighborhood-safety-initiatives/more-info>

- **Promoting Community-led Approaches to Safety:** NIA mobilizes local residents to promote peace and safety. The Save Our Streets program, which takes a public health approach to ending gun violence, described in more detail in the next section, has been documented to reduce shootings.
- **Healing:** NIA's community healing and well-being programs give participants (all of whom are youth who have experienced violence) the tools they need to overcome trauma and succeed. All programming takes into consideration collective or historical trauma and resilience in order to heal.
- **Aiding Neighbors:** Doors are open to anyone who wants to come in for help. Services include helping people find jobs, apply for benefits, and access basic services. In partnership with the Legal Hand program, local residents are trained to provide legal information to their neighbors so they can resolve housing, family, immigration, and other issues. There is also an on-site lawyer who provides free legal assistance to community members.
- **Placekeeping:** By creating places that are welcoming, accessible, familiar, and conducive to economic development and social interaction, placekeeping can tip the scales in favor of safe and vibrant communities without relying on conventional law enforcement responses. Placekeeping is more than just space improvement or beautification, it is as much about cultivating resident decision-making as it is about environmental design. Annual activities include street festivals, arts campaigns, and events in spaces identified by program participants. NIA also facilitates residents to activate under-resourced and underdeveloped spaces to help promote ways that they can be transformed into spaces that are joyful, healthy, and engaging.
- **Investing in Youth:** NIA engages youth from the Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights neighborhoods of Brooklyn, New York, with a focus on long-term investments, such as building transformative relationships and creating scaffolded opportunities for skill-building in meaningful educational, recreational, vocational, and artistic opportunities. Staff works with teens to implement meaningful youth-led community projects to solve community issues. Teens are trained to become peer leaders and community organizers and help prepare young adults for the world of work. Many alumni stay involved and participate in leadership and organizing work after they graduate from our programs.

### **Save Our Streets (S.O.S.)**

---

The Save Our Streets (S.O.S.) program works in four New York City neighborhoods, partnering with local organizations, faith leaders, residents, and the individuals most likely to be involved in a shooting. Staff prevent gun violence from occurring by mediating conflicts and acting as peer counselors to people who are at risk of perpetrating or being victimized by

violence. They work closely with neighborhood leaders and businesses to promote a visible and public message against gun violence, encouraging local voices to articulate that gun violence is unacceptable. These local voices are respected pillars of the community, adults that youth and their families know and trust.

Using public health strategies, S.O.S. seeks to control the spread of violence. Its key elements are:

**Community Outreach and Hospital Response:** The program deploys outreach workers and violence interrupters who engage youth and adults in the community at risk of perpetrating or being victimized by violence. The staff, who all have intimate knowledge of life on the streets, serve as counselors, offering advice and guidance on how to respond to conflicts without violence. They use positive peer pressure to redirect high-risk individuals towards school or jobs and help them think and behave differently about violence. Violence interrupters' primary focus is to prevent shootings from occurring by engaging in mediation. Hospital responders partner with local hospitals to respond to shooting injuries, connecting with gunshot-wound victims and their families at the hospital to offer resources and prevent retaliation.

**Public Education:** S.O.S. staff and volunteers distribute palm cards and posters with messages that promote peaceful conflict resolution, decry violence, and offer S.O.S. as a safe resource for people at risk of experiencing gun violence. Merchants have signs in their windows supporting our "Stop Shooting. Start Living," message and counting the number of days since the last shooting. Social media, texting, and e-mails keep the community updated and involved. S.O.S campaigns are often designed particularly to reach youth, with a specific, thought-provoking focus.

**Faith-Based Leaders:** Faith-based organizations are an essential partner in the S.O.S. violence-reduction strategy. Faith-based leaders are encouraged to preach against gun violence from their pulpits, attend vigils, counsel people who are potentially involved in gun violence, and refer high-risk individuals to the program.

**Community Mobilization:** S.O.S. has built strong relationships with local businesses and agencies to spread an anti-violence message and promote community collaboration. Staff, participants, and volunteers organize block parties, arts showcases, presentations, and trainings to advance the idea that gun violence is both unacceptable and preventable. The program organizes community forums, rallies and marches, speak-outs, and barbecues to advance a simple idea: our community is moving past gun violence. S.O.S. also organizes a rally or vigil in the location of every shooting to call attention to the tragic results of violence. Local residents work as canvassers to promote events and disseminate program information.

**Youth Programming:** The youth specific program, Youth Organizing to Save Our Streets (YO S.O.S.) mobilizes youth in a twice weekly after-school program. Participating youth become peer educators and advocates for change in the local schools and throughout the community. S.O.S. also carries out the following initiatives:

- **Working with Justice-Involved Youth:** S.O.S. Bronx is contracted through the city Administration for Children's Services to work with young people in Horizon Detention

Center, The Children’s Center, and the Close to Home program. The goal is to reduce violence by changing the mindsets of the youth we serve. Staff facilitate workshops, including Job Readiness, Know Your Rights (provided by Legal Aid), Self-Care and Awareness, Reflections of Oneself, Creative Arts, plus game and movie nights. If needed, staff will accompany participants to court and write recommendation letters to help support their cases.

- **Conflict Mediation in Schools:** School-based conflict mediation provides culturally competent programming to at-risk youth to reduce their involvement in violence while increasing attendance, academic progress, and other social measures. The program includes school-wide activities to change the culture around violence and to assist schools in their response to incidents in school or the community.
- **Anti-Gun Violence Employment Program:** This program is a seasonal employment program for participants 14- to 24-years-old. The program consists of two phases: a six-week summer program and a 25-week school-year program. Job responsibilities include community canvassing, asset mapping, data gathering, community outreach, and coordinating shooting responses.
- **In This Together:** Also known as “ITT,” this is a therapeutic program that fosters a safe space for individuals in the community and participants to share and process trauma experienced by themselves or someone close to them. Through individual and group therapy, participants learn coping skills and other techniques such as mindfulness to incorporate in their daily lives. Groups like the King and Queen Makers tap into the greatness of young people and teach them how to use their talents to be positive and safe.
- **Youth Council:** The Youth Council serves young people ages 16 to 24 by providing a safe space to develop leadership and community skills. Participants work to become positive contributors to their neighborhoods. Learning takes place through workshops, community meetings, and recreational activities. Goals include reducing violence and forming a healthy, vibrant peer culture.

### **Reimagining Intimacy through Social Engagement (RISE) Project**

---

The RISE Project transforms responses to intimate partner violence, focusing specifically on its intersection with gun violence. Gun violence and intimate partner violence are often viewed as separate problems that require different responses, but neighborhoods impacted by high rates of gun violence also have the highest levels of reported domestic violence incidents. Access to a gun makes it five times more likely that a partner experiencing abuse will be killed.<sup>3</sup>

The need for these services is increasing, as domestic violence related homicides are displaying startling upward trends. According to a recently released report from the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence, there were 71 domestic violence homicide

---

<sup>3</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. *Rise Project*. New York, NY.  
<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/rise-project>



deaths in New York in 2022, up nearly 15% from the year before.<sup>4</sup> Black and Hispanic women were disproportionately affected, with Black women comprising 41% of the victims despite representing just 21% of the population and Hispanic women comprising 36% of the victims, despite making up just 28% of the population. This disproportionate effect also extends to the boroughs, with Brooklyn experiencing a 225% escalation in intimate partner homicides and the Bronx experiencing a 57% increase.<sup>5</sup> Seeing these disturbing data trends, it is imperative that we increase funding to these services, rather than decrease.

In neighborhoods across New York City, RISE implements community-centered interventions that build local capacity to respond to and prevent intimate partner violence. RISE works with people causing harm in their relationships to stop the violence and transform behaviors and offers people experiencing harm the support they need to navigate systems to obtain safety. RISE's program offerings seamlessly integrate public health, healing-centered approaches, and restorative justice strategies through the following:

- **Community Initiatives:** By engaging communities most impacted by violence, RISE builds capacity to co-create safety in the community and within our homes by changing the societal norms that tolerate intimate partner violence. RISE implements community healing, placemaking, and community organizing strategies that activate neighborhood spaces to prevent violence and support healthy relationships. Youth programming provides space for youth to understand how to maintain healthy relationships, develop youth advocacy projects, and build networks of peer support.
- **Prevention Strategies:** RISE engages community members to play a role in preventing, responding to, and ultimately ending intimate partner violence through workshops, youth programs, community events, and neighborhood-specific public education campaigns.
- **Capacity Building:** Through tailored training and technical assistance to community-based and gun violence prevention organizations, RISE builds community capacity to prevent violence, support healthy relationship norms, and reduce tolerance for intimate partner violence
- **Crisis Response:** RISE responds to crises through immediate interventions and addressing existing service gaps that make it difficult for those most marginalized or impacted by intersectional violence to access support.
- **Youth Programs:** RISE engages youth to develop and implement projects focused on changing harmful behaviors around intimate partner violence. Youth learn about dating

---

<sup>4</sup> Shwe, E., Carlson, S., & Pinder, H. (2024, February 10). In NYC, 2022 was a grim year for domestic violence homicide. Things have gotten worse.

<https://gothamist.com/news/in-nyc-2022-was-a-grim-year-for-domestic-violence-homicide-things-have-gotten-worse>

<sup>5</sup> Graham, A. (2024, January 31). Domestic violence-related homicides skyrocket in NYC, according to new report.

[https://www.amny.com/news/domestic-violence-homicides-skyrocket-nyc/?oref=csny\\_firstread\\_nl](https://www.amny.com/news/domestic-violence-homicides-skyrocket-nyc/?oref=csny_firstread_nl)

violence, consent, and navigating relationships through workshops, public education campaigns, arts initiatives, and community events.

- **Transformative Initiatives:** Community-based interventions engage individuals who cause harm in their intimate relationships. The goal for the individual is to stop causing harm, take accountability, and change their behavior to ultimately prevent abuse
- **Individual Interventions:** RISE provides individual services to support participants in recognizing the root causes of their harmful behaviors and co-creates strategies to change behavior using an intersectional and restorative framework.
- **Group-Based Interventions:** RISE supports people to hold themselves accountable and to build networks of peer accountability through group interventions. Voluntary, neighborhood-based groups facilitated by trained staff provide accessible space to challenge harmful behaviors and beliefs around intimate partner violence.
- **Community Strategies:** RISE provides community healing circles and interventions to provide ongoing support when violence has been caused in the community. RISE also develops tools, trainings, and interventions to increase community engagement to challenge violence such as bystander intervention trainings, community-focused safety planning, and community campaigns.

## **Court Reform**

---

In addition to our preventative work, the Center also offers supportive interventions through our Court Reform programming. The Center’s work follows a model of problem-solving justice, turning an arrest into an opportunity for change. Beyond just processing cases, our staff works to resolve the underlying issues that involve individuals in the justice system in the first place by connecting individuals in need with a range of services including counseling, drug treatment, employment, and housing help. Offering support early builds safety, restores lives, and saves money. By striving to make each engagement swift and meaningful, it makes the most of a participant’s brief—and hopefully last—contact with the system.

### **Alternatives to Incarceration (ATIs)**

Each year, thousands of people with substance use disorders, serious mental illness, and other treatable issues cycle through our city’s jails. According to recent data, over 1,200 people in New York City jails have a serious mental illness, up 45% since the start of 2022. Often, these folks are returning to their communities destabilized, leading to more harm and ultimately, re-incarceration.<sup>6</sup> With the goal of breaking that cycle, alternatives-to-incarceration (ATIs) link participants with mental health and substance use treatment, vocational and educational supports, individual and group counseling tailored to participants’ needs, as well as supervision and

---

<sup>6</sup> *A Safer, More Effective Option Than Rikers*, A More Just NYC: Independent Commission on NYC Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, Oct. 2023, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b6de4731aef1de914f43628/t/6530056e07c0614a1a3d6655/1697645934489/1500+Secure+Treatment+Beds+to+Help+Close+Rikers+White+Paper.pdf>.

regular reporting to the court. ATIs reduce the court’s reliance on incarceration, lower the jail population, and allow people to remain in their communities while receiving the tools they need to avoid further justice involvement.

ATIs work to set defendants up for success upon completion of programming. Through significant staff training and quality assurance measures, we ensure our programs consistently adhere to evidence-based practices. As a result, our programs are successful in reducing re-offending and re-incarceration. In addition, our programs offer longer term services to participants on a voluntary basis following completion of their court-mandated program.

Utilizing these evidence-based practices results in shrinking some of the well-documented high costs associated with incarceration and detention. Ultimately, we can also reduce the potential harms of confinement, such as losing housing, critical benefits, or employment, protective factors that can be hard to regain once lost.

Our breadth of data-driven alternatives are evidence that it is possible to achieve lofty goals, such as closing Rikers Island, without compromising public safety. As Governor Hochul’s most recent crime report shows, significant progress has been made in decreasing crime in and around New York City.<sup>7</sup> The Center executes these effective programs across several distinct program sites and models. These programs have the capacity to make real, tangible advances in our efforts to improve public safety, ensure justice and accountability, and strengthen communities in the long run.

### **Manhattan Felony Alternative to Incarceration Court**

Launched in 2019, the Manhattan Felony Alternative to Incarceration Court—an initiative of New York County Supreme Court—expands on the principles and successes of specialized drug and mental health courts to create alternatives to incarceration for all types of felony cases, including violent offenses. The court is among the first all-purpose felony alternative courts in the country. The Center’s Manhattan Justice Opportunities (MJO), partners with the Felony Alternative to Incarceration Court to realize its vision of reducing the harms caused by incarceration and supporting people to address the issues that often underlie their contact with the justice system.

MJO staff conduct independent assessments of the court’s prospective participants and develop individualized plans for services to address not just their mental health and substance use issues, but also their educational, housing, and employment needs. In certain cases, participants are offered an opportunity to repair the harm they caused through a restorative justice process engaging directly with the victim. These are all important determinants of a participant’s ability to live successfully and safely in community. However, these services are

---

<sup>7</sup> “Governor Hochul Details the First Comprehensive Overview of Crime Trends Across New York State for 2023.” *NY.Gov*, Governor Kathy Hochul, 9 Nov. 2023, [www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-details-first-comprehensive-overview-crime-trends-across-new-york-state-2023](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-details-first-comprehensive-overview-crime-trends-across-new-york-state-2023)

often unavailable to people in the carceral setting. Once participants formally enter the court, MJO social workers connect them to an extensive network of service providers across New York City. MJO provides ongoing case management until participants complete their mandate.

In 2023, participants were mandated to an average of 14 months with the program, and nearly 100 participants completed successfully. When our participants graduate, they are graduating with the support of a vast web of resources that continue to buoy them in a way incarceration does not, contributing to their ability to live safely and productively in their communities. Importantly, the vast majority also walk away without the burden and stigma of a criminal conviction on their record. In 2023, 70% of successful participants graduated with no criminal record, and 96% were able to avoid a felony conviction.<sup>8</sup>

In the words of one successful MJO participant, “Each time I was in court, I started to feel more seen. Judge Biben cared about me and always asked, ‘Do you have anything to say?’, and that let me speak from the heart and be remorseful for what I had done. As part of my mandate... I started with an anger management class. But I wanted to do more. So I started GED classes, and therapy...ATI Court... gave me a second chance to show who I really was, without the anger, and to be productive in society. Last October, I graduated from ATI Court... I remember feeling different than the woman who started there years before. I felt that the people at court knew I was more than my trauma. They knew I had gone through hard times but that I could be successful. It took a lot of hard work to get to my graduation day. But when I got there, it was a day for celebrating and for smiles. Today, I have my own apartment. I have a steady job. I have a new computer, and I use it to take classes. I am reconnecting with my family, and my relationship with my mom is healing. And I still have support from the people I met at ATI Court.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Brooklyn Mental Health Court**

Launched in 2002 as the first mental health court in NYC, Brooklyn Mental Health Court (BMHC), based within Brooklyn Supreme Court, works to craft effective responses to crime committed by those suffering from severe mental illness, including those facing felony charges. In addressing both program participant treatment needs and community public safety concerns, the court links defendants with serious and persistent mental illness, who would ordinarily be jail- or prison-bound, to long-term community-based treatment as an alternative to incarceration. Cases are referred by judges, defense attorneys, and the Kings County District Attorney’s office.

The participants in our mental health courts often face numerous challenges, so being able to administer critical treatment services while preserving stability in participants’ community is of vital importance. To date, over 1,300 participants have received treatment, satisfied program requirements, and graduated, all outside of the carceral setting. Active

---

<sup>8</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2024). Justice Center Application database. [Data file].

<sup>9</sup> New York State Unified Court System. (2024, February 27). *The State of the Judiciary 2024 - Transcript of Remarks*. NYCourts.gov. [https://www.nycourts.gov/SOJ-2024/24\\_SOJ-Remarks.pdf](https://www.nycourts.gov/SOJ-2024/24_SOJ-Remarks.pdf)

participants boast a 73 percent compliance rate while in Brooklyn Mental Health Court. These participants see a 46 percent reduction in the likelihood of a rearrest and a 29 percent reduction in the likelihood of a re-conviction versus a comparison group.<sup>10</sup> This data shows that these programs are not just effective at administering treatment but also at improving public safety, features traditional incarceration often lacks. As evidenced by the reduction in re-arrests and convictions, these programs function in a way that is true to their name, working to solve the problems that result in justice system involvement to benefit individuals and communities for years to come while saving the city from increased incarceration costs.

### **Misdemeanor Mental Health Courts**

In partnership with the New York State Unified Court System, the Center launched Misdemeanor Mental Health Courts in Brooklyn and Manhattan in 2022. The court helps people with mental health issues and co-occurring disorders to engage meaningfully in social services and reduce their involvement in the justice system. Our clients living with serious mental illness often face myriad and intersectional challenges. Following the model of Brooklyn Mental Health Court, the court works with participants to craft individualized responses that address both treatment needs of the client and public safety concerns of the community. Participants are connected with ongoing mental health and substance use services, benefits, and housing support. The court also helps clients build their relationships with family, friends, and community organizations, relationships that help clients avoid further justice system involvement. The Center has served over 290 individuals in programming through the Misdemeanor Mental Health Courts since their inception, with many clients electing to continue with voluntary services after they complete their mandate due to the effectiveness of services provided.<sup>11</sup>

### **Alternatives to Detention**

After an effective pilot program showed that releasing more people from pre-trial detention does not compromise public safety,<sup>12</sup> the Center now runs Supervised Release, an Alternative to Detention (ATD), in Brooklyn and Staten Island, playing an instrumental role in the success of the program. The Supervised Release model employs social workers and case managers who check in regularly with participants to not only help plan for upcoming court dates and address needs and barriers to court attendance, but also to connect them to

---

<sup>10</sup>Rossmann, S.B., J. Buck Willison, K. Mallik Kane, K. Kim, S. Debus-Sherrill & P.M. Downey (2012, July). Criminal Justice Interventions for Offenders with Mental Illness: Evaluation of Mental Health Courts in Bronx and Brooklyn, New York. New York, NY: Urban Institute.  
<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/25576/412603-Criminal-Justice-Interventions-for-Offenders-With-Mental-Illness-Evaluation-of-Mental-Health-Courts-in-Bronx-and-Brooklyn-New-York.PDF>

<sup>11</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2024). Justice Center Application database. [Data file].

<sup>12</sup>Hahn, J. (2016, February). *An Experiment in Bail Reform: Examining the Impact of the Brooklyn Supervised Release Program*. New York, NY: Center for Justice Innovation.  
<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/publications/experiment-bail-reform-examining-impact-brooklyn-supervised-release-program>



community-based resources and services that can provide lasting support beyond the duration of a court case.

An independent evaluation found that Supervised Release is as effective as cash bail at preventing failure to appear in court without recourse to the documented harms of incarceration.<sup>13</sup> In 2020, a citywide measure showed that since 2016, 87 percent of participants never missed a single court date while enrolled in Supervised Release. Court attendance remains high following major bail reforms in January 2020 which made all cases eligible for the program, with approximately 90 percent of scheduled court dates attended.<sup>14</sup>

The data shows that Supervised Release is a trusted pretrial option and bail alternative for the courts. In 2023, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives and Staten Island Justice Center worked with nearly 9,000 participants to provide them with supervision and resources in order to ensure their return to court and help them address any other needs.<sup>15</sup>

### **Pre-Arrest Diversion**

In recent years, a critical and growing part of the Center's work has been an effort to develop proportionate responses that shrink the footprint of the justice system and minimize its harms. This has led to the launch of several early diversion programs which seek to provide offramps to individuals even further upstream than traditional system responses have allowed for. Two such examples are below.

#### **Bronx HOPE**

Bronx Heroin Overdose Prevention and Education (HOPE), an initiative of Bronx Community Solutions, addresses substance use issues with a harm reduction model at the precinct level. By giving clients the option of accessing community services instead of appearing in court, Bronx HOPE gives Bronx residents the opportunity for rehabilitation and connection to community rather than jail or options that don't address the underlying issues.

The process begins when an individual is issued a Desk Appearance Ticket from the New York Police Department. The NYPD will forward this ticket to the Bronx District Attorney's Office, which will review the individual for eligibility. Individuals who receive a ticket for drug possession will have the option to participate in the HOPE program. If an individual is eligible, they will be met at the precinct after their arrest by a peer mentor, who explains the program, provides a Naloxone kit and overdose prevention education, and connects the individual to Bronx HOPE case managers. If an individual chooses to participate, they must meet with a

---

<sup>13</sup> Bloom, H., C. Redcross & M. Skemer (2020, September). *Pursuing Pretrial Justice Through an Alternative to Bail: Findings from an Evaluation of New York City's Supervised Release Program*. New York, NY: MDRC.

<https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/pursuing-pretrial-justice-through-alternative-bail>

<sup>14</sup>Center for Justice Innovation, New York City Criminal Justice Agency & CASES. (2021, October). *Supervised Release: A Proven Alternative to Bail*. New York, NY.

<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/publications/supervised-release-five-years-later>

<sup>15</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2023). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].

Bronx HOPE case manager within seven days of their arrest. Case managers then conduct an assessment and work with the individual to develop an individualized plan of care; help identify services that address an individual's needs; and provide support in the completion of services.

Bronx HOPE demonstrates that eligible cases are more likely to engage in programming with peer presence at the precinct. In 2023, Bronx HOPE had a contact rate of 86 percent for dispatched cases. Of those cases that were dispatched, 92 percent completed their services, thereby preventing the need for those participants to appear in court and face criminal charges.<sup>16</sup>

## **Project Reset**

Much like Bronx HOPE, Project Reset offers participants the option to avoid court and a criminal record by completing community-based programming. The Center operates Project Reset for adults ages 18 and older in all five boroughs with support from the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, New York City Council, District Attorneys' offices, and the New York City Police Department. Police alert individuals arrested for low-level offenses that they may be eligible for Project Reset. Prosecutors then review each case. Those with eligible charges are offered the opportunity to engage in programming rather than going to court. Individuals may consult with a defense attorney at any time.

Participants complete an intake interview with program staff and engage in two-to-four hours of programming. Participants who successfully complete this intervention never set foot in a courtroom and don't get a criminal record. Instead, the local district attorney's office declines to prosecute their case and the arrest record is sealed. Project Reset programming varies by borough and the participant's age. Participants are offered interventions such as group workshops, restorative justice circles, arts programming, or individual counseling sessions. Through these interventions, participants gain a better understanding of the criminal justice system, personal accountability, and knowledge of the resources available to them in the community. All participants are offered voluntary referrals to social services, such as counseling, job training, or substance use treatment.

Since 2015, Project Reset has helped more than 6,000 participants avoid court and the consequences of a criminal record. As of 2023, the program has a 96 percent attendance rate of those scheduled.<sup>17</sup> An evaluation of 16- and 17-year-old Project Reset participants in Manhattan found they were significantly less likely than defendants in a comparison group to be convicted of a new crime within one year.<sup>18</sup> It also documented improved case processing times and case outcomes, as well as positive perceptions of the program. More than 95 percent of participants said they had made the right decision by entering the program and that they would recommend Project Reset to someone in a similar situation.

---

<sup>16</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2024). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].

<sup>17</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2024). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].

<sup>18</sup> Cadoff, B. & K. Dalve (2019, January). *Project Reset: An Evaluation of a Pre-Arrest Diversion Program in New York City*. New York, NY: Center for Justice Innovation.  
<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/publications/projectreset-evaluation>

In addition, the Center is expanding offerings to provide same-day at-arraignment diversion services for individuals who were referred to Project Reset Bronx or Bronx HOPE pre-arraignment diversion programming, but who were not contacted or did not complete programming prior to appearing in court. Any other individuals deemed eligible by court stakeholders also have the opportunity to participate in this at-arraignment diversion program. Upon successful completion of the session, participants' cases are dismissed the same day and they are not required to return to court. This has offered relief from the collateral consequences participants might otherwise experience if arraigned for a low-level crime, while simultaneously reducing court backlog by resolving cases swiftly at their first appearance

## **Conclusion**

---

As we look towards a future without Rikers Island, these programs will be relied on even more. We ask that City Council continue to invest in these programs meaningfully to provide communities with more options to adjudicate harm, maintain community safety, and produce better outcomes for the individual and community at large. We thank Council for its continued partnership and are available to answer any questions.

Courtney Bryan. Executive Director

## FY25 Center for Justice Innovation Proposals

- **#172167 - Center for Justice Innovation (formerly Center for Court Innovation) - \$750,000**

### **Innovative Criminal Justice Programs (Renewal/Expansion); Speakers Initiative**

**Description:** This is an application to support the continuation of the Center for Justice Innovation's innovative criminal justice responses, community-based public safety initiatives, and access to justice programs across all five boroughs in New York City. City Council's support allows us to serve tens of thousands of New Yorkers with mental health services, family development, youth empowerment, workforce development, and housing, legal, and employment resource services. Our goal continues to be improving safety, reducing incarceration, expanding access to community resources, and enhancing public trust in government to make New York City stronger, fairer, and safer for all.

- **#170201 - Center for Justice Innovation (formerly Center for Justice Innovation): Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration, community-based interventions and rigorous judicial monitoring for those facing felony charges in Brooklyn Criminal and Supreme Court. - \$1,175,000**

### **Alternatives to Incarceration (ATIs) (Renewal/Redesign); Diversion Programs**

**Description:** The Center for Justice Innovation (Center) seeks funding to support its Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration (FATI) programs for individuals arrested on violent and non-violent felony charges in Kings County. These FATI programs operate across two Center projects: Brooklyn Justice Initiatives and Brooklyn Mental Health Court, which offer holistic and individualized community-based interventions and rigorous judicial monitoring of participants on felony cases, thereby reducing the use of jail and prison sentences and leading to reduced criminal dispositions.

- **#165625 - Staten Island Justice Center - Community Justice Center - \$987,087 (Renewal/Expansion)**

**Speaker's Initiative;  
Innovative Criminal Justice Programs;  
Alternatives to Incarceration (ATIs)**

**Description:** In response to growing need in the community, the Justice Center has worked in collaboration with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office to plan and begin operationalizing programming for a Staten Island Community Justice Center. This work puts the Justice Center on a path to replicate and launch community-based interventions and initiatives piloted and established at the Center for Justice Innovation's existing Community Justice Centers in other boroughs. Based on results of a comprehensive public safety assessment, several pilot initiatives for at-risk youth are being implemented in the spring of 2024, in addition to the reestablishment of Youth Impact. In FY25, the Justice Center will also have a dedicated community outreach van to allow for expanded recruitment. Staff will continue planning for the increased scaling of operations, working on program design, building data and technology infrastructure and strengthening partnerships. In response to the needs identified in the assessment, the Justice Center will continue planning for and launching additional initiatives in areas such as veterans support, housing assistance, and violence prevention.

- **#171694 - Center for Justice Innovation (formerly Center for Court Innovation): Driver Accountability Program - \$885,000**

**Diversion Programs (Renewal);  
Alternatives to Incarceration (ATIs)**

**Description:** The Center for Justice Innovation's Driver Accountability Program works to improve street safety by changing driver behavior, while minimizing harms perpetuated by the criminal justice system's historically punitive responses. It does so by offering a proportionate and meaningful alternative to fines, fees, and short-term incarceration for vehicular offenses in criminal court; and by utilizing principles of restorative justice to address the dangerous behaviors that are the primary cause of pedestrian fatalities. With support from City Council, the program currently operates at six sites in all five boroughs. This application seeks funding to sustain those operations, as well as to sustain operations of its more intensive version, Circles for Safe Streets, which brings together drivers and their victims for a process of accountability and healing in cases where traffic crashes have caused critical injury or death.



- **#171747 - Bronx Community Solutions: Project Reset Expansion, expanding diversion opportunities in the Bronx - \$710,000**

#### **Diversion Programs (Renewal/Expansion)**

**Description:** Building on Bronx Community Solutions’ (BCS) success running the Project Reset pre-arraignment diversion restorative model for six years, and the robust support and collaboration of Bronx court system stakeholders, the Center seeks to renew funding to expand access to rapid diversion services for adults in the Bronx. To address the large gap in services caused by the inability to contact many Bronx Reset and Bronx HOPE (Bronx Heroin Overdose and Prevention Education) pre-arraignment diversion participants before their initial court date, and to remedy the growing backlog of low-level arrests in the Bronx Criminal Court system, BCS launched same-day at-arraignment programming that would give eligible individuals the opportunity to participate in diversion programming at their first court appearance and receive an immediate dismissal the same day. This application seeks to renew the previously awarded \$710,000 to continue to provide at-arraignment diversion programming and expand access to diversion services in the Bronx.

- **#170174 - Midtown Community Justice Center: Youth Weapons Diversion, a program based on a restorative framework for Weapons Possession Charges in Family Court - \$300,000**

#### **Diversion Programs (News)**

**Description:** Midtown Community Justice Center (MCJC), formerly the Midtown Community Court, in collaboration with the New York City Law Department Family Court Division (LD-FCD), seeks a dedicated funding source to sustain and enhance its youth diversion pilot program for weapons possession charges: Youth Weapons Diversion (YWD). MCJC’s program, founded on restorative practices and culminating in a family support circle, was created to fill a gap in holistic alternative-to-prosecution diversion options for young people ages 14 to 17 arrested for gun and other weapons possession, providing an early off-ramp from the traditional Family Court process and building supportive connections for participants. Successful completion of the program results in a “decline to prosecute” with a sealed record, or for cases that have already been filed, the petition is withdrawn and the case sealed, thereby preventing a full criminal process, a criminal record, and many collateral consequences for young people at a pivotal age. In addition to providing a critical diversion opportunity that addresses the root causes of gun violence, this program will provide educational support and job skills development, offer

connections to health and wellness and other holistic services, and build youth connections to the community.

- **Brooklyn Mental Health Court #168934 - \$150,000**

**Court-Involved Youth Mental Health (Renewal/Expansion)**

**Description:** The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health initiative of Brooklyn Mental Health Court provides specialized support to youth ages 18 to 24, who have unique social and cognitive needs and who represent a growing percentage of the cases we serve. Since 2017, more than 162 youth in this age range have been served by Brooklyn Mental Health Court. Thanks to City Council support, we hired a new dedicated Youth Engagement Social worker who leads youth programming and fosters close relationships with our participants. Renewed funding will enable us to continue and strengthen our youth-focused programs, provide meaningful activities and healthy meals and snacks to our participants, continue essential training for staff, and maintain our critical Youth Engagement Social Worker.

- **#168258 - Staten Island Justice Center: Youth Wellness Initiative - \$130,000**

**Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative (Renewal)**

**Description:** This a renewal proposal for Staten Island Justice Center’s Youth Wellness Initiative (YWI), a program providing wrap-around services to court-involved and justice-impacted youth in Staten Island, ages 12 to 18, to decrease the likelihood of long-term justice involvement and support those who may have unmet mental health needs. We specifically seek to engage youth who have participated in some form of community harm (such as assault, robbery, or gang violence) or who have experienced community harm such as community violence or violence at home. YWI works to decrease community violence and the likelihood of long-term justice involvement through transformative education, youth-led community engagement, peer support and mentorship, and individual short-term counseling and advocacy. YWI also offers interactive and holistic family resources and support to parents or guardians who may need assistance in caring for their youth while navigating the justice system. Participants will be able to translate their therapeutic encounters into an opportunity to restore themselves back into their communities.

- **#171801 - Center for Justice Innovation: RISE Project - \$105,000**

**Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) (Renewal/Expansion)**

**Description:** This is an application for continued support of the RISE Project. RISE is a part of New York City's Crisis Management System, working in partnership with Cure Violence sites to provide community-based intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention services to individuals at risk of being impacted by gun violence in communities most impacted. RISE works to reduce IPV by engaging individuals who are causing abuse in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior, change community norms to reduce tolerance for IPV, train credible messengers to identify risk factors for IPV, build skills to talk about IPV, and connect community members in need of services to RISE. RISE incorporates components of the Cure Violence and restorative justice models in its work.

- **#172054 - Bronx Community Solutions: Bronx Project HEAL (Helping to Empower through Advocacy and Leadership) - \$100,000**

#### **Support for Victims of Human Trafficking (Renewal)**

**Description:** This application is for Bronx Project HEAL (Helping to Empower through Advocacy and Leadership), an evolution of the Bronx Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC) initiative. Based on the National Project HEAL curriculum, developed by the Center for Justice Innovation (formerly the Center for Court Innovation), Bronx Project HEAL is a leadership development and peer support initiative for justice-involved human trafficking survivors that is informed by, co-created with, and often co-led by, survivors themselves. It is a 3- to 6-month voluntary program that aims to enhance the capacity of survivors to become leaders and advocates in the Bronx community by offering community-based professional development experiences, leadership and advocacy opportunities, and mentorship and peer support. Funding will support the implementation of the survivor leader empowerment program aimed at providing professional development services, including leadership and advocacy training, to survivor leaders to enhance their professional skills and encourage their participation in anti-trafficking policy and advocacy efforts.

- **#168959 - Brooklyn Mental Health Court - \$100,000**

#### **Speakers Initiative (Renewal/Expansion)**

**Description:** Launched in 2002 as the first mental health court in New York City, Brooklyn Mental Health Court (BMHC) is a specialized court that seeks to craft meaningful responses to the problems posed by defendants with mental illness in the criminal justice system. Addressing both the treatment needs of defendants with mental

illness and the public safety concerns of the community, BMHC links defendants with serious and persistent mental illnesses (such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder), who would ordinarily be jail- or prison-bound, with long-term treatment as an alternative to incarceration. BMHC performs psychosocial assessments and psychiatric evaluations, comes up with treatment plans, monitors clients' adherence to treatment plans, and refers clients to community-based services.

