



Department of Finance  
Bureau of the Budget and Management Research

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# City of Baltimore

## Fiscal 2023 Virtual Taxpayers' Night

### Testimony Submissions

Compiled by Bureau of the Budget and Management Research

The Board of Estimates and the Department of Finance's Bureau of the Budget and Management Research (BBMR) hosted the Fiscal 2023 Taxpayers' Night on Wednesday, April 27, 2022. This event was hosted in a hybrid format. To ensure access for residents to provide testimony, BBMR collected testimony via webform, email, and voicemail through April 29, 2022. This document compiles all testimony provided on the Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget Plan via the webform, email, and voicemail. Please note that some of these submissions have been edited for clarity and ease of reading.

## Testimony Submissions

**Submitted by:** Lucia Treasure

**Submitted via:** Webform

The proposed Baltimore City budget was just released and they have, once again, increased the BPD budget. This time by \$5 million. One of the things they're doing to cover that big bloated budget is raising our water rates.

I am personally really sick of paying extremely high property taxes (which also translates to higher rents for folks who are renting) and overpriced water bills so that we can give half a billion dollars to a terrifying gang every year so that they can terrorize us. There are a lot of ways to decrease crime in a community and the BPD has proven time and again that they are not capable of that. I'm not sure why we keep giving them more and more money. If I did my job like that I would be fired.

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**Submitted by:** Karen Gross

**Submitted via:** Webform

Hello,

The infrastructure charge and miscellaneous fees that were added after the 2016 Board of Estimates approval, is a huge burden on the City residents. The fees need to be stricken! The purpose was to support the renovation of an outdated infrastructure and to help with billing issues. These issues are still prevalent, particularly the billing issues. They have yet to be remedied! Most recently, to check your bill online you must create an account. Until less than a month ago, anyone could put any address in and see the bill of your neighbors. Being able to see your neighbor's bill was very telling about how disorganized and outright false the billing system is. My average usage is \$13.11 and my bill is OVER \$50/month. My neighbors and I have the same bill every month. All \$50.74 with \$13.11 of usage. There is NO due process for us, because of these fee increases. My elderly neighbor has a water bill over \$200/month. Baltimore County pays a fraction of that-their bills are less and are assessed quarterly, versus monthly. Meanwhile, the City Council approved a 30% raise for the Head of the Department of Public Works. And the citizens are left to deal with inflated property tax rates and unconscionable water bill fees. The outdated infrastructure can be supported in our property tax bill. Where at least we have due process rights. And the billing system has yet to be addressed since 2016, and therefore these rate increases are going to the one change I see: a raise for the Head of the Department of Public Works.

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**Submitted by:** Kennedy McDaniel

**Submitted via:** Webform

My name is Kennedy McDaniel and I am a resident of the 12th district. I have lived in Baltimore my entire life, and I am disgusted by the consistent and increasing funding that goes towards the police. I've worked with youth, families, and seniors within various communities in Baltimore City. We do not need police. Police do not help us. We need strong community centers, well-funded educators, affordable housing, and abundant resources, opportunities, and enrichment for people of all ages throughout Baltimore City. BPD DOES NOTHING to support our communities - they do not deserve an increase. They lock away children and adults, disrupt family units, and target our communities unfairly. If you want to help Baltimore, help us - don't fund the police.

As a Baltimore city resident and believer that we can and must do better, I unequivocally support and stand with CJSJ and Organizing Black to demand that: \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities; a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process; and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and all 'crimes of poverty.'

I urge you to vote down the budget as it stands.

Thank you.

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**Submitted by:** Mateen Milan

**Submitted via:** Webform

Good evening.

My name is Mateen Milan, and I am a resident of the Old Goucher/Station North neighborhood.

I believe that the additional \$5 million dollars the board of trustees is planning to allot to police in the upcoming fiscal year (FY23) should be redistributed to community center empowerment and positions in the mayoral office dedicated supporting this empowerment initiative. Organizations such as the Greenmount West Community Center have been DYNAMIC in their work and have the power to provide and distribute justice for their neighborhood, but are greatly underfunded.

As a Baltimore city resident and believer that we can and must do better, I unequivocally support and stand with CJSJ and Organizing Black to demand that: \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities; a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process; and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and all 'crimes of poverty.'

I urge you to vote down the budget as it stands.

Thank you.

