



Roosevelt Network at George Washington University's Testimony on the Metro Police Department Budget

Dear DC Council,

I am here to represent the Roosevelt Network at George Washington University, a student run think tank working to write and advocate progressive policies across the DMV area. After the shocking and horrific deaths of, among far too many others, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, it is abundantly clear that big change is needed to end systemic racism in this country. While the solutions need to go far beyond criminal justice reform, it's obviously a place to begin, as the events of the last few weeks have demonstrated a desperate need for reform.

While we are in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, which as you obviously know is putting significant strain on municipal budgets, it is incredibly upsetting to see that there is an \$18.5 million *increase* in the MPD's budget for FY 2021. It's clear that over policing communities, rather than actually making investments in them, has not worked. And while there are simple reforms that absolutely should be taken to reform how police departments operate, such as have been proposed by Campaign Zero in their project "8 Can't Wait" (which the District does have work to do on), it's obvious that these changes alone are not sufficient.

We need to dramatically rethink the role that police should play in our society. The role that American police play within society is incredibly uncommon when compared to the rest of the world. Our police officers are more like armed soldiers entering into a war zone than productive members of our communities, and trained more to treat members of our communities more like enemy combatants than the citizens they've been charged to protect.

We call on the DC Council to decrease, rather than increase, funding to the MPD and instead invest that money into the communities that have, for so long, been held back by the scourge of systemic racism. We call on the DC Council to de-arm a significant amount of the MPD, as the majority of their work does not require an officer with a gun. DC should instead invest heavily in social services and take a public health approach to supporting communities and reducing crime, similar to the Safe Streets and Cure Violence programs that other cities have implemented to impressive results. We call on the DC Council to defund the MPD as we know it in order to finally create a Washington DC where all people, regardless of race, have the right to feel safe and protected in their communities.