

April 15, 2015

Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Mark-Viverito:

We write to express our opposition to the City Council's proposal to add 1,000 new NYPD officers, particularly as programs and services for communities, youth, and seniors – many of whom have historically experienced massive underinvestment by their city government – remain incompletely funded. The Council has been the leader in supporting many of these programs and efforts, designating funding for Council-led initiatives and pioneering funding increases to address critical areas of need for communities. We encourage you to continue that leadership and respectfully urge you to re-evaluate the city budget's traditional funding levels that incrementally – and sometimes significantly – increase investment, but still leave basic needs unmet within our city, before considering any addition to the NYPD headcount.

Adding 1,000 new positions within the police department not only raises significant concerns for communities that have yet to see public accountability for the department, but it also would come at the expense of more beneficial long-term investments in the safety and well-being of our neighborhoods. With City Hall now inhabited by a mayoral administration and yourself, whom both have conveyed the desire to fundamentally address inequality, we are confident that a more forward-looking budget vision for our city can be put forward – one that more successfully improves public safety and our city in the long term than simply adding to the headcount of the police department.

Like all New Yorkers, we are deeply concerned about the safety of our communities. We all want to feel secure living in our neighborhoods, walking to and from the subway, going to the store for groceries, entering our buildings – no matter the time of day or where we live. We are especially attuned to the concerns about violent crime in communities of color, as gun violence has disproportionately impacted our communities at crisis levels for several years. Additionally, we also remain concerned about the targeted hate violence against LGBTQ New Yorkers, particularly Trans women of color.

Just as gun violence and hate violence have long-term impacts on the safety of our communities, so does unjust and unchecked police aggression and violence against members of our neighborhoods. Last year, some of us conveyed our serious concerns about your then-proposal to move officers from administrative duty to patrolling our neighborhoods, given the NYPD's long-term, systemic failure to implement effective internal systems of accountability. The Department's common use of administrative placement as discipline for misconduct risked putting officers who have been placed on administrative duty for abusive policing and misconduct back into communities – already disproportionately impacted by such practices – to potentially victimize more of our neighbors.

While there has been a focus on the issue of “police-community relations,” there has not been enough attention paid to addressing the concrete and underlying issues of discriminatory and abusive policing. Although the de Blasio administration represents a shift from the Bloomberg administration's indifference to the concerns of our communities, Commissioner Bratton has not substantively addressed many of these problems. Specifically, nothing has been done thus far to resolve the long-term and complete failure in holding the NYPD accountable in cases of police abuse and brutality. The residents of our communities

also continue to face disparate targeting for low-level enforcement and abusive behavior by the police department that should serve and protect them.

Without addressing these core issues, the addition of 1,000 new police department positions – to be dispersed throughout our communities that already feel over-policed – threatens to exacerbate these long-standing problems, deepening rifts between not only communities and the police, but also between New Yorkers and their city government. The City Council must not allow these serious issues to be glossed over in the name of “community policing” that is more rhetorical than substantive.

There are many factors that contribute to safety. Adding 1,000 additional personnel to the police department at an annual additional cost of close to \$70 million in FY 2016 and nearly \$100 million in FY 2017 – in a city that currently boasts one of the highest officer-to-resident ratios in the country – while underfunding crucial community-based programs and services is not the answer. The funds required to hire an additional 1,000 officers would inevitably deduct from investments in budget areas that are more critical than the existing need for more police officers.

It is often said that budgets are moral documents that communicate our priorities. We are now at a crossroads, where there is an opportunity to increase long-term, holistic investments that will have sustainable benefits for New Yorkers in all neighborhoods.

There are several programmatic areas that we urge the Council to focus its attention for additional funding (in the enclosed document), where the funds required for the proposal to increase NYPD headcount is more vital and would produce better public safety and overall results than simply adding more officers. We humbly urge you to reconsider the serious limitations and issues with increasing the headcount of the NYPD, and take the longer view for the health and safety of our neighborhoods and city.

Sincerely,

Communities United for Police Reform
Adhikaar
Arab American Association of New York
Association of Legal Aid Attorneys - UAW Local 2325
Audre Lorde Project
BAYAN - USA
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Blacks In Tech/BIT-NYC
Bronx Defenders
Brooklyn Movement Center
CAAAY Organizing Asian Communities
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Popular Democracy
Center on Race, Crime & Justice, at John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Coalition for the Homeless
ColorOfChange
Community Voices Heard
Drug Policy Alliance
DRUM South Asian Organizing Center
Equality for Flatbush
Faith In New York

FIERCE
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Girls for Gender Equity
Global Action Project
Good Old Lower East Side
Harm Reduction Coalition
Housing Works
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
Justice Committee
Justice League
JustLeadershipUSA
Kairos Center for Religions, Rights & Social Justice
La Fuente, Tri-State Worker & Community Fund
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Legal Aid Society
Make The Road New York
Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
Mekong NYC
Million Hoodies
Mothers