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**Submitted by:** Sandy Laubenheimer

**Submitted via:** Webform

More police officers nor an increase in the BPD budget is the answer to all of Baltimore City's issues. We need to redirect funds from police to much needed services such as mental health, post-traumatic stress help for children witnessing violent crimes, drug rehab, job training for our youth and a ton of other services for our youth before they turn to drugs. Also, the Baltimore City schools are in terrible shape and need desperate help, they are the butt of many jokes, no heat no books and so on. That is sad that we feel we need to pay tons of police but no funds for the schools that is where we start to help young folks prepare for their futures so then the need for police is decreased. There is so much more we can do with those funds to help the youth of Baltimore City get off the streets and get them a good education and good jobs.

The Mayor and the City Council need to read and watch the HBO mini-series The Corner, it is eye opening of the generational drug dependency that continue and the cycle needs to be broken due to the decimation drugs have on family after family. DeAndre McCullough is a prime example, his mother and father and most of their family were drug addicts, so he experienced this as a 15-year-old drug dealer in Baltimore and he was featured in the book "The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner City Neighborhood". Unfortunately, he succumbed to his own drug addiction and sadly was found dead on Aug. 1 in Woodlawn, he was only 35. The one good thing out of the whole book/mini-series is his mother finally got clean and is helping others in her West Baltimore neighborhood get their lives back on track. That all takes money and money that would be better spent than on more police or increasing the police budget.

It is sad that we think the answer is more police that keep killing young Black women & men at a horrendous rate, but not putting much more funding into schools, mental health, drug rehab etc. The arresting and mass incarceration of our young Black men & women is not the answer, we need to help them before they are introduced to drugs & violence and put them on the right path with services that benefit them. We need to have more community advocates and violence interrupters to help curb and get to the bottom of the issues creating the violence before it erupts.

Thank you,

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**Submitted by:** Megan Shook

**Submitted via:** Webform

Data shows that higher per capita spending on police does not result in reduction of violent crimes. All the 911 calls for mental health situations, e.g. bizarre behavior, psychological suffering, etc., need appropriate response from a mental health professional or social worker from the Health Department, not police. Shift \$20,000,000 from BPD to the Health Department! Maybe they could update their spaces so those employees could come to work in an attractive, clean healthful

environment, and feel valued. That would be a start. And shift another \$20,000,000 to Parks and Rec. How is the police department giving us more bang for the buck? I'm not seeing any accountability for the resources we've given them in recent years.

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**Submitted by:** Ethan Hasiuk

**Submitted via:** Webform

Honorable members of the Board of Estimates,

My name is Ethan Hasiuk. I live in the 12th district in Charles Village. I am a member of Jews United for Justice, which organizes more than 1,600 people in Baltimore City to support social, racial, and economic justice.

JUFJ is proud to stand with Organizing Black and our coalition partners in the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs in supporting the following amendments to the FY23 Baltimore City Budget. These are the same demands that we have made since 2020.

A \$100 million cut from BPD's existing budget. The increases to police funding in this budget are unacceptable.

A \$30 million investment into a community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process.

A \$70 million additional investment to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

Removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues. Baltimore must create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police but connects people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment, and harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.

Additionally, JUFJ would like to see \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program.

Baltimore is my adopted home. It is where I had my first job, found community, and met my fiancée. It is the place where I want to build a career and grow old. However, I am extremely discouraged that Baltimore City government continues the failed pattern of increasing investment in police, and I believe that it is a pattern that ultimately fails all residents. Baltimore has the highest per-capita spending on police in the U.S. by far, and continual increases in police funding have failed to make our city safer. In fact, police have committed violence and civil rights abuses against our city's most vulnerable residents with impunity, resulting in irreparable harm and trauma at a cost of millions in lawsuit settlements, paid by taxpayers.

Affordable housing, quality public education, universal healthcare, living-wage jobs, and universal basic income are proven to reduce crime and harm. Every dollar spent on police is a dollar taken away from these basic priorities that will ultimately make our safety safer and more just.

Of course, gun violence and public safety are real and urgent issues in Baltimore City, and I am encouraged that this budget decreases funding to some traditional police functions and increases funding to effective public safety alternatives such as Safe Streets. However, this budget does not do enough to divest from police and invest in public safety alternatives.

