

New York City Council

Memorandum in Support of Legislation

This memorandum is authored by the sponsor and explains the need for the legislation referenced below, in accordance with Rule 6.00(d) of the Rules of the Council.

Legislative Service Number:

- LS No. 7191

Prime Sponsor:

- Council Member Chi Ossé

Bill Title:

- A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to regulating the police department's response to first amendment events.

Submitted by:

- Council Member Chi Ossé

Justification

The New York Police Department's Strategic Response Group (SRG) was formed in 2015 as a counter terrorism unit but overtime, the unit has been used to police protests and demonstrations. The SRG has a long history of using violent tactics such as using tear gas/pepper spray, and using sound magnifiers against protestors. The use of these tactics has led to a major class action lawsuit in June 2020 where the City [settled](#) to pay over \$13 million to protestors who were harmed by the SRG at a Black Lives Matter protest in Mott Haven. Additionally, there is a lack of transparency on how and when the SRG is deployed to protests and other First Amendment events with reports [stating](#) that the unit has been disproportionately deployed to protests and demonstrations that are predominately led and attended by Black and brown protestors.

This bill would prevent the New York Police Department and the SRG from utilizing actions that harm New Yorkers who are expressing their First Amendment rights and bring more transparency into how the NYPD handles protests and other First Amendment gatherings. The

right to demonstrate and gather is protected by the First Amendment and New Yorkers should be safe to express and exercise this right.

For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.