- **#167064 - Queens Community Justice Center: UPLIFT - \$100,000**

**Court-Involved Youth Mental Health (Renewal);  
Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations (Renewal);  
Speakers Initiative (Renewal);  
Community Safety and Victims Services Initiative;**

**Description:** To address the high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, the Queens Community Justice Center piloted UPLIFT in FY22, a program that provides trauma and healing services to justice-involved young men of color, ages 16-25. By offering client-driven individual therapeutic sessions and supportive group workshops, case management and victim services assistance, and advocacy and mentoring, participants are supported to recognize, process, and heal their own trauma, resulting in better life outcomes. Given the program's initial success, the Justice Center was able to fully implement and sustain the program, thanks to the ongoing support of City Council.

- **#167148 - Queens Community Justice Center: Queens HOPE (Heal, Overcome, Prosper, Empower) - \$75,000**

**Speakers Initiative (Renewal);  
Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE);  
Community Safety and Victims Services**

**Description:** The Queens Community Justice Center seeks funding for its Queens HOPE (Heal, Overcome, Prosper, Empower) program. Queens HOPE aims to provide client-centered and trauma-informed advocacy, counseling, victim services, and case management to young people 25 years old and under that have experienced, or are vulnerable to sex and/or labor exploitation. A social worker and mentor work one-on-one and in a group setting with referred youth, providing intensive case management and trauma-informed, survivor-centered support services, including mentoring. Queens HOPE staff will also provide training/professional development and support to court stakeholders and community partners to build their capacity to identify and provide

services to girls and young women who are at risk of, or are victims of, sex and/or labor trafficking.

- **#170083 - Red Hook Community Justice Center: Community Healing and Wellness \$50,000**

#### **Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) (Renewal/Expansion)**

**Description:** This is an application for the Community Healing and Wellness Program at the Red Hook Community Justice Center, which is a community and court-based program that provides trauma-informed, healing-centered approaches to advocacy, counseling, and case management to both those who have experienced harm and those who have engaged in harm with a goal of contributing to a healthy, resilient, thriving community.

The program aims to interrupt cycles of violence and increase community safety by connecting people with the resources they need and want, creating opportunities for healing with those who have been harmed, and creating opportunities for accountability with those who have engaged in harm.

- **#170023 - Bronx Child Trauma Support - \$33,0000**

#### **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations (Renewal)**

**Description:** Funding for Bronx Child Trauma Support will support the provision of clinical assessment and treatment of child victims and witnesses to crimes in the Bronx, in partnership with the Bronx District Attorney's Office. Direct services are conducted through evidenced-based trauma-informed intervention models designed to prevent or reduce post-traumatic stress symptoms, suicidality, re-traumatization, and future victimization.

- **#171724 - Red Hook Community Justice Center: Youth Impact - \$20,000**

#### **Community Safety and Victims Services (Renewal/Expansion)**

**Description:** The Red Hook Community Justice Center seeks funding from the City Council's Community Safety and Victim Services Initiative to support youth participating in our Youth Impact program. Youth Impact is a peer-led diversion program for young people ages 10-18 referred by local schools, community partners, the court, justice system agencies or local law enforcement. The goal of Youth Impact is to use positive



peer influence and a restorative approach to develop young leaders, repair harm, avoid future involvement in the justice system through early intervention, and educate young people about the justice system.



ERIC GONZALEZ  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
KINGS COUNTY  
350 JAY STREET  
BROOKLYN, NY 11201-2908  
(718) 250-2202  
WWW.BROOKLYNDA.ORG

February 28, 2024

Adrienne Adams  
Speaker, New York City Council  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Adams and Members of City Council,

On behalf of the office of the Kings County District Attorney, I write in support of key Center for Justice Innovation FY25 City Council Applications to sustain critical investment in the following areas:

- alternatives to incarceration,
- mental health support,
- programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence,
- and innovative pilot programs that address pressing needs in communities.

These programs will enable Brooklyn to continue to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system wherever possible and building public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

The Center has submitted a proposal for continued support of its **Brooklyn Felony Diversion Programs**, which assist my office in expanding diversion opportunities for felony alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) across Brooklyn, while maintaining public safety and accountability. The Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court, launched in January 2020 with Council support, offers clinical assessments, individualized community-based interventions, and judicial monitoring on felony cases. I urge the Council to continue funding this initiative to reduce unnecessary incarceration and strengthen diversion opportunities in Brooklyn. Also included in that application is a request for continued support of the Center's renowned **Brooklyn Mental Health Court**. For the past twenty plus years, Brooklyn Mental Health Court has served as a pioneering model that offers community-based mental health treatment, paired with rigorous judicial monitoring and case management for defendants diagnosed with serious mental illness and facing felony charges. If not for the intervention of this specialized court, these defendants would be facing long-term incarceration in our jails and prisons. Support for this program is an essential component of our effort to address the mental health crisis in our City.

I urge the Council to continue supporting the Center's **RISE Project** which provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence. RISE works to reduce intimate partner violence by engaging individuals who are causing abuse in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior; changing community norms to reduce tolerance for violence, and training credible messengers to identify risk factors for intimate partner violence.

To address the issue of street safety, I support the continuation of the **Driver Accountability Program**, which seeks to change the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court, while simultaneously reducing reliance on fines or short-term incarceration for those offenses. The Driver Accountability Program is also addressing more serious cases through a second tier of programming, Circles for Safe Streets, which brings together drivers and their victims through a restorative justice process in cases of serious crashes that have resulted in serious injuries or fatalities.

Finally, the Council should continue and expand support for the Center's **Innovative Core Funding**. The Center uses this funding to respond to the immediate needs of Brooklyn residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, victim services, mental health integrations to diversion, and other pilots to test for scalable solutions.

The Center's long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in Brooklyn to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities align with my office's vision. Together we reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice, aiming to reduce incarceration and conviction wherever possible and build substantial and meaningful community-based supports. I encourage investment in each of the Center's programs to enhance fairness, accountability, and safety for the people of Brooklyn.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Gonzalez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric Gonzalez  
Brooklyn District Attorney

DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF NEW YORK  
ONE HOGAN PLACE  
New York, N. Y. 10013  
(212) 335-9000



ALVIN L. BRAGG, JR.  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

February 29, 2024

Speaker Adrienne Adams  
New York City Council  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Application for FY 25 City Council Funding

Dear Speaker Adams and Members of City Council,

I write in support of key Center for Justice Innovation (formerly, Center for Court Innovation) FY25 City Council Applications that will continue to support and expand:

- alternatives to incarceration for more cases
- mental health support
- restorative justice options
- early diversion
- programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence

These programs will enable Manhattan to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system wherever possible and building public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions. The Center's proposal to assist my office in expanding diversion opportunities for misdemeanor and felony alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) across Manhattan are crucial to the administration's goals of maintaining public safety and accountability. The **Manhattan Justice Opportunities Felony Alternative to Incarceration program** and the **Midtown Community Justice Center Misdemeanor Mental Health Court and Emerging Young Adult Court**, offer specialized supervision and support for individuals facing felony and misdemeanor charges. By providing interventions and judicial monitoring, we aim to decrease the use of jail and prison sentences and help individuals address the underlying issues driving their behaviors through treatment and social services. These programs have the potential to reduce criminal dispositions and improve outcomes for the participants. For example, funding for the Misdemeanor Mental Health Court will enable the hiring of peers to support participants; a model that has proved successful in that by sharing their own lived experience and practical guidance, peers assist participants in navigating challenges which ultimately lead to better outcomes. I urge the Council to support these vital interventions and invest in public safety interventions.

Additionally, funding for the Felony Alternative to Incarceration Program can be used to assess and provide support programming to participants in a more expeditious manner. The more timely an individual receives the necessary support in the community, the more likely they are to succeed. This has the dual effect and benefit of setting them on a better trajectory and improving public safety.

I urge the Council to continue supporting the Center's **RISE Project** which provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence. RISE works to reduce intimate partner violence by engaging individuals causing harm in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior; changing community norms to reduce tolerance for violence, and training credible messengers to identify risk factors for intimate partner violence.

To address the issue of street safety, I support the continuation and expansion of the **Driver Accountability Program** to provide a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving and work to change the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court. The Driver Accountability Program is also addressing more serious cases through a second tier of programming, Circles for Safe Streets, which brings together drivers and their victims through a restorative justice process. Finally, the Council should continue and expand support for the Center's **Innovative Core Funding**. The Center uses this funding to respond to the immediate needs of Manhattan residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to antigun violence, victim services, mental health integrations to diversion, and other pilots to test for scalable solutions. The Center's long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in Manhattan to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities align with the Manhattan District Attorney's office vision. Together we reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice, aiming to reduce incarceration and conviction wherever possible and build substantial and meaningful community-based supports. I encourage investment in each of the Center's programs to enhance fairness, accountability, and safety for the people of Manhattan.

Sincerely,



Alvin Bragg  
District Attorney





DARCEL D. CLARK

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
BRONX COUNTY

February 21, 2024

Speaker Adrienne  
Adams New York City  
Council City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Adams and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the Bronx District Attorney's Office, I am writing to support the Center for Justice Innovation (CJI or the Center, formerly Center for Court Innovation) FY25 City Council Applications. Funding will sustain existing programs and continue to expand:

- Pre-arraignment early diversion options,
- Mental health supports,
- Restorative justice interventions,
- Human trafficking survivor leadership initiatives,

These programs will enable the Bronx to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the legal system and enhance public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

For the past several years, the City Council has supported the Bronx with **\$710,000** to invest in early system diversion, which includes Project Reset, the Center's citywide pre-arraignment diversion model that re-directs New Yorkers with misdemeanor arrests from the court system. The Center also offers same-day at-arraignment diversion services for individuals who were referred to Project Reset Bronx or Bronx HOPE pre-arraignment diversion programming, but who were not contacted or did not complete programming. Any other individuals deemed eligible by court stakeholders also have the opportunity to participate in this at-arraignment diversion program. Upon successful completion of the session, participants' cases are dismissed the same day and they are not required to return to court. This has offered relief from the collateral consequences participants might otherwise experience if arraigned for a low-level crime. We support CJI continuing to partner with the Council to implement the next generation of early system diversions for the Bronx to continue to lead the City in upstream interventions.

The Bronx County District Attorney's Office partners with the **Bronx Child Trauma Support** program to support the provision of clinical assessment and treatment of child victims and witnesses to crimes in the Bronx. The continued support of the Council will baseline these direct services conducted through evidenced-based and trauma-informed intervention models designed to prevent or reduce post-traumatic stress symptoms, traumatization, and future victimization. Thanks to meaningful changes in



the treatment of trafficking victims in the justice system, the Center's Bronx Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC) referrals continue to decline. As a result, we support CJI's piloting of **Project Healing and Empowerment through Advocacy and Leadership** (Project HEAL), designed to be a survivor leadership and peer support initiative for human trafficking survivors. Additionally, we support the Center's RISE Project which is used in Family Court and provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence.

To address the issue of street safety, we support the continuation and expansion of the **Driver Accountability Program**. The essence of this program is to provide a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving and improve the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court.

Finally, we support continuation of the **Center's Innovative Core Funding** which addresses the immediate needs of all boroughs by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, victim services, and mental health integrations to diversions.

The Center has a long and documented history of conducting research and operating direct service programs in the Bronx. Their mission to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities aligns with the Bronx District Attorney's vision and mission to pursue justice with integrity. Together we can reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice by reducing incarceration and convictions as well as by building substantial and meaningful community-based support. I encourage the City Council to consider funding the Center's programs which will ultimately enhance fairness, accountability, and safety for all people in the Bronx.

Sincerely,



Darcel D. Clark



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
RICHMOND COUNTY  
MICHAEL E. MCMAHON  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 6, 2024

Honorable Adrienne Adams  
New York City Council Speaker  
New York City Council  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

**RE: Support for Center for Justice Innovation Fiscal Year 2025 Initiatives**

Dear Speaker Adams and Members of the New York City Council:

As Staten Island's chief law enforcement officer, I write this letter to offer my support for the Center for Justice Innovation ("the Center") and the critical FY25 discretionary funding applications made by their organization to expand alternatives to incarceration opportunities and to provide mental health support, early diversion programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence, restorative re-entry options for individuals and their families, pre-court eviction prevention options, and innovative pilot programs that address pressing needs in communities across the city. Many of these important initiatives and programs will enable Staten Island to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system and building public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

The Center's long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in Staten Island to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities align with my office's vision. My office has proudly partnered with the Center in the development of a Staten Island Community Justice Center purposed to reduce crime and incarceration, and strengthen community trust in justice, while also creating safer, more equitable neighborhoods through community-driven public safety initiatives, youth opportunity, and economic mobility efforts. Staten Island Justice Center staff will continue to maintain existing operations in addition to the continued planning and execution of new programming along with enhanced data collection and evaluation.

Together, we reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice, aiming to reduce incarceration and conviction and build substantial and meaningful community-based supports through innovative courts and alternatives to incarceration programming and services. I strongly encourage investment in each of the programs and areas outlined above to ensure that they can continue this successful work.

I further urge the Council to support Youth Impact Staten Island. The Youth Impact program (formerly Youth Court) is a multi-pronged youth leadership development program focused on peer-led mentorship and violence intervention and prevention practices, with a goal to keep young people in school and out of the criminal legal system, while inspiring community safety and healing from a youth-centered perspective. The program primarily uses a restorative justice model through structured in-school violence intervention partnerships and organized civic engagement. Participants develop hard skills including in oral and written communication, facilitation, conflict resolution and research processes; learn the impact and infrastructure of the justice system; and are trained in community planning and organizing.

Individuals demonstrating persistent and untreated mental illness require access to culturally competent mental health treatment. To address gaps in mental health-related support for court-involved youth in Staten Island, I urge the Council to continue and expand support for the Staten Island Justice Center's Youth Wellness Initiative. This initiative provides vital mental health services that address trauma and promote healing for young people on Staten Island involved in the justice system or at-risk of justice system involvement. Additionally, this initiative is geared towards providing holistic support to families by supporting the parents and caretakers of youth enrolled in the initiative.

To address the issue of street safety, I support the continuation of the Center's Driver Accountability Program to provide a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving and work to change the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court.

I also urge the Council to continue supporting the Center's RISE Project, which provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence. RISE works to reduce intimate partner violence by engaging individuals who are causing abuse in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior, changing community norms to reduce the tolerance for violence, and training credible messengers to identify risk factors for intimate partner violence.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this letter as you make important financial determinations on behalf of the City of New York.

Sincerely,



Michael E. McMahon  
District Attorney

MEM/aem



**Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Public Safety  
FY25 Preliminary Budget Hearing, March 20, 2024**

Chair Salaam and Committee Members,

Since 1995, Children's Rights has been a national advocate for youth in state systems. We are also a member of the New York City Jails Action Coalition. Our experience with adolescents and young adults in foster care and juvenile justice systems often brings us into contact with young adult and youth corrections policy, as our clients are disproportionately represented in young adult and juvenile correction facilities. We advocate on behalf of young adults, 18- to 21-years old, incarcerated on Rikers Island.

If actual public safety is the question, then decarceration is the answer.

New York City operates both the most over-staffed and excessively-funded jail system in the country. In 2021 alone, New York City spent 290% more per incarcerated person than the second most expensive jail system in the country.<sup>1</sup> This amounts to over \$556,000 per incarcerated person per year.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the enormous sums poured into the City's jails, countless reports show that incarcerated persons are subjected to some of the most dangerous, degrading, and inhumane conditions in the country.<sup>3</sup> Officers are still not showing up for work, and people have been going without showers or food and are left in their cells for hours on end. We need look no further than the *Nunez* monitor's regular reports and the February 28, 2024 report filed in *Benjamin v. Molina* detailing vermin infestation and other sanitary violations on Rikers. Serving time on Rikers can also be a death sentence: since Mayor Adams took office, 30 incarcerated people have lost their lives on the Island.<sup>4</sup>

For all these reasons and more, Rikers must close by August 2027 in accordance with the law. Yet Mayor Adams's proposed budget will undoubtedly reduce the chances of this happening by cutting funding for alternatives to incarceration, the supervised release program, and re-entry services to the tune of \$27.8 million, and failing to adequately fund community resources. All of these would reduce the ballooning population on the Island and hasten its closure.

The cuts that the administration is proposing will uniquely affect young adults incarcerated on Rikers Island. Evidence shows that incarceration reduces youth's success in education and employment, and

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/a-look-inside-the-new-york-city-correction-budget.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2/> Yesterday's data show that more than 83% of incarcerated persons on Rikers are there pre-trial, nearly 55% have mental health conditions, and over 90% are people of color. <https://greaterjusticenyc.vera.org/nycjail/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/new-rikers-island-report-reveals-graphic-details-about-unsanitary-conditions-fire-safety-and-ventilation-systems/>; <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2024/01/11/detainees-request-clean-laundry-report-unsanitary-conditions-on-rikers#:~:text=%22They%20don%27t%20have%20soap,%2C%20to%20wash%20their%20clothes.%22>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.vera.org/news/second-death-on-rikers-island-in-2024-brings-new-york-city-jail-death-toll-to-30-under-mayor-adams#:~:text=He%20is%20the%20second%20person,basic%20safety%20in%20its%20jails>



also leads to lasting damage to their health and well-being.<sup>5</sup> Evidence also shows that alternatives to incarceration lead to better outcomes for youth and adolescents, all while costing far less than incarceration.<sup>6</sup> Reducing funding for alternatives to confinement and re-entry services makes no sense morally, ethically, or fiscally.

There is still time for Mayor Adams to change course. For example, the City can deliver on its promise to open 380 units of Justice Involved Supportive Housing, a model that has been widely successful in reducing jail, shelter, and hospital stays, and generates significant cost savings.<sup>7</sup>

Negotiating changes to the proposed budget provides an opportunity for the Council to move the City in the right direction, while also rightsizing the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. Instead of allocating \$2.6 billion to the Department of Correction, the Council should reduce the Department's uniform headcount, eliminate vacancies, and hold staff accountable for chronic absenteeism. (This last effort would also help reduce overtime spending on the staff who do show up for work.) We also urge the Council to provide sufficient funding for alternatives to incarceration, supervised release and re-entry programs, supportive and affordable housing, and community mental health services. We also urge the Council to fund the Board of Correction adequately so it can provide meaningful oversight of the abomination that is Rikers until it closes.

The more than half a million dollars it costs to incarcerate someone for a year on Rikers can and must be used instead to fund these programs that are proven to result in actual public safety. Surely, both incarcerated persons and New York City taxpayers deserve better, and better for their money. Surely the City Council can see its way clear to reducing the cruelty and degradation that define our criminal legal system. That means decarceration now.

The budget in its current state does not move toward any of the goals Children's Rights and other advocates have outlined today and in other committee hearings. We look to you and Speaker Adams to negotiate a fair, just, and reasonable budget that serves all New Yorkers, including young adults and adults on Rikers, and expedites closure of the Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Daniele Gerard  
Senior Staff Attorney  
dgerard@childrensrights.org

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/why-youth-incarceration-fails-an-updated-review-of-the-evidence/>

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Reduce-Homelessness-for-People-Impacted-by-the-Criminal-Legal-System.pdf>



Andrew Frame, CEO of Citizen  
Submitted Written Testimony to the NYC City Council Public Safety Committee

March 20, 2024

Greetings, my name is Andrew Frame. I am the founder and CEO of Citizen.

I want to thank Chair Yusef Salaam and acknowledge the unique lens and leadership that he provides.

In November 2023, I testified before the joint hearing with the Public Safety and Technology Committees, alerting them of the threats posed by New York Police Department radio encryption.

Today, I submit this written testimony to amplify and further explain the threat that radio encryption by the New York Police Department poses. Simply put, encryption will eliminate public access to our city's public safety system – putting New Yorkers at risk.

Founded in 2017, Citizen has become America's most popular safety app. 38% of people in New York have downloaded Citizen. It is a free app on iPhone and Android, that provides safety alerts based on police radio traffic data, user-generated videos, and comments, to help everyday New Yorkers make informed decisions.

Since we testified in November, we have met with many members of the City Council to share directly what we do, and the many ways that New Yorkers benefit from Citizen. Our meetings were well received, and members were transparent regarding their thoughts on public safety.

Those Councilmembers include:  
Public Safety Chair, Yusef Salaam  
Technology Chair, Jennifer Gutierrez  
Land Use Chair, Rafael Salamanca  
Education Chair, Rita Joseph  
Public Housing Chair, Chris Banks  
Criminal Justice Chair, Sandy Nurse  
Darlene Mealy  
Public Advocate Jumanne Williams

Today, Citizen democratizes life-saving information and gives it directly to the people. For example, when there is a fire in a building, Citizen alerts nearby users in real-time, giving people time to get out and be rescued safely by the fire department.

When a child is kidnapped, Citizen immediately activates tens of thousands of nearby people to be on the lookout and has had ongoing success identifying kidnapped and/or missing children.

The free Citizen App, powered by access to NYPD radio, allows New Yorkers to move around the city freely – with a sense of control and safety. As it stands today, radio encryption would lock out Citizen and take this freedom from the public.

Without Citizen, New Yorkers will be without potentially life-saving alerts.

Citizen is prepared to take the next step by offering its technology *directly to the NYPD*, as a tool to bring awareness to the public of incidents of missing children, fires, violent occurrences, and other life-threatening emergencies. In other words, we want to enable the NYPD to post alerts directly on Citizen.

Moreover, Citizen is prepared to improve the perception of crime in New York in conjunction with the NYPD. As we know, crime in most parts of the city is down; however, perception of crime is often reality. Citizen is dedicated to showing incident resolutions; for example, alerting people nearby when suspects are apprehended, people are saved, or officers have resolved a dispute.

Citizen is also prepared to notify residents of decreasing crime rates, post accurate stats directly from the NYPD, and live-stream press conferences from city officials to over 2 million monthly active New Yorkers.

Citizen understands that alerts must also be responsibly managed. It is important to know that Citizen always excludes officer details like names, badge numbers, positions, and numbers of officers. Citizen excludes the exact location of most events, identifying the incident through the nearest intersection or public place. Citizen excludes tactical information from all incidents.

We are proud that nearly 40% of all New Yorkers have the Citizen App and that we signed up more than 15 million users across major U.S. cities. Citizen users nationwide have received real-time hyper-local safety notifications for 30,000+ fires, 28,000+ assaults, and 50,000+ events involving weapons.

As the NYPD transitions to encrypted radio, Citizen is prepared to work in partnership with the NYPD to retain radio access. Instead of shutting down access to life-saving information to the public, this can be a true opportunity for officer safety and all New Yorkers.

We are asking for your support to work with the NYPD, to provide Citizen citywide real-time radio access, and continue service in New York City. We want residents to continue to have access to critical and immediate safety information.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to all of us. I look forward to further conversations to develop solutions to improve the safety of our fellow NYC residents.



240 West 35<sup>th</sup> Street ■ Suite 302 ■ New York, New York 10001

## **Testimony on Public Safety Preliminary Budget Hearing**

Submitted to the City Council Committee on Public Safety

*March 20, 2024*

*Ana Champeny, Vice President for Research, Citizens Budget Commission*

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Citizens Budget Commission (CBC), a nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank and watchdog dedicated to constructive change in the finances, services, and policies of New York City and New York State governments.

CBC recently released "[Straight from New Yorkers](https://cbcny.org/2023-resident-survey)," our 2023 Resident Survey, which provides a comprehensive, statistically valid, post-pandemic view into how New Yorkers feel about the quality of life in the city and how they rate government services. The results are comparable to surveys done by CBC in 2018 and the City in 2008. [Straight from New Yorkers](https://cbcny.org/2023-resident-survey), along with detailed data, maps, and an interactive are available at <https://cbcny.org/2023-resident-survey>.

Today we would like to highlight the survey findings on public safety and how they have changed over time, with figures and maps provided at the end. While the City is recovering economically, the severely disruptive effect of the pandemic is still a recent memory and crime levels remain higher than in 2017, which was seven years into a robust recovery.

### **Key Survey Findings on Public Safety**

- New Yorkers are feeling much less safe, with only 37 percent rating public safety in their neighborhood as excellent or good, down from 50 percent in 2017;
  - Hispanic respondents to the survey give the lowest rating, with 28 percent rating public safety as excellent or good; and
  - In a borough breakdown, only 28 percent of Bronx residents rate their neighborhood public safety as excellent or good;

- New Yorkers in 2023 feel about as safe in the park during the day as they felt walking in their neighborhood at night in 2017;
- 71 percent of New Yorkers report feeling safe in parks and playgrounds during the day, the highest rated safety item on the survey. However, this is still a 16 percent decrease from 2017; and
  - White and Asian New Yorkers rate daytime safety in parks and playgrounds higher, 81 percent and 78 percent, respectively, while 70 percent of Black respondents and 58 percent for Hispanic New Yorkers felt safe or very safe in parks during the daytime;
- Rating of safety on the subway declined sharply from 2017, with a 40 percent decrease in the daytime subway safety positive rating and a 52 percent decrease in nighttime subway safety positive rating.
  - Just 22 percent report feeling safe on the subway at night, while 49 percent report feeling safe on the subway during the day.

### **Survey Findings Should Inform City’s and NYPD’s Approach to Addressing Public Safety Concerns**

Both the City Council and the Administration should incorporate this type of in-depth, statistically valid feedback into management systems and policy development. This data should complement and be viewed alongside City service performance metric and CompStat data to get a sharper picture of service quality and results to help drive the needed progress

#### **Explore the Resident Survey results:**

1. Read the CBC Brief: [Straight from New Yorkers](#) (download [PDF](#))
2. View [Selected Maps](#): At-a-Glance Ratings, by Location
3. View the [Full Data Report](#), Compiled by Survey's Research Firm
4. View [Community Board Breakdowns](#): Ratings by NYC Neighborhood
5. View Survey's [Slide Presentation](#): Full Breakdowns by Categories and Comparisons to Previous Surveys
6. Explore the [Resident Survey Navigator](#)
7. View the original [survey](#)

#### **Figures and Maps**

See next page.

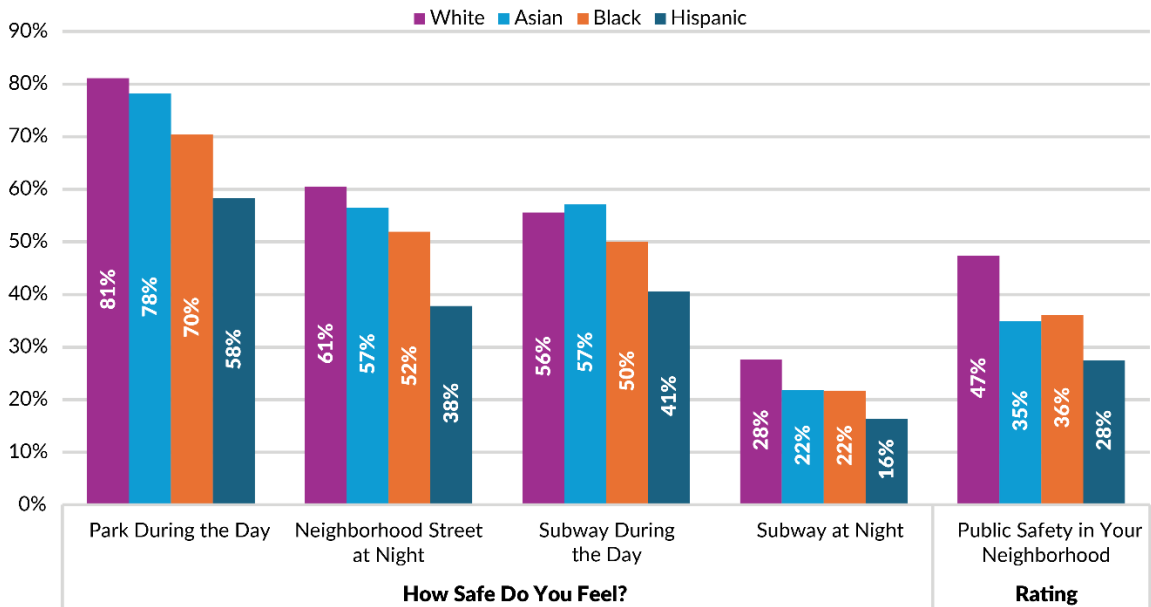
## New Yorkers Feel Much Less Safe; Steepest Drop in Ratings on Subway Safety at Night



**Note:** Public safety in your neighborhood question was phrased as crime control in your neighborhood in 2017.

**Sources:** CBC Analysis of CBC NYC Resident Feedback Survey 2017 and 2023 editions; and City of New York, Mayor's Office of Operations, "NYC Feedback: Citywide Customer Survey Results" (March 2009), <https://www.nyc.gov/site/operations/performance/nycfeedback-citywide-customer-service-results.page>.

## Lowest Safety Ratings from Hispanic New Yorkers



**Notes:** Public safety in your neighborhood question was phrased as crime control in your neighborhood in 2017. Race/ethnicity is a combination of two survey questions. Any respondent selecting Hispanic or Latino/a is coded as Hispanic. Among those who are non-Hispanic, if a respondent only selects White, Black or Asian/Pacific Islander, he/she is coded as White, non-Hispanic; Black, non-Hispanic; or Asian, non-Hispanic; respectively. Any respondent selecting American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut; or two-plus races was coded as Other.

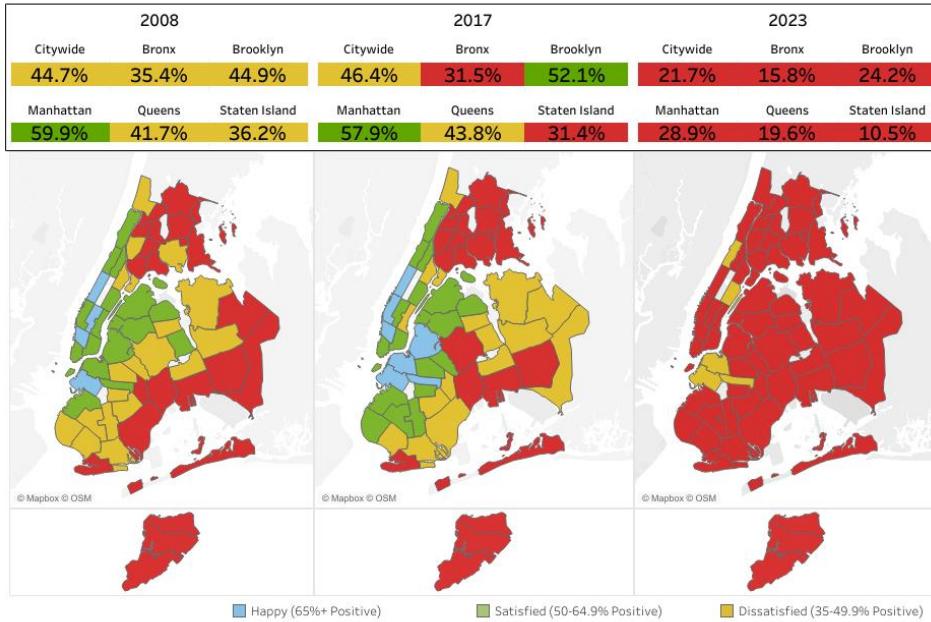
**Source:** CBC Analysis of CBC NYC Resident Feedback Survey, 2023.



### NYC Resident Feedback Positivity by Community Board, 2008-2023

Select question to review below and hover over maps for more information.

3D. Rate how safe/unsafe you feel: Riding a subway at night

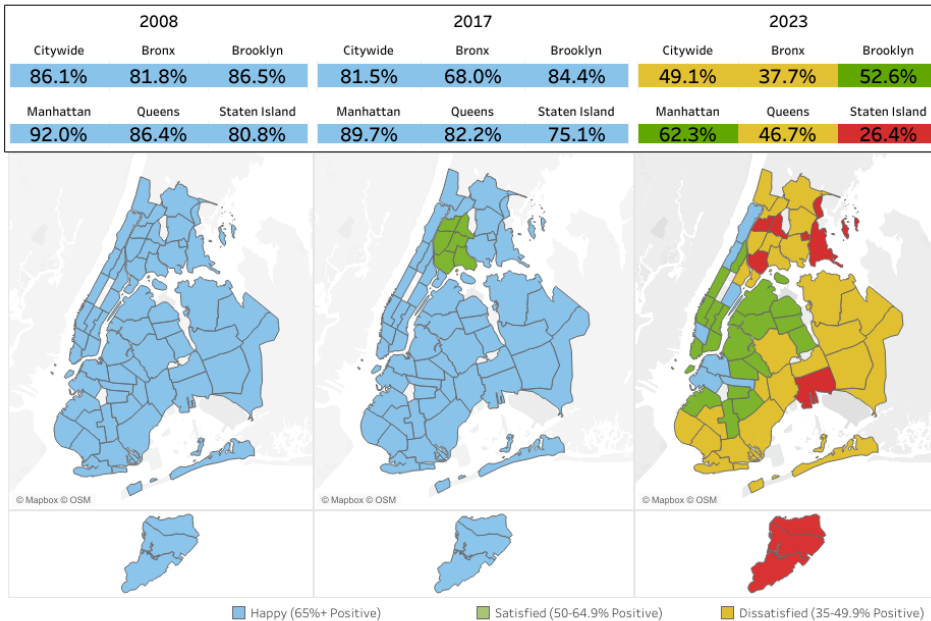


Note: Percent positive is share of respondents in the Community District responding "Excellent/Very Safe" or "Good/Somewhat Safe". In the 2008 and 2017 survey question asking for ratings on neighborhood "public safety" (4Q) asked respondents to rate neighborhood "crime control". Find full methodology and survey [here](#).

### NYC Resident Feedback Positivity by Community Board, 2008-2023

Select question to review below and hover over maps for more information.

3C. Rate how safe/unsafe you feel: Riding a subway during the day



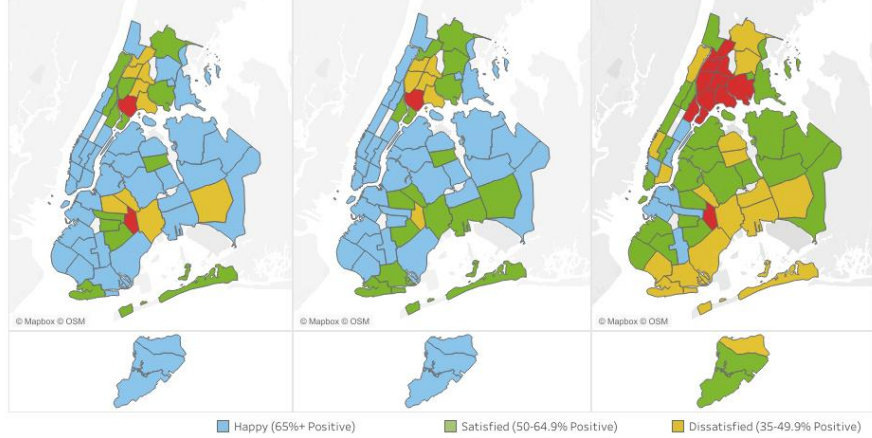
Note: Percent positive is share of respondents in the Community District responding "Excellent/Very Safe" or "Good/Somewhat Safe". In the 2008 and 2017 survey question asking for ratings on neighborhood "public safety" (4Q) asked respondents to rate neighborhood "crime control". Find full methodology and survey [here](#).