Sincerely,

Ethan Hasiuk

Jews United for Justice  
District 12

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**Submitted by:** Valeria Pappas-Brown

**Submitted on:** April 27, 2022

**Submitted via:** Email

Dear BOE,

Hello. I am Valeria Pappas-Brown. I have lived in Baltimore City for 27 years. For part of that time Canton Middle School (Canton#230) has been a middle school, educating the youth here in Baltimore. But for a large part of that time, it has been empty, no school. The school is still there and my fear, knowing that gentrification is alive and well in my area, would like the City Council to preserve or prevent the sale of this educational building to developers that do not care about anything but money. Many charter schools have tried and to make a proposal to the Board of Education to set up their schools in that school, but no progress has been made. I guess I am saying the time to make Canton 230 into a school and recreation center is now. We have many young couples with young children, if you want to keep families in this part of the city you need to open Canton Middle School and other abandoned schools in the Southeast and have those building put to work educating the children to keep families here for the long term. Money for Education not the Police.

Thank you so much for listening to my concern.

Valeria Pappas-Brown

Canton

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**Submitted by:** Alison Quintaniel

**Submitted on:** April 26, 2022

**Submitted via:** Voicemail, transcribed

Hi there. My name's Alison Quintaniel and I live in the 12th district in Baltimore. And I'm just calling to request that the 5 million additional dollars that will be allocated to the BPD get allocated someplace else, literally anywhere else. So, I think for all the reasons you already know about, I have been extremely disappointed by the police department's performance. I am pretty disturbed that they managed to miss the fact that their chief financial officer, their fiscal officer, rather had a gun, what is it called, on their record. I don't want to pay this money, all of this money on my taxes, through my wallet, water bills, which are already, like, exorbitantly high to continue funding a gang that terrorizes the citizens of Baltimore. So, please, if you can put that money somewhere else. Thank you.

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**Submitted by:** Onyinye Alheri

**Submitted on:** April 27, 2022

**Submitted via:** Voicemail, transcribed

Hello my name is Onyinye Alheri, I'm from Upton, over West. I'm calling to provide some commentary on the proposed 2023 budget. The most pressing in my mind being a need for a shift toward a participatory budget. I think it really is time for us as a city to start considering those options. I did take a look at the budget overall. Happy to see some in educational spending, which is likely due to the Kirwan Commission legislation that passed last year, so shout out to everyone who organized for that. I do see another \$5 million increased for the Baltimore City Police and at this point I know I'm a broken record on this and I hope other people are too and have been speaking out. But we cannot continue to keep funding a service that does not serve our city, does not service the true needs of our people. Continues to criminalize and enact violence upon the residents of our city, most recently Donnell Rochester, killed by the Baltimore City Police, many others in the past and, sadly, most likely to come. I do see a \$23 million decrease for Public Works, a lot to do with water, which is really devastating, especially now given the news that the State now controls our city's water. Aside from those points, I think generally the city seems to be in a budget crunch because of the overall massive decrease in budget expenditures, I'm not really going to go over line by line. In terms of pillars, I think one pillar we could consider is reparations for the Black people of Baltimore that have been harmed by the State and by the city continuously. I hope that will be considered one day, along with the participatory budget I mentioned earlier. I'll say it here because I don't have any other place to say it, Hogan refunds the police tactic is not going to work and I hope that our own City legislators can recognize that and take leadership to shift away from the massive, massive, ridiculous spending that our city has regards to the police department. Thank you.

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**Submitted by:** Amiyo Nuchovich

City Hall, 100 N. Holliday Street Baltimore, MD 21202  
410-396-3100 | bbmr.baltimorecity.gov

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**Submitted on:** April 28, 2022

**Submitted via:** Voicemail, transcribed

Hey, my name is Amiyo Nuchovich, I go by Ami. I've been a resident here in Baltimore City about like five years now, living in Bromo Arts District, Mount Vernon area. Love it. Yeah, I'm calling to oppose the current budget that you all are kind of proposing because it definitely gives too much money to police and not enough money to any of our communities. I mean, even a single dollar going to the police is way too much money. So I think we need to do something about that. As a Baltimore City resident and a believer that we can and must do better by our people, I support and stand with the CJSJ and Organizing Black to demand that one, \$100 million to be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities. Two, a \$30 million community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process, and three, the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and all crimes of poverty. I urge you to vote down the budget as it stands. Thank you from the very bottom of my heart. Take care. Brush your hair. Love you.

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**Submitted by:** Carl Earhart

**Submitted on:** April 28, 2022

**Submitted via:** Voicemail, transcribed

Good morning, my name is Carl Earhart and I am a resident of the Hampden neighborhood. And I'm calling to oppose the current budget because it gives too much money to police and not enough money to any of our communities. As a Baltimore City resident for over 20 years and a believer that we can and must do better, I unequivocally support and stand with the CJSJ and Organizing Black to demand that one, \$100 million to be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities. A \$30 million community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process, and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and all "crimes of poverty". I urge you to vote down the budget as it stands. Thank you [provided phone number].