NYC Resident Feedback Positivity by Community Board, 2008-2023

Select question to review below and hover over maps for more information.

3A. Rate how safe/unsafe you feel: Walking alone in your neighborhood at night

2008			2017			2023		
Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn	Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn	Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn
68.9%	54.5%	65.0%	70.1%	52.1%	70.7%	51.2%	35.9%	55.8%
Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
79.1%	72.3%	82.7%	80.0%	72.3%	77.7%	54.6%	52.1%	56.1%



Note: Percent positive is share of respondents in the Community District responding "Excellent/Vary Safe" or "Good/Somewhat Safe".  
 In the 2008 and 2017 survey question asking for ratings on neighborhood "public safety" (4Q) asked respondents to rate neighborhood "crime control".  
 Find full methodology and survey [here](#).



Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding the NYC budget for 2025. My name is Emma Cathell, Senior Program Manager at CSH. CSH is a national non-profit that works with communities all over the country to devise and implement supportive housing solutions as a response to homelessness. [Supportive housing is an effective, long-term intervention](#) that pairs permanently affordable units with voluntary, individualized, wrap-around services to offer our most vulnerable and behaviorally complex community members an opportunity to stabilize and thrive in safe, affordable housing. Supportive housing has been proven to increase public safety and create more inclusive, and resource-rich communities. It's also far more cost effective than crisis systems such as jail, shelter, and improper emergency department use.

In fact, my team authored a report that estimated - conservatively- more than 2500 people a year in Rikers have a serious mental illness and will be homeless upon discharge; and the City could save roughly \$1.4 billion dollars annually JUST by investing in supportive housing, and in bringing people home- not hemorrhaging money into programs that are not designed to offer permanent solutions.



*This is why investing in supportive housing for individuals with carceral histories is so important.* Supportive housing can help ensure that at-risk New Yorkers access housing and services that can help them rebuild and stabilize their lives, versus getting caught in endless cycles of carceral and emergency systems.

Justice Involved Supportive Housing (or JISH) is currently the **only** designated supportive housing program in NYC for people leaving Rikers Island, with just 120 beds currently occupied. According to program documents, clients served by JISH are “high-need, with a long history of homelessness, incarceration, and serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders;” the program “offers necessary intensive case management and connection to clinical services for people leaving Rikers to stabilize their lives.”

One would think then, that JISH would be funded on par with other high-need supportive housing programs that include intensive case management, however that is not the case. The JISH rates are so low in fact that no provider has brought a single unit into operation since DOHMH released an RFP in 2019 to increase JISH units to 500, adding 380 units that have never come to fruition. The offered rates have not increased since the program’s expansion 5 years ago; no provider can afford back such a poorly funded program.

- **For this reason, we recommend that the City expands JISH by \$6.4 million annually to align supportive service rates with other populations that are considered high needs.**
- **We also advocate that a line-item be created in the DOHMH budget to allow for better tracking and transparency moving forward, given its importance for public safety.**

The housing crisis in NYC is at a critical point. The lack of access to safe, affordable housing for some of our most complex and marginalized community members has led to a public health and safety crisis. We know that an effective, impactful way to address the collateral consequences of mass chronic homelessness is through supportive housing: affordable rents paired with individualized services to help people with long histories of homelessness AND a behavioral health diagnosis.



The Testimony of The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) for the New York City Council Public Safety Budget Hearing on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024

*We respectfully ask that City Council urges Mayor Adams to invest in the housing and services needs of the most at-risk New Yorkers and takes steps forward on the [City's commitment to Close Rikers](#) by:*

**1. Expand Justice Involved Supportive Housing services funding by \$6.4 million**

- JISH currently only has 120 out of 500 possible beds in operation. In 2019, the City expanded the JISH program from 120 to 500 units (*an increase of 380*); however, no provider has since brought a unit into operation directly due to unacceptable service rates that have not been increased in five years.
- We recommend that NYC aligns JISH service rates at \$25,596 (per unit annually) with the service rates of the NYC 15/15 youth population, a similarly high-need population. This would adequately fund the 120 online units and incentivize providers to apply for the remaining allocated 380 units in the 2019 RFP.
- The total recommended investment for 500 JISH (120 current and 380 future units) units is \$6.4 million
- **Create a JISH line-item in the DOHMH budget** to allow for better tracking moving forward, given its importance for public safety.

**2. Restore \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for ATIs, supervised release and re-entry programs** including \$6.7M for alternatives to incarceration, \$13.1M for supervised release, and \$8M for re-entry services.

**3. Allocate an additional \$21.3M to meet housing and mental health needs,** and fulfill commitments in the Close Rikers plan, including:

- a. Establish a separate line-item for JISH in the DOHMH budget, and allocate an additional \$6.4M to increase service funding rates for new units and existing units. Existing, long time JISH providers are struggling at current rate levels.
- b. \$2.9M more to enable 5 of the 22 newly funded state Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team).
- c. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the establishment of four new crisis respite centers.
- d. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 119-2023, supporting the establishment of five new clubhouses.

The case for investing in housing can be made both ethically and financially, and the conclusion is the same: safe, affordable housing – with services and connections to community resources – is how we will increase public safety, and help move people beyond cycles of poverty and crisis.

All New Yorkers deserve a safe home and to be connected to resources in their community- not just those who have the most at their disposal. If we are truly committed to increasing public safety and creating a healthier New York, we must invest in accessible housing options for all.

Respectfully,

Emma Cathell, Senior Program Manager, CSH, [emma.cathell@csh.org](mailto:emma.cathell@csh.org)





**The Testimony of The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) for the New York  
City Council Public Safety Budget Hearing on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

## Family Legal Care's Testimony to the New York City Council's Public Safety Committee

Wednesday, March 20, 2024  
Council Chambers, City Hall  
Yusef Salaam, Chairperson

My name is Cathy Cramer and I am the Chief Executive Officer at Family Legal Care, formerly LIFT. Thank you to Chair Salaam and members of the Public Safety Committee for the opportunity to testify about the issues families with cases in New York Family Court are facing.

On behalf of Family Legal Care, I'd like to thank the New York City Council for its continued support and focus on issues impacting New York's parents and caregivers in Family Court. Without funding from the New York City Council, we could not do our vital work to assist families confronting issues at the heart of their well-being, including **child support, custody and visitation, and domestic violence**.

Despite the pivotal role we play to increase access to justice, Family Legal Care is facing a potential loss of critical funding due to a transition of our contract from the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, which we had for eight years, to a subcontracting opportunity on a pending RFP from the Mayor's Office to End Gender Based Violence. **We urge the Council to increase discretionary funding allocations for Family Legal Care in the upcoming budget cycle to ensure continuity of services for the thousands of parents and caregivers who rely on us and have nowhere to turn.**

Here is some background information on the important services we provide to over 25,000 New Yorkers each year:

Family Legal Care's mission is to increase access to justice in New York State Family Court. We combine legal guidance, easy-to-access technology, and compassionate support to help unrepresented parents and caregivers self-advocate on critical family law issues, while working on reform that improves the system for everyone.

We are the only organization in New York State dedicated solely to empowering parents and caregivers to represent themselves in New York Family Court. Each year we help approximately 25,000 parents and caregivers to self-advocate for positive outcomes in Family Court. The demand for free, expert legal advice has never been greater, continues to grow, and Family Legal Care is the only organization in New York City filling this need.

The New York City Family Courts have been under-resourced and overburdened for decades, and 80% of litigants come to Family Court without a lawyer. These unrepresented litigants are



disproportionately low-income, from communities of color, often undocumented immigrants, or speak monolingual Spanish or some other language. Because the family courts are understaffed, there is a justice gap for many of the litigants. Organizations like Family Legal Care and others have worked closely with the Court to close this justice gap, but serious issues remain.

The underinvestment in the family courts, and particularly the failure to prioritize child support cases, has significant effects for families in NYC. **We recognize child support as a critical tool that can help thousands of parents establish not only economic stability but also healthy emotional development**, as it can help **prevent** other issues **BEFORE** they need to be handled in Family Court, including domestic violence and abuse and neglect cases. Many times, the withholding of child support is another tactic that abusers use to maintain control in the relationship. **Investing in organizations like Family Legal Care to help parents address their child support concerns will increase financial stability of NYC families and have upstream effects on the public safety of our city.**

As of 2021, 1 in 6 children in NYC live in a household receiving child support<sup>1</sup>. Child support is a literal lifeline for many of the most impoverished families in NYC, but it is not uncommon for custodial parents to receive none of the money they are entitled to. Child support is a poverty prevention tool – in 2015, according to data from the NYC Office of Child Support Services, 1.4 million New Yorkers were lifted out of poverty through receiving child support, 790,000 of those impacted were children.

Many parents turn to the Family Court for help: 1 in 3 cases in New York Family Court deals with child support, but the Courts do not give child support cases the weight they are due. Litigants do not have a right to attorney in child support cases unless for imprisonment over nonpayment but the pro se litigants are held to the same standards as lawyers and are expected to offer evidence, cross examine witnesses, and understand other court procedures, like service. Pro se litigants, a disproportionate number of whom self-identify as people of color, are navigating the complex Court and legal systems completely on their own, and the stakes for their families are high. Child support is not just about money – it is about housing, healthcare, and food on the table.

Family Legal Care helps by

- Offering legal advice and consultations from staff attorneys with expert knowledge on family law topics.

---

<sup>1</sup> New York City Human Resources Administration Office of Child Support Services. August 2021.

- Operating bilingual phone, email, and live chat Helplines that provide information to litigants and pro se litigants on family law issues.
- Regularly conducting legal education workshops, presentations, and webinars on common family law issues.
- Developing over 60 multilingual legal information materials on child support and other family law issues, which are available online and in each of the city's borough courthouses.
- Connecting unrepresented litigants with pro bono attorneys for video consultations through our Pro Bono Program.
- Developing innovative digital tools that make legal information and court documents easy to access, understand, and be completed on a mobile device.
- Connecting those impacted by the digital divide in our Tech Hubs to the equipment and stable internet connection they need to access the hybrid courts.

The communities with the fewest resources, a disproportionate number of whom identify as people of color, are bearing the brunt of the Court's systemic failures. The Court's decisions touch the lives of thousands of children and families with profound, long-lasting effects on their safety, economic security, health, and well-being.

Strong families are essential building blocks for a thriving city, and we believe we have a powerful upstream impact in this unique space through Family Court. Family Legal Care helps families self-advocate for the financial resources to which they are entitled, that will help them to care for their children, and remain in their homes and communities. With increased support from the City Council, Family Legal Care can continue to be part of the solution.

Thank you.

**TO: City Council, Committee on Public Safety**

**FROM: Tiffany Sloan, Project Manager at From Punishment to Public Health (P2PH) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

**DATE: March 20, 2024**

**RE: City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing**

Spoken Testimony:

Thank you, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Tiffany Sloan, and I am the Project Manager at the From Punishment to Public Health initiative at John Jay College. P2PH works to transform the infrastructure of public health and public safety. We do this by convening stakeholders across systems of care and drawing on their expertise to build and scale equitable solutions grounded in the health and well-being of families and communities. Throughout my journey in this city, I've witnessed the advantages of public health-oriented initiatives and programs and the impacts they have on our most vulnerable residents. Conversely, I've observed the detrimental impact of over-policing and mass incarceration, particularly within predominantly African American communities.

Current narratives suggest that increased police presence in high crime areas reduces crime. New York City saw a rise in crime during the COVID pandemic and implemented increases in police presence in these high crime areas. Officers employed stop-and-frisk tactics, issuing over 82,000 summonses for minor offenses in 2023. However, research indicates no direct correlation between police presence and crime reduction. Instead, it led to community complaints. Moreover, of the 6,000+ guns seized by the NYPD from 2020 to 2021, only a third were linked to crimes. Many arrested individuals face minor charges, overwhelming the criminal justice system. This has resulted in a surge in minor cases in drug courts, mental health courts, and alternative incarceration programs, neglecting the underlying high-risk needs of individuals.

Throughout our work with the Brownsville Safety Alliance, we know that a large percentage of individuals who are in the criminal justice system suffer from complex high-risk needs especially mental health disorders. The issue of over-policing and inadequate mental health response in New York City is a multifaceted problem that intersects with issues of social justice, public safety, and healthcare. One aspect of this issue is the over-reliance on law enforcement to respond to situations involving individuals experiencing mental health crises. With current initiatives, law enforcement officers are the first responders called to the scene. However, many argue that police officers may not always be adequately trained to handle these situations effectively.

There have been numerous instances where individuals in need of mental health support have been subjected to excessive use of force during encounters with the police. The current system of arresting individuals with SMI and funneling them through the criminal justice system does not effectively address the underlying issue of pressing mental health needs. Having a response team consisting of mental health professionals and individuals with lived experience responding to the mandated 988 hotline, allow for the mental health to be addressed head on instead of force and more punitive measures that may only make the situation worse.

It's crucial to align the budget with community needs. High-risk individuals require a shift towards public health interventions rather than punitive measures. Funding initiatives like youth employment, job training, substance use programs, mental health response teams, and community violence programs directly targets vulnerable populations. Peer-led mental health models are gaining traction nationwide, diverting individuals from the criminal justice system and providing necessary services. These approaches offer alternatives to over-policing and reduce incarceration rates.

I thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today and we look forward to sharing additional resources for your consideration in our written testimony.

To Chair Member Salaam and the committee members,

Thank you, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Tiffany Sloan, and I am the Project Manager at the From Punishment to Public Health initiative at John Jay College. P2PH works to transform the infrastructure of public health and public safety. We do this by convening stakeholders across siloed system of care and drawing on their expertise to build and scale equitable solutions grounded in the health and well-being of families and communities. Throughout my journey in this city, I've witnessed the advantages of public health-oriented initiatives and programs and the impacts they have on our most vulnerable residents. Conversely, I've observed the detrimental impact of over-policing and mass incarceration, particularly within predominantly African American communities.

There are current narratives that over-policing and police presence on the streets of cities across the nation lead to lower levels of crime. In New York City, there was an increase in all five boroughs of violent crime during the COVID pandemic. This led to increases in police officer presence on street corners such as the ones in Brownsville, which is considered one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the city accounting for a large percentage of the gun violence crime in the city. Using the modern stop and frisk tactics, these officers patrolling the streets. Handed out in 82,000+ summons in 2023 for minor offenses in efforts to lower crime rates in the high crime rate areas across the city, including Brownsville. From this prospective it may seem that this police presence on the streets of high crime areas lowered crime rates. But researchers have shown that there is no linear effect between police street uptake and lower crime rates. Instead, the constant police presences brought multiple complaints towards the NYPD from the communities. And the city reported from 2020 and 2021 outlining the seized guns, out of the 6,000+ guns seized only a third of them were used in a crime. Most of these individuals who were arrested are charged with minor offenses and are funneled through the criminal justice system. We are seeing an uptake in minor cases and drug courts, mental health courts, and alternative to incarceration programs across the city are seeing an influx of minor offenses that should not be pushed through the court system. These individuals have underlying high-risk needs that are in dire need of resources.

Over-policing has consequences especially for BIPOC youth. Instead of being provided with support and resources, young people are often subjected to punitive measures, further entrenching them in the criminal justice system. This punitive approach of stop and frisk fails to address the underlying issues, the high-risk needs, that may be driving youth involvement in delinquent behavior, such as poverty, lack of access to education and employment opportunities, and exposure to trauma and violence. Over-policing of youth in NYC also intersects with broader issues of systemic racism and inequality. Young people from marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by poverty, lack of access to quality education, and structural barriers to success. Neighborhoods like Brownsville consisting of majority African Americans, experience over-policing and constant police presents. The over-

policing of these communities enhances these disparities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and incarceration that hinder the ability of young people to thrive and reach their full potential.

Through our work in Brownsville with the Brownsville Safety Alliance, we know that a large percentage of individuals who are in the criminal justice system suffer from complex high-risk needs especially mental health disorders. The issue of over-policing and inadequate mental health response in New York City is a multifaceted problem that intersects with issues of social justice, public safety, and healthcare. One aspect of this issue is the over-reliance on law enforcement to respond to situations involving individuals experiencing mental health crises. With current initiatives, law enforcement officers are the first responders called to the scene. However, many argue that police officers may not always be adequately trained to handle these situations effectively.

The consequences of more punitive approaches can be tragic, as encounters between law enforcement and individuals experiencing mental health crises sometimes escalate into violence or result in unnecessary arrests. There have been numerous instances where individuals in need of mental health support have been subjected to excessive use of force or have even lost their lives during encounters with the police. The current system of arresting individuals with SMI and funneling them through the criminal justice system does not effectively address the underlying issue of pressing mental health needs. Having a response team consisting of mental health professionals and individuals with lived experience responding to the mandated 988 hotline, allow for the mental health to be addressed head on instead of force and more punitive measures that may only make the situation worse. Communities around the nation are adapting more community led peer-based models to address the mental health crisis. These models have been successful to keep individuals suffering from SMI out of the criminal justice system, they also provide and refer individuals to mental health, substance use, and any other services they may need. These models address the underlying needs of individuals and give back to the most vulnerable residents instead of the current tactics of policing which lead to more individuals incarcerated or in the criminal justice system.

Ensuring that the budget accurately reflects the requirements of the community it serves is important. High-risk individuals need greater emphasis on public health interventions over punitive measures to address their underlying needs effectively. Allocating funds to initiatives like youth employment services, job readiness training, substance use and harm reduction programs, mental health response teams, and community-based violence programs specifically targets the pressing needs of our most vulnerable population. These measures provide alternatives to the traditional use of over-policing and funneling individuals through the criminal justice system. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify and submit a written testimony.





**ICNY**  
Interfaith Center of New York

**New York City Council Committee on Public Safety Meeting March 20, 2024  
Preliminary Budget Hearing - Public Safety**

**TO:** Yusef Salaam

**FROM:** The Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer, Shanaz Deen, and Scott Blumenthal, The Interfaith Center of New York

March 20, 2024

Dear Council Member Salaam,

We are grateful for this opportunity to provide you with written testimony on behalf of The Interfaith Center of New York, a non-profit organization which, over the course of 26 years, has built the most religiously-diverse and civically-engaged network of grassroots and immigrant religious leaders across the five boroughs of Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island and the Bronx.

The Mayor's proposed FY2025 budget falls short of its legal and moral obligation to reduce the overall jail population, complete the already-delayed borough-based jails, and close the Rikers Island jail facilities by August 31, 2027. And yet, the mayor plans to spend over \$2.6 billion on jail operations next year while significantly cutting funding to the Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, Youth and Community Development, and Social Services. His decision to slash spending on proven community-based interventions such as alternatives to incarceration (ATI), supervised release, reentry services, and summer youth employment runs counter to the claim that "ensuring dignity, safety, and care of all justice-involved New Yorkers is a top priority for our administration."<sup>1</sup>

Extensive research has shown that *all* New Yorkers are safer and live more dignified lives when their communities have adequate housing, healthcare, and social services – conditions that reduce involvement with the criminal legal system in the first place. Former inmates often return to their communities with more acute physical, mental health, and substance abuse issues than when they were detained. Supervised release programs and ATIs ensure seamless transitions and reduce recidivism rates.<sup>2</sup>

The Adams' administration is proposing a \$6.7M cut to ATI programs and \$8M cut to re-entry services, which runs counter to the key commitments of the plan to close Rikers. Further, we have noted that the proposed budget intends to cut \$13.1M in supervised release programs – an initiative in which the Council secured \$36.8M in new funding just last year to manage the 440% increase of caseloads since FY2019. The various

---

<sup>1</sup> "[Mayor Adams Announces Progress to Improve Care and Services for People in Custody](#)," The official website of the City of New York, March 4, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> "[Successful Reentry: Exploring Funding Models to Support Rehabilitation, Reduce Recidivism](#)," National Conference of State Legislatures, June 21, 2023.

cuts across key programs with proven track records indicate a regression in the plan to close Rikers and reduce the incarceration population by 2027.

Additionally, ICNY would like to express concern for the rise of hate-based bias incidents and crimes across our city. ICNY played a pivotal role in both the healing of the city and the protection of the religious freedom of Muslim communities in the post-9/11 world. Once again, we are witnessing an alarming rise of Anti-Semitic and Anti-Muslim sentiments in our domestically polarized political climate and as the violence in the Middle East continues to unfold and affect our city of immigrants

We recognize that many individuals and faith-based communities have engaged in political protests since October, bringing into question the protection of their religious and political First Amendment rights.

According to the NYPD website, the Strategic Response Group unit, formed in 2015 “responds to citywide mobilizations, civil disorders, and major events with highly trained personnel and specialized equipment. However, according to CAIR-NY recently, protesters calling for peace and government accountability have been subjected to surveillance, violence, and civil rights violations. In the past, ICNY resisted the surveillance of mosques and community centers post-9/11 through our advocacy in the *Raza v. City of New York* and *Handschu v. Special Services Division* cases of 2017. Today, we worry this history of unwarranted surveillance will repeat itself. Thus, we call on the City Council to hold the SRG accountable and reinvest in programs that will protect our religious and political freedoms.

To conclude, we urge Council Members to support proven, humane reform measures and enact a budget that:

- Restores \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for ATIs, supervised release and re-entry programs;
- Allocates an additional \$21.3M to meet housing and mental health needs;
- Reduces overtime spending by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers by 2027;
- Improves oversight by increasing Board of Correction headcount in proportion to DOC’s headcount;
- And holds the Strategic Response Group accountable for its abuses.

Reforming our criminal justice and public safety systems will take moral courage and continued political leadership. We are grateful to the Committee on Public Safety for your attention and concern for the well-being, dignity, and humanity of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer, Executive Director  
Shanaz Deen, Racial Justice Advocacy Fellow  
Scott Blumenthal, Program Associate  
The Interfaith Center of New York



Testimony of:

**The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services and Queens Defenders**

**Presented before The New York City Council Committee on Public Safety  
And Council Finance**

**March 20, 2024**

This testimony is submitted jointly by The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services, and Queens Defenders. As New York City’s public defenders, we serve hundreds of thousands of low-income people, overwhelmingly Black and brown New Yorkers, each year.

Sixty-one years ago, almost to the day, our country’s modern public defender system was born when the United States Supreme Court handed down its landmark decision in [\*Gideon v. Wainwright\*](#), ruling that states must provide people arrested and accused of a crime with a lawyer if they are unable to afford one. As the Court explained, “[L]awyers in criminal courts are necessities, not luxuries...This noble ideal cannot be realized if the poor man charged with crime faces his accusers without a lawyer to assist him.”

This historic ruling was a significant step forward for the rights of people facing the severe penalty of loss of liberty. Our organizations are incredibly proud to have made the “noble ideal” a reality in NYC. Our organizations and dedicated interdisciplinary staff have led the way nationally by providing excellent services and serving as a critical resource to low-income people in New York City.

Despite never having had sufficient funding, we have evolved and expanded what it means to be a “public defender” by adding social work services, investigators, paralegals, and a broad range of related services, such as attorneys, to handle the immigration consequences facing our clients. We have supported the enhancement of resources in communities, taken a strong stand against deplorable jail conditions, and fought for fair laws that would end unnecessary mass incarceration. And more.

Last year, we testified before the City Council about the difficulties we have in retaining our exceptionally dedicated staff due to the low pay scales we have been forced to maintain under our current funding. We also discussed significant technology needs, partly due to the discovery laws passed in 2019, which still need to be fully implemented and what is necessary in the new norm of the hybrid work environment.

Due to advocacy by this Council, led by Speaker Adams and Mayor Adams lobbying Albany on our behalf, two funds were established to assist our offices. One was approximately \$30 million for NYC public defense providers, which was delayed and available next fiscal year.

The other was \$50 million in capital monies directed to NYC by the State specifically to cover discovery and other technology needs for the NYPD and all prosecutors and defenders in New York City. Unfortunately, those funds have been dedicated exclusively to the prosecutors, leaving our offices without the resources to build technology to store and process the evidence in our cases.

New York City and New York State share the obligation to fund public defense services. While New York State has stepped up over the past few years due to a lawsuit establishing this obligation statewide, New York City has not increased defense funding in many years.

It is for this reason that the defender offices jointly ask the City for an increase of **\$ 133.5M** in Fiscal Year 25 to:

1. Fund the discovery needs of our offices that were redirected to the Prosecutors. **This is \$50 million.** It will allow us to hire paralegals and update our technology.
2. Provide a 25% increase on the personnel budgets for our baselined contracts to raise existing salaries and allow us to pay our staff competitive wages that value their work for their clients and society. **This cost is \$60M.**
3. Additional funding of **\$4.5M** is needed to cover the 10% increase in health insurance on our baselined contracts.
4. Additional funding of **\$4M** is needed to cover the 10% increase in occupancy and OTPS costs on our baselined contracts, which reflect many years of increases without additional funding.
5. Additional funding of **\$15 million** on our contracts to represent people accused of the most serious allegations--Murder.

We also ask that the City:

- Continue the Workforce Enhancement Initiative (WEI) on our baselined contracts.
- Expand WEI to the City Council discretionary contracts of defender offices to assure equal pay and resources to all of our staff, no matter how they are funded.

## **Recruitment and Retention**

### We Continue to Experience Attrition and Obstacles to Recruitment Due to Low Salaries and High Workload

New York City's public defenders are continuing to experience staff attrition due to unsustainable salaries. While the funding provided allowed our organizations to increase wages to some extent and negotiate union contracts for those of us with a union, the increase is far outpaced by the continued high cost of living and inflation. Some of our offices continue to see

attrition rates over 15%. We are also often unable to hire sufficient staff at the starting level to guarantee replacing staff, often due to low starting salaries combined with the high cost of living in New York City.

It is not just the sheer number of attorneys and other advocates who are leaving; it is of grave concern that the colleagues leaving are some of our most experienced. Many departing attorneys have between 5 and 10 years of experience, and some have more. These are our most seasoned and most skilled attorneys. The loss of experienced attorneys is particularly concerning given the nature of current cases in New York's criminal courts. The caseload trend over the past several years has been that felony cases, with most felony cases charged as violent felony offenses, have increased dramatically. The greater the number of felony cases, the greater the need for experienced attorneys, social workers, investigators, and other advocates who can represent and support clients facing these charges.

Sadly, some experienced attorneys are now leaving our offices for the assigned counsel (18B) panel, given the increase in the hourly rate to \$158/hour.

Losing staff members, particularly attorneys and social workers, is challenging. It impacts the client and delays cases. However, transferring caseloads to other attorneys and social workers makes the job less sustainable for the remaining staff and increases attrition.

We have repeatedly heard from departing staff, including those with years of experience, that low salaries – salaries often markedly lower than those with equivalent experience in the prosecution or other government offices and the courts – are a significant factor in the decision to leave public defense work. No one goes into public defense work expecting to get rich. But public defenders need to earn a living wage – a wage that enables them to support themselves and their families and recognizes their critical work. While the city where we live and work may be magnificent, it is also expensive. When recruiting candidates from other jurisdictions, we routinely hear that New York City is simply too costly, given the salaries we offer.

Salaries are significantly higher in other cities with similar living costs than in New York City. For example, our offices strive to pay \$80,000 to starting attorneys, while the Los Angeles public defender office starts their attorneys at over \$100,000.

We also know that the insufficient technology and support for reviewing body cam footage and other discovery materials contributes to attrition. Access to discovery allows defenders and clients to see and analyze police reports and other documentary evidence early in a case and to use that information to make fully informed decisions during plea negotiations and trial preparation. The expansion of access to this information removed the discovery blindfold that grossly prejudiced people accused of a crime and their attorneys for years. However, the volume of discovery material, including significant digital discovery, such as body-worn camera videos and other video surveillance, is tremendous. Attorneys, advocates, and investigators must thoroughly review and digest this material to prepare motions, challenge certificates of compliance, respond to motions for protective orders, develop case theories and defenses, counsel clients, and prepare mitigation and negotiation strategies. The resources needed to

support this work are long overdue, including the technology necessary to share and store data and additional personnel to assist with discovery processing and compilation.

With the increasing workload and low salaries experienced by our attorneys, attrition will likely continue, potentially eroding our excellent work for our clients. These issues must be remedied this year.

### We Need More Financial Resources From the City

While we each spend countless hours of staff time in recruitment, we are seeing more and more applicants respond with a “no” than ever before. As this was almost unheard of a few years ago, we are clear that we need additional resources to address the staffing crisis and allow us to (re) build and maintain fully staffed, exceptional defender office.

New York City public defenders require additional financial resources to increase salaries, hire personnel to implement discovery reform, and improve discovery-related technology. We conservatively estimate that an across-the-board pay correction of 25% is needed to bring our salaries to where they need to be for the current year, with guarantees of COLA increases each year to ensure our salaries keep pace with inflation. We also urge the City to continue the Workforce Enhancement Initiative (WEI), which has been helpful over the past year.

In addition, we seek funding to realize the benefits of discovery reform and to relieve the overwhelming workloads that our offices currently sustain. We seek to hire, train, and retain paralegals at a ratio of one paralegal to every three attorneys. Paralegals are vital to assisting in organizing, reviewing, and maintaining the voluminous discovery that our criminal defense practices now navigate – discovery critical to our clients’ cases and our work on their behalf. We similarly request additional funding to improve technology necessary to fully recognize discovery reform implementation within our offices as well as enable us to build secure systems to function in the hybrid environment that is the reality for our offices and the courts – technology that ranges from additional cloud storage space to software to assist with discovery review and organization.

Last year, New York State gave the city 50 million dollars earmarked to help with discovery technology across the criminal legal system. As was stated earlier, our offices were promised that funding would be provided to us and the District Attorneys to meet some of these needs. Yet, a last-minute reversal of that promise excluded us from the funding entirely. This year, we must be provided the resources we need by the City because no additional funding from the State can be expected for the technology they believed they were covering with the \$50 million they appropriated last year.

### **HOMICIDE REPRESENTATION**

Our offices were awarded homicide contracts in January 2019 after a long negotiation with New York City. During this negotiation, it was clear to us and the City that the funding was inadequate. At that time, the Mayor’s office stated its intention to revisit the funding for



homicides regularly to build a data-based sustainable program. Unfortunately, the follow-up from these early agreements never came to fruition.

In addition, the following developments have occurred since then:

1. The caseload estimate we were working with, which was based on about 300 homicide cases per year, has now turned out to have been way lower than the homicide rate the City has experienced every year since then.
2. The pandemic delayed the resolution of cases for years and years, and the compounding effect of court stagnation has caused the pending caseloads to balloon to numbers greatly exceeding even what we had predicted.
3. The quantity of evidence has multiplied. With the welcome changes in the discovery laws, videos and investigatory documents are provided in enormous data dumps of about 80 Gb each (as compared to under 2 Gb for an average non-homicide felony) that can take weeks or months to organize and review.

## **HOMICIDE STATS BY CALENDAR YEAR**

2017 and 2018--- under 300

2019---319

2020—462

2021 – 485

2022 -- 433

2023—386

Using these numbers, during the five years of the homicide contract implementation, the average number of cases per year was 417. Compared to 300 cases per year on which the funding was based, there has been a sustained increase of about 40% over the course of the program as compared to what was planned for and predicted in 2018.

But this is only part of the story. In 2020 and 2021, the homicide numbers were solidly 60% more than was predicted when these programs began. The attorneys reached full caseloads much faster than we thought they would due to this large influx of cases, and then, due to the pandemic delays, they could not resolve any of them. Even though the numbers have started to go down, in 2023, it was still almost 30% more than what the funding was predicated upon. Meanwhile, our offices are still facing the impact of the surge years because many of those cases still need to be resolved.

Our homicide programs have come on the heels of a disgraceful number of exonerations, many of which derived from poor-quality legal representation. Our mission is to make sure every case is fully investigated, from the facts of the case to the nature and character of the accused. Every legal issue must be researched and argued before the court, ranging from the admissibility of

evidence to compliance with the discovery laws. In almost every case, there is extensive consultation with experts such as DNA and forensic experts or those who can attest to the accused's mental state at the time of the incident.

Our offices have proven our commitment to the highest level of legal work, something residents of New York City deserve. Our attorneys have access to supervisors and other experienced attorneys for collaborations; we have mitigation specialists/social workers on staff working as a team with attorneys to help expedite potential pleas and reduce ultimate sentences; we have a streamlined process for retention of experts as well as on-staff forensic expertise; and we can provide collateral and legally required resources. In the complex environment of interdisciplinary criminal defense representation, the homicide practices we created are setting the standard for excellence in representing people facing a life sentence for these very serious accusations.

To get our caseloads down to about 8-9 per attorney and return to intake at full strength, we require an infusion of about \$15 million. This will allow us to hire attorneys who can begin to take cases while those with a full caseload can work exclusively on their pending load. We will also hire investigators, social workers, mitigation specialists, and other staff to continue building and sustaining the necessary comprehensive teams for homicide cases.

#### **“Flat Funding” Isn’t Flat, It’s A Budget Cut That Harms Clients**

In addition to salary increases and the need for staffing and technology for discovery, our flat contract budgets also do not cover year-over-year cost increases for healthcare premiums, utilities and space, and other OTPS costs, which have continued to rise. We have managed these cost increases by decreasing staff to raise money for increased rent, employee benefits, and other non-negotiable increases.

This is not the same for City agencies or District Attorneys. The City automatically pays the costs of increases, including any adjustments made as part of the City's negotiated increase to the City's unionized workforce. For legal services providers, funding adjustments for collectively bargained salary increases, fringe benefits, and utility and space costs have to be negotiated as part of our contract. Yet, these expenses have stayed the same for years.

Supporting our offices will help reduce the harm of the criminal legal system by allowing us to fight police abuse, overreach by prosecutors, overuse of incarceration, and many more harms.

We thank the City Council for hearing our request and for its support of the people of the City of New York.

**LDF Oral Testimony**

**Public Safety Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Obi Afriyie, speaking on behalf of the Legal Defense Fund. We urge the City Council to end the years of budget exceptionalism shown to the NYPD, divest from the harmful policing entities that disproportionately target our Black communities, and instead invest increased funding toward the housing and healthcare of communities that have been most negatively impacted by police practices in New York.

Aggressive policing is rampant in Black communities across New York City. Since the Mayor took office and established units like Neighborhood Safety Teams, the NYPD is making more arrests, mostly for non-violent offenses. Specialized units cause harm and undermine safety. Last year, the Independent Monitor found that 97 percent of people stopped by NST were Black and Latinx, and that NST officers failed to show reasonable suspicion before conducting 1 out of every 4 of their stops. It is clear that the NST is repeating the same pattern of aggressive and discriminatory policing that New York City experienced multiple times in the past. Thus, the NST should be disbanded, just like its prior iterations, and funds instead should be used for grants for community groups that have developed alternative response models, such as the Brownsville Safety Alliance, and services to address people's underlying needs that would prevent another call to 911.