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**Submitted by:** Lydia Campbell

**Submitted on:** April 29, 2022

**Submitted via:** Voicemail, transcribed

Hi my name is Lydia Campbell. I am a [inaudible], a city member and I wanted to weigh in on the 2023 [inaudible] budget. [inaudible]. I agree with most of the sentiments [inaudible] around reallocating funding from Baltimore Police Department towards the arts and community engagement programs, such as behavioral and mental health, as well as school programming and public works. I was in a [inaudible] for community service for public works efforts, clean-ups in the community, and I think that funding should be prioritized over the reduction of crime as the people are more important.

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**Testimony was submitted via webform and email attachments by the following individuals and are attached to this document.**

[Mattee Becker](#)

[Stephanie Compton](#)

[Rachel McGrain Holly](#)

[Powell](#)

[Dan Richman](#)

[Charlene Rock-Foster](#)

[Adam Rosenberg](#)

[Rishi Shah](#)

[Taylor Smith-Hams](#)

April 27, 2022

Mattee Becker  
(legal name: Madeline Becker)  
1012 South Paca Street  
Baltimore, MD 21230

Testimony for Baltimore City Taxpayers Night 2022

Thank you for hosting another year of Taxpayers Night. I am submitting testimony as a part time teacher at the Baltimore School for the Arts, as an IATSE Local 487 Delegate, Lighting Technician and Rigging Electrician in film and television, as a sculptor and avid gardener living on the sovereign land of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe (Baltimore City).

I am writing to call for an increase in funding for the arts and sciences in public school preK-12, as well as the need for robust mental health funding for children and adults of all ages in the Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget Plan. This funding can be achieved by decreasing the budget going towards the police.

Everything is connected, as Mae Jemison, an astronaut and visionary said in 2012 TED talk, “The creativity that allowed us, and we required, to conceive and launch the space shuttle, springs from the same source of imagination and analysis it took to carve a Bundu statue, or the ingenuity it took to stage Alvin Ailey’s ‘Cry.’ Einstein said ‘the most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious...’” The mysterious and unknown are also sources of fear for a great many people, in part because without the fluidity of artistic and scientific practices, which swim in the unknown, people don’t have the tools to sit with uncertainty.

Mae Jemison, being an astronaut, came up with a formula, “Understanding + Resources + Will = Outcomes... Understanding is our sciences, arts, religion, how we see the world around us. Resources are our minerals, labor, money, what we have to work with. Most importantly, our Will, that’s our vision, our aspirations for the future, our hopes and dreams, our strengths and our fears, successes, failures – it’s what we do with understanding and resources. Design, craftsmanship, engineering, skilled labor and our Will add up to form our outcomes, which is our human quality of life. **Where do we want to be?**” Today many people are so burnt out and overworked, it’s hard to even imagine where we want to be, let alone how to get there.

Frederick Douglass wrote of the importance of trades, not from a creative standpoint but one of survival, “learn trades, or die.” The practical aspects of what has morphed into the Fine Arts are born of self-sufficiency, invention, and survival. However, today, fine arts are always the first thing cut in public school funding, alongside wet labs and hands on science-based work.

Increasingly, our kids are learning through a screen and not with hands on experience. The high schoolers I work with hardly write anymore, few take notes, nearly all are anxious and struggling with varying degrees depression, and as a result they have a hard time retaining information and working with their hands. There is a profound connection between the hands and the brain, *and we are losing that*. Our kids are in crisis. While working at the Johns Hopkins and MICA film center as an assistant manager, I learned from working with college students, that many do not know how to read an analog

clock or map. Our emerging adults are also in crisis. This is a failing of our education systems, our current mainstream culture's demand on speed over quality, and of our society's failure to take care of the most vulnerable populations.

Arts and sciences provide means to connect the mind, body and spirit. They allow idealism and realism to co-exist. They give skill to fix things that are broken. Re-purpose materials. Look at situations, locations, resources, objects, structures, and people from multiple vantage points. Consider contradictions and leave space for compassion. The arts and sciences lead to endless questions, to questioning the questions, to finding beauty in the smallest moments, like the way sun hits Baltimore brick in the late afternoon.

Agnes Martin, a painter who worked to find balance with her schizophrenia, said "the function of art work is the stimulation of sensibilities, the renewal of memories, of moments of [joy]." Artists carry pain and love. They transform it, keep record of it, give it voice, movement, release.