The Strategic Response Group engages in similarly discriminatory practices that have also resulted in police violence against Black people. NYCLU's investigation into this unit found that 66 percent people who filed CCRB complaints against SRG officers from 2015 to 2021 were Black, 21 percent were Latinx, and only 9 percent were white. The SRG has also participated in the "homeless sweeps" that have dismantled encampments of unhoused people and disposed of their belongings, with reports of excessive arrests and uses of force. The NYPD is allocating more than \$77 million in the FY 2025 budget to this abusive unit.

The city should also end its investment in co-responder models. The NYPD Mental Health Co-Response Teams (CRT) consist of two police officers and one behavioral health professional. The city's plan to train police to respond to emotional distress calls and pair officers with mental health workers is a backward and failed approach. In 2021, at least 104 people were killed after police responded to someone with a mental health disability or in crisis.

The Mayor's preliminary budget calls for a 24 percent decrease in funding to DOHMH. One in five New Yorkers experiences a mental health episode each year, and our city has deep racial and economic disparities in quality and access to mental health care. Black and Latinx New Yorkers are less likely to be connected to mental healthcare than their white counterparts, but people from the city's lowest income neighborhoods are twice as likely to be hospitalized for mental illness, compared to residents from the highest income neighborhoods.

In the last few years, the city has experienced an increase in criminalization and emergency hospitalization of those deemed in need of crisis intervention, rather than connecting them to long-term support or holistic community-based services. In 2022, the mayor rolled out a widely criticized initiative that authorized first responders to forcibly detain New Yorkers for psychiatric evaluation if they were deemed to lack the ability to care for themselves. According to the NYPD's own figures, 47 percent of people who are subjected to involuntary mental health removals are Black. The NYPD is not equipped to conduct mental health outreach services, and certainly not after a mere 25-minute training. People experiencing a mental health crisis require a healthcare-centered response, with the mental health system taking the lead.

The city must direct funding toward Respite Centers. They have a documented success rate in helping individuals recover from psychiatric episodes and get connected to ongoing care and support. We also need increased funding for Community-Based Programs, such as short-stay apartments, walk-in urgent care centers, and drop off centers scattered throughout communities so that they are readily accessible to people in all neighborhoods.

We must also invest in our youth and young adults. We must ensure that students with disabilities, those in foster care, and English language learners have the support and services they need. Our schools need \$75 million to hire 500 community members into supportive positions including youth advocates, parent coordinators, paraprofessionals, community outreach coordinators, counselors, and social workers, as well as staff to greet students at the door and check-in visitors. Another \$75 million should be budgeted for current and additional social workers at competitive rates to support the needs of all students, including newcomer asylum seekers, and achieve a ratio of 1:150 across schools and 1:50 for high-need schools. These investments could be accomplished with the elimination of funding for Neighborhood Safety Teams, SRG, and commonsense reductions in NYPD overtime.

The mayor's plan to slash funding for social services threatens the vital services that the most vulnerable New Yorkers rely on most. LDF urges the City Council to take a different, more effective path by investing in communities and developing effective strategies for public safety.

Thank you.

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES  
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME  
TO THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING ON PUBLIC SAFETY  
MARCH 20, 2024  
4:00 PM

Public Safety Committee Chairman Yusef Salaam and distinguished members of the committee, I am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local 372 - NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 - AFSCME. It is the honor of Local 372 to present this testimony on behalf of the approximate 2,100 Level-I and 80 Level-II School Crossing Guards we represent under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I. Local 372 respectfully requests: the City restore the School Crossing Guard positions that were cut from the previous budget to fill the priority school crosswalks, City funding to support the promotion of a city-wide public awareness campaign to stop the violence against School Crossing Guards, and permanent reforms to conform School Crossing Guard pay practices to that of other DOE support staff titles.

School Crossing Guards are often the first line of defense to improve the safety for students who walk, bicycle, or take public transportation to school. Student-pedestrians often face major safety traffic hazards everyday caused by double-and-triple parked cars at bus stops, in front or near the school building. These workers have risked their own health, safety, and lives to perform these vital services to the community. This role often places School Crossing Guards in vulnerable positions with no immediate assistance on hand. Just last year, two of our members in Queens were struck by moving vehicles, and unfortunately one School Crossing Guard tragically lost her life.

Cases like these are sadly becoming a common occurrence, and it is essential that the City of New York increase funding for the additional hiring of School Crossing Guards. When such

instances happen, an on-duty School Crossing Guard would have to leave their post to cover the recently vacated station, thus leaving a school crosswalk vacant and vulnerable to accidents. The City cannot continue shuffling our members around when the number of School Crossing Guards are not enough to keep each school crosswalk safe. As the number of School Crossing Guards continue to decline, the number of unprotected school crosswalks continue to rise, leaving thousands of school children crossing main intersections without any supervision, putting our children's safety in jeopardy. **Local 372 respectfully requests** that the City restore the School Crossing Guard positions that were cut from the previous budget to fill the priority school crosswalks. We have heard a lot in the news recently about violence against transit workers. What we have not heard about is the similar risk of violence that School Crossing Guards face on a daily basis. That is why **Local 372 respectfully requests** City funding to support the promotion of a city-wide public awareness campaign to stop the violence against School Crossing Guards.

While increasing the number of School Crossing Guard positions solves the staffing and safety issue; however, it does not solve the equity problem that our members are currently facing. School Crossing Guards work daily at a 25-hour capped part-time schedule that includes early morning, lunch time and after school hours to serve 957,438 public-school children. Our members do not get paid for snow days and certain holidays (days where the schools shut down but the City remains open), leaving their paychecks dependent on the whims of the weather. A snow day might just be the determining factor as to whether a School Crossing Guard can put food on the table. For many New Yorkers who are living paycheck to paycheck, like School Crossing Guards, any one unanticipated day off from work can be the difference between making ends meet and financial ruin.



Despite working under the New York Police Department (“NYPD”), School Crossing Guards are functionally analogous to school support staff titles working under the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”). Likewise, School Crossing Guards and DOE school support staff should also share the same privileges and pay rights. Just as DOE school support staff are currently compensated for this lost time, so too should School Crossing Guards be equally compensated. On top of the equity concern, it also poses a retainage issue. Due to the danger that comes with the position and not having the same pay benefits as other DOE support staff titles, the current pay practices for School Crossing Guards are harmful to these vital workers. Within the School Crossing Guard membership, 90% are woman, 85% are Black and Latino, and many of our members are at higher risk because they are older, with 33% of the membership are over 55 years old. **Local 372 requests** permanent reforms to conform School Crossing Guard pay practices to that of other DOE support staff titles.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued support on behalf of Local 372’s School Crossing Guards. I will now answer any questions you may have.

# **New York City Council**

## **SAVE LEARNING TO WORK**

March 19, 2024

Testimony Presented By  
Michael De Vito Jr.  
Executive Director  
NYCID



Good Day Councilmembers:

I'm Michael DeVito from New York Center for Interpersonal Development. NYCID is a member just about all the coalitions giving testimony to this committee. Today, I write to you specifically about Learning to Work Program which is set to lose 72% of its funding on June 30, 2024. Effectively rendering the programs inoperable. This represents \$32M of a \$40 million dollar budget that supports the community-based partnerships. These funds have historically been supplied by City Tax Levy funds.

As someone working this long, I feel charged to ensure we state our history.

Over the years I have reported to this committee that the partnerships that CBOs like NYCID have with the city have saved the Big Apple BILLIONS.

Here's the figure that has been presented over the years to many committees: \$325,000 - that's the aggregated figure presented by Northeastern University and the Community Service Society,

*"in lifetime budgetary terms, 'each individual without a high school diploma represents a net cost to New York City of \$134,037, whereas each New Yorker with a high school diploma or GED yields a net benefit of \$192,715 – a swing of more than \$325,000 per person.'<sup>1</sup> Thus, in the aggregate, simply helping one low-skilled New Yorker earn a high school degree or equivalency is worth more than \$325,000 to the city."<sup>2</sup>*

In the last 20 years LTW Programs helped more than **15,000** New Yorkers obtain a high school diploma. That's \$4.9 **billion** dollars of net benefit for our city. Learning to Work has been delivered to New York City.

To understand where we are going, we must know where we have been. And where we have been before is face to face with a population size problem, an epidemic - a tragedy where the youth of New York City, your kids, my kids, our kids, were in need. Academically, emotionally, and economically in need.

Our kids needed guidance, support, mentoring, personal and professional development, remediation, and ways to self-regulate and become accountable for their actions for themselves, their families, our city, and our

---

<sup>1</sup> Community Service Society, From Basic Skills to Better Futures: Generating Economic Dividends for New York City at 9 (Sept. 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Id. at 1.

nation. They needed a place to thrive, flourish, and belong. In 2004, the number of our kids who needed this help topped 180,000. They were in need - at risk, at promise!

LTW was the planned, strategic answer, bringing together community and government to begin solving the problem. It was also considered the most cost-effective solution.

Twenty years later - after a global pandemic where the rich got richer, and the poor got even further beaten down, we cannot even count the number of OUR KIDS who are in need. Many walk around unidentified and will continue until all the dust settles on the pictures taken over the last four years.

Amid this continued state of emergency, LTW is being viewed as a “NICE-TO-HAVE.” Instead of a “MUST-HAVE.” Somehow, it is not being prioritized with food and water.

We are NOT-A-NICE-TO-HAVE. We are an ABSOLUTELY-MUST NEED. Not funding LTW is saying we don't care about the most vulnerable - No matter how it is twisted, the fact that we are standing here again hat in hand screams inequity and wrong-doing. Not funding LTW is cutting off our noses despite the City's face. A face that we must save. It's not just missing the forest for the trees. It is not seeing the wild followers that need cultivation and love to be strong and ready.

All this has happened before. NYC had a whole in its guts before Alternative Pathways were developed. We didn't have an answer.

Indulge me now, and let's use our imagination to imagine a future without LTW. At some point, someone on your council will say we need to solve this problem, and they will find money for it. My money now would be on the fact that the answer then will be the answer we already have now -

Let's not KID our KIDS by lying to ourselves that we can live without this program. Let's not go backward.

Please find a way. Please find a way to save this program and those workers that give of themselves every day to help our KIDS.

Thank you.

**The New York City Charter School Center**  
**Erik Joerss, Vice President of Advocacy and Government Affairs**  
**Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Committee on Public Safety**  
**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget Hearings**  
**March 20, 2024**

The New York City Charter School Center (Charter Center) respectfully submits the following testimony. The Charter Center thanks the New York City Council Committee on Finance and Public Safety for providing the opportunity to comment on the Executive Budget Hearings on behalf of students attending New York City charter schools.

Since the enactment eight years ago of Local Law 2016/02, which provides a reimbursement program for non-public schools for the purpose of hiring security guards, there has been one glaring inequity in how NYC keeps its students safe, the exclusion of charter schools in private space. This could be remedied with the reintroduction, amending, and passage of Int. 532-2024, which closed the year with 19 co-sponsors. In 2016, the Council created a \$19.8 million School Safety reimbursement fund with taxpayer dollars for non-public schools with over 300 students to cover the cost of keeping their school facilities safe through contracts with private security firms. The Department of Education (NYC DOE) employs school security guards in all of its buildings in partnership with the New York City Police Department. This means that students in private schools with over 300 students, district students, and charter students in DOE buildings have security officers in their buildings. The only group of students attending K-12 schools in NYC who do not receive access to security officers are charter students in private space settings. This exclusion has meant that the approximately 177 charter campuses must fund security costs out of per-pupil funding or redirect teachers and staff to provide security services. Some of these students at private space charter schools are the same students that do not receive rental assistance under a 2014 state law. These students are already receiving \$4,863 less per pupil than district schools.<sup>2</sup> For those private space charter schools that do receive rental assistance, they are receiving \$2,057 less per pupil than district schools. The totality of these realities further demonstrates the ways in which public charter schools' stresses are exacerbated and resources are stretched. Charter schools are continuously asked to do more with less, and while the sector has continued to grow and conquer obstacles, the safety, security, and education of children must be non-negotiable.

There is room in the current School Safety reimbursement fund for charter students because the \$19.8 million pot has never been depleted. In 2020, \$14.2 million was unused; in 2021, \$13.6 million was unused; in 2022, \$10 million was unused; and in 2023, \$7.9 million was unused. These leftover funds amount to money and resources that can be directed to charter schools – we have estimated that the inclusion of the excluded charter schools (where schools have at least 150 or more students at the school) would cost \$7.6 million per year. Instead of diverting funds set aside to provide equitable access to security and safety measures and precautions, NYC has chosen to leave charters to fend for themselves in creating a secure environment in which schools can direct their time and attention to providing quality education to some of the most impacted students in the city. If the Council takes up 532-2024, which proposed to grow the

number of eligible schools and double the current reimbursement fund, the city's public charter schools would expect to be included, as well.

All students deserve to feel safe and free to focus their energy on their academic growth, and under current law, public charter schools in private space are the only schools in NYC – public or private – that are forced to divert money and resources out of the classroom to provide the basic security every other school enjoys. Even some of the city's wealthiest private schools like Spence, Dalton, Chapin, and Brearley enjoy access to security funding, whilst the public charters that educate primarily low-income students of color whose families are community members and constituents deserving of the same treatment as all other New Yorkers. The approximately 71,000 students in private space charters are made up of 46% Black/African American, 43% Hispanic/Latinx, 82% Economically Disadvantaged, 10% English language learners and 19% are students with disabilities.

During his career as an elected official, Mayor Adams has been vocal about creating a safe city for all in an ever-changing, and both the Mayor and NYC DOE Chancellor Banks have been vocal about scaling educational excellence. To reimburse public charter schools in private space to hire security guards helps us all achieve these common goals, while centering all NYC students – public and private, alike. In fact, Mayor Adams (then Brooklyn Borough President) advocated for the inclusion of charter schools in Local Law 2016/02 stating, [“Our tax dollars should protect all our children.”](#) adding that he believed this could be passed by the Council. The NYC Council should amend Local Law 2016/02 to include public charter schools. Absent legislation, the City Council should ask City Hall to add funds into the budget for these already underfunded charter schools, many of whom are among the worst-funded public schools in NYC.

For over twenty years, public charter schools have been an integral part of the public education system in New York City (NYC), and in the 2023-24 school year there are 274 public charter schools operating in the five boroughs. Over 146,200 students, representing 15% of public school students, of which nearly 90% are Black/African American or Latinx. New York's public charter schools are serving primarily low-income NYC families (82% are economically disadvantaged), offering additional high-quality educational options for families.

More and more NYC families continue to choose charter schools as the right public school for their children. In the 2023-24 school year, 37% of NYC's Black kindergarteners (enrolled in a public school) enrolled in a public charter school. Charter school enrollment growth increased 13% between the 2019-20 and 2023-24 school, even as the NYC district schools have seen historic drops in enrollment (12% drop in the same time period). Differences in enrollment between district and charter schools are even more stark in certain areas of NYC. For example, in the Bronx, charter enrollment has increased 32% between 2019-20 and 2023-24. In this same period, district schools in the Bronx have lost 18% of students. Charter schools may well be part of what keeps families in NYC.

In addition, the recent 2023 Math and ELA 3-8 test scores confirmed that students in charter schools experience higher rates of proficiency than their district counterparts. In ELA, Black and Hispanic charter school students outperformed district counterparts by 19 percentage points (59% vs. 40%) and 16 percentage points (55% vs. 39%), respectively. In math, Black and



Hispanic charter school students outperformed district counterparts by 27 percentage points (61% vs. 34%), and 25 percentage points (61% vs. 36%), respectively.

Despite the demand and success of charters, charter school students still remain the lowest funded public schools in NYC. It is nothing more than a myth that charter schools drain resources or cost the district a disproportionate amount of public aid. A NYC student attending a charter school receives much less public funding than their New York counterparts in district public schools. The most recent Independent Budget Office of New York City (IBO) analysis found that NYC charter schools were underfunded between more than a \$1,000 to up to almost \$5,000 per student.<sup>1</sup> The magnitude of the disparity differs depending on whether the school is co-located, receives rental assistance, or no rental assistance. While there has not been an updated comparative analysis of New York City's funding for district and charter schools since the new charter school tuition formula was passed in 2017, there is nothing in the funding trends since 2017 to suggest that gaps have gotten smaller; if anything, they are likely to have increased, particularly for students that receive no rental assistance.

We ask that you prioritize the passage of Int. 532-2024.



New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Inc.  
151 W. 30<sup>th</sup> St., 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10001-4017  
Tel: 212-244-4664  
Fax: 212-244-4570  
TTY: 212-244-3692  
www.nylpi.org

**Testimony of  
William Juhn, Senior Staff Attorney  
on behalf of the Disability Justice Program  
at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest  
before the Council of the City of New York  
Committee on Public Safety  
March 20, 2024**

My name is William Juhn and I am a Senior Staff Attorney with the Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (“NYLPI”). Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today regarding public safety. NYLPI is deeply concerned about the City’s dangerous and illegal practices relating to the involuntary removal of individuals perceived to have mental illness diagnoses for psychiatric evaluation. We also oppose the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division (“B-HEARD”) Program, a deeply flawed pilot that diverts resources desperately needed for non-police response to mental health crisis into a program that continues the criminalization of disability. NYLPI urges the City Council to mandate significant changes to the B-HEARD so that it becomes a truly non-police response system that dispatches teams of peers—individuals with lived mental health experience—and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) who are not City employees.

**THE MAYOR MUST IMMEDIATELY RESCIND HIS POLICY OF FORCIBLY REMOVING INDIVIDUALS PERCEIVED TO HAVE A MENTAL ILLNESS DIAGNOSIS AND PERCEIVED TO BE “UNABLE TO CARE FOR THEIR BASIC NEEDS,” BUT WHO DO NOT PRESENT A DANGER TO THEMSELVES OR OTHERS**

The Mayor’s Involuntary Removal Policy launched in November 2022, allows a police officer to detain an individual by force, and remove the individual to a psychiatric hospital, solely

because the officer believes the individual has a mental disability and is unable to meet “basic needs” -- without any indication that the individual is a danger to themselves or others.

The Policy is both illegal and immoral. By failing to mandate that an individual is “conducting himself or herself in a manner which is likely to result in serious harm to the person or others,” the Involuntary Removal Policy runs afoul of Section 9.41 of New York’s Mental Hygiene Law, as well as myriad other federal and state constitutional and statutory provisions, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and New York City Human Rights Law.

Mayor Adams’ statements, as well as the City’s November 28, 2022 press release, entitled “Mental Health Involuntary Removals,” make clear that city agencies have aggressively instituted involuntary removals by police officers who have little to no expertise in dealing with individuals with mental disabilities and who will be required to determine whether an individual should be forcefully detained against their will. The examples cited by Mayor Adams at his press conference illustrate how difficult it is for police officers to make these sorts of determinations and how likely it is that the rights of New Yorkers will be violated by the Involuntary Removal Policy. Mayor Adams’ example of “the shadow boxer on the street corner in Midtown, mumbling to himself as he jabs at an invisible adversary,” does not describe someone who is unable to care for their basic needs, let alone describe someone who meets the standard of serious danger to themselves or others. The City’s Involuntary Removal Policy also contains no information about how an officer would even go about determining whether such shadow boxers are unable to take care of their basic needs or are merely exercising.

Even though the City touted the success of the policy one year after its launch, the City offered no data on its implementation, including whether people of color are being disproportionately targeted.

The City must rescind the Involuntary Removal Policy to ensure that no New Yorkers are subjected to unlawful detention and involuntary hospitalization just for exhibiting behavior perceived by a police officer to be unusual—whether the individual has a mental disability or not.

**THE CITY MUST WHOLLY TRANSFORM ITS RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISES BY ELIMINATING POLICE AND REPLACING THEM WITH A PEER-LED HEALTH RESPONSE**

The City must join other cities across the country – including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Albuquerque, Denver, New Haven and many more – to **remove police** entirely from the equation, and **ensure that healthcare workers respond to healthcare crises**. According to NYLPI and Human Rights Watch’s [joint-research](#), there are at least 160+ emergency response programs nationwide that engage in crisis response activities without police as the initial responders or as automatic co-responders.

Closer to home, New York State is already taking action. The state legislators are working to pass a bill known as Daniel’s Law (Senate Bill [S2398](#)/Assembly Bill [A2210](#)), which would establish a statewide emergency and crisis response system where police are no longer the default first responders to health emergencies. Under Daniel’s Law, the state will only fund emergency response plans where mental health experts and peers control the response to a health emergency, and the role of police would be strictly limited to situations involving imminent risk of serious physical harm to the public. The bill currently has 33 sponsors in the Assembly and 17 sponsors in the Senate.

Likewise, the City must establish a system whereby individuals who experience a mental health crisis receive appropriate services which will de-escalate the crisis and which will ensure their wellbeing and the wellbeing of all other New Yorkers. Only those who are trained in de-escalation practices should respond to a mental health crisis, and the most appropriate individuals

to receive such training are peers and health care providers.<sup>1</sup> Police officers, who are trained to uphold law and order, are not suited to deal with individuals experiencing mental health crises, and New York's history of its police killing 19 individuals who were experiencing crises in the last eight years alone, is sad testament to that. Eliminating the police as mental health crisis responders has been shown to result in quicker recovery from crises, greater connections with long-term healthcare services and other community resources, and averting future crises.<sup>2</sup>

The scores of people experiencing mental health crises who have died at the hands of the police over the years is a microcosm of the police brutality around the world. Disability is disproportionately prevalent in the Black community and other communities of color,<sup>3</sup> and individuals who are shot and killed by the police when experiencing mental health crises are disproportionately Black and other people of color. Of the 19 individuals killed by police in the last eight years, 16 – or greater than 80% -- were Black or other people of color. The City Council simply cannot stand by while the killings continue. Now is the time to remove the police as responders to mental health crises – and certainly we must all oppose the Mayor's efforts to increase the role and funding of the NYPD as it relates to people with mental disabilities. Lives are literally at stake.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, "When There's a Crisis, Call a Peer: How People With Lived Experience Make Mental Health Crisis Services More Effective," (2024), <https://www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Bazelon-When-Theres-a-Crisis-Call-A-Peer-full-01-03-24.pdf>; Martha Williams Deane, *et al.*, "Emerging Partnerships between Mental Health and Law Enforcement," *Psychiatric Services* (1999), [http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/ps.50.1.99?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&rft\\_id=ori%3Arid%3Aacrossref.org&rft\\_dat=cr\\_pub%3Dpubmed&#/doi/abs/10.1176/ps.50.1.99?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&rft\\_id=ori%3Arid%3Aacrossref.org&rft\\_dat=cr\\_pub%3Dpubmed](http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/ps.50.1.99?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rft_id=ori%3Arid%3Aacrossref.org&rft_dat=cr_pub%3Dpubmed&#/doi/abs/10.1176/ps.50.1.99?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rft_id=ori%3Arid%3Aacrossref.org&rft_dat=cr_pub%3Dpubmed).

<sup>2</sup> Henry J. Steadman, *et al.*, "A Specialized Crisis Response Site as a Core Element of Police-Based Diversion Programs," *Psychiatric Services* (2001), [http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.52.2.219?utm\\_source=TrendMD&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=Psychiatric\\_Services\\_TrendMD\\_0](http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.52.2.219?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Psychiatric_Services_TrendMD_0).

<sup>3</sup> Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, "Accessible NYC" (2016), [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessiblenyc\\_2016.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessiblenyc_2016.pdf).

[Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC](#) has developed the needed antidote. Modeled on the [CAHOOTS](#) program in Oregon, which has successfully operated for over 30 years without *any* major injuries to respondents or responders – let alone deaths -- the CCIT-NYC proposal is positioned to make non-police responses available to those experiencing mental health crises in New York City. The proposal avoids the enormous pitfalls of the City’s B-HEARD pilot, which the City inaccurately refers to as a non-police model. Hallmarks of the CCIT-NYC proposal are:

- teams of trained peers and emergency medical technicians who are independent of city government;
- teams run by culturally-competent community organizations;
- response times comparable to those of other emergencies;
- 24/7 operating hours;
- calls routed to 988 rather than the city-operated 911; and
- oversight by an advisory board of 51% or more peers.

The full text of the CCIT-NYC proposal can be found at <https://www.ccitnyc.org/ourproposal>

**THE CITY MUST ENTIRELY REVAMP THE B-HEARD PILOT AS THE PILOT AUTHORIZES EXTENSIVE POLICE INVOLVEMENT AND IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE OR EVEN INCREASE THE RATE OF VIOLENT RESPONSES BY THE NYPD**



The City, via its Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (formerly ThriveNYC), introduced a pilot program in 2021 that it contends is responsive to the need to cease the killings at the hands of the police of individuals experiencing mental health crises. Unfortunately, that is simply not the case, despite the City's glowing description of the program. Among B-HEARD's grim statistics are the following:

- In Fiscal Year 2023 (July 2022 through June 2023), about **79% of all mental health calls** in B-HEARD precincts were still **directed to the NYPD**, and B-Heard responded to only about **21% of total mental health calls** in the pilot area.
- Even when all kinks are ironed out, the City anticipates continuing to have about **50% of all mental health calls directed to the NYPD**.
- Moreover, **all mental health calls continue to go through 911**, which is under the NYPD's jurisdiction.
- The entire **program is run by the NYPD, the Fire Department and other City agencies**, with **NO role whatsoever for community organizations**. And there is not even any delineation of the lines of authority and communication among the various city agencies.
- **The crisis response teams are composed of emergency medical technicians (EMTs) who are City employees (from the Fire Department) who are deeply enmeshed in the current police-led response system**. Peers do not trust these EMTs. The other team members are *licensed clinical* social workers. The licensure and clinical orientation requirements are unnecessary and they also preclude a vast array of potential candidates who have excellent skills and a long history of working with people experiencing crises.
- B-HEARD has **NO requirement to hire peers**.

- **The training of the teams does *NOT* require a trauma-informed framework, need *NOT* be experiential, and need *NOT* use skilled instructors who are peers or even care providers.**
- **The anticipated response time for crisis calls could be as long as half an hour, and when last reported averaged over fifteen minutes,<sup>4</sup> which is not even remotely comparable to the City’s response times for other emergencies of 8 to 11 minutes.**
- **The pilot operates only sixteen hours a day.**
- **There are no outcome/effectiveness metrics.**
- **There is no oversight mechanism.**

A comparison of the CCIT-NYC proposal, which is based on the CAHOOTS model with a stellar track record, and the B-HEARD program, which is not aligned with any best practices, is illustrated in the following chart:

---

<sup>4</sup> Regrettably, the average response time was not even collected for the last reporting period.

<b>Critical Attributes of a Mental Health Crisis Response System</b>	<b>CCIT-NYC's Proposal</b>	<b>NYC's B-HEARD Proposal</b>
Removal of police responders	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b> (currently, around 79% of calls are still responded to by police, and even when all kinks are removed, 50% of calls will still be responded to by police)
Three-digit phone number such as 988, in lieu of 911.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Response team to consist of an independent EMT and a trained peer who has lived experience of mental health crises and know best how to engage people in need of support	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b> (licensed clinical social worker and EMT employed by the New York City Bureau of Emergency Medical Services)
Crisis response program run by community-based entity/ies which will provide culturally competent care and will more likely have a history with the person in need and can intervene prior to a crisis	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b> (run by New York City Police Department and other City agencies)
Peer involvement in all aspects of planning/implementation/oversight	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Oversight board consisting of 51% peers from low-income communities, especially Black, Latinx, and other communities of color	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Creation/funding of non-coercive mental health services ("safety net"), including respite centers and 24/7 mental health care to minimize crises in the first place and to serve those for whom crisis de-escalation is insufficient	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>

Response times comparable to those of other emergencies	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b> (Most recently reported response time of over 15 minutes -- compared with average response time of 8 to 11 minutes for non-mental health emergencies)
Response available 24/7	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b> (Response only available 16 hours/day)
Training of the teams to use a trauma-informed framework, be experiential, and use skilled instructors who are peers	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>

NYLPI therefore urges the Council to ensure that the money previously allocated for a non-police mental health crisis response be utilized solely for a truly non-police response, mandating substantial modifications to the B-HEARD program by including the critical components of the CCIT-NYC proposal.

**THE CITY COUNCIL MUST ENSURE THAT NEW YORKERS HAVE ACCESS TO A WIDE RANGE OF VOLUNTARY NON-HOSPITAL, COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES THAT PROMOTE RECOVERY AND WELLNESS, AS WELL AS A FULL PANOPLY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, INCLUDING HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, AND EDUCATION, BY ALLOCATING FUNDING FOR SUCH PROGRAMS**

Since NYLPI was established nearly 50 years ago, we have prioritized advocating on behalf of individuals with mental health conditions, and we have consistently fought to ensure that the rights of individuals with mental health conditions are protected by every aspect of New York’s service delivery system. Core to our work is the principle of self-determination for all individuals with disabilities, along with the right to access a robust healthcare system that is available on a *voluntary, non-coercive* basis.

We have long been on record opposing mandatory outpatient and inpatient treatment for insufficiently safeguarding the rights of persons with mental health concerns and failing to offer

appropriate healthcare. Quite simply, there is no place for coercion. Forced “treatment” is not treatment at all, and it has long been rejected by health practitioners -- to say nothing of the disability community – in favor of numerous best practices strategies that offer assistance even to those who have previously resisted offers of care.<sup>5</sup> There are multiple less invasive models of care<sup>6</sup> that New York City must invest in to avoid the tragedy and enormous cost of forced treatment. At the heart of these models are trained peers, who are ideally suited to implement effective harm reduction and de-escalation techniques, especially during crises.

We know how to help those with the most severe mental illness, but we fail to do so, instead providing services that are insufficient or not held to the highest accountability. We face complete system failure, yet we have done little to correct the failure, and even point our fingers at those most affected by the system failure. We must stop the finger pointing and fix the system. We must invest in innovative, voluntary health programs. And we must invest in supportive housing and not cart people off to a psychiatric ward or to jail.

Any proposal that facilitates the ability to force people into in-patient or out-patient “treatment” must be seen in the context of whom we’re entrusting to “remove” these individuals. As we now surely know all too well, the police, who are steeped in law and order, are not well-suited to deal with individuals with mental health concerns. The Mayor’s policy includes an outsized role for the police, and the City Council must halt it immediately.

Forced “treatment” must also be seen in the context of existing racial disparities. Of the 19 individuals killed at the hands of New York City police in recent years, 16 were people of color. This systemic racism also underlies the disproportionate prevalence of disability in the Black

---

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., de Bruijn-Wezeman, Reina “Ending Coercion in Mental Health: The Need for a Human Rights-Based Approach,” Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 14895 (May 22, 2019), <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=27701&lang=en>.

<sup>6</sup> See the attached list of long-term, voluntary programs that have excellent track records.

community and other communities of color.<sup>7</sup> The racial disparities in the application of forced outpatient treatment (also known as Kendra’s Law) are also vast.

While there is extensive literature supporting voluntary treatment, there is no support for the success of forced evaluation and treatment.

## **CONCLUSION**

NYLPI respectfully requests that the Council:

- Halt the Mayor’s policy of forcibly removing individuals perceived to have a mental illness diagnosis and perceived to be “unable to care for their basic needs,” but who do not present a danger to themselves or others.
- Mandate changes to the B-HEARD program to align it with the truly non-police, peer-led CCIT-NYC model.
- Ensure that New Yorkers have access to a wide range of non-hospital, community-based mental health services that promote recovery and wellness, as well as a full panoply of community services, including housing, employment, and education, by allocating funding for such programs.

Thank you for your consideration. I can be reached at (212) 244-4664 or [wjuhn@nylpi.org](mailto:wjuhn@nylpi.org), and I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how best to respond to the needs of individuals experiencing mental health crises in New York City.

###

### About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

For nearly 50 years, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) has been a leading civil rights advocate for New Yorkers marginalized by race, poverty, disability, and immigration status. Through our community lawyering model, we bridge the gap between traditional civil legal services and civil rights, building strength and capacity for both individual solutions and long-term impact. Our work integrates the power of individual representation, impact litigation, and comprehensive organizing and policy campaigns. Guided by the priorities of our communities, we

---

<sup>7</sup>Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, “Accessible NYC” (2016), [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessiblenyc\\_2016.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessiblenyc_2016.pdf).



strive to achieve equality of opportunity and self-determination for people with disabilities, create equal access to health care, ensure immigrant opportunity, strengthen local nonprofits, and secure environmental justice for low-income communities of color.

NYLPI's Disability Justice Program works to advance the civil rights of New Yorkers with disabilities. In the past five years alone, NYLPI disability advocates have represented thousands of individuals and won campaigns improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Our landmark victories include integration into the community for people with mental illness, access to medical care and government services, and increased accessibility of New York City's public hospitals. Working together with NYLPI's Health Justice Program, we prioritize the reform of New York City's response to individuals experiencing mental health crises. We have successfully litigated to obtain the body-worn camera footage from the NYPD officers who shot and killed individuals experiencing mental health crises. In late 2021, NYLPI and co-counsel filed a class action lawsuit which seeks to halt New York's practice of dispatching police to respond to mental health crises, and in the context of that lawsuit, seeks relief on behalf of individuals affected by the Mayor's Involuntary Removal Policy.

## Community Voluntary Long-Term Innovations for At-Risk Individuals

### Residential

**Crisis Respite – Intensive Crisis Residential Program:** OMH program: “a safe place for the stabilization of psychiatric symptoms and a range of services from support to treatment services for children and adults. are intended to be located in the community and provide a home-like setting.” <https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/bho/docs/crisis-residence-program-guidance.pdf>.

**Crisis Respite (shorter term and less intensive):** OMH Program: “Crisis Respite Centers provide an alternative to hospitalization for people experiencing emotional crises. They are warm, safe and supportive home-like places to rest and recover when more support is needed than can be provided at home. The Crisis Respite Centers offer stays for up to one week and provide an open-door setting where people can continue their daily activities. Trained peers and non-peers work with individuals to help them successfully overcome emotional crises. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/crisis-emergency-services-respite-centers.page>.

**Peer Crisis Respite programs:** OMH funded; Peer operated short-term crisis respites that are home-like alternatives to hospital psychiatric ERs and inpatient units. Guests can stay up to seven nights, and they can come-and-go for appointments, jobs, and other essential needs. Offers a “full, customizable menu of services designed to help them understand what happened that caused their crisis, educate them about skills and resources that can help in times of emotional distress, explore the relationship between their current situation and their overall well-being, resolve the issues that brought them to the house, learn simple and effective ways to feel better, connect with other useful services and supports in the community, and feel comfortable returning home after their stay.” <https://people-usa.org/program/rose-houses/>.