Theater, dance, music, painting, textiles, gardening, filmmaking, writing, and all the other endless forms of art are avenues to deal with grief, to heal, to remember, to let go... then rebuild, transform, transcend. Author bell hooks said "the function of art is to do more than tell it like it is – it is to imagine what is possible."

In 2022, our world is as complicated as ever, something you all working in our government I'm sure are well aware. This is why we need artists and scientists to imagine what is possible – to remind us there are other ways. *It doesn't have to be like this.*

We must divert funds from the police and fund arts, sciences, and mental health programs in schools, recreational centers, after school programs, prison programs, returning citizens programs, and support groups for adults and kids who are already doing this work. We MUST NOT use this money to fund arts centers or housing that only benefit developers, as there is a vicious cycle of artists being used as tools for gentrification.

Within public schools, these funds must flow to ALL public schools, not just Charter schools. For every dollar that is invested in police, public schools only get 50 cents. We do not need helicopters and SWAT teams. Use the money that funds police more effectively by training away from drug war tactics to violence intervention, with policies that require officers to get out of their cars and get to know the neighborhoods they work in, mental health support for officers, and increased public transparency, to name a few.

Our kids deserve more than mere survival, heat and air conditioning are needed, but they are not enough. I understand due to the Kirwan Legislation there will be more funding for teacher pay, college readiness, and "improving student outcomes." It is crucial that arts and sciences are included in this funding. Our kids deserve to thrive, to dream, to lead the way for what could be.

Because, if kids do not have an outlet to process their grief, anxiety, puberty, and also their ideals and beauty, the logical next step that any human being does is shut down or act out. Currently, the way in which our society is structured, kids who act out, especially Black, Brown and low income kids, end up in the hands of the police and prison system. We can change this. Throw out this budget and create a new one that is sustainable. Baltimore artist Joyce J. Scott said, "We have a chance to make this world a paradise, if not for us, at least for our kids."



Testimony on the 2022-2023 Preliminary Budget

4/29/2022

Stephanie Compton  
2936 Wyman Pkwy.  
Baltimore, MD 21211  
City Council District 14

Dear Members of the Board of Estimates,

I attended the tax payer's night in person but didn't offer my testimony while in attendance. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony by email by the end of the week.

I work for the non-profit, Energy Justice Network, and organize locally with the Clean Air Baltimore Coalition, a project of EJN. In the past year, I've engaged with many members of the BOE and advocated zero waste policies and infrastructure that protect the environment and create the jobs to do the work, meet climate action goals, and are in alignment with the Mayor's Transition Report committing to zero waste implementation.

I witnessed the overwhelming opposition from the community for the increased budget to the Baltimore Police Department. I also echo their sentiments and oppose increasing their budget and request considerations for increasing the funding of services and programs that support the communities needs and basic human rights to housing and healthcare.

Locally, I've been working on a zero waste policy for the C&D waste stream which would mandate a policy for deconstruction, sustainably managing the 319K annual tonnage of the C&D waste/resource stream. In the proposed legislation, soon to be introduced by Councilmember Odette Ramos, The REBUILD Act proposes a fund to help existing demolishing companies get certified in deconstruction and support new businesses that would also be created with the passing of this mandate. In the bill, we suggest that demolition permits be increased to support the deconstruction fund however, after talking with members of DHCD, they said that funds always go straight to the general fund and from the general fund they receive their budget to work with, which is often underfunded based on what they ask for. (I do not quote them on that, but that is my interpretation.) I'm asking that to support the successful implementation of The REBUILD Act that the Mayor would approve earmarking funds needed to directly support deconstruction. This policy addresses alot of the communities needs with workforce development and a cleaner, safer environment while also removing blight.

Thank you for your consideration!  
Stephanie Compton

April 29, 2022  
Rachel McGrain  
Baltimore, MD 21211

**Testimony - FY2023 Board of Estimates Taxpayers' Night**

Honorable members of the City Council,

My name is Rachel McGrain (she/her), and I am a constituent of District 12 in the Remington neighborhood. I am a former Baltimore City school teacher and an active member of my neighborhood and faith communities in Baltimore.

I believe that budgets are a reflection of a city's values. If a city truly values its children and preaches investing in communities, the budget should reflect that through clear investments in education, transportation, housing, rec and parks, and health; not police. I am disappointed that the FY2023 Baltimore City Preliminary Budget continues a pattern of increasing investments in policing such that the police budget is nearly double the education budget and is more than the transportation, rec and parks, and health budgets combined.

As a public school teacher, far too many of my students had a parent or close relative who was incarcerated or themselves at risk of starting down the abhorrent school to prison pipeline. Many of my students also struggled to get to school because of the inconsistency of the bus system or lived in neighborhoods full of vacant homes. I applaud the city's increase in the education budget to satisfy the requirements of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, and yet it is still only half of the police budget; do we care twice as much about policing as we care about our kids' education?

If this budget is a reflection of our values, I see no reason why the police department budget should be increased while housing and community development suffers a \$32M cut. There are so many holistic and community centered ways to be investing in our city; this should be reflected in the budget through a decrease in the police budget and an increase in the health, housing, transportation, and education services that truly support our youth and all Baltimoreans.

As such, I am asking you to support the following amendments to the budget:

1. A \$100 million cut from BPD's existing budget. The increases to police funding in this budget are unacceptable.
2. A \$30 million investment into a community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process.
3. A \$70 million additional investment to support quality, affordable housing, high-quality public education, universal healthcare, jobs, a universal basic income, and community programs.

4. Removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and other quality of life issues. Baltimore must create an alternative to 911 that does not dispatch police but connects people in crisis with the mental health, housing, treatment, and harm reduction resources they need to live with dignity.
5. \$2.5 million to fund the new Fair Elections program.

Rather than investing in the same failed pattern of increasing police spending, let's make radical investments in community needs, such as housing and education, and address the root causes of violence.

I respectfully urge you to invest in supporting Black, brown, and low-income communities, not in policing them. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rachel McGrain

April 27, 2022

Good Evening,

My name is Holly Powell and I am a resident of the 46<sup>th</sup> district.

I am a social worker who has worked in various positions in Baltimore City and County primarily focused on youth and families. Many of those youth were in the care of the Department of Social Services or the Department of Juvenile Justice. I currently work with families who have experienced a large spectrum of trauma that continues to inhibit their forward progress and growth. While the families that I have worked with have had some positive experiences with the police, they, and I, have also had many not so positive experiences with the police. Such as the police confiscating dirt bikes from kids and then proceeding to ride the bikes themselves throughout the neighborhood, or the police yelling at kids who are already traumatized.

The amount of money that has been committed to the police department is astonishing given the extensive needs of this city in terms of housing, education, healthcare, addiction resources, etc.

As a Baltimore city resident and believer that we can and must do better, I unequivocally support and stand with CJSJ and Organizing Black to demand that: \$100 million dollars be cut from BPD's budget and invested into Black communities; a \$30 million dollar community wellness trust fund to be governed through a participatory budgeting process; and the removal of police entirely from responses to mental health distress, substance use, sex work, homelessness, and all 'crimes of poverty.'

I urge you to vote down the budget as it stands.

Thank you.

Holly Powell

April 27, 2022

Testimony for FY23 Board of Estimates Taxpayers' Night

Dan Richman, Patterson Park 21224

Dear Mayor Scott, Council President Mosby, Comptroller Henry, Solicitor Shea, and Public Works Director Mitchell:

Mayor Scott ran his campaign on reducing police funding to shift money to housing, infrastructure, social services, and all sorts of other helpful things. And yet here we are, another annual budget increasing funding for police. You're going to say we need the highest per capita police costs in the country (by far) to fight crime? How dare you with that cynical nonsense. We have crime BECAUSE all services for people are starved for funding. We have crime BECAUSE the police steal, kill, maim, and otherwise destroy the economic and social fabric of this city.

I walk around my neighborhood every day and see the obvious opportunities that could be addressed with the hundreds of millions of dollars you're wasting on policing. You could train and employ more city employees to work on decaying infrastructure, trash cleanup, transportation services, recreation facilities, youth activities, and mental health services. You could increase funding for drug harm reduction, housing costs, housing maintenance, poverty relief, and violence reduction programming, the list could go on.

Vote down this budget and start over with the budget people are asking for.

April 27, 2022

Greetings,

Although I had several activities that were happening, I took the opportunity to listen to B.O.E. taxpayer's to hear directly from my fellow Baltimore City residents about their concerns and to amplify what I am in agreement with. From what I have heard, most of those who were able to testify in real time made it **very clear** that they **are in opposition to the increased budget of BCPD**. I strongly agree with their testimonies that were presented because I, myself, was thoroughly appalled and frustrated with the proposal of putting more money into an agency that has not produced the positive outcomes this city deserves and has cost us, the taxpayers, a whopping \$18 million dollars in settlement.