**Housing First:** a housing approach that prioritizes permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness and frequently serious mental illness and substance use issues. Supportive services including substance use counseling and treatment are part of the model, but abstinence or even engagement in services is not required. <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/>.

**Soteria:** a Therapeutic Community Residence for the prevention of hospitalization for individuals experiencing a distressing extreme state, commonly referred to as psychosis. We believe that psychosis can be a temporary experience that one works through rather than a chronic mental illness that needs to be managed. We practice the approach of “being with” – this is a process of actively staying present with people and learning about their experiences. <https://www.pathwaysvermont.org/what-we-do/our-programs/soteria-house/>.

**Safe Haven:** provides transitional housing for vulnerable street homeless individuals, primarily women. “low-threshold” resources: they have fewer requirements, making them attractive to those who are resistant to emergency shelter. Safe Havens offer intensive case management, along with mental health and substance abuse assistance, with the ultimate

goal of moving each client into permanent housing. <https://breakingground.org/our-housing/midwood>.

**Family Crisis Respite:** trained and paid community members with extra space in their homes provide respite for individuals who can thereby avoid hospitalization.

**Living Room model:** a community crisis center that offers people experiencing a mental health crisis an alternative to hospitalization. health crises a calm and safe environment. The community outpatient centers are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and people receive care immediately. Services include: crisis intervention, a safe place in which to rest and relax, support from peer counselors; intervention from professional counselors including teaching de-escalation skills and developing safety plans, Linkage with referrals for emergency housing, healthcare, food, and mental health services. [https://smiadviser.org/knowledge\\_post/what-is-the-living-room-model-for-people-experiencing-a-mental-health-crisis](https://smiadviser.org/knowledge_post/what-is-the-living-room-model-for-people-experiencing-a-mental-health-crisis).

**Crisis Stabilization Centers:** 24/7 community crisis response hub where people of all ages can connect immediately with an integrated team of clinical counselors, peer specialists, and behavioral health professionals, as well as to our local community's health & human service providers, to address any mental health, addiction, or social determinant of health needs. People use the Stabilization Center when they're experiencing emotional distress, acute psychiatric symptoms, addiction challenges, intoxication, family issues, and other life stressors. <https://people-usa.org/program/crisis-stabilization-center/>.

**Parachute NYC / Open Dialogue:** provides a non-threatening environment where people who are coming undone can take a break from their turbulent lives and think through their problems before they reach a crisis point. Many who shun hospitals and crisis stabilization units will voluntarily seek help at respite centers. Parachute NYC includes mobile treatment units and phone counseling in addition to the four brick-and-mortar respite centers. <https://www.nyaprs.org/e-news-bulletins/2015/parachute-nyc-highlights-success-of-peer-crisis-model-impact-of-community-access>.

## **Non-residential**

**Safe Options Support teams:** consisting of direct outreach workers as well as clinicians to help more New Yorkers come off of streets and into shelters and/or housing. SOS CTI Teams will be comprised of licensed clinicians, care managers, peers, and registered nurses. Services will be provided for up to 12 months, pre- and post-housing placement, with an intensive initial outreach and engagement period that includes multiple visits per week, each for several hours. Participants will learn self-management skills and master activities of daily living on the road to self-efficacy and recovery. The teams' outreach will facilitate connection to treatment and support services. The SOS CTI Teams will follow the CTI model – a time-limited, evidence-based service that helps vulnerable individuals during periods of transitions. The teams will be serving individuals as they transition from street homelessness to housing. [https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/rfp/2022/sos/sos\\_cti\\_rfp.pdf](https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/rfp/2022/sos/sos_cti_rfp.pdf).

**Intensive and Sustained Engagement Team (INSET):** a model of integrated peer and professional services provides rapid, intensive, flexible and sustained interventions to help individuals who have experienced frequent periods of acute states of distress, frequent emergency room visits, hospitalizations and criminal justice involvement and for whom

prior programs of care and support have been ineffective. MHA has found that participants, previously labeled “non-adherent,” “resistant to treatment” or “in need of a higher level of care” and “mandated services,” become voluntarily engaged and motivated to work toward recovery once offered peer connection, hope and opportunities to collaborate, share in decisions and exercise more control over their lives and their services and supports. their treatment plans. Engaged 80% of people either AOT eligible or AOT involved. <https://www.mhawestchester.org/our-services/treatment-support>.

**NYAPRS Peer Bridger™ program:** a peer-run and staffed model providing transitional support for people being discharged from state and local hospitals, with the goal of helping people to live successfully in the community, breaking cycles of frequent relapses and readmissions. The program include inpatient and community based intensive one on one peer support groups, discharge planning, connection to community resources; provides access to emergency housing, wrap around dollars and free cell phones and minutes. <https://www.nyaprs.org/peer-bridger>.

**NYC Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health Intensive Mobile Treatment teams:** provide intensive and continuous support and treatment to individuals right in their communities, where and when they need it. Clients have had recent and frequent contact with the mental health, criminal justice, and homeless services systems, recent behavior that is unsafe and escalating, and who were poorly served by traditional treatment models. IMT teams include mental health, substance use, and peer specialists who provide support and treatment including medication, and facilitate connections to housing and additional supportive services. <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/program/intensive-mobile-treatment-imt>.

**Pathway Home™:** a community-based care transition/management intervention offering intensive, mobile, time-limited services to individuals transitioning from an institutional setting back to the community. CBC acts as a single point of referral to multidisciplinary teams at ten care management agencies (CMAs) in CBC’s broader IPA network. These teams maintain small caseloads and offer flexible interventions where frequency, duration and intensity is tailored to match the individual’s community needs and have the capacity to respond rapidly to crisis. <https://cbcare.org/innovative-programs/pathway-home/>.

**Testimony to the New York City Council  
Committee on Public Safety**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 20, 2024**

Allison Hollihan, Director  
NY Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Tarini Garimella, Policy Associate  
Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations



Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Allison Hollihan, and I am the Director for Osborne Association's New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents at the Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations. Osborne offers a wide range of diversion and reentry programs at sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Harlem, Buffalo, and Newburgh, White Plains, and Troy, as well as services at 41 New York State prisons and New York City jails including Rikers Island. We serve more than 10,000 New Yorkers a year. We are grateful for the Council's ongoing support and look forward to continued collaboration.

My testimony will focus on the largely invisible issue of how children are affected by a parent's arrest; what is currently being done to minimize trauma to children before, during, and after a parent's arrest, and; how critical it is for NYPD and community-based organizations to continue to build their capacity to safeguard and support children of arrested parents in New York City.

We applaud the City Council for passing a bill in 2019 (Administrative Code §14-181) that requires NYPD to adopt guidelines for safeguarding children present during an arrest, train officers, and provide families with information about services in the community to help children process the arrest of a parent. We are grateful to have received City Council funding for the past three years to work with NYPD and community-based organizations to implement this law. The funding has allowed us to take unprecedented steps toward safeguarding children, but we have much more to accomplish.

Children are deeply affected by their parent's arrest, yet it is rare to find a law enforcement agency that provides training to officers on child development and interacting with children. Osborne served as an advisor for the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) model protocol on safeguarding children at the time of a parent's arrest issued in 2013. Since then, we have developed curricula for and trained the Albany, Buffalo, Hudson, and Cheektowaga Police Departments, and the Erie County Sheriff's Office, which have each also issued written policies. This curriculum has been informed by law enforcement, research on child development and trauma, and young people telling us what they need to be considered, validated, and seen.

We are currently collaborating with NYPD to co-facilitate training for new recruits and



promotional classes, and working to develop a sustainable plan for training all uniformed members of service (UMOS) on the new safeguarding protocols, child development, and interacting with children. In the upcoming fiscal year, it is critical for the NYPD Training Bureau to become equipped to fully facilitate the training developed by Osborne and to develop a plan that integrates this into routine training for all staffing levels. I will now provide some background to underscore the importance of this work and why it is a multi-year effort.

From our programs, we know that children and young people often carry the experience of witnessing the arrest of a parent for years or even a lifetime. They share that they felt invisible and vulnerable at the time, or felt seen but ignored. As a result, many tell us they are hesitant to reach out to the police when they need assistance, and fear law enforcement after what they have been through. Witnessing an arrest and being stripped from a parent is a traumatic experience. Research tells us that trauma negatively affects a person's brain and that having an incarcerated parent (almost always preceded by a parent's arrest) is the fourth most common Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)<sup>1</sup>, which increases the likelihood of children developing long-term negative health and mental health outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

We also know that protective factors can lessen the harmful effects of these experiences, and that police officers and community partners can be protective factors for children. Efforts to safeguard children at the time of arrest have the potential to build new and strengthen existing community-police partnerships while signaling to families that the police and their community will do everything possible to minimize trauma for a child whose parent is arrested. Thus, it is critical to ensure this local law is effectively implemented, and for NYPD and community partners to receive the necessary training to safeguard children.

Currently, there is no data on how many children are present when a parent or caregiver is arrested in NYC. Documenting how many children are present at a parent's/caregiver's arrest was not included in the 2019 law. We provided the NYPD with data collection recommendations, and

---

<sup>1</sup> National Survey of Children's Health, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau.  
<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/data/national-surveys>

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Adverse Childhood Experiences,  
[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/riskprotectivefactors.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/riskprotectivefactors.html)

urge the Department to update their “aided card” to collect this data. Knowing how many children are affected is critical to identifying trends, monitoring implementation of the law, and informing funding allocations to ensure community-based support is available for children post-arrest. Currently, the only source for this data is the New York City Criminal Justice Agency, which, for several years, asked supplementary questions (not included in its bail assessment) of people in New York City awaiting arraignment.<sup>3</sup> Those interviewed by CJA in 2019 indicated they provided care or support to more than **60,347** children in New York City, making it clear that this work is critical for safeguarding many of New York City’s children.

Given the estimated scope of the issue, the size of NYPD, and frequent departmental and organizational changes, our work to safeguard children is a multi-year, multi-faceted effort requiring immense coordination, time, and adaptability. I’d like to highlight some of our accomplishments, the work currently underway, and work needed in the coming years.

## **Accomplishments**

To date, thanks to City Council funding, we have:

### With the NYPD

- Reviewed the updated Patrol Guide Procedures 208-02, 208-03, 215-01, and 215-03, providing guidance to arresting officers;
- NYPD added a checkbox to the aided card to capture when a child is in need of shelter, and we are urging NYPD to collect data on the number of children who witness an arrest and clarify the “child in need of shelter” question;
- Listed community-based partners on the NYPD Intranet so that Officers can provide information about services to families;
- Developed a one- and two-hour training module for recently promoted Lieutenants and Sergeants, newly recruited officers, and Youth Coordinating Officers;
- Trained 713 newly promoted Sergeants and Lieutenants;<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> This data reveals that 4,286 (4.3%) of the 98,675 respondents awaiting arraignment provided full-time care to children, and 31,203 (31.6%) respondents provided financial support to one or more children.

<sup>4</sup> Trained 306 in FY24 to date; trained 397 in FY23;

- Trained 950 new recruits and 400 Youth Coordinating Officers in FY24;
- Questions about interacting with children and implementing the law are now included on the NYPD Sergeant and Lieutenant exam;
- Delivered a two-hour virtual training for 90 Training Sergeants in 2021 on the new protocol and interacting with children of various ages;
- Provided recommendations for infusing children into scenario-based training for new recruits.

### With Community Partners

- Provided training and technical assistance to ten community-based children’s mental health partners that have agreed to accept referrals post-arrest, with five trainings conducted so far, and;
- Convened quarterly meetings with partner organizations to develop revised intake processes to identify parental arrest or incarceration as issues among families seeking services, identify their capacity needs, and offer technical assistance to equip them to meet the needs of children and families of arrested parents.

### Materials and Knowledge Development

- Trained the Albany, Buffalo, Hudson, and Cheektowaga Police Departments and Erie County Sheriff’s office, informing and strengthening the curricula for NYPD;
- Created two training videos, one sharing the experiences of children whose parents were arrested, and the other sharing law enforcement perspectives on why safeguarding children is important;
- Collaborated with the University of Buffalo School of Social Work’s Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care to create a training video for police about trauma and vicarious trauma;
- Drafted an Activity Insert Log that can hopefully be accessible to all members of service;
- Created a Safeguarding Protocol checklist and a Communicating with Children fact sheet.

Despite all of this, our efforts have yet to reach most of the 36,000 uniformed members of service (UMOS) who are interacting with individuals and children on a daily basis.

### **Work underway by Osborne includes:**

- Collaborating with the NYPD Training Bureau to develop a sustainable training plan;
- Reviewing existing NYPD curricula to identify areas where safeguarding children material can be infused;
- Delivering an updated in-person training for Training Sergeants, new recruits, and Youth Coordinating Officers;
- Partnering with the Office of Collaborative Policing on implementing the law, data collection, and collaborating on an NYPD-produced refresher training video for roll call and in-service training;
- Providing training and technical assistance for community-based partners, including quarterly meetings, as well as expanding the number of community partners engaged in this work; and
- Collaborating with NYC Well to list the partner organizations in its directory, and exploring how to partner with 311.

To date, the responses on our training evaluations have been largely positive. For example, one Sergeant stated that the training will help officers consider children’s perspectives and take steps to reduce trauma to the extent possible. Officers also shared that the training will help them communicate effectively with children, remind them to make children on scene more of a priority, increase their empathy, and for some, reinforce what they are already doing.

While much is happening right now, there is much more to do. With 36,000 UMOS, a complex network of community providers in NYC, and many elements to implement, achieving a true comprehensive citywide approach to safeguarding children will take time. Therefore, it is imperative that NYPD develop and enact a sustainable training plan that can be carried out by the NYPD Training Bureau without the assistance of Osborne. We are grateful to be partnering with NYPD and a letter of support for our request for continued City Council FY25 funding from NYPD Commissioner Caban is attached to my testimony. Osborne offers many services, programs, and innovative approaches that promote public safety in NYC, including our Court Advocacy Services, an array of services for young people, and efforts to address violence and harm that heal rather than further harm individuals and communities. We have submitted discretionary funding applications to support this work and a full summary of these is attached to

my testimony.

One final note about public safety: this year Osborne celebrates our 91st year of providing programs and advocating for justice. These decades have taught us that public safety is an outcome of investing in people and communities. Today, this means investing in communities and prioritizing alternatives to arrest, jail, and prison whenever possible, and working to decarcerate and to close Rikers Island. The city and state must continue to implement pre-trial reforms and measures to expedite court processes. People are spending unprecedented amounts of time on Rikers, with dire consequences to their health, families, and long-term wellbeing. The plan to Close Rikers by August 2027 must proceed as required by law. Reducing the number of people detained in our city jails and the length of time they spend there must be a priority for the Council and the city, for our shared humanity, and for smart investments that improve on the dismal return we currently receive for spending more than \$556,000 per person per year on Rikers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Contact: Allison Hollihan

Director, New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents (NYCIP)

[ahollihan@osborneny.org](mailto:ahollihan@osborneny.org)

**The Osborne Association  
New York City Council  
FY25 Discretionary Funding Requests**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>FY25 Request</b>	<b>FY24 Funding</b>
<b>Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Services</b>	Osborne’s portion of the ATI coalition request, which will support multiple programs: (1) court advocacy and mitigation services; (2) video visiting and family strengthening activities; (3) expansion of job training and placement; (4) elder reentry services; and (5) the Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations.	\$1,952,074	\$1,852,074
<b>Rikers Island: Partial Program Restoration-Supportive Services at George R. Vierno Center (GRVC)</b>	To relaunch critical rehabilitative services for people who are detained at the GRVC on Rikers Island. Osborne will restore daily group services for up to 18 housing areas, serving approximately 360 people per week.	\$500,000	N/A
<b>Bronx Osborne Gun Accountability and Prevention Project (BOGAP)</b>	For expanding BOGAP—an innovative diversion program developed with the Bronx DA—to serve approximately 75 participants annually. Funds will be used to provide hot meals to program participants, stipends for internships, and additional support services to participants to increase their chances of success in the program.	\$20,000	\$20,000



<p><b>Elder Reentry Initiative Services and Advocacy</b></p>	<p>To support two related program areas: (1) The Elder Reentry Initiative’s participant screening, intake and assessment, reentry service plans, community case management, and technical assistance; and (2) Osborne’s advocacy and public education on behalf of older adults.</p>	<p>\$100,000</p>	<p>\$90,000</p>
<p><b>The Fulton Community Reentry Center</b></p>	<p>For Osborne’s new transitional reentry housing facility. Funding will support workforce development training for Fulton residents; group sessions for residents and community members (e.g., AA meetings); restorative justice community-building circles for residents and community members; and a therapeutic gardening program.</p>	<p>\$250,000</p>	<p>\$10,000</p>
<p><b>Health and Wellness – Ending the Epidemic</b></p>	<p>To support formerly incarcerated people who are living with or at high risk of contracting HIV and come from low-income communities of color, with a focus on LGBTQIA+ people. Osborne will provide sexual health education, prevention/treatment, trauma support, and other supportive services.</p>	<p>\$60,219</p>	<p>\$60,219</p>
<p><b>Hep Free NYC</b></p>	<p>To support a new, full-time staff position of Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C Patient Navigator—who will serve formerly incarcerated people and others with criminal legal system involvement from Osborne’s offices in the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx.</p>	<p>\$125,000</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p><b>Implementation of the NYC Safeguarding Children Initiative</b></p>	<p>To support implementation of Local Law 1349-A, enacted to reduce trauma to children when NYPD arrests the parent of a child. Osborne will provide necessary training and administrative support to the NYPD, and build a network of CBOs that can provide post-arrest support to children.</p>	<p>\$265,000</p>	<p>\$265,000</p>
<p><b>Improving Behavioral Health and Wellbeing for Youth</b></p>	<p>For assessing and addressing mental health and trauma in youth impacted by the criminal legal system through treatment options that alleviate stress, improve functioning, and reduce trauma symptoms. Targets: 60 assessments; 120 referrals.</p>	<p>\$158,000</p>	<p>\$158,000</p>



**THE POLICE COMMISSIONER  
CITY OF NEW YORK**

January 16, 2024

Speaker Adrienne Adams  
New York City Council  
250 Broadway Ste. 1880  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Adams:

I have been informed that the Osborne Association has applied for continued New York City Council discretionary funding for its work with the New York City Police Department ("NYPD") on implementing practices and developing training regarding the Child-Sensitive Arrest protocol delineated in New York City Administrative Code section 14-181.

This law was enacted in 2020, specifically to reduce the trauma children and families may face when NYPD officers arrest the caregiver of a minor child. Last year, Osborne received City Council funding which allowed it to assist the NYPD with the implementation of this protocol, which requires training and follow-up support. The law specified that the NYPD should include a nonprofit partner to participate in the process, however, no funding was allocated to accomplish this. I understand that the City Council provided funding to Osborne through which Osborne was able to hire a full-time staff. Further, Osborne was able to make additional staff available to NYPD to develop training materials and establish a network of partner referral organizations, as required in the above mentioned law.

We are in the process of working with Osborne to tailor training to a wide variety of personnel, including recruits, police officers and various ranks of supervisors. We welcome Osborne's role in educating uniformed members of the service about the impact of parental arrest, along with practical ideas for implementing policies designed to lessen trauma at, and following, an arrest including providing and connecting children to safe settings when caregivers are taken into custody.

We would request that you give the Osborne Association's funding application all due consideration for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget as it supports a significant City interest.

Sincerely,  
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward A. Caban".

Edward A. Caban  
Police Commissioner

March 20th 2024

Parents Supporting Parents NY/ Moms United For Black Lives NYC written  
testimony written by executive director Tanesha Grant  
NYC City Council Public Safety Committee Budget Hearing

Good evening Chair Salaam and NYC Public Safety Committee members. My name is Tanesha Grant and I am testifying as executive director of Parents Supporting Parents NY and Moms United For Black Lives NYC. We are based in Harlem and Washington Heights but we do community work across the city and state of NY. Thank you for holding this important budget hearing today. The communities which are safest are the communities with the most resources and opportunities for those community members. Today we heard the NYPD, DAs and CCRB testify to this fact. Yet we still spend more money on policing than actually dealing with the homelessness, poverty, scareness of positive opportunities for our youth and mental health crisis with more policing. Why do we continue to over fund the police and defund our communities of resources? The only answer the mayor has is to overly criminalize people who need help. We also see this being used in ACS which uses the police to assist them take children from parents constantly.

We find it funny to hear the Bronx DA talk about the need for resources when she was one of the people responsible for keeping Kahlil Browder locked up in Rikers Island for allegedly stealing a backpack. Mr Browder's time on Rikers Island led to his serious mental health problems. As we all know this led to Mr. Browder killed himself upon release. This is just 1 of millions of stories. Since that time more Black people have been severely harmed by this policing system.

We must move away from over policing and over spending on policing and from a system of resources care and community. Many people don't talk to cops because it can be a matter of life or death or a matter of being locked behind bars. We urge this committee to really work with community based organizations to provide services to our community by taking some of that money from the police budget and putting it into the hands of the volunteers who work for their communities for the betterment of their communities. The people closest to the problems have the solutions to fix the problems. The solution is compassion and treating everyone like human beings. Making sure everyone has a safe place to sleep and food to eat would be a great start. We heard the police talk a lot about satisfying people's perception of safety. Police come after something bad has happened. If we stop bad things from happening to good people but just supplying resources and care we would not have the national guard in our subways making people feel more unsafe. We look forward to continuing to create the world of care we want our children to inherit. Again thank you for this hearing and for reading this written testimony.

**Tanesha Grant, Executive Director  
Parents Supporting Parents NY  
Moms United For Black Lives NYC**



# TAKEROOT JUSTICE

**Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Public Safety**

**Public Hearing on the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025**

**May 20th, 2024**

Good Afternoon Chair Salaam and Members of the Committee. My name is Christina Chaise and I am a life-long resident of New York City and an Advocacy Coordinator in the Equitale Neighborhood practice at TakeRoot Justice. TakeRoot Justice is a non-profit that provides legal, participatory research and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots and community-based organizations in New York City.

I am here today to center the concerns and demands established by and with one of our partners, Communities for Police Reform (CPR). In particular, we are concerned about Mayor Adams' preferential treatment of the NYPD in the budget process. For example, the NYPD's FY25 preliminary agency budget is more than \$300M above what the Adams administration proposed at this time last year. Meanwhile, the administration is proposing cuts for many of the institutions that help create community safety (e.g. libraries, education, services, and the Dept. of Youth & Community Development's Office of Neighborhood Safety – which includes community-led gun violence prevention programs). The NYPD historically overspends their budget, but under Mayor Adams, NYPD overspending is beyond excessive; in FY23, the NYPD spent close to \$1B over the budget that the Council voted on in June of 2022. We need investment in our communities and improving our material conditions, not in police.

While New Yorkers struggle to secure basic rights to housing, food, and education, we have witnessed an expansion in abusive units like the Strategic Response Group (SRG), an increase of school cops instead of counselors, and a surge of mental health crises being met with officers holding guns rather than mental health workers and peers as first responders. Our priorities are backwards. I do not know how to reverse a legacy of NYPD malfeasance, misinformation, mistrust, and murder that continues to violate the rights of New Yorkers and positions us as less safe. Yet, I do know that it's time for our Council to step up and intervene in and interrupt a budget process that consistently puts the police before the people.

We call on the Council (and Mayor) to stop rewarding NYPD violence, misinformation and refusal to fire abusive police in the budget process. This includes:

# TAKEROOT JUSTICE

- ***Counselors, not Cops.*** Freeze hiring of school police and remove/reallocate funding for remaining vacant school positions and towards funding to protect and expand restorative justice, mental health, other non-police schools staff and practices that help students learn and thrive.
- ***Dismantle the SRG.*** Disband the SRG and reinvest funds to serve, not harm New Yorkers. SRG is an abusive and hyper-aggressive unit that regularly escalates violence towards protestors who are exercising their First Amendment Rights. Militarized forces do not belong in our communities or in our streets. We need to:
  - Reduce the scope of the NYPD by disbanding SRG
  - Reduce the size of the NYPD by the number of SRG officers
  - Ensure former SRG officers who are placed in another unit cannot continue to carry SRG functions
  - Ensure that the NYPD doesn't recreate SRG under a different name
- ***Care, not Criminalization.*** Remove NYPD from mental health “co-response teams”, reallocate those funds from the NYPD to non-NYPD programs that create and strengthen non-police mental health response. According to the last publicly available data, the NYPD Mental Health Co-Response Teams were only able to connect people to services 32% of the time, with no data about if participants were able to stay connected to services. Contrastingly, mental health teams that are composed of peers and mental health workers have a 98% success rate of getting people connected to services. Moreover, when police respond to people who are/or perceived to be experiencing a mental health crisis, they are more likely to end up in jail, injured, or worse - killed by officers. In 2021, at least 104<sup>1</sup> people were killed in the US after police responded to someone “behaving erratically” or having a mental health crisis. When police respond to mental health crisis calls, they endanger New Yorkers who really need services and support. People in crisis don't need police, they need trained mental health workers and peers who will respond without violence and connect them to services.
- ***End Misinformation.*** Cut the NYPD's press/communications budget by at least 50%, including the Deputy Commissioner for Public Information (DCPI) and other NYPD press/communications infrastructure/programs. The DCPI includes a 36-person team with a budget of at least \$3.4 million; this PR arm of the NYPD dwarfs other agencies with much smaller press departments – and may not even include the costs of misinformation

---

<sup>1</sup> Vera Institute for Justice, We Need to Think Beyond Police in Mental Health Crises, 2022



# TAKEROOT JUSTICE

that is being carried out by some local precincts using social media and other digital platforms.

- *Invest in Genuine Community Safety.* Block attempts to increase NYPD headcount, and instead invest those monies to fund real safety infrastructure (e.g. housing, schools, libraries, non-police anti-violence programs).

Creating a safe New York City requires deep and sustained investments in creating strong, healthy and safe communities - not more policing. Our budget, as a moral document, should reflect the priority of investing in communities first - not cutting and stagnating important programs and community infrastructure while letting the NYPD expand its budget year after year. TakeRoot, CPR, and many concerned community-based groups look forward to serving as a resource to the Council as we work towards building a world that is truly safe for *all* of us that call NYC home.

**Contact:**

Christina Chaise, Advocacy Coordinator, [cchaise@takerootjustice.org](mailto:cchaise@takerootjustice.org), (347) 665-2650



**The Arab American  
Association of  
New York**

### **Testimony of the Arab American Association of New York**

New York City Council Chambers Hall  
Disband the Strategic Response Group  
March 20, 2024

Hello, my name is Maryam Khaldi. I am speaking on behalf of the Arab American Association of New York. AAANY was founded not even a month before the attacks of September 11th, 2001 to respond to the needs of low-income, recent Arab immigrants in NYC. After 9/11, AAANY stepped into an advocacy role, recognizing that the onslaught of surveillance tactics by NYPD and federal agencies, hate crimes, and community isolation would not be solved by direct services alone.

Over twenty years later, the NYPD continues to engage in gross overreach and barely-masked political policing in the name of “counterterrorism.” Since it launched in 2015, the Strategic Response Group (SRG) has mostly been deployed to violently police protests, crack down on activists engaged in social justice organizing, forcefully displaced houseless New Yorkers, and terrorize marginalized communities. Their manual classifies Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, and anti-Trump protesters as violent, despite any and all evidence that refutes this. This is not public safety; it is police brutality and political retribution. Most recently, the SRG has been deployed at pro-Palestine and pro-ceasefire protests, where they have violently attacked and injured peaceful protesters, including young people. There have been countless reports of SRGs brutalizing our community at Pro-Palestine protesters. In October 2023, they arrested an 11 year old in Bay Ridge. SRGs violence did not stop there. There is footage of community members physically attacked, resulting in head injuries and seizures, while refusing to provide medical support to the victims. SRGs have also ripped off keffiyehs that were worn by Muslim hijabi women, and have threatened community members while in custody with sedation, and sending them to psych wards. For the past 6 months, time and time again, the SRGs have strategically targeted the Arab community and allies, being deployed to brutally attack our communities. This is not safety.

For AAANY, this is a tale as old as time. Arab and Muslim New Yorkers have been unjustly surveilled, our communities criminalized, and our safety marginalized in the name of “counterterrorism” for far too long. The rapid growth of the SRG – its bloated budget, weaponized deployment, and documented abuses – proves that the NYPD will never prioritize



**The Arab American  
Association of  
New York**

the well-being of black, brown, and immigrant communities. That they will always treat us as criminals, suppressing our first-amendment rights and threatening us with violence.

The Mayor's proposed budget is an endorsement of these practices – and we cannot accept it. We call on the New York City Council to put an end to these abuses by disbanding the Strategic Response Group and reinvesting those funds – an estimated \$133 million per *year* – into community-led programs that will *actually* promote the safety and well-being of all New Yorkers.



Freedom  
Agenda

## Testimony to the City Council Committee on Public Safety

Submitted March 20, 2024 by Darren Mack

Thank you Chair Salaam and Council Members, for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Darren Mack, and I am Co-Director of Freedom Agenda. We are led by our members who are survivors of Rikers like myself, and impacted family members. We're one of the organizations leading the [Campaign to Close Rikers](#), and I'm glad to testify here today.

New York City has committed to closing Rikers Island because mass incarceration undermines public safety, by destabilizing communities and draining resources we need for housing, healthcare, work opportunities, and more. We have moved past debating if Rikers should close or can close – Rikers is legally required to close by 2027, and our City budget must put all the necessary resources in place to give people the support they need, close the pipelines that feed incarceration, and shift to a smaller borough jail system. Unfortunately, Mayor Adams is planning to do the opposite, through a budget proposal that would slash and starve essential services while continuing to funnel billions to the Department of Correction and NYPD.

The Mayor's proposal to slash \$28M from alternatives to incarceration, supervised release, and re-entry services should be a big concern for this committee. New York City has an incredible network of alternatives to incarceration providers, who are far more successful in preventing re-arrests than Rikers. Some providers have success rates of over 90% in preventing felony re-arrests for their clients within two years. ATIs cost between \$8,000 and \$22,000 per person per year, while exposing someone to the brutality of Rikers costs \$556,539 per year. There is no question that ATIs save money, and at a moment when Rikers is more dangerous than ever, ATIs also save lives. Rather than cutting their funding, the Mayor should be directing the Office of Criminal Justice to actively encourage judges and prosecutors to utilize ATIs, including for people facing more serious charges and with serious behavioral health needs. The decision about approving someone for an ATI program should be based on whether that program is likely to be more effective in preventing future harm than a stint at Rikers. I think we all know that the answer in nearly every case is YES. The actual evidence that alternatives to incarceration *work* should not be undermined by NYPD's efforts to scare the public and distract us from their rampant abuse of power.

We have heard the administration say they are expecting the jail population to rise. I can see how they would expect that when all their policies are designed to create that outcome, including slashing \$28M from alternatives to incarceration and re-entry programs, and ramping up criminalization of poverty & mental illness. But the Mayor doesn't govern this City alone.

This City Council knows that Rikers must close and you know that the safest communities are the ones with the most resources, not the most incarceration. In the full written testimony that we submitted, you'll see a [full budget analysis](#) from the Campaign to Close Rikers that calls on the City Council to make the following amendments to the FY25 budget to support the closure of Rikers:

- **Reduce DOC's uniform headcount to 5,110, by eliminating vacancies and holding staff accountable for chronic absenteeism**
- **Reduce overtime expenses by permanently closing unused jails**
- **Restore \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for alternatives to incarceration, supervised release and re-entry programs**
- **Allocate an additional \$21.3M to meet critical housing and mental health needs**
- **Increase Board of Correction headcount in proportion to DOC's headcount**

Thank you for your partnership.

Darren Mack

Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

[Dmack@urbanjustice.org](mailto:Dmack@urbanjustice.org)

[attached – FY2025 Campaign to Close Rikers Budget Analysis]

# CLOSE RIKERS

DECARCERATE \* DEFEND \* DIVEST & REDISTRIBUTE

## FY2025 Budget Analysis & Priorities

**Mayor Adams' proposed budget is a recipe for keeping Rikers open** by maintaining DOC budget bloat while cutting funds for alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) and re-entry services, and failing to adequately fund supportive housing and community-based mental health treatment. The budget also proposes cuts to a wide range of social services and violence prevention initiatives.<sup>1</sup> In order to follow through on the legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, City Council must secure a budget that will improve community safety and reduce our City's overreliance on incarceration.

### **DOC's budget is still bloated:**

- The Mayor has proposed spending [\\$2.6 billion](#)<sup>2</sup> on jail operations in FY2025, down just 3.3% from FY2024 forecasted spending.
- Most of DOC's costs are driven by overstaffing. Their ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated people is more than [4 times higher than the national average](#).
- DOC anticipates cost savings from [1,451 uniformed vacancies in FY2025](#), but plans to budget for [7,060 uniformed officers through FY2028](#)<sup>3</sup>. By that time, New York City is required to close Rikers Island and shift to a borough jails system with [approximately 4,000 beds](#). Uniform headcount reductions are consistent with a lower jail population and closing Rikers - in fact, these reductions should have started years ago when the jail population started to decline.
- DOC's [overtime costs have ballooned to \\$254M](#), 78% above FY2024. Consolidating operations, through closing empty jails like the Anna M. Kross Center, would help to control these costs.

*The administration seems to be planning either to continue overusing incarceration, or to employ almost twice as many correction officers as people in custody. Either option makes no sense, morally or financially.*

### **Alternatives to incarceration/detention, and re-entry supports face big cuts:**

- The administration is proposing [\\$6.7M in cuts to alternatives to incarceration programs](#).<sup>4</sup> Opportunities to divert people from Rikers should be fully utilized, in collaboration with the Jail Population Review Initiative that the Council established last year through Local Law 75-2023. Expanding alternatives to incarceration was also a key commitment in the [plan to close Rikers](#).
- The administration is proposing [\\$13.1M in cuts to the supervised release program](#) - for which the Council secured \$36.8M in new funding just last year. [The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice](#)

<sup>1</sup> Including large cuts to DSS, DCYD, and DOHMH, outlined here: [GJNY Look inside the DOC FY25 Budget.pdf \(vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Including expenses, associated fringe benefits, pensions, and debt service. "A Look Inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget." Vera Institute of Justice. February 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Financial Plan of the City of New York. Fiscal Years 2024 - 2028. Full time and full time equivalent staffing levels.

<sup>4</sup> "The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025. Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)". January 2024. P. 30 - 31.



[testified in November 2023](#) that recent funding additions were needed to rightsize the program after their caseloads grew 440% since FY2019.

- The administration is proposing [\\$8M in cuts to re-entry services](#), while a key commitment in the [plan to Close Rikers](#) was to “Enhance Reentry and Discharge Planning Services Available to Everyone Leaving City Jails,” as [evidence recommends](#).
- The above programs are funded under the Office of Criminal Justice (formerly MOCJ).