I am summarizing some of what I heard that I stand in agreement with, in terms of where Organizing Black's stated \$100 million defunding/divesting from BCPD can be better served:

- Better water systems: I've heard three residents stating why we needed better water systems. I'll go one step further and say that Baltimore City's water bill is too high and yet still not drinkable in some neighborhoods.
- Invest more in neighborhoods to include middle class: From Ms. Truehart to Mr. Butler and everyone else stated what their neighborhoods were lacking and believe that the 100 million divestment can go toward the neighborhoods.
- More individuals have died from overdose than from homicides (in 2020, 964 individuals died from overdose and 337 individuals died from homicide) yet it seems the city is still behind the curve in addressing the steady climb in opioid overdose deaths in a way that this too is a public health crisis that is equally as important to pay attention to as homicides.
- Someone from Scan the Police organization mentioned Tyrone West and Keith Davis Jr. This city **STILL HAS NOT** reconciled with the families of those two men, and now recently, Donnell Rochester has become the latest victim of police brutality, with this current mayor praising the work of BCPD before finding out some of the details that cast extreme doubts on proper procedures followed.

I'm a resident that lived in this city for a total of 33 years and have yet to see the positive outcome of throwing more money at a police department on the backs of divesting from neighborhood stability because it simply does not work - definitely not in this city that I found out a few years ago doesn't even have full control of its own police department and also still have a small percentage of officers that actually live in the city. I urge you all to immediately work on amending the budget, thank you.

Sincerely,  
Charlene Rock-Foster  
District 2, Frankford Neighborhood



April 29, 2022

To Whom This May Concern,

Please accept this letter of support for the FY2023 City of Baltimore budget regarding funds allocated for Baltimore Police Department to occupy and co-locate at our new facility to best support the City's continued multi-disciplinary approach to ending child abuse.

The FY2023 budget includes approximately \$324,000 in the BPD budget to support the Center for Hope location at Sinai Hospital, located at 5400 Preakness Way. This project has been in development for 3 years and this new facility replaces the existing Baltimore Child Abuse Center located at 2300 North Charles Street. That site (and its previous sites) have for over 20 years housed co-located specialized detective units from BPD integral to the investigation of child maltreatment and family violence. Police have paid some form of rent these last 20 years as well. Co-location of these units meets national best practice standards put forth by the Department of Justice relating to investigations of child abuse as well as standards of accreditation put forth by National Children's Alliance. Co-location of police units also ensures BPD meets Maryland Family Law 5-706, and the current federal consent decree around victim services.

The new Center for Hope facility replaces the old and outdated current 2300 North Charles Street site. This new site will include multiple BPD units (child abuse, family violence, missing persons / human trafficking) as well as teams from child and adult protective services, prosecutors, and the team from former Baltimore Child Abuse Center. In its place, the new site at 5400 Preakness Way will support more victims of abuse and violence in a trauma informed manner, with a safer and cleaner setting. The new site will meet modern requirements including ADA as well as improved transportation access for clients. Police will also have their own separate secure entrance comporting to national standards.

These funds allocated in the FY2023 budget are necessary and critical for BPD to enable these units to meet national and federal requirements and to continue co-locate on site. Thank you for your consideration. If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 667-309-9740 or [arosenberg@lifebridgehealth.org](mailto:arosenberg@lifebridgehealth.org).

Sincerely,

Adam Rosenberg  
Executive Director, Center for Hope

# Maryland PIRG

*Maryland Public Interest Research Group (Maryland PIRG) is a citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members in Baltimore and across the state. For fifty years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society.*

My name is Rishi Shah. I'm a Mt Vernon resident, and a policy advocate with Maryland PIRG, a public interest advocacy organization.

I'm here to again ask the Board of Estimates to invest in the Fair Election Fund in FY23. This investment in our democracy will benefit candidates and elected officials, the public, and Baltimore as a whole.

A study found that [over 80% of the money in the 2020 Baltimore mayoral elections came from entities that weren't eligible to vote in the election](#). Corporations, PACs, and wealthy donors that don't live in Baltimore have too much influence in campaign finance and the political process, and Baltimoreans are left out.

Large campaign contributions have too much influence on who can run for office, what issues make it on to the agenda, and ultimately who wins elections. And women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ+ community are less likely to have access to big money needed to win elections.