### **Commitments in the Close Rikers plan are still inadequately funded:**

- In the [Points of Agreement on Closing Rikers](#), the administration agreed to establish 380 more units of [Justice Involved Supportive Housing](#), a model that has been hugely successful in reducing jail, shelter, and hospital stays, and generating substantial cost savings. But funding rates proposed in the RFP issued were so low that [qualified providers have not applied](#), and operators of the existing 120 units are struggling to keep them open.
- [The Close Rikers Plan](#) also promised “A new community-based mental health safety net.” This administration has clearly fallen short of that goal - the number of people in Rikers diagnosed with a serious mental illness has [increased 41% since January 2022](#) without sufficient investments in community-based interventions and care.

### **Jail oversight cuts are proposed:**

- DOC continues to [violate minimum standards](#) established by the Board of Correction, and strong oversight is crucial. BOC needs more staff to fulfill its mandate, but the Mayor proposes [reducing their staff from 35 to 29 positions, and cutting BOC's budget by \\$672,000 \(17.5%\)](#).

---

## **What should happen in this year's budget**

### **i. Reduce DOC uniformed headcount to 5,110**

- a. **Eliminate vacancies for uniformed staff.** The Department of Correction currently employs about [6,150 uniformed staff](#) (910 vacancies) and anticipates cost savings based on an average of [1,451 uniformed vacancies in Fiscal Year 2025](#), but they have not made a plan to rightsize this agency in alignment with closing Rikers.
  - b. **Hold staff accountable for chronic absenteeism.** The Nunez Federal Monitor reported in October 2022 that DOC had [identified 1,029 officers as chronically absent](#),<sup>5</sup> and in November 2023, DOC could not report if these staff had returned to work or been held accountable.<sup>6</sup> If approximately 50% (500) of these officers are terminated and 50% return to work to avoid termination, we can reduce jail operations spending by \$55.8M.<sup>7</sup>
2. **Reduce overtime spending** by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Martin, Steve J et al. “Second Status Report on DOC's Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor.” October 28, 2022. p53.

<sup>6</sup> Martin, Steve J et al. “Status Report on DOC's Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor.” November 8, 2023. p. 99.

<sup>7</sup> Based on \$111,660 per officer, as calculated by the Vera Institute, [GJNY Look inside the DOC FY25 Budget.pdf](#) ([vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com](#)).

<sup>8</sup> In response to Council Member questions in the March 23, 2023 budget hearing.

3. **Restore \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for ATIs, supervised release and re-entry programs** including \$6.7M for alternatives to incarceration, \$13.1M for supervised release, and \$8M for re-entry services.
  4. **Allocate an additional \$21.3M to meet housing and mental health needs,** and fulfill commitments in the Close Rikers plan, including:
    - a. Establish a separate line-item for JISH in the DOHMH budget, and [allocate an additional \\$6.4M](#) to increase service funding rates for new units and existing units. Existing, long time JISH providers are struggling at current rate levels.
    - b. \$2.9M more to enable 5 of the 22 newly funded state Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team).
    - c. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the establishment of four new crisis respite centers.
    - d. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 119-2023, supporting the establishment of five new clubhouses.
  5. **Increase Board of Correction headcount** in proportion to DOC's headcount. This type of linked budget exists for other oversight agencies [like the CCRB](#). Increasing BOC headcount to 1% of DOC's would add 35 BOC staff positions, but would only add approximately \$4M to the overall expense budget.<sup>9</sup>
- 

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Does the Department of Correction have a staff shortage?**

No. In fact, they are overstaffed. The Department of Correction's ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated people is more than [4 times higher than the national average](#), and NYC's is the only jail system among the nation's 50 largest cities that has as many officers as people in custody. Reducing their headcount now is an important first step to [rightsizing](#) the department.

### **If they are not understaffed, why is there a shortage of officers to cover posts and provide basic services?**

For three main reasons:

1. **A large number of officers don't come to work.** Uniformed DOC staff have unlimited sick leave, and an extraordinarily high number of officers call out sick on any given day. As of December 2023, [DOC sick leave rates](#) remained at nearly twice the pre-Covid rates within the department (8.49%), and more than double the rates of NYPD and FDNY - agencies that also offer unlimited sick leave.<sup>10</sup> Another 3.4% of officers are out on [long term sick leave, which is often abused](#).
2. **There are too many officers assigned to non-jail posts.** There are [hundreds of officers each day](#) who work in non-jail posts either because they are prevented from working directly with incarcerated people due to an ongoing disciplinary case, they are being 'medically monitored,'

---

<sup>9</sup> The FY2024 projected budget allocates \$3.8M to BOC, for 35 staff; 68 staff would constitute 1% of a 6,822 person uniformed DOC workforce (1,722 civilian - as projected by the administration and 5,100 uniformed - as we recommend).

<sup>10</sup> "Preliminary Mayor's Management Report." January 2024.p 411.

or they have been assigned to a different job like working in the laundry room or as a secretary to a warden - tasks that are performed by civilians in other jail systems. These posts have been widely used in DOC as rewards to officers favored by supervisors, and officers who have these posts have [strongly resisted](#) being transferred to posts in the jails.

3. **Officers who are at work often don't do their jobs.** [Investigations](#) found that many officers who *are* at work are *not* at their assigned posts – including some found hanging out in locker rooms. [A Board of Correction report](#) on seven deaths in DOC custody in 2022 noted that in three instances (leading up to the deaths of Erick Tavira, Edgardo Meijias, and Gilberto Garcia) officers were present at work but failed to properly conduct their rounds, and in two instances (leading up to the deaths of Michael Nieves and Gilberto Garcia) failed to provide first aid. The *Nunez* federal monitor in their [November 8 report](#), stating “Definitive measures to ensure that staff are available in sufficient numbers and that they stay on post are obviously necessary. It is equally critical that staff *actually do their jobs* [emphasis in original]... Too often, staff are present and yet fail to enact or enforce even the most basic security protocols.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Does DOC need to replace officers who are retiring?**

Reducing the uniform headcount would not prevent DOC from replacing officers who quit, retire, or are terminated. It would require DOC to more effectively supervise and manage their very large staff.

### **How is the money being spent?**

The FY2025 budget projects that [88.3% of DOC expenses](#) will be staff salaries, overtime and benefits.

### **How does NYC's jail spending compare to other cities?**

In 2021, [New York City spent 350% more](#) per incarcerated person ([\\$556,539](#)<sup>12</sup> per year) than Los Angeles or Cook County, Illinois, and yet, people in DOC custody are subjected to some of the worst jail conditions in the nation. The *Nunez* federal monitor also reported in their [October 2023 report](#) “The Department’s staffing complement is highly unusual and is one of the richest staffing ratios among the systems with which the Monitoring Team has had experience.”

### **What will we do about those jobs? Aren't a lot of correction officers people of color, and women?**

Many NYC correction officers *are* women and people of color. The choice to invest so much of New York City’s budget in incarceration has meant that DOC has become a path to the middle class, including for many people of color.<sup>13</sup> New York City could and should make a different choice - to invest in and raise salaries, for example, for [EMS workers](#), [green jobs](#) that can help us meet our goals for a vibrant and climate resilient city, and [human services jobs](#) that address community needs. Black and Brown workers deserve jobs with good wages and benefits that aren't dependent on the incarceration of their neighbors and families. We must invest in a [just transition](#) to expand and better compensate jobs outside of law enforcement - for example, human services, a sector in which more than 80% of workers are women of color, and which is subject to constant budget cuts that have resulted in lost jobs and depressed wages.

---

<sup>11</sup> Martin, Steve et al. Status Report on DOC's Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor. November 8, 2023. P 25.

<sup>12</sup> For FY2021. “NYC Department of Correction, FYs 2011-21 Operating Expenditures.” *New York City Comptroller's Office, Budget Bureau*. December 2021

<sup>13</sup> New York City correction officers are paid \$92,000/year after 5.5 years on the job, and receive generous benefits. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/jointheboldest/officer/salary-benefits.page>

## **New York City Council Public Safety Committee Budget Hearing**

Written Testimony of Jullian Harris-Calvin

Director, Greater Justice New York

Vera Institute of Justice

March 20, 2024

My name is Jullian Harris-Calvin, and I am director of the Greater Justice New York program at the Vera Institute of Justice, which works to end mass incarceration, protect immigrants' rights, ensure dignity for people behind bars, and build safe, thriving communities. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

We spend more than \$14 billion on jails and police in New York City every year, yet many New Yorkers still do not feel safe.<sup>1</sup> Once again, the mayor's preliminary budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 shows continued overspending on incarceration and law enforcement instead of adequate investment in community-based safety solutions. It is past time to listen to the evidence and take a different approach.<sup>2</sup> We urge the city council to pass a budget that invests in community-based support to prevent crime before it happens instead of just reacting to it afterwards and to delivers effective intervention that supports communities when harm does occur.

The FY 2025 preliminary budget maintains astronomical funding for the New York Police Department (NYPD). In contrast to major budget cuts across the city, NYPD's budget is set to decrease by just 3.9 percent compared to anticipated FY 2024 spending, remaining above \$11.5 billion.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, despite growing concerns about New York City's inability to care for people experiencing mental illness, substance use disorder, and homelessness, funding for the departments serving these populations is set to shrink in FY 2025.<sup>4</sup> The preliminary budget significantly decreases funding for the Department of Youth and Community Development (25.4 percent), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (20.4 percent), and the Department of Social Services (14.9 percent) compared to their estimated FY 2024 expenditures.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Independent Budget Office, as of March 11th, NYPD has spent \$617.5 million on uniformed overtime—41 percent more than its uniformed overtime budget for the entire fiscal year. And despite this overspending, NYPD's uniformed overtime budget in the FY 2025 preliminary budget is \$477.5 million, an unrealistic number that the agency will almost certainly surpass.<sup>6</sup> Systematically underestimating astronomical overtime points to mismanagement and wasteful resource allocation, which the mayor and city council enable when they fail to hold NYPD accountable for its overspending.

City leaders must rein in NYPD's overtime, using those savings to reverse budget cuts for community-based interventions backed by extensive research, including \$6.7 million for alternatives to incarceration, \$13 million for supervised release, \$8 million for reentry services, \$6.1 million for summer youth employment, and \$66 million for the Office of Neighborhood Safety. In addition, the city should allocate at least an additional \$6 million to fund five new clubhouses and

an additional \$6 million to fund four new crisis respite centers by 2025, as mandated by 2023 legislation, and increase funding for Justice Involved Supportive Housing by \$6.4 million, which will add 380 beds and ensure adequate funding for the existing 120.<sup>7</sup> Simply holding NYPD to its overtime budget would more than cover all of these investments.

Funding police to the exclusion of communities will not deliver the safe and thriving neighborhoods New Yorkers deserve. Community safety requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on preventing crime, not just reacting after it happens. Research routinely shows that community-based investments reduce crime without the harmful collateral consequences of contact with law enforcement.<sup>8</sup> Even one misdemeanor arrest can increase the instability that often leads to crime in the first place.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the community-based, evidence-backed investments outlined here will deliver safety by enabling all New Yorkers to thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [jharriscalvin@vera.org](mailto:jharriscalvin@vera.org) if the Vera Institute of Justice may provide further support.

---

<sup>1</sup> Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 January modified budget numbers from the Independent Budget Office (IBO), shared via email with Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) on January 16, 2024. Vera used data from IBO for the FY 2024 budget to have the most up-to-date numbers; for more information, contact Benjamin Heller at [bheller@vera.org](mailto:bheller@vera.org). FY 2025 preliminary budget numbers from New York City Mayor's Office of Management and Budget (OMB), *The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025: Expense Revenue Contract* (New York: OMB, 2024), 39E and 29-30E, <https://perma.cc/R4J2-UYN4>. The total FY 2024 and FY 2025 numbers presented in this testimony include fringe benefits, pension contributions, and debt service.

<sup>2</sup> Research shows that just 23 hours in jail increases the likelihood that someone will be rearrested. See Core Correctional Solutions, *The Hidden Costs of Pretrial Detention Revisited* (Houston, TX: Arnold Ventures, 2022), <https://perma.cc/4UQV-4S4Q>.

<sup>3</sup> FY 2024 January modified budget numbers from IBO, January 16, 2024. FY 2025 preliminary budget numbers from OMB, *The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025*, 29-30E.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Emma G. Fitzsimmons and Jeffery C. Mays, "Is New York City Back? Not for Everyone," *New York Times*, March 5, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/05/nyregion/nyc-economy-comeback.html>; Amy Julia Harris and Jan Ransom, "Behind 94 Acts of Shocking Violence, Years of Glaring Mistakes," *New York Times* November 22, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/20/nyregion/nyc-mental-illness-breakdowns.html>; and Kiara Alfonseca, "Overdose Crisis Reaches Historic Levels in New York City," ABC, September 25, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/overdose-crisis-reaches-historic-levels-new-york-city/story?id=103470582>.

<sup>5</sup> FY 2024 January modified budget numbers from IBO, January 16, 2024. FY 2025 preliminary budget numbers from OMB, Budget Fiscal Year 2025, 2024, 135E-136E (Health and Mental Hygiene), 68E (Youth and Community Development), 36E-37E (Social Services), 38E (Homeless Services).

<sup>6</sup> Overtime figures from the Independent Budget Office (IBO), shared via email with Vera on March 11, 2024. The original NYPD uniformed overtime budget for FY 2024 was \$436.9 million, and the preliminary FY 2025 budget for uniformed overtime is \$477.5 million. For more information, contact Benjamin Heller at [bheller@vera.org](mailto:bheller@vera.org)

<sup>7</sup> For evidence of the effectiveness of supervised release, see Melanie Skemer, Cindy Redcross, and Howard Bloom, *Pursuing Pretrial Justice Through an Alternative to Bail: Findings from an Evaluation of New York City's Supervised Release Program* (New York: MDRC, 2020), <https://perma.cc/9WAR-TQ3Y>; for evidence of the effectiveness of reentry services see Emilee Green, "An Overview of Evidence-Based Practices and Programs in Prison Reentry," Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, December 19, 2022, <https://perma.cc/68C6-G9A3>; and for evidence of the effectiveness of summer youth employment see Judd B. Kessler, Sarah Tahamont, and Alexander Gelber, et al., *The Effects of Youth Employment on Crime*:

---

*Evidence from New York City Lotteries* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021), [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w28373/w28373.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28373/w28373.pdf). For the city's requirement to build new clubhouses and crisis respite centers, see New York City Council Int. 1021-2023, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6179132&GUID=CE077354-6AB1-404E-A55C-6189B6299603&Options=&Search=>; and New York City Council Int. 1022-2023, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6179131&GUID=1A0BCFE1-49E1-4083-8371-BD61D5AE1166&Options=ID|Text|&Search=>. For more on these budget recommendations, see Vera, *A Look Inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget*, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Betsy Pearl, *Beyond Policing: Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety* (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, 2020), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/beyond-policing-investing-offices-neighborhood-safety/>; and Aaron Stagoff-Belfort, Daniel Bodah, and Daniela Gilbert, *The Social Costs of Policing* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2022), <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/the-social-costs-of-policing.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Amanda Y. Agan, Jennifer L. Doleac, and Anna Harvey, *Misdemeanor Prosecution* (Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021), 22, 52, [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w28600/w28600.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28600/w28600.pdf).



Board of Trustees

Chair  
Jamaal Thomas

Treasurer  
Lloyd Doaman

Secretary  
Ellen Fried

Trustees  
Neil Callahan  
Jarrell E. Daniels  
Rebecca Neusteter, PhD  
Alexander Paddington  
Mark B. Rubin  
Ann Siegel  
Scott Simon  
Nneka Upkai

Executive Director  
Christine Pahigian

Trustee Emeritus  
Hwan-yoon Chung

Co-Founders and  
Trustees Emeritae  
Norma Green  
Barbara O. Grodd  
(1926-2018)

Our Locations  
Manhattan Headquarters  
63 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street,  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10027  
(212) 760-0755  
[www.youthjustice.org](http://www.youthjustice.org)

Bronx Office  
424 East 147<sup>th</sup> Street,  
Suite 200  
Bronx, NY 10455  
(718) 653-5301

Brooklyn Office  
25 Chapel Street,  
Suite 1206  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
(347) 689-4771

**Testimony of Youth Justice Network**  
Before the Committee on Public Safety  
March 20, 2024

**Re: Preliminary Budget Hearing –  
Build Public Safety Solutions for Justice-Impacted Youth**

On behalf of Youth Justice Network, I thank the Committee on Public Safety for the opportunity to address you. My name is Messiah Ramkissoon, and I am the Associate Executive Director at Youth Justice Network.

Previously known as Friends of Island Academy, Youth Justice Network was born out of cycles of injustice experienced by youth of color held on Rikers Island in the 1980s. We build proactive public safety solutions focused on community investment and credible messenger interventions, not incarceration and punishment. We are one of many organizations that will be directly impacted by the **\$27.8 million decrease** to the Office of Criminal Justice’s budget.

This past year, our staff reported a significant uptick in young people and families in crisis. Our youth are facing a critical need for concrete pathways to financial security and emotional healing, as they return home to neighborhoods with the highest rates of jail admissions, poverty, and unemployment in the city.

The proposed cuts to alternative to incarceration, supervised release, and reentry programs fail to reflect the City’s commitment to closing Rikers. These programs provide essential services and make an impact with resources that pale in comparison to the \$2.6 billion budget being proposed for the Department of Corrections. As key decision-makers, I urge the Committee to **prioritize the well-being of our youth and invest in their public safety** through solutions offering tangible resources and opportunities.

Our mobile advocacy and career center, Shifting Gears, drives job resources, mental health support, legal advocacy, and a network of credible messengers directly into a young person’s neighborhood. Shifting Gears offers a real solution to promote public safety in communities most harmed by structural poverty, racism, and the violence these conditions breed. Yet our organization is among the \$8 million in cuts to re-entry services.

We call on the Committee to support our boots-on-the-ground work at a moment where there is a legal and moral obligation to close Rikers, improve public safety, and reduce the City’s overreliance on incarceration. Our advocacy teams are lifelines for young people at Rikers, in juvenile custody, and in neighborhoods citywide, building a network of care that begins with connections in jail and continues long after a young person returns home.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee.



Good afternoon. My name is Natalia Aristizabal, Deputy Director at Make the Road New York. On behalf of our 27,000+ working class immigrant members and staff, I thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today and to express our outrage that the Mayor has proposed increasing the NYPD's budget for FY2025 while cutting essential programming such as libraries, education, and youth programming that are critical to true public safety. We urge the City Council and the Mayor to listen to New Yorkers, substantially cut the NYPD budget, and re-direct that funding to community-based programming and infrastructure.

The Mayor's proposed NYPD budget comes at a high-water mark of scapegoating of immigrant communities, including in New York City. We remind the Council that New York City is a city of immigrants who strengthen our city.<sup>1</sup> Welcoming immigrants is core to who we are as New Yorkers. We also want to be clear that in spite of anti-immigrant messaging<sup>2</sup>, there is no evidence<sup>3</sup> of a "migrant crime wave" in New York City.

Despite this reality, the NYPD press/communications team has issued misleading press statements which stoke fear about immigrants and lead to anti-immigrant bias. In one recent example, in January of this year, the NYPD issued statements and edited footage about the so-called Times Square brawl in which the NYPD claimed that immigrants attacked officers after

---

<sup>1</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller Brad Lander. "Facts, Not Fear: How Welcoming Immigrants Benefits New York City" (January 4, 2024), available at <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/facts-not-fear-how-welcoming-immigrants-benefits-new-york-city/>.

<sup>2</sup> Rivlin-Nadler, Max, *Hell Gate*. "How To Manufacture a 'Migrant Crime Wave'" (February 7, 2024), available at <https://hellgatenyc.com/migrant-crisis-eric-adams-crime>.

<sup>3</sup> Cusicanqui, Ashley, *CBS 6 Albany*. "Despite recent NYC assault, studies show immigration actually improves public safety" (February 9, 2024), available at <https://cbs6albany.com/news/local/despite-recent-nyc-assault-studies-show-immigration-actually-improves-public-safety>.



refusing to disperse. However, as *The City*<sup>4</sup> and *NY Mag*<sup>5</sup> reported, recently released body-cam footage contradicts the NYPD's narrative. Rather than proving an "immigrant crime wave" as the NYPD suggested, the footage shows that the immigrant man at the center of the incident had been walking away when a NYPD officer grabbed him by the collar and rammed him against a wall. Unfortunately, by the time this body-cam footage was released, the NYPD's original narrative had already taken hold, unjustly fueling anti-immigrant rhetoric.

One area of the NYPD budget that we urge the Council to cut is its press/communication office, which is responsible for such misinformation and which helps fuel the myths of crime waves that lead to overinflated police budgets in the first place. We urge the Council to cut the NYPD's press/communications budget by at least 50%.

More generally, we urge the Council to substantially reduce the NYPD's overall budget and send the NYPD a clear message that its record of violence, obstruction, overspending, and refusal to fire officers who unjustly kill, brutalize and violate the rights of New Yorkers is unacceptable. Without accountability, we fear that the NYPD will continue to be emboldened to act violently and with impunity, harming all New Yorkers, including our newest members. For example, just last week, a NYPD officer beat and used a stun gun against a father holding his 1-year-old baby at a Queens shelter for recently-arrived immigrants<sup>6</sup>. Everyone should be appalled by this. No matter how long someone has called New York home, they deserve to be treated with compassion and care – not stun guns and separation.

We also want to express our alarm that, at a moment when violent crime rates on our subways are at historic lows,<sup>7</sup> the Mayor has announced randomized bag checks of subway travelers. As we saw during the Giuliani era, over-policing such as stop and frisk and bag checks do not make us more safe, and instead lead to greater harassment of Black and brown New Yorkers. In fact, just last week, the Data Collaborative for Justice at CUNY's John Jay School issued a report<sup>8</sup> showing that in the past ten years, racial disparities in policing remain widespread in NYC and, in some cases, have worsened. We urge the Council to stand up to regressive police tactics through this budgetary process and affirm that all New Yorkers,

---

<sup>4</sup> Hogan, Gwenn, *The City*. "New Videos Contradict NYPD Account of Lead-Up to Times Square Attack on Cops" (February 8, 2024), available at <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/02/08/times-square-migrants-arrests-body-camera-footage-contradicts-nypd-account/>.

<sup>5</sup> Prater, Nia, *NY Mag*. "It Looks Like Police Started the Times Square Migrant Brawl" (February 9, 2024), available at <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/it-looks-like-police-started-the-times-square-migrant-brawl.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Ferré-Sadurní, Luis, *New York Times*. "Families Are Moved From Shelter Where Police Fired Stun Gun at Migrant" (March 15, 2024), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/15/nyregion/migrants-queens-shelter.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Robbins, Christopher, *Hell Gate*. "Hochul Is Sending the National Guard Into the Subway to Search Your Bag Because of Vibes" (March 6, 2024), available at <https://hellgatenyc.com/hochul-national-guard-subway-bag-search>.

<sup>8</sup> Koppel, Stephen and Rempel, Michael. (2024). Assessing Progress in Reducing Racial Disparities in New York City Law Enforcement, 2013-2022. New York, NY: *Data Collaborative for Justice, John Jay College of Criminal Justice*, available at [https://datacollaborativeforjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Law\\_Enforcement\\_Tools\\_Final.pdf](https://datacollaborativeforjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Law_Enforcement_Tools_Final.pdf).



especially vulnerable ones like immigrant New Yorkers, have the right to travel freely on the subway without the fear of randomized searches.

As an organization that frequently takes to the streets to make sure our communities' voices are heard about important issues such as environmental justice, housing, immigrant rights, LGTBQ rights, and policing, we also want to urge the City to disband the NYPD's Strategic Response Group ("SRG"). The SRG is widely known as the most violent division in the NYPD when it comes to responding to protests and has harassed, assaulted, and unconstitutionally arrested protestors, legal observers, and members of the press during mass protests. The SRG's illegal practices have resulted in numerous lawsuits leading to historic payouts<sup>9</sup> to plaintiffs, but little or no consequences to the NYPD itself. We urge the City to defend New Yorkers' First Amendment rights and hold the NYPD accountable for its own illegal activity by defunding and disbanding the SRG.

Finally, I want to end by noting that our budget is a moral document and should not only reflect what we stand against but also what we stand for: investing in our communities. I want to uplift the testimony of youth leaders with Make the Road NY's Youth Power Project, who appeared before the Council this Monday and spoke about the dire need to reinvest the over 400M spent on school policing towards restorative justice, mental health support, counselors, social workers and community schools - services and support young people need to succeed and thrive. We urge the Council to listen to young people who are calling for an immediate hiring freeze of school police, elimination of the vacant school police positions and redirect those resources to those supports. As youth leader and Staten Island 8th grader Julieta Da-Cruz testified on Monday, "The safest and most welcoming schools have the most resources NOT the most police. It's past time to take action and listen to the youth - look at Chicago and Oakland - they did it. Why can't we?. New York needs to step up and lead the way."<sup>10</sup>

Julieta is right: NYC needs to step up and lead the way. On behalf of Make the Road NY's 27,000+ working class immigrant members and staff, I urge you to take bold and immediate action to substantially cut the NYPD budget, and make deep and sustained investments in creating strong, healthy and safe communities.

---

<sup>9</sup> Offenhartz, Jake. *NBC New York*. "NYC agrees to pay \$13 million to George Floyd protesters arrested, beaten by NYPD" (July 20, 2023), available at <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/nyc-agrees-to-pay-13m-to-george-floyd-protesters-arrested-beaten-by-nypd/4520642/>.

<sup>10</sup> X ("Twitter"), Make the Road NY (March 18, 2024), available at <https://twitter.com/MaketheRoadNY/status/1769856467853574519>.

Good afternoon everyone, **my name is Aaliyah Guillory-Nickens.** I currently work as the Campaign Organizer at Youth Represent which is a non profit organization that provides free legal services and mental health support to young people under the age of 26. Additionally, we work on policy and legislation that will help youth in the legal system while also supporting young people who have or haven't been system impacted to become civically engaged, and training them to become advocates in their community. I'm here today to echo the demands of my comrades at Communities United for Police Reform and to express my frustration as a young person living in the city and seeing no efforts to improve public safety for people that look like me but only the continuous use of politricks and playing w people's lives as if we're in a video game.

In the fiscal year of 2023 the NYPD over-spent their budget by more than 1 billion dollars. In 2023 there were 92,879 homeless people in NYC, including 33,399 homeless children. **First example of our priorities not being in the right place.** For the fiscal year of 2025 the NYPD's preliminary budget is 300 million dollars more of what the Adam's administration proposed this same time last year. This is all while the Adam's administration is proposing cuts to libraries, education, ATI programs, prevention programs, services and the Dept of Youth & Community Development's Office of Neighborhood Safety (all things that help create safer neighborhoods). **Second example of our priorities not being in the right place.** Right now our city has reached a point where it's almost unsuitable to live. New Yorkers are struggling with housing, food, education, battles mentally and we repeatedly pour millions of dollars into the NYPD that have a terrible track record in black and brown communities of keeping us safe.

We are anticipating that for fiscal year 2025 that ends. The first step that the council and the Mayor can take to create a safer and livable New York City is to prioritize care, not criminalization and invest don't arrest. That would mean to block any budgeted increase of NYPD uniformed headcount and move those funds to real safety infrastructure (including: housing, schools, libraries, and non-police anti-violence programs). It would also mean removing NYPD from youth engagement and city youth programming/services and redirect those funds to youth organizations and community groups that engage in youth organizing, one being Youth Represent. This is my second/third year on staff at Youth Represent and before joining staff I was a 17 year old in High School part of their public speaking training program called YSI which I graduated from. I'm now 21 years old in college studying Criminal Justice fortunate enough to do what Youth Represent did for me which is give youth an opportunity to become leaders. These programs and

organizations are doing the work and it is effective, the problem is they are not being funded correctly.

The people who live in the city aren't what's making the city unsafe, it's the people who are running the city that are making it unsafe. The longer we neglect the needs of people the longer we will never be able to achieve public safety, and public safety is not cops, public safety is community investments. **Again public safety does not equal cops, public safety equals community investments.** To reiterate what these community investments may look like they include fully funding education, investing in restorative justice, counselors, and social workers in schools. Employing trained mental health workers and community-based mental health services and programs that can provide general mental health services for people suffering from mental health. Moving funds into affordable housing and of course providing more jobs that have livable wages and good benefits for New Yorkers.

The last thing I want to address is the narrative that young people in New York is what's driving crime, I want to debunk that narrative and ask that the Council do everything in their power to provide jobs, housing and other resources for young New Yorkers that come from neighborhoods like Harlem, East Flatbush, Brownsville, East New York, the South Bronx and other underserved communities. As I stated earlier what's driving crime is not people, especially not young people (we need to stop scapegoating them) it's the lack of adequate resources needed to survive. Nobody wakes up with intentions to commit a crime but unfortunately we are living in a time right now where it's survival of the fittest and people are being forced to do anything to survive. And instead of giving assistance to them they are being penalized and thrown in headlines as the problem. They are not the problem. The City is not taking enough steps to provide youth in New York with what they need to thrive so all the comments about youth driving crime needs to be kept to a minimum until New York City and the mayor prioritizes it's youth.

Thank you all for listening and I hope that sooner rather than later our demands are met so we as a city can meet true public safety.



Hello Councilmembers. My name is Alex Baldwin, I am a mutual aid organizer and a resident of District 36 in Bed-Stuy. I'm here to urge the City Council to disband the NYPD's Strategic Response Group and to reinvest in our communities. I also wanted to note my disappointment with the council's ejection of several affected community members who have a right to share their personal experiences with the SRG.

In December 2014, tens of thousands of New Yorkers, myself included, took to the streets for the Millions March to protest the non-indictment of Eric Garner's killer. The Strategic Response Group was announced just one month later. Ever since, they have been a constant and violent presence at racial justice protests, from the largest marches to groups as small as 15 people.

As a protestor, the SRG's arrival is synonymous with escalation and violence. They are well known for unprovoked uses of force and for disrupting nonviolent protests with tactics such as kettling, where protestors are encircled, ordered to disperse, and then arrested when they are unable to. I have personally witnessed SRG officers hit my fellow protestors with bikes, push, shove, and trap protestors using bikes and shields, and grab individuals out of a crowd in order to body-slam them to the pavement. While a march I was part of in 2019 was crossing a crosswalk towards Barclays Center, I was shoved by multiple SRG officers as they suddenly targeted the person next to me for arrest. This is just a sample of what I've seen in person- legal observers and journalists have documented far worse, almost all of them at racial justice and pro-Palestine protests. They clearly have a pattern of creating violent situations out of peaceful ones. When deployed outside of protests, the SRG has shown the same tendencies for violence during homeless encampment sweeps and when murdering Saheed Vassell in Crown Heights in 2018. They are unquestionably a threat to the safety of New Yorkers.

If you look at the stark contrast in the policing of racial justice and pro-Palestine protestors compared to far-right and white supremacist groups, and in the racial demographics of SRG misconduct complaints, it is clear they have a bias problem. Even if it isn't official policy, systemic racism is integral to the policing system, including how it delineates between "peaceful" and "violent" protests, so why should we believe that the SRG is being objective when the evidence says otherwise?

The financial cost of this militarized suppression of protest is immense. The SRG budget has ballooned over time from \$13 million to an estimated \$133 million, though the NYPD's lack of transparency means we don't know their true size or funding. Taxpayers also end up shouldering the settlement costs of the numerous misconduct lawsuits involving SRG officers, like the one resulting from the kettling of hundreds of protestors in the Bronx in June 2020, where SRG violence and tactics were on full display.

We know from decades of research that the best way to keep our communities safe is to fund them. A robust social safety net, meeting people's basic needs such as housing, food, healthcare, and dignity, is the key to public safety. The city could easily address both interpersonal and institutional violence by abolishing the Strategic Response Group and reallocating its funding, along with other excess NYPD spending, to everyday New Yorkers and our communities.

**Testimony to the Council Committee on Public Safety**  
**March 20, 2024**  
**Submitted by Ryan Acquotta**

Chair Salaam and Committee members,

My name is Alex Hansen and I have lived in New York City for the majority of the last 11 years since I began my studies at New York University as an undergraduate student. I currently live in West Harlem in District 9. I work as a teleprompter technician and I organize with the New York City chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ).

I feel incredibly lucky to live in what is, in many ways, the greatest city in the world, but incredibly disappointed by the ways the city is failing its citizens. We all know that a budget is a moral document and an expression of priorities, and the current budget prioritizes unnecessary spending on the Department of Corrections that fails to improve conditions for people incarcerated there or people that work there over vital and necessary programs and resources that would keep people out of jail in the first place. New York City is home to one of the most well-funded jail systems with some of the worst results. [\\$438,000 to incarcerate a single person is ridiculous, especially considering that the next highest cost per person in a US city is \\$138,000 in DC](#), still an incredible amount of money but far less than what we are spending. What adds insult to the injury of the cost is that [conditions in NYC jails](#) are [still awful](#). If all this spending fails to keep our incarcerated neighbors safe and in humane conditions, surely we must make significant changes to reach even a minimal level of decency.

One way to save spending on jails is to reduce DOC uniformed headcount to 5,110. This can be accomplished by eliminating vacancies for uniformed staff and by holding staff accountable for [chronic absenteeism](#) by terminating 50% and 50% of chronically absent staff returning to work. The city can also save spending on jails by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center, in order to reduce overtime spending.

The city can then shift the money from these cost-saving measures to programs and resources that truly serve New Yorkers, those who are in jail and coming home, and those who may go to jail in our current systems but could benefit from resources that would then keep them out of jail in the first place. The city should restore \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for ATIs, supervised release, and re-entry programs. These programs are so important in supporting people to stay in their communities and improve the situations that led them to potential or actual incarceration. Given the opportunity, I believe that most people, especially New Yorkers, would do their best to be a positive force in their community. The City should also allocate an additional \$21.3 million to meet housing and mental health needs. This would include \$6.4 million to support Justice Involved Supportive Housing, \$2.9M more to enable 5 of the 22 newly funded state Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team), \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the

establishment of four new crisis respite centers, and \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 119-2023, supporting the establishment of five new clubhouses.

Thank you, Council Members, for taking time to review this testimony. I hope this makes it clear that while many New Yorkers have not experienced the city's jails ourselves, many of us know that the jails in the city do much more harm than good, and that the best way to allocate funds in this year's budget is to provide more money for supportive services and less unnecessary and ineffective spending on the jails.

Please act in the best interests of all New Yorkers when putting together this year's budget.

Sincerely,  
Alex Hansen  
alex.kelly.hansen@gmail.com

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole

and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Alia Ganaposki

[queenalia@hotmail.com](mailto:queenalia@hotmail.com)

New York, New York 11102



Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Andrea Castellano  
[firstcastellano@gmail.com](mailto:firstcastellano@gmail.com)

RIDGEWOOD, New York 11385

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

April Billips

[aprillbillips26@gmail.com](mailto:aprillbillips26@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11221

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Arcadio Borrero

[arcadioborrero298@gmail.com](mailto:arcadioborrero298@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11103

March 20, 2024

**Ladies and gentlemen of the NYC Committee on Public Safety,**

I stand before you today with a heavy heart and a pressing concern for the safety of our students and children. As members entrusted with the guardianship of our community, we hold a solemn duty to ensure that every child, regardless of their circumstances, has the fundamental right to learn in a safe and secure environment. Yet, as we gather here today, there exists a glaring gap in our current legislation that undermines this very principle.

In 2014, the NYC Committee on Public Safety passed Local Law 2 of 2016, a commendable step towards enhancing safety measures within our educational institutions. However, as our city has witnessed a dramatic surge in the number of charter schools from 183 to 274, it has become apparent that this law has not kept pace with the evolving landscape of our educational system.

On March 7, 2024, a tragic incident shook my community. The senseless murder of a student took place, right in front of our school. The untimely death of 17-year-old Laquai Dash serves as a stark reminder of the critical importance of effective safety protocols. If our school had public safety, Laquai would be packing for his senior trip to Spain - his first trip out of the country. Laquai would be graduating in three months, becoming the first in his family to go to college. Instead, our community is grieving and preparing to attend a funeral of a child gone too soon. It is a harrowing testament to the repercussions of inadequately safeguarded spaces. How many more lives must be shattered before we take decisive action?

Legacy College Prep High School stands as a beacon of hope in an area bustling with educational institutions, including elementary and middle schools. The concentration of young, vulnerable minds demands our unwavering commitment to fortify their surroundings against the ever-looming specter of danger. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the stark realities that confront us. The absence of inclusive legislation leaves a chasm of vulnerability that threatens the very fabric of our community. Every child, regardless of whether they attend a public or non-public charter school, deserves the assurance of safety within their educational environment.

As stewards of public safety, we are tasked with the solemn responsibility of protecting the most vulnerable among us. We must rise above bureaucratic constraints and political intricacies to enact tangible change that resonates with the core values of our society.

I implore each and every one of you to consider the gravity of our collective responsibility. Let us not be remembered as the generation that failed to act when our children's safety hung in the balance. Let us seize this moment to amend Local Law 2 of 2016, to ensure that no child is left exposed to the perils of an inadequately protected school environment. I urge you to allocate funds for public safety personnel in non-public charter schools, including those that operate in private spaces.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." Let us rise to the occasion and demonstrate, through our actions, our unwavering commitment to protecting the legacy of our children.

Thank you.

Brittney Ramos

[Bramos@legacycollegeprep.org](mailto:Bramos@legacycollegeprep.org)

Good afternoon.

My name is Daria and I am a first-year undergraduate student. I recently graduated from Stuyvesant High School in June of 2023 before moving to France for an affordable college education. Leaving New York City was one of the hardest decisions I've ever made... My parents are here, my little brother is here, my mentors are here, my entire community is here. It truly is my home. I love New York, but I despise what **Eric Adams**, his senseless investment into the **police**, and your **pacificity** have done to the fabric of my city.

I am here today to not only urge the City Council to **hold the NYPD's Strategic Response Group accountable for its abuse**, but also to push to **disband the unit**. The SRG was founded as a counter terrorism unit, yet they continue to be deployed at **peaceful protests** despite consistently being known for their violent strategies and ever more militarized tactics. The ACLU [documentation shows that the SRG is, at best, an escalating force, and, at worst, the source of this violence](#). Even the **CCRB** and our own **legal system agrees**, as the SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to abuse of protesters throughout 2020 and beyond, which has only led to massive financial costs to **all parties** to settle these cases. **Seems redundant, don't you think?**

For as long as I can remember, I have been a local organizer and activist. Fundraising for reproductive rights, resource distribution to arriving migrants, overdose management education, COVID-19 test redistribution... you name it. I love coming together for a cause and I love giving back to my neighbors. But I often asked myself, why is it that people are neglected in the first place? Why does the system fail to provide adequate social programs, or even basic housing rights? With every passing moment, it becomes increasingly evident to me that it's because we give the vast majority of our funding to the police. **Instead of giving New Yorkers what we need to survive, our government officials utilize cops to criminalize our differences and then punish our outrage.**

Aren't we **all** citizens? Doesn't **all** suffering concern public safety?

This spring break, I came home to continue that fight – to exercise my first amendment right to protest the appalling genocide of the Palestinian people that is fueled by the **hypocrisy** of my very own government. I see so many **parallels between our struggle and theirs**, so I came out to Union Square this past March 8th to spread that rhetoric, that we have to stand up and fight against injustice wherever we see it. It filled me with joy to be back with **my people**, fighting for the things I believe in.

When I graduated from Stuy, I received an award from the City Council, commending me for my outstanding civic engagement and dedication to bettering the circumstances of New York City residents. Yet when I came **home to continue doing exactly that**, I was met with a brutal, wrongful arrest at the hands of the SRG. **Don't you find it dreadfully ironic?** On March 8th, of all days, I watched as **more than 60** of my fellow New Yorkers were kettled, beaten, and violently arrested. But of course Happy International Womens' day! Let's celebrate by **throwing**



**citizens to the ground** and **beating them unconscious** so their limp bodies could be handcuffed more easily.

**Is this how you say thank you?**

It is unacceptable to be toasting to the tenacity and resilience of young students like me just to turn around and throw them up against the hood of a car for “walking in the street with sidewalk available”. There is absolutely no excuse for the SRG to be trained to consider any protest concerning justice inherently violent. **Tell me, what are you going to do about this?**

As I walked through the gates of 1 Police Plaza on the evening of March 8th, SRG officer Elvis Salas looked over at me and said “Stay safe.” I’m sure he had good intentions, but the fact of the matter is that I had to spend the next couple days on the phone with a lawyer, instead of with my family. I could’ve gone and seen a movie with my mother, or spent time with my 6 year old brother, but instead I was **left on my own**, figuring out how I was to show up for my summons when I **needed** to go back to school. Aren’t cops supposed to be there to prevent crime... to make sure kids stay in school?

**Is that what you call staying safe? Is that what you call “protecting and serving”?**

It disgusts me that we, as everyday citizens, go out of our way to get educations that cause bankruptcy, just to be ignored, even with our professional status. Why is it that I can go to school all my life, get a degree, yet still be **brushed aside by the people in power**? What are professionals good for if **you don’t listen** to the educated? It simply makes no sense.

I am done asking nicely. You folks **need to do your part in amplifying voices** that need to be heard. Allocate our budget based on the things **New Yorkers themselves** say they need, not the **wants** of the privileged people in power. Solving the housing crisis should involve **providing housing**. Managing the opioid crisis should involve **providing healthcare**. Increasing education opportunities should involve **funding libraries** and other **social programs**. Building overall safety in our city should involve **grassroots movements** at the **community** level, not filling the subway with the national guard.

If you can comfortably sit back, watching as this all unfolds, you’re just as bad as they are. **Violent policing tactics should not be used on everyday citizens, period.** The SRG must disband and its funds should be reallocated in order to **actually** serve New Yorkers. That means reinvesting back into public parks, libraries, and other third spaces that keep people like me safe. That means ensuring SRG officers who are placed in another unit cannot continue to carry SRG functions, nor recreate the SRG under a different name. That means reducing unnecessary contact between the NYPD and New Yorkers and centering the needs and voices of those that are directly impacted by police violence. **That means protecting people like me.**

I truly hope that one day, we can all live side-by-side in an actually safe and secure New York City. Thank you for your time.

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** deedeesweets@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Friday, March 22, 2024 2:47 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] WRITTEN TESTIMONY FROM PUBLIC SAFETY COUNCIL MEETING

[REDACTED]

Hello,  
My name is DEE SAMS and I am a BROOKLYN resident.  
Please find my written testimony given at the Public Safety meeting below:

Hello, my name is Dee Sams. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to hold the NYPD's Strategic Response Group accountable for its abuse and disband the unit.

Last year alone the city paid out nearly \$115 million due to reported misconduct. According to NBC NY, the city of NY agreed to pay \$21,500 per protester who was a victim of the illegal tactic of kettling. In that same reporting that was the largest settlement in history at roughly \$10 million. I did some math and thats roughly \$896 every two weeks over the course of a year, for some people \$21,500 is a yearly salary.

Its my hope that the City Council will disband the SRG and disburse those funds to vital city programs, such as our parks, libraries, composting programs and more. While I have been fortunate enough to not have had a harrowing experience dealing with the SRG, knowing that far too many of my fellow NY'ers who exercise their right to peacefully protest have, is enough to bring me here today. Defund and disband the SRG and help bring us all a little closer to a quality of life becoming of citizens of the greatest cities in the world.

Carry On,  
dee Sams

Hello my name is Devon Krishnaswami For everyone who is here today, there is so much that should be discussed about the SRG but I think we would need to discuss them if they wouldn't show up to our protest or harass us in the streets or harass us in general. This is not just about the SRG but about the NYPD as a whole, who have taken an aggressive stance to many of the recent protest, have been happening in the city using unlawful, or sometimes aggressive tactics to achieve what they see as law and order when in actuality is it a different form of anarchy and oppression that had not seen since 2020. It is in clear violation at the NYPD to use these tactics as proved by previous settlements, which I know that they know about even though they have decided to not to care whatsoever about them , they know that they are breaking rules. They know that they are deliberately using tactics that they were told not to use anymore and for what reason I do not know why I will never say that we have truly gotten rid of police brutality in the activist scene. I will say that these settlements when they were used in the past lead to what I can only described as a rebirth in the world of activism in the city people could use their voices and respectively challenge the government without aggressive intervention from the NYPD or the SRG, or the mayor and it's these recent violations that are now making it once again unsafe for anybody living in the city for now you cannot use your voice to express what your goal is because simple things such as taking the streets which is a common thing protest have done even with numbers of 500 people in groups. The NYPD claims they have authority to shut these protests down for simple acts. In actuality they do not, and there are clear settlements that have clearly specified these changes. including one section specifically stating the NYPD must accommodate protests taking the streets with or without a permit. So now it is much bigger than why haven't we disbanded the SRG , this problem should amount to the question many of us including myself are asking on why haven't the City Council taken action to ensure that these settlements and the changes that we have already in force stay enforced. and why is it that the NYPD is allowed to reuse old tactics so easily, going as far as to bring back use of riot helmets and batons in a setting where there faces in the protest scene who have not experienced this type of force and are now being exposed to a totally new side of the NYPD that they have not seen before and are unprepared to face the brutality the NYPD will bring to them by continuing to use tactics from the 2015 and before. While I do agree that the disbanding the SRG's budget and the group as a whole is important. I must also stress the importance of holding the NYPD accountable for the actions that they have done to many of these protests. This includes kettling, unlawful use of violence that has led to some protesters sustaining injuries even being knocked unconscious, and the completely exaggerated charges given to detained activists in an attempt to scare those who into not continuing to protest. And that is the big question I and my colleagues demand be answered.

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Diane Aronson

[dianabrooklyn15@yahoo.com](mailto:dianabrooklyn15@yahoo.com)

New York, New York 11218

Divad Durant Testimony  
New York City FY25 Preliminary Public Safety Hearing  
March 20th, 2024

Good evening, my name is Divad Durant, a leader in the Justice Committee, a grassroots organization committed to ending police violence and systemic racism in New York City.

As a Black man, raised in the South Bronx; one of the poorest congressional districts in the United States, I've experienced the physical and psychological harms of police violence, as well as, the violence of historical disinvestment.

Growing up, my safety was dependent on essential services like youth programs, community centers, and public libraries; institutions and organizations that nurture neighborhoods back to health, not the NYPD.

I was repulsed to learn that the consequences of **Mayor Adams mismanagement of city funds**, and refusal to generate revenue from the rich, leaves low-income **Black, Latinx and other New Yorkers of color stuck with the bill**. The NYPD's FY25 preliminary agency budget is more than \$300M above what the Adams administration proposed for them at this time last year.

Flooding the subways with the national guard and NYPD is a weird flex. When you gut programs that are supposed to support low-income, working class New Yorkers but continue to fund NYPD's already bloated budget you are saying the only solution to deal with poverty in this city is to jail the poor. Despite this tired effort to overpolice New Yorkers, the core problems that generate violence will persist like lack of affordable housing, lack of access to educational resources, lack of resources to travel to and from work, lack of access to food, etc.

Moreover, NYC paid out **\$114.5 Million in police misconduct settlements** last year. This doesn't even include the personnel costs of keeping cops who kill, brutalize and sexually assault on payroll when the NYPD obstructs discipline and refuses to fire cops for half a decade or longer like we've seen in the cases of Ramarley Graham and Eric Garner and like we're seeing in the cases of Kawaski Trawick, Allan Fliz, Delrawn Small, and Ronald Anthony Smith. Despite this, the NYPD is already reported to not face cuts in the upcoming PEGS. .

Clear eyed research supports that real safety is achieved through investments in core infrastructure and services like affordable housing, childcare, healthcare including mental health, and youth programs. We need a City Council and Mayor to prioritize New Yorkers' well-being, over further bloating the police force.

I urge the mayor and city council to stop giving the NYPD preferential treatment and invest in services that all new yorkers need to thrive.



Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Donnalyn Washington

[donnawashington@gmail.com](mailto:donnawashington@gmail.com)

Brooklyn, New York 11226

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Ellie Safran  
[elstar123@gmail.com](mailto:elstar123@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11218

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on, and then blame his choices on asylum seekers - claiming that people who have the least are taking up all the resources in such a rich city, enthusiastically participating in the racist scapegoating of immigrants for political gain at a time when fascism is growing stronger in the US and around the world.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more

hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Emily Rinck

[rinckemi@gmail.com](mailto:rinckemi@gmail.com)

[rinckemi@gmail.com](mailto:rinckemi@gmail.com)

Brooklyn, New York 11218

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.



By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Erin Lawson

[elawson703@gmail.com](mailto:elawson703@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11691

## **End Police Brutality: Disband the Strategic Response Group**

Hello, my name is Forest, and I am a proud Brooklyn resident, a graduate student at CUNY, and a volunteer for the New York Civil Liberties Union.

Council Member Tiffany Caban recently said: “The essence of public safety isn’t obedience extracted under the threat of violence, but healthy communities”. These words resonate deeply with me as I have witnessed firsthand the erosion of our democratic values at the hands of the New York Police Department’s Strategic Response Group.

As a volunteer for the NYCLU. I have been appalled by the actions of the SRG during peaceful demonstrations. What I have seen resembles scenes from countries where the right to free expression is brutally suppressed. I am terrified about the current and future states of democracy in this country if we continue to allow such abuses to persist unchecked.

It is estimated that the SRG receives \$300,000 per day, which is a slap in the face to those seeking a safer, healthier community. This exorbitant budget is used to brutalize, beat, and arrest us for exercising our fundamental rights to speech. I have personally witnessed innocent individuals being subjected to appalling acts of violence by the SRG for simply walking on the street or using a megaphone.

These atrocities must cease immediately and those responsible must be held accountable. The only course of action is to completely defund the SRG and reallocate those resources towards essential services such as physical and mental health care for the victims of the SRG, as well as education and housing initiatives to build healthier and safer communities.

Anything less than an unequivocal condemnation of the SRG and a commitment to defund it would be endorsing an ongoing assault on democracy and innocent New Yorkers. I urge you to listen to the voices of your constituents, to prioritize the well-being of our communities, and to take decisive action to dismantle the SRG.

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Georgette Thomas

[georgetterhomas76@gmail.com](mailto:georgetterhomas76@gmail.com)

New York, New York 10457

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Gisele Hearne  
[tcamille395@gmail.com](mailto:tcamille395@gmail.com)  
Ny, New York 10039

Thank you, Chair Salaam and members of the Committee on Public Safety for hosting this important hearing and the opportunity to testify.

My name is Grace Amato and I am a prospective social worker at CUNY Hunter and an intern with the Mental Health Project. Today I am here to urge the Committee to reverse the budget cuts to the Office of Criminal Justice in this year's budget and legislative session.

We are clearly having a mental health crisis in New York City. In the social work and mental health field, we simply cannot support all of our clients. From experience and research, I know that psychiatric hospital beds are overflowing, supportive housing is limited and therapeutic services are costly and hard to find. For years, we have turned our backs on New Yorkers who are struggling with substance use and mental health concerns, and funneled them into our broken correctional system. It is time to create a systemic change, instead of relying on individual case management and the criminal legal system.

I believe that the Department of Corrections' budget is extremely bloated and should be redistributed to other important resources to improve New Yorker's welfare. The number of New Yorkers with mental health concerns in New York City jails is rising. Since we have invested more in our corrections than public health, we find over three thousand New Yorkers (more than half of the jail population) receive mental health treatment at Rikers. Meanwhile, the issue is exacerbated in the women's jail, Rosie's, where 82% have a mental illness. Additionally, suicide was the leading cause of death in New York City jails in 2022. Clearly this system is not working.

These statistics are frightening, knowing that most people in jails are there awaiting trial and will return to the community without any real treatment. Incarceration does not make our communities safer or provide care to the most vulnerable. Opportunities to divert people from Rikers should be fully utilized, in collaboration with the Jail Population Review Initiative that the Council established last year through Local Law 75-2023. Expanding alternatives to incarceration was also a key commitment in the plan to close Rikers.

Therefore, I urge the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction to prioritize the following items in the budget:

- We need to restore \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for ATIs, supervised release and re-entry programs including \$6.7M for alternatives to incarceration, \$13.1M for supervised release, and \$8M for re-entry services.
- Allocate an additional \$21.3M to meet housing and mental health needs, and fulfill commitments in the Close Rikers plan, including:



- Establish a separate line-item for JISH in the DOHMH budget, and allocate an additional \$6.4M to increase service funding rates for new units and existing units. Existing, long time JISH providers are struggling at current rate levels.
- \$2.9M more to enable 5 of the 22 newly funded state Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team).
- \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the establishment of four new crisis respite centers.
- \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 119-2023, supporting the establishment of five new clubhouses.

We cannot no longer rely on prisons and jails to address New York's mental health crisis. Please increase alternatives to incarceration and provide sufficient funding to create a better system for mental health in New York. Thank you for your time.

**Testimony to the NYC Council Committee on Public Safety  
For the March 20, 2024 FY25 Preliminary Budget Hearing on Public Safety  
Submitted by Julia D. Chmaj**

Dear Chair Salaam and Committee Members,

I welcome this opportunity to submit testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Public Safety. I am a member of Standing Up for Racial Justice NYC and a Brooklyn resident in District 39. We in New York City have a \$109.4 billion preliminary budget. "The budget spares NYPD, FDNY, and Sanitation from the cuts he announced in November, to 'protect public safety and cleanliness.'"

<https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2024/01/adams-announces-109-billion-preliminary-budget-includes-71-billion-budget-gap/393376/>

The mayor's plan for the budget is shortsighted. Public safety is so much more than the police, the fire, and the sanitation departments. Public safety is providing for the community---housing, food, education, mental health support, jobs, and social services. There is a disturbing video of NYPD officers at the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue F station in Brooklyn swinging a young man around and pushing him against the wall to cuff him for fare evasion on January 4, 2024.

<https://twitter.com/mynameisjro/status/1743008579739586571?s=20>

This doesn't create safety. What if we provided individuals who needed fare, hard-working New Yorkers, with a MetroCard instead of tackling and arresting them? The high discrepancy between the extreme amount of funding for additional NYPD on the subway---an extra \$151 million in overtime spending---and the results, saving \$104,000 on fare evasion, shows this an extremely wasteful way to create safety.

What if that \$151 million went into social services and other City agencies? I feel that would create more of an atmosphere of safety than 3500 NYPD officers in the subway profiling Black and brown riders

<https://www.amny.com/police-fire/fare-evasion-arrests-skyrocket-93-of-those-arrested-were-black-brown-riders/> and looking at their phones <https://hellgatenyc.com/the-distracted-police-book-is-a-zine-made-for-eric-adams>.

Here are my recommendations for specific cuts to the NYPD budget to improve the health and safety of all New Yorkers. Cut funding for vacancies and freeze officer hiring for the Department of Education, and increase investment in restorative justice, mental health services, and other non-policing practices that help our students thrive in a non-punitive environment. Disband the violent Strategic Response Group. Remove the NYPD from mental health "co-response" teams and increase funding for programs that strengthen non-police mental health response. Cut the NYPD public relations/communication budget by 50% including Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Public Information (DCPI) and other NYPD press and communications infrastructure. Cut police positions in other agencies including the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Homeless Services, and remove NYPD from youth engagement as well as city youth programming and services. Prevent any further increase in NYPD headcount and please invest in evidenced safety solutions like housing, schools, libraries, and non-police anti-violence programs. Invest in housing and services for all, regardless of legal or immigration status, and service

workforces. There should be no cuts to service provision. We can do this if we divest from harmful policing and NYPD overspending.

Thank you for reading this and your service to the City.

Sincerely,  
Julia D. Chmaj  
District 39

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Kadisha Davis

[Kdidteam@aol.com](mailto:Kdidteam@aol.com)

New York, New York 11201

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Kali Palmer

[kalipalmer9991@gmail.com](mailto:kalipalmer9991@gmail.com)

Yonkers, New York 10701



[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Kristin Herbeck <herbeckkristin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 22, 2024 3:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Disband the NYPD's Strategic Response Unit

[REDACTED]

Dear council members,

I am writing to recount personal experiences with abusive actions and overall tactics of the SRG, a unit of the NYPD that acts with total impunity.

I was first personally introduced to the particular cruelty of this group at a JVP protest where we took over Grand Central to demand an immediate end to the genocide perpetrated against Palestinians via US military aid to Israel, a lift of the siege of Gaza in general, an end to the occupation. It also served to prove that Israel does NOT speak for the world's Jews as it claims for its own violent, colonial theft purposes.

On 10/27/23, I spent 5+ hours in police custody of Officer Nicholas Albergo (#17802), member of the notorious SRG, with 3 others. Two people were gender nonconforming/trans but categorized 'female' on their ID. There was also myself, a cis woman, and a cis male. Before being loaded to 1PP transport, Albergo cuffed both of my trans' friends too tight; they had to spend a lot of time advocating to get them reapplied so as to not cut off circulation. Every time a female officer walked past, he asked them to search two of them as he watched, for a total of FOUR times. When I questioned why, he said it was because they were female. When I asked him why that wasn't being applied to me as another female in his custody, he had nothing to say. His transphobic, gross fixation continued when we were finally on a bus en route to 1PP, when he pressed everyone to share "how many men how many women" were on the bus while laughing, even though he had what he needed with every person's ID. He reapplied one of said trans friends' cuffs, to the point that it cut off circulation. They stated this and Albergo stated there was nothing he could do.

This event culminated in the person completely losing circulation and unable to feel their hands. They started spontaneously shaking and going into a state of shock. Albergo continued to hover over this person and called us his "girls" to continue to let us know he had physical control of us. We all screamed and organized for intervention by others on the bus, thank god there was a surgeon arrested with us. She exclaimed that anytime someone loses circulation and isn't permitted to regain it that can result in permanent nerve damage and had to argue at length with multiple officers about this point. Everyone's advocacy and her specialty allowed the situation to eventually be rectified, even though he kept trying to be unreasonably close to person he hurt. It was harassment and he was clearly getting off on doing it. There has been multiple CCRB complaints filed about this incident, which must not have amounted to anything as this person is still racking up overtime suppressing protestor's rights.

<https://x.com/ashagony/status/1769961744766533757?s=46>

I have also attended marches hosted by Within Our Lifetime, a Palestinian organization that has been an incredible voice in our collective efforts to STOP this genocide that the entire political establishment is hellbent on perpetrating and profiting from. SRG has brutalized youth, elderly, women, men, organizers--anyone they can get their hands on. I live in Astoria, and recently attended a February WOL march there. When I saw the SRG squad pull up, I knew they were coming to beat the hell out of people and to cause mayhem. In a surprise to no one, they proceeded to do exactly that the moment organizers actually concluded and dispersed the march. video:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3jKTIYtcbJ/?igsh=bmEyOG80NnZsdnN3>

The SRG are detested by the broader community at large for their routine violence and absolute bigotry. We have a right to protest and they are the ones that make protesting dangerous. They conduct themselves as an Islamophobic, anti Black and Brown (despite individual officers' identities), anti Palestinian, anti queer and trans gang. They are very violent and aggressive at Palestinian-led marches, and typically tepid and reserved at like Jewish Voice for Peace, where the attendance is majority white people. Despite the first incident mentioned, the difference in general can not be more clear.

I am ethnically an Ashkenazi Jew whose people actually did experience violence & displacement in Europe(not a convert to the religion-as are many Zionist "Jewish" supporters of Israel)--I did not grow up a Zionist; many of us did not. I am disgusted at how politicians are weaponizing our identities to line their own pockets by supporting the Zionist regime, at the expense of millions of Palestinians displaced, murdered and disappeared by Israel. I am disgusted at council member Inna Vernikov, who brandishes guns in public and has called Nerdeen Kiswani and other Palestinian/Arab/Muslim organizers terrorists, in a clear effort to incite racist violence, including police repression, against them.

At least 14,000 children have been murdered at the time of this writing, and politicians like Vernikov and Eric Adams have the audacity to go after Palestinian women leaders in our city, themselves survivors of displacement via Israel's previous ethnic cleansing campaigns. SHAME. Regular people with dreams are being murdered in front of our faces in the most high tech genocide ever perpetrated, as Gazans are live-streaming their realities every single day. Disband the SRG!

Ramadan Kareem and thank you to Council member Yusef Salaam, who was the only councilmember to sit through and listen to the public's comments on Wednesday.

L'Chaim Intifada,  
Kristin Herbeck

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Lupe Hernandez  
[lupe.figuera@gmail.com](mailto:lupe.figuera@gmail.com)

New York , New York 10013

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole

and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Martina Meijer

[martina.meijer@gmail.com](mailto:martina.meijer@gmail.com)

Brooklyn, New York 11225

Meropi Peponides Testimony  
New York City FY25 Preliminary Public Safety Hearing  
March 20th, 2024



My name is Meropi Peponides. I am a New Yorker, a nonprofit worker, an artist based in Flatbush Brooklyn, and a member of the Justice Committee, a grassroots organization working to end police violence in NYC.

I am writing because the preliminary budget laid out by the Mayor has once again prioritized resourcing the NYPD over the needs of our communities.

In the past three months, I have seen the impact of Mayor Adams' austerity budget on my predominately Black and Latinx neighborhood. Libraries were forced to cut hours at a time of year where indoor public spaces are vital to the well-being of families and all New Yorkers in need of supportive, safe places, and access to information.

As an artist who makes work in collaboration with everyday New Yorkers, my small nonprofit arts organization has experienced a more than 10% reduction in our previously awarded city funding, causing us to have to make painful cuts to our programming, which directly impacts our ability to serve the working people of this city. It has also impacted our ability to hire artists for our programs. In addition to our own budget difficulties I have spoken to colleagues across organizations large and small who are feeling the effects of this austerity budget. Cultural programs are not the only services being severely underfunded in NYC. Essential services like affordable housing and mental healthcare are continuously deprioritized year after year. NYCHA has been underfunded by 1.89 billion dollars since 2001.

Meanwhile, the NYPD continues to receive funding increases each year. This includes the Strategic Response Group (SRG), a violent unit that was originally tasked with doing "single-fold terror work", but who have regularly been deployed to police nonviolent protests in the past several years. As well as the neighborhood safety teams, which have been rebranded from the former anti-crime unit that systemically terrorizes New Yorkers. The current estimated spending of the SRG, is \$133 million a year. Meanwhile, the entire budget of the Cultural Development Fund, the body that distributes much needed resources to Arts and Cultural organizations like my own, is only \$52 million and they are not the only service that is being severely underfunded. How do we expect New Yorkers to thrive when both their essential services and cultural resources are under continuous budget cuts?

The fact that a violent unit of police officers who are often deployed against my fellow citizens protesting injustice has a budget nearly three times that of all cultural funding in New York City sends a clear message that the Mayor's budget prioritizes repressing the voices of nonviolent protest over and above resourcing the important cultural organizations of our city. This

allocation of our public funds is misguided and does nothing to ensure real safety for New Yorkers.

After the racial justice uprisings of 2020 were met with violent crackdown by the SRG, and the protests for Palestinian freedom that have taken place in the last five months have been met with increased repression and similarly violent tactics, not to mention numerous other instances of violent behavior by the SRG, it is past time that the city council disband this unit of the NYPD, ensure that those officers are not reabsorbed into the force to enact the same violence elsewhere in our communities, and redirect these resources.

I urge the city council to reallocate the necessary funds that is currently being spent to repress everyday New Yorkers into restoring crucial library and arts funding as well as investing in services that actually increase community safety. This includes supportive housing, non-carceral mental health support and properly resourcing our public schools.

I urge the mayor and city council to stop giving the NYPD preferential treatment and stop allowing the NYPD to go significantly over budget without consequence. The NYPD should be subject to the same PEGs the rest of city services are, and the mayor and city council should reinvest in services that all new yorkers need to thrive. I hope the city council will finally take the crucial and overdue step of using those funds to resource our communities.

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Natasha Severin <natseverin.1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 21, 2024 4:13 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony 03 20 25

[REDACTED]

---

 20221228\_124142.mp4

NYC Council  
Hearing at Financial Committee  
On budget 2025,  
03 20 2024.

## TESTIMONY

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at the City Council! My name is Natasha Severin, I am a retired Senior citizen. I live in NY 22 years. Last few years in NYCHA Senior building.

I want to support my movement ACLU in their demand to disband SRG. Why? Let us speak about American moral values! Police nature changed for the last years for worse – NYPD is becoming more and more punitive organization, which methods reminds me former KGB and current Putin’s squad “Omon!” And it is not for democratic society!

Here a few examples from my life:

On 06 27 2023 I was attacked in my building, I called 911. The police came in 2 hours. When I reproached them in delay officer told me:-- If you will not stop criticizing us, we place you to the mental institution for Covid damaged patients!

I did not have Covid at that time. But I was smashed by the fact that police was going to use punitive psychiatry against a citizen who was only using the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment! It is happening only in totalitarian countries!

Another case. Once in the morning on 12 28 2022 Police together with NYCHA broke down the door in my apartment when I was at home, sick, in bed, and resisted this illegal intrusion. 10 men at the door stated that they must check a leak in my bathroom. There was no any emergency, danger in my apartment! And they did not look for any leak! Instead, of this they made... a search for drugs without any warrant! They checked my medication, sniffed detergents, and roach sprays in the bathroom! and then, when they did not find anything, ( I saw drugs only in the movies) they left without apology. Two NYCHA workers later confessed to me that they were persuaded to do this illegal search by police!

It was a pure act of harassment, intimidation, psychological pressure. It was revenge for my often critics of precinct 25 and PSA 5. Nobody investigated this crying story up to now – In spite I had a single picket against Police harassment last year near the City Hall.

NY police have tremendous budget! This money is being misused for revenge, excessive surveillance, and intrigues against innocent citizens! I wrote 12 complaints to CCRB, 2 complaints to the mayor's office – I did not get even 1 response. Police misanthropic, unlawful, arbitrary actions are going unpunished!

Precinct 25 , PSA 5 are spreading rumors that I am mentally sick. (It is a lie! I am in perfect mental health. Working on two books in two languages.) They lied about my insanity at the Aging Department, reported this slander to the Temples where I am praying on Shabbat. De ja vu! I saw these dirty methods against critics-- against freedom of speech-- in the USSR!

SRG is a very dangerous tool. It can be handled properly only by highly moral organization. NYPD in its current moral condition may use it only in a harmful way. It is unacceptable in the great democratic America!

Ms. Natasha Vittoria Severin, [REDACTED]

NY,NY, 10035. [REDACTED]

On the video you can see part of the illegal search for drugs in my apt. which I managed to get before police officer stopped me, the intrusion was performed by PSA 5 and NYCHA workers -- against my permission. In my presence!

# SRG Testimony

 Date @March 20, 2024 4:00 PM

Good Afternoon. My name is Nicole and I am here as a New York resident to not only call on the city council to hold the SRG more accountable but to disband this unit entirely.

Over these past few months the SRG have led brutal crackdowns on New Yorkers exercising their first amendment rights, arresting and injuring hundreds of protesters. On March 8th they knocked a protester unconscious and rather than call for medical attention, when the protester came to they handcuffed them and took them away. Just last night SRG Officer Luis Machado jumped the barricade and charged at a crowd protesting, exemplifying the culture of danger and violence at the SRG.

When SRG arrives on the scene, officers escalate situations and injure New Yorkers who are exercising their First Amendment rights

The SRG receives a disproportionate number of police misconduct complaints, 91% of which came from people of color from 2015-2020, further costing the city hundreds of thousands in lawsuits settlements.

This unruly arm of the NYPD costs the city \$133 million every year while unhoused people fill the streets, and social services are being cut. This militarized unit not only attacks protesters but is instrumental in terrorizing unhoused people by sweeping encampments and violently conducting arrests. Rather than divert funding to help these people in need, the city would rather lock them up.

The city continues to fund the SRG despite their lack of transparency and mountains of evidence of brutality. These funds belong in our communities and the council must disband this unit.

Thank you

I am Peter Tarson, and I am testifying against Mayor Adams's proposed spending cuts. I am deeply concerned by the slashing of library funding, such that Sunday services will be forced to be cancelled, the midyear budget cuts to the school system without preparation, forcing teachers to scramble to provide for their students, and, most of all, the targeting of Pre-K programs. When the services of childcare, education, and eldercare community (as library services) are cut, the result is not that these populations self-sufficiently meet their own needs, but that their unmet needs bottle up and burn into a cycle of desperation. Without good education comes a deficit in test performance, leading to lower employment possibilities and a greater likelihood that youth will end up enmeshed in gang violence due to a simple lack of other ways to make a living.

A study done with two government-funded pre-K programs in Chicago in 2001 showed that by age 27 children who did not receive government-funded pre-K were 5 times more likely to have been arrested than those who had. This is not a simple case of post hoc ergo propter hoc—the release of stress and logistical burdens on the parent side make legal and sustainable employment possible, and eliminate major sources of uncertainty and trauma. Disposing of this social service will only swell New York City's law enforcement costs, damaging the very fiscal responsibility it aims to resolve. These costs are already unsustainably high, especially for groups like the Strategic Response Group whose budget swelled from on the order of 10 to 90 million in its first year of deployment despite being almost exclusively used to repress peaceful protests and homeless settlements, and essentially *losing* responsibilities for terrorism, which it now no longer covers. The violence of the Strategic Response Group, including the brutal suppression of the Palestine protests a few weeks ago, and violent attacks on peaceful *observers* of protests and on encampments of homeless people in dire need of medical care and long-term support, as if intending to disappear them into non-existence, is completely unacceptable, and must end immediately, to be replaced by caring and sustainable solutions to violence, rather than the perpetuation of violence by dehumanizing persons existing inconveniently on the street and beating them to cause pain and permanent injuries.