Under the Fair Elections program, participating candidates must reject contributions from PACs, corporations, and any contributions over \$150. In exchange, the contributions to those candidates from Baltimore residents would be matched on a sliding scale by the program. This would serve the dual purpose of encouraging donations from Baltimore residents and limiting the influence of large and corporate donors, while enabling participating candidates to remain competitive with traditionally funded ones.

When funded properly, these types of programs are effective. In [Montgomery County and in DC](#), Fair Elections encouraged greater participation, reduced the influence of large donors, and enabled more residents to be able to run for public office.

More than 75% of Baltimore City voters supported Fair Elections when it was on the ballot in 2018. In the spirit of Taxpayers' Night, it's time to ensure that every Baltimore resident—regardless of the size of their checkbook—has their voice heard in the political process. I'm counting on Mayor Scott and the Board of Estimates to support funding the Fair Elections program in the final FY23 budget.



April 27, 2022

## **Fiscal 2023 Board of Estimates Taxpayers' Night**

Dear Comptroller Henry, Mayor Scott, Council President Mosby, Director Mitchell, and Solicitor Shea,

Blue Water Baltimore's mission is to restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams, and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. We are writing to urge you to prioritize investments in water and sewage infrastructure in the FY23 budget.

We know the consequences of not properly investing in our water and wastewater infrastructure, from sewage backing up into thousands of Baltimoreans' homes every year<sup>1</sup> to health advisories warning residents not to touch the water in Back River.<sup>2</sup> This is unacceptable. Clean water is a human right.

Baltimore City has a duty to invest in its sewer pipes and treatment plants without further burdening residents with water rate increases that disproportionately affect Black residents.<sup>3</sup> The City must also increase its investment in its two programs that are meant to help residents who experience sewage backups in their homes, the Sewage Onsite Support (SOS) program and the Expedited Reimbursement Program (ERP). The FY23 preliminary budget indicates that the City will continue supporting the \$2.5 million dedicated for the SOS pilot program,<sup>4</sup> but this is far from enough, particularly given that the limited scope of the program leaves most residents without critical resources during what can be dangerous and traumatic events.

Currently, the SOS and ERP programs only provide support to residents who can prove that their backups happened as a result of a wet weather event. But far more residents are impacted by sewage backups that occur in dry weather,<sup>5</sup> meaning that the majority of residents who experience sewage backups are not eligible for the City's support programs.

The Department of Public Works published a feasibility study in November 2021 outlining what it would cost to provide relief to *all* residents who experience basement backups, in dry or wet weather. In that study, DPW estimated that it would cost \$14.7 million to provide direct cleanup assistance through the SOS program for all sewage backups.<sup>6</sup> For context, that is roughly 3% of BPD's proposed FY23 budget.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Harkleroad & Matt McDonald. (2021). Deluges and denials: Baltimore reimbursement program leaves residents burdened with sewage backup costs. The Baltimore Sun. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-sewage-backup-costs-20210512-w6wwnrswuzhp5hobrijzfbnunui-story.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Jay Apperson. (2022). Public health advisory and progress report issued for Back River. Maryland Department of the Environment. <https://news.maryland.gov/mde/2022/04/22/public-health-advisory-and-progress-report-issued-for-back-river/>.

<sup>3</sup> Fern Shen. (2019). Study shows disparate impact of water rates on Black Baltimore. Baltimore Brew.

<https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2019/06/10/study-shows-the-disparate-impact-of-water-rates-on-black-baltimore/>

<sup>4</sup> City of Baltimore. (2022). Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget Plan. p. 74.

<https://bbmr.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/FY23%20prelim%20final%20for%20web.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Baltimore City Department of Public Works. (2021). A Report On Sewage Backup Expedited Reimbursement And Direct Assistance Program. p. 8. [https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Ordinance%202021-044%20\(CCB21-0075\)%20-%20Basement%20backups%20feasibility%20study%20report%2012.03.2021.pdf](https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Ordinance%202021-044%20(CCB21-0075)%20-%20Basement%20backups%20feasibility%20study%20report%2012.03.2021.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Baltimore City Department of Public Works, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> City of Baltimore, p. 72.

The City has an enormous opportunity to direct state and federal resources, including money from the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, toward our water infrastructure to make sure that Baltimoreans have access to the clean water we all deserve.

We urge you to apply for and invest state and federal funds in sewer infrastructure improvements to both protect our waterways and to reduce the number of sewage backups into people's homes. This investment would not only address a public health crisis in Baltimore, but it would also create much-needed jobs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taylor Smith-Hams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Taylor Smith-Hams  
Advocacy & Outreach Senior Manager