But we've been socialized not to care. As long as the money we spend is on force, punishment, the defense of the objects—turnstyles not to be jumped, windows not to be broken—against the soft and vulnerable bodies that inhabit them, we justify the expenses of police and punishment and the traumas they cause. Why? Why don't we justify the joys of reading with children easily and only pay for pain-inducing sprays on the faces of our siblings when there is no alternative? Can we not trim the fat from these police units like the SRG that no longer serve public safety objectives? Do you want to perpetuate a cycle of alienation, or invest in the reconciliation of our city's intergenerational wounds? And why, Mayor Adams, do you want another generation to be fed Nutraloaf as adults when they could be reading storybooks today?



**Subject line examples:** Dismantle the Strategic Response Group and move their budget to communities!

Hi, my name is Reed. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to hold the NYPD's Strategic Response Group accountable for its abuse and disband the unit.

The NYPD has a long history of suppressing protest and committing violence against our communities. The Strategic Response Group is just a continuation of this. When the unit was announced in 2015, NYPD called it a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, NYPD amended this statement and announced that the unit would not be deployed at protests.

Despite this, it has consistently been deployed to violently police protests using militarized tactics. Its original budget ballooned from \$13 million to \$90 million in its first year and the current estimate of SRG spending is \$133 million per year. Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. New Yorkers deserve better.

Over the past few months, the SRG has led brutal crackdowns on protests across New York City, arresting and injuring dozens of protesters who are exercising their First Amendment Rights. This violence isn't a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and "violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators."

SRG deployment also isn't limited to large-scale demonstrations - it is deployed to protests with as few as 15 participants, with no transparency around the metrics used to justify the deployment of this militarized unit. The SRG was also central to homeless encampment sweeps in the summer of 2022, when its officers were consistently deployed to violently clear encampments and even arrest unhoused residents.

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

The mayor's preliminary budget continues to fund the SRG's abuses despite the fact that the NYPD consistently refuses to answer questions regarding the SRG. All the while, the SRG continues to brutalize New Yorkers and threaten our First Amendment Rights.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. The City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit, removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities by funding affordable housing, healthcare, education, and libraries.

**Testimony to the Council Committee on Public Safety**  
**March 20, 2024**  
**Submitted by Ryan Acquotta**

Chair Salaam and Committee members,

My name is Ryan Acquotta. I'm a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC and a Bronx resident. And while I currently work for Freedom Agenda at the Urban Justice Center, I previously spent several years working in the criminal courts in the Bronx for an Alternative To Incarceration (ATI) program at the Fortune Society. I'm writing this testimony because I was astounded to see that the Mayor's Preliminary Budget proposal contained massive cuts to ATI programs, as well as to Supervised Release and Re-entry Services. If NYC was actually committed to following the law and closing Rikers, it would not be cutting funding for the programs that have been helping to safely bring down the jail population for decades.

Working as a court advocate for an ATI program, I met hundreds of people, some detained and some in the community. I spoke to people of all ages, who were accused of all kinds of charges, and I worked with anyone the District Attorney and Court would allow me to. If someone was homeless, it was my and my team's job to find them housing. If someone was struggling with addiction or in a mental health crisis, it was our job to get them treatment. We helped find people jobs, get their GEDs, reunite with their families, and so much more.

This job kept me up at night. So many of the people I worked with were struggling with so many different things, all while under the surveillance of the court with a potential prison sentence hanging over them if they failed to complete our program. And yet, despite those challenges, there are many success stories I carry with me to this day: A young man with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders who was eventually able to achieve and maintain sobriety in our program, despite his struggles with homelessness, grief, and trauma causing him to relapse many times along the way. Even after he completed our ATI program and his criminal case concluded, he continued to meet with his counselor at Fortune every week and worked with our Employment Services team to find a job.

I also think of a young woman who had been living in a homeless shelter with her partner when she was mandated to our ATI program, who found her voice through our creative arts and leadership programming, and went on to obtain and excel in a paid internship. When her case concluded she was hired full-time and was able to obtain stable housing with a more stable income.

These were ordinary people faced with extraordinary challenges who found themselves caught in the criminal legal system, but who were given an opportunity to be resourced instead of punished. And given that opportunity, they turned their lives around.

It was always my belief that everyone deserved that opportunity, and what really kept me up at night were the calls from parents whose sons were sitting on Rikers, accused of some charge

the DAs and courts did not deem worthy of an ATI program. Or the people on that Godforsaken island I spoke with who so obviously needed behavioral health treatment, but who residential treatment programs refused to work with. The charges were “too serious”, or the person needed a “higher level of care” that no facility seemed to offer. One time a place literally refused someone because they were a trans woman. I’d run into these walls again and again. There were so many people I spoke with who needed help and support, and so often it seemed the criminal legal system and healthcare system were only interested in finding reasons not to give it to them.

And so when I read that the Office of Criminal Justice was cutting funding for ATI programs due to “Less Than Anticipated Spending”, I thought of the years I spent trying to convince Judges and ADAs that human beings are human beings. I thought of all the amazing case managers and counselors I worked alongside at Fortune, who were each helping dozens of people find their way, and who could’ve helped so many more if given the chance. I thought of every human being on Rikers that I interviewed who was passed over for the opportunity to turn their life around, because someone somewhere decided they didn’t deserve it. And I screamed. Because OCJ should be spending more on ATI programs, not less. Mayor Adams, allegedly committed to following the law, should be singing from the hilltops for Judges and DAs to utilize these alternatives for more cases, not less. Mayor Adams, allegedly concerned about the dramatic increase in people with serious mental illness languishing on Rikers, should be clamoring for investments in mental health treatment infrastructure and resources for diversion. Mayor Adams, who promised on the campaign trail that he would be the mayor who closed Rikers, seems to be planning to do just the opposite. Massive cuts to all of OCJ’s program areas, paired with no planned uniform headcount reduction at DOC, seems like a recipe to keep Rikers open to me.

And so I am submitting this testimony as a New Yorker deeply concerned for the safety of our communities if these cuts are allowed to be made. Subjecting more people to violence and trauma on Rikers has never made and will never make our communities safe or whole. Anyone who has experienced Rikers or who loves someone who has experienced Rikers knows this. For decades NYC has decreased incarceration, and shown that doing so does not increase crime. Crime has instead plummeted for decades. We know how to make our city safer. We know what works, and we absolutely cannot afford to cut the things that work and keep funding the things that don’t. The City Council must restore \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for alternatives to incarceration, supervised release and re-entry programs, and can easily cover the cost by reducing uniformed vacancies at DOC.

Please do the right thing. Thank you.

Ryan Acquotta  
ryan.acquotta@gmail.com

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I am the father of a four-year-old who has benefited profoundly from universal 3K and PreK. It was a tremendous boon for our family, who previously alternated between struggling to pay for childcare -- as much as our rent-stabilized apartment -- or trying to juggle our baby between us with two parents working from home. Universal 3K and PreK allowed me to find a new job that had more in-person hours and higher pay. My daughter has thrived in her care settings, even though her 3K was beset by the city's repeated failure to pay them under Mayor Eric Adams's tenure.

I want all children and families to have access to this resource. It keeps working parents and families like mine here in NYC.

The recent budget cuts led by Mayor Adams have already affected my family. Although we are in PreK, we do so at a public school, where my daughter's school lunch has changed following recent decisions. Our main library is closed on Sundays, which baffles and confuses my daughter. The real composting options have closed. We are relatively privileged, middle-class people -- these are inconveniences and frustrations for us, rather than devastations, but we know that the cuts fall heavier on our neighbors who are less fortunate.

We know from non-mayor assessments that our city has a uniquely large BUDGET SURPLUS right now. Our city deserves an investment in childcare, public schools, public pools and parks, housing, food assistance, and more. These are investments in the best our city has to offer: existing and future generations.

I support the demands of the People's Plan for a budget built on Care Not Cuts. Please reject Mayor Adams's proposed austerity budget and fight for New Yorkers.

Shay O'Reilly  
[shay.g.oreilly@gmail.com](mailto:shay.g.oreilly@gmail.com)

Brooklyn, New York 11225

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Susan Hadley <susanmofus@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 22, 2024 4:37 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Strategic Response Group

[REDACTED]

Hello my name is Susan Hadley. I am a NYC resident and I am urging the city council to hold the NYPD Strategic Response Group accountable for its abuse and disband the unit.

. The SRG has been brutalizing the public since jit was established ..They have beat,shot, as well as choked the very people that they were sworn to protect.They have been deployed to support many BLM protests sometimes using military grade long range acoustic devices and aggressively arresting demonstrators as well as the press. in 2017 the SRG initiated a no knock raid where an officer shot and killed Maria Sanabria. In 2018 they violently arrested protestors as they were protesting the deportation of Ravidath Ragbis. Protestors exercising their First Amendment rights are met with a show of force that intimidates . Their presence creates tension rather than de-escalation. This is undermining the very foundation of a free and democratic democracy .Its an abuse of power that has to stop now! Each year we see more money go into the SRG. These millions of dollars could be spent on our communities. Our communities need more funding for education, summer youth programs, senior programs, Housing and so much more.

Thank you for reading my letter. i hope that you will listen to the people who elected you into office.

Thank you for reading this letter and i hope that you will stop and listen to the people who elected you .in office .

## Testimony for March 20 NYPD budget hearing 3/20/2024

I'm Todd Maisel, Govt Relations Chair of the NYPPA, founder of the NY Media Consortium, contributing editor of AMNY- a journalist 40 years but I speak for myself.

This past Nov. 20, the City Council held a public hearing in which Chief Ruben Beltran of the NYPD Technology **Division** testified about their radio encryption program, designed to lock out the public and more specifically, the press from hearing their communications. He quoted you a price of \$380 million. Since we are discussing the budget, you need to ask what " is the real cost" and whether Chief Beltran was making a glaring omission.

The radios themselves may have cost \$380 million, so why does the NYPD have scores of expensive contracts to program encryption keys and to make those more than 40,000 radios functional? Is this part of the quoted price?

Add thousands of new repeaters connected to both hard-line telephone lines paid for monthly or the microwave antennae's installed throughout the city on private properties.

How about other agency budgets subsidizing the cost of these lines and repeaters? Ask the Mayor's office of Technology about that? They continue to put off their FOIL requests going on two years.

Include the cost of thousands of charging stations, extra batteries. Include the vastly expanded communications division – hundreds if not thousands of jobs added to the division for the express purpose of servicing these complex radios?

Did anyone tell you that on New Year's Eve, cops were asked not to use their radios unless necessary because of excessive battery usage? And the new computers that are included on those radios are useless because they use excessive power. Why did they even need those computers when the city already pays for their phones with full internet and each police car already has a computer?

This is an agency that you are entrusting with the narrative. They get to put out notifications on all crime in the city by email – they get to choose what they want to tell the press and you. Some crimes are not reported out for many hours or even days after occurrence. Some not at all.

Look at the capital spending request of \$81 million for this year. Last year, the budget for NYPD communications division with capital programs came to more than \$178 million. Can you trust this budget after you were told the price tag was only \$380 million? We asked these questions of the NYPD and our questions were either rejected, FOIL's ignored or those queries were spurned.

This is the price we are paying for the most destructive transparency policy in the history of New York. The encryption program is a black hole of spending mostly for the price of locking out the "bad guys" - the media - eliminating checks and balances.

A failure to question this budget that we believe is closer to a billion dollars, makes this city council responsible for allowing the NYPD to become the secret police. Respectfully, is that what you want?



Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Trevor Nathan

[trevornathanphoto@gmail.com](mailto:trevornathanphoto@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11231

Good afternoon everyone,

My name is Waemary Waeyakoh. I am a New York City resident, and a student activist with the NYCLU and I am here to urge the City Council to hold the NYPD's Strategic Response Group accountable for its abuse and disband the unit.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of \$13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terrorism unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests. Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests only months later, its budget ballooning to \$90 million in its first year.

The SRG has been a consistent presence at protests ever since. And over the past few months, they have led brutal crackdowns on protests across New York City, arresting and injuring dozens of protesters who are exercising their First Amendment Rights. I, myself, have been regularly attending these protests in my own time, and I have witnessed firsthand the SRG's escalation of violence.

When I tell you I fear for my safety, it has never been because of other protesters. It is because of police. Tell me that the lines of officers holding batons, violently screaming and pushing protesters to the floor, do so with the intention of protecting us.

The SRG was never made with the intention of public safety and their violence is far from a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force. The conflation of terrorism and protest is more than dangerous, and has only led to the provocation and escalation of violence in our streets. They have no place in peaceful demonstrations.

The SRG's current budget is \$133 Million per year. \$133 Million that should instead be going to housing, public education, mental healthcare, employment support— evidence-based public services that would actually support the prospering of our communities and keep them safe.

I am a 16 year old, exercising my first amendment rights to free speech and peaceful assembly. I, along with every other New Yorker should be able to do so without being brutalized and terrorized by the SRG.

The mayor's preliminary budget continues to fund the SRG's abuses despite the NYPD's lack of accountability and transparency regarding the unit. We the people, refuse to allow our taxpayer dollars to fund systems that uphold our own suppression.

The City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Thank you.

**Testimony of Walter Ditman for March 20, 2024 City Council Public Safety Committee hearing on SRG group of NYPD**

Hello, my name is Walter Ditman. I'm a NYC resident. I urge the City Council to hold the Strategic Response Group accountable for its abuses against nonviolent protesters.

I have witnessed SRG members brutally assault and arrest a number of individuals who were simply trying to assist female patients about to enter a Planned Parenthood clinic on Bleecker Street. At the same time, the SRG actually escorted a group of religious anti-abortion advocates right up to the clinic entrance. Why does the SRG help Catholic Church members try to prevent patients from obtaining reproductive health services? Why does the SRG target nonviolent protestors? The City Council must hold the SRG accountable and defund the unit.

On Saturday morning, December 3, 2022, I joined a peaceful protest at Old St. Patrick's Church against church members who try to prevent abortion access. This is two blocks away from the Planned Parenthood clinic. As about 15 to 20 of us were picketing front of the Church, about 50 SRG officers were standing guard. Soon about five monks dressed in grey togas exited the church, heading toward the clinic.

As the monks walked toward the clinic, protestors followed. Suddenly at least ten SRG cops roughly shoved protestors aside and formed a protective cordon around the monks. The cops actually began escorting the monks to the clinic. As some protestors moved ahead, the police grabbed five of them, threw them to the ground, slapped handcuffs on them and hauled them away to a police van. Meanwhile the police permitted the monks to proceed to the clinic entrance where they tried to discourage women from entering. A short while later the police aggressively arrested and hauled away a few more protestors who were simply voicing their outrage at the unfair police treatment of their fellow protestors.

On two other Saturdays near the clinic I witnessed similar use of excessive force against nonviolent protestors by SRG: October 1, 2022 and January 7, 2023.

At no time did protestors use violence against the religious figures. When nonviolent protestors are repeatedly abused by SRG police, it's time to disband this unit and redirect city funding to programs that serve our communities and do not abuse fellow New Yorkers.

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Ximena Frankel  
[ximena.hihnyc@gmail.com](mailto:ximena.hihnyc@gmail.com)

Forest Hills, New York 11375

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

Mayor Adams says he is concerned about crime but any qualified public official knows that when people receive what they need to thrive crime decreases. Spending money to overpolice (in a system he was brutalized in) people when they cannot afford food and housing is ineffective and immoral.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more

hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Zakiyah Sayyed

[zakiyah.sayyed@gmail.com](mailto:zakiyah.sayyed@gmail.com)

New York, New York 10459



Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

zakiyah shaakir-ansari

[Zakiyah@ageny.org](mailto:Zakiyah@ageny.org)

Valley Stream, New York 11203

When discussing violent crime, we do not acknowledge that more police does not equal more safety. If more funding to police resulted in safer communities, NYC would be the safest city in the world. Yet we consistently talk about how we're unsafe. Clearly what we're doing is not working.

What went unsaid in the latest media frenzy of a subway shooting was that the subway station itself was also a police station. This happened a year after adding **1000 NYPD** officers to the subway, and shortly after adding both the National Guard and State Police. And nothing changes.

Insanity is defined by doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results. Of course we will see violence if we underfund social services and overfund police like our budget does. Police rule by violence. \$14M in 2023 was paid out in lawsuits from police misconduct. By underfunding social services like schools, libraries, and health care, we create the opportunity for crime and then look towards police to lock up the most vulnerable people that would benefit from underfunded social services. It's a sick self-fulfilling system of corruption and New Yorkers are increasingly aware of this — just look at Eric Adams historically low approval ratings. **THIS** is the issue he ran on. And people are finally broadly seeing that this simply does not work.

**Instead of providing affordable housing, the SRG sweeps up homeless people out of view as if they are disposable and calls it quality of life. Instead of welcoming migrants to the city of opportunity, the SRG surveils, terrorizes, and harasses new migrants. Is this what you call public safety?**

**Let me be clear about what this is. This is fascism. In New York City. Given to us by Eric Adams. Putting the National Guard in the subway to “make people feel safe” is the mask-off moment for our police state. The SRG is an emblem of everything that is wrong with militarizing our police. And Eric Adams is an emblem of everything that is wrong with how Democrats approach crime. And where has he been? Is that who you're standing with?**

So it's no longer about electeds just having a conscience. I'm done asking where your conscience is. Your job is on the line. And if you're not with us, we're organized to vote you out.

Testimony to the Council Committee on Public Safety  
March 20, 2024

Chair Salaam and Committee members,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify. I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC and a Manhattan resident (Harlem – District 9).

I am writing this testimony because I am concerned that the proposed budget fails to invest in the resources truly needed in our communities, while maintaining the bloated budgets for the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the New York City Police Department (NYPD). We have been told by the Mayor that the City needs to cut essential services in order to find money to support asylum seekers who are seeking refuge in NYC. But the NYPD overspends its budget as a matter of routine, and amidst the above realities, the NYPD is being rewarded for their fiscal irresponsibility and lack of accountability by a proposed \$300M budget increase.

This fact alone shows that our City's true budget crisis far predates the latest realities. Our City's budgets have long reflected a false definition of public safety that, without any reflection or second thought, continues to invest more and more of our valuable tax dollars in policing and prisons rather than services that truly benefit all New Yorkers. This is despite the fact that housing, food, healthcare, education, public services, and jobs are the things that are actually proven to keep all of us safe and healthy.

This failed approach is both taking away valuable resources and also making our communities less safe and secure. We know that New Yorkers regularly suffer violence, brutality, and surveillance at the hands of the NYPD. Hundreds of our neighbors are on Rikers simply because they have a mental health diagnosis or are experiencing homelessness. People die in DOC custody, including on Rikers Island, with little transparency. So many New Yorkers have already suffered the generational and cyclical impacts of mass incarceration, and these cycles are continuing to this day.

Our City is truly on the wrong path if we are able to more easily find money to put people in prison than in housing; if we are able to find money for unaccountable levels of NYPD overtime but not for early childhood education. Therefore, I call for the following:

- Freeze the hiring of school police, cut all funding for vacant school police positions, and invest more heavily in restorative justice, mental health services, and other non-policing practices in our schools. Remove NYPD from youth engagement as well as city youth programming and services.
- Disband the Strategic Response Group (SRG).
- End the use of police officers in mental health co-response teams and increase funding for programs that strengthen non-police mental health response
- Cut NYPD's press budget by at least 50% including the Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Public Information (DCPI) and other NYPD press or communications infrastructure

- Stop homeless sweeps and remove NYPD from homeless outreach teams
- Restore \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for alternatives to incarceration, supervised release and re-entry programs, and cover this cost by reducing uniformed vacancies at DOC
- Cut police positions in other agencies, including the Department of Parks & Recreation and Department of Homeless Services
- Prevent any further increase in NYPD headcount and invest in evidenced safety solutions like housing, schools, libraries, and non-police anti-violence programs.

Thank you very much for your time.

The NYPD's Strategic Response Group is a direct threat to the safety and security of our city and stands as a very real, and very critical threat to our democracy. The SRG operates as a band of paramilitary aggressors, seemingly answering to no one while utilizing excessive resources and funds to endanger, berate, and oppress the citizens they have sworn to serve and protect. This is why it is imperative, for the future prosperity of our communities and our liberties, that the SRG be defunded and disbanded immediately.

As an active-duty veteran, and as a public servant myself, I understand the enormous responsibility that is entrusted to those who serve the public. It requires that we in this line of work hold ourselves to a higher standard to guarantee that the power we have been given freely of the people is forever utilized for the people. It is obvious that the weight and magnitude of this honor has been lost on the SRG and the NYPD.

This is made evident by their flagrant lack of transparency, their violent and systematic discrimination of minority groups, as well as their general inability to serve their communities. As a NYCLU protest monitor, I have borne witness to these atrocities. I have seen the SRG routinely meet peace with unbridled violence, I have seen them destroy private property in the name of de-escalation, I have seen them arrest members of the press for asking questions.

The actions of the SRG prove that they are nothing more than a group of bullies who believe they can trample on our civil rights because they wield total and unregulated power. In order to build a more equitable and prosperous New York: we must stand up to those who seek to stand in the way of democracy, we must let the NYPD know that just because they utilize excessive force, the people will not be forced into silence. Funds must be divested from the SRG, the entire unit must be disbanded, and those in the NYPD and SRG must be held accountable for their willful disrespect of our constitutional rights.

I preface my comments on SRG with: It was ridiculous a member of this community waiting to speak on the same topic was ejected out of this chamber despite having already passed his past security. Another community member was kicked out for simply filming that incident. Nothing more. We know that the NYPD hates transparency, and this is simply the newest entry to that record.

I'm here as a NYC resident to demand that the SRG is immediately disbanded and held accountable for the significant levels of abuse it has committed.

The SRG is a staggering waste of money. Approximately \$133 million of our dollars have been spent on officers who do nothing but commit a massive level of misconduct, disproportionately against people of color.

I've witnessed a lot of this brutality at protests, both large and small, because an inordinate number of SRG are deployed at all of them. I have been at numerous protests where SRG officers— sometimes in full riot gear— outnumber protesters 2-to-1.

Time and again the SRG has proven that its MO is immediate escalation. What I mean by that is they make every single situation at every protest— no matter what type, no matter the context— unnecessarily violent. That starts with physically shoving people— for instance, with bikes— often completely over. Oftentimes groups of SRG, sometimes up to five or six of them, grabbing and then arresting people off streets or off sidewalks with no warning or no reason, sometimes tackling them to the ground, pinning them on the ground, pinning them against walls and other forms of violence.

These attacks are often indiscriminate— or deliberately target organizers, marshals, or people simply acting to keep the protest safe (e.g. by blocking cars or giving protesters direction). I personally know many cases where someone is arrested, asks why they were arrested, and are given no response by SRG officers.

Not to mention the disdain they have for protesters such as mocking us, goading us to touch them or hit them to provoke us so they can arrest us.

And this violence escalates to severe injuries as well— especially when the SRG begins beating and hitting people without a warning. I have friends who have got concussions. I've seen cases of fractures, broken bones requiring hospitalizations. At one time I've seen someone literally get knocked over backwards by the SRG. They hit the back of their head on the pavement and became completely unconscious. When we demanded that the cops call a medic, we were berated by SRG officers. All of this in response to protesters just marching down the street.

And this is really only scratching the surface of the harm that SRG does. This is not even close to the worst of it. I know people who have left protests completely broken by SRG's indiscriminate, violent attacks against them. I know of protesters who have been forced to sit in



a jail cell, while injured, without medical care. These are human rights abuses and cannot be allowed to continue.

This level of force is unjustifiable, unnecessary, and frankly infuriating. The SRG are undoubtedly the number one danger at protests. They are setting up situations where protesters will be seriously injured or killed. Let me repeat: They are setting up situations where protesters **WILL** be seriously injured or killed. Disband them immediately. Thank you.

I'D LIKE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF WHAT IS BEING DEFINED AS "PUBLIC SAFETY" REGARDING CURRENT LEGISLATION IN THE CITY & STATE OF NEW YORK. FIRST THE DEFUNDING OF THE NYPD WHICH HAS RESULTED IN THE MASSIVE RISES IN CRIME OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. CRIMES SUCH AS MURDER, RAPE, ASSAULT, ROBBERY, SEXUAL MISCONDUCT & DRUG RELATED CRIMES IE: CANNABIS, OPIOIDS, CIGARETTES & ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION HAS ONLY EXASPERATED ITSELF BY ~~THE~~ THE LEGAL & ILLEGAL USE <sup>WHICH IS CURRENTLY LAW</sup> PROHIBITED BY THE CITY & THE STATE WHICH HAS RESULTED IN THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL & ECONOMIC CRIMES BEING COMITTED BY THE MENTALLY & CRIMINALLY INSANE WHO ARE OFTEN HOMELESS, ~~EMPLOYED~~ MIGRANTS OR PEOPLE LIVING IN A SHELTER OR FACILITY. THESE REPEAT RECIDIVIST OFFENDERS WHO ARE NOT PROSECUTED OR PUT IN JAIL WITH OR WITHOUT BAIL ARE PART OF THE REASONS PUBLIC SAFETY IS IN JEAPORDY, & ~~SAFETY~~ <sup>ALSO</sup> WHY THE UNITED STATES CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IS IN <sup>DIRE</sup> NEED OF REFORM ~~WHETHER~~ <sup>WHETHER</sup> CONSERVATIVE OR DEMOCRATIC.

As A Homeless Person FOR OVER 8 YEARS NOW, I HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIMES REPEATEDLY BECAUSE THE U.S. CONSTITUTION SUPPOSEDLY DOES NOT PROTECT MY RIGHTS AS A U.S. CITIZEN ANYMORE. I HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF RAPE ROBBERY, ASSAULT & A.I. TARGETING. DESPITE MY ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE FROM ANY AGENCY SUCH AS THE <sup>CITY, STATE OR FEDERAL</sup> NYPD, INSPECTOR GENERAL, GOV OFFICE, MAYOR'S OFC. MANHATTAN & QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY, ACLU, CCRB, STATE DETECTIVES OR THE F.B.I. I HAVE RECEIVED NO ASSISTANCE IN RESOLVING ANY OF THESE MATTERS WITH ~~PROSECUTING~~ PROSECUTING

4  
PAGES

ANY OF THE CRIMINALS WHO HAVE PERPETRATED THESE CRIMES  
IN ADDITION, THE SERVICES PROVIDED TO HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS  
ARE OFTEN LESS THAN ADEQUATE FOR ANYONE SEEKING TO  
REGAIN THEIR LIVES AFTER YEARS OF HOMELESSNESS,  
IE: EMPLOYMENT, A DECENT APT OR HOME, A HOUSING VOUCHER  
MEDICAL INSURANCE & LEGAL ASSISTANCE, ALL OF THIS &  
MORE BEING SAID, THE REAL ISSUES SURROUNDING  
A PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET PROPOSAL ARE BEING MANIPULATED  
IF YOU WILL, BY THE WILL OF THE TAXPAYERS, POLITICIANS,  
BUSINESSES, PROFESSIONALS, WHO ARE MICRO-MANAGING THESE  
ISSUES IN A MANNER THAT IS BOTH CONFLICTING &  
OF ILL USE TO THOSE WHOSE JOB IT IS TO FIND  
REAL SOLUTIONS, NOT POLICIES WHICH CURRENTLY ARE  
MIREN WITH CORRUPTION & FRAUD. I WOULD ASK THE  
CITY COUNCIL TO OPENLY DISCUSS THESE MATTERS SO THAT  
A REAL BUDGET PROPOSAL CAN BEER AN OF THE  
CITIES CITIZENS NOT A CITY ~~USE~~ <sup>FULL</sup> OF IN THE WORDS  
OF FORMER MAYOR BILL D'OLASSIO OF HAVE &  
HAVE NOTS.

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Zara Nasir  
[zaran03@gmail.com](mailto:zaran03@gmail.com)  
Jackson Heights, New York 11372

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Deputy Commissioner Kaz Daugherty

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYPD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Chief John Chell

Address: NYPD

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Chair Arva Rice

Address: CCRB

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Executive Director Jonathan Darshel

Address: CCRB 3/20

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Chair Anna Rice  
CCRB

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DARCEL PLARK

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Bronx County District Attorney

Address: 198 E. 161, St, N.Y. 10461

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Queens DA melindakutz

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Queens County District Attorney's

Address: Office

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aisha Greene  
Address: 125-01 Queens Blvd  
I represent: Queens County District Attorney, DA Katz  
Address: 125-01 Queens Blvd.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Naiburg  
Address: 125-01 Queens Blvd  
I represent: Queens Co. D.A.  
Address: Same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HON DARCEL D CLARK  
Address: 198 116th ST. BX, NY 10451  
I represent: BRONX DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
Address: 198 E 116th STREET BX NY  
10451

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Wendy Feddy

Address: [REDACTED] Forest Hills, NY 11375

I represent: Queens District Atty

Address: 80 02 Kissena Road, Queens, NY 11375

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Odalye Albers (Chief of Staff)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Brooklyn County District Attorney

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Meg Reiss

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Manhattan DA

Address: 1 Hogan Place

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jill Harris

Address: 350 Jay Street

I represent: DA. Eric Gonzalez

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Oswaldo Cruz

Address: 350 Jay Street

I represent: DA. Eric Gonzalez

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIC Gonzalez

Address: 350 Jay Street, Brooklyn NY

I represent: Same

Address: Same

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/2021

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Donald Nesbit

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Executive Vice President, Local 372, DC37

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ileana Mendez-Penate

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Communities United for Police

Address: Reform

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darren Mack

Address: 40 Rector St. NY NY, 10006

I represent: Freedom Agenda

Address: 40 Rector St

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Depl. Comm. Seth Severino

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Police Commissioner Edward Cabani

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief of Department Jeffrey Madorey

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Dep. Comm. Michael Garber

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: First Dep. Comm. Tania Kinsella

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Dep. Comm. Rosemarie Maldonado

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Insp. Tracy Mulet

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Joseph Kenny

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dep. Comm. Mark Stewart

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Dep. Comm. Kez Daughtry

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Chief Michael Kemper

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Dep. Comm. Rebecca Weiner

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Philip Rivera

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Theresa ~~Lee~~ Tobin

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Martine Materasso

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Michael Lipetri

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Asst. Comm. Carlos Nieves

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief of Patrol John Chell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Dep. Comm. Bob Barrows

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Chief Wilson Arambales

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Chief Ruben Beltran

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief John Benoit

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Asst. Chief John Cosgrove

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dep. Comm. Paul Gamble

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Dep. Comm. Edward Delatorre

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Dep. Comm. Wendy Garcia

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Chief Miguel Iglesias

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ~~Deputy~~ Deputy Commissioner

Address: Chauncey PARKER

I represent: NYPD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deputy Commissioner Lisa White

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYPD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Olufunmilola OBE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYPD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Hailey Nolasco (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Center for Justice Innovation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

Name: Sanket Kumar (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: Normandy Dr.

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-20-24

Name: Alfredo Gutierrez (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 4127 42nd ST

I represent: NYCLU

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Hennessey

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Awalter Masterson

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: SCG

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sonni Min

Address: ████████ Nassau Street ██████████

I represent: ~~████████~~ Christopher Marte

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: WALTER DITMAN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: JACKSON HTS, NY 11372

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Milcah Gray

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Todd Maisel

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ E 38<sup>th</sup> St

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Phoebe France

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: NICOLE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NIA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Griffin Jones

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Disbanding SRG Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Arni Pravin

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Flushing 11385

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maximilian Clark

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ 41st 11101

I represent: self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 03/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Klea

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Rochambeau Ave #

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 03/20/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Waemary Waeyakoh

Address: West 50<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY, 10019

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Awfter Masterson

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Public Safety

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tashoy Miller

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: WCJA (Womens Community Justice Association)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sabine Black

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/21/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: dee sams

Address: POWELL ST BROOKLYN NY 11212

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Paul Rivera

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Public safety Res. No. Hearing  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Natalia Aristizabal

Address: Make the Road NY

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: BK, QNS, SI

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Labelle Leyva

Address: [REDACTED] Murtle Ave

I represent: NYCLU

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darius Kadiyan

Address: [REDACTED] Greene Av BK

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LAMYA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Council on American-Islamic Relations, NY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

Public

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brenna Lip

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kant, Tiskens

Address: 11 W. Alden Lane, Apt 6A, 10036

I represent: Collective Public Affairs on behalf of

Address: Initiative Against Sexual Assault, The

Equal Justice Support For Persons in the Sex  
Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daniel Ciore

Address: [REDACTED] St Astorik NY

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-20-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Feras Deek

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Public Safety Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Neroleen Kiswani

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Within our lifetime

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LISA SCHNEIDERBERG DORF

Address: 177 Livingston St, Bklyn

I represent: BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICE

Address: Sam

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Obi Afriye (Ah-Free-Tay)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Legal Defense Fund

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deven Krishnaswami

Address: [REDACTED] W 96th St Bldg way 10025

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BEN RIVERA (CHIEF OF OPERATIONS)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: BRONX COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DARWANA CASTILLO (CFO)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: BRONX COUNTY DA  
198 E. 161 ST, Bx, N.Y. 10461

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-20-2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: REGAN W. FLORES

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

Name: Toraki Konstantis (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

Name: Aaliyah Guillory-Nickens (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 11 Park Place New York NY 10007

I represent: Youth Represent

Address: 11 Park Place Suite 1512

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Jullian Harris-Calvin (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: jullian.harris@gmail.com

I represent: Vera Institute of Justice

Address: jharrisocalvin@vera.org

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JUSTINE LUDNIP

Address: 199 WATER ST

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: 199 Water

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/12/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Couronne Northampton

Address: [REDACTED] BROOKLYN NY

I represent: West 9th Tenants Union

Address: [REDACTED] BROOKLYN

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ann Matthews

Address: 360 E. 161<sup>ST</sup> BRONX NY 10451

I represent: The Bronx Defenders

Address: 360 E. 161<sup>ST</sup> BRONX NY 10451

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-21-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stan German NYCDS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LORIZENO

Address: 118-21 QUEENS BLVD. FOREST HILLS

I represent: QUEENS DEFENDERS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chadain Dr. Victoria Phillips - Dr. V

Address: 99 Wall St. Ste 813 NY NY 10005

I represent: Myself today

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I have  
to leave by 5PM  
fora Comm on it  
event



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms





**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tiffany Sloan

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 03/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARGOT BARRAT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: N/A

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: C. G.

Address: [REDACTED] E. 99 ST.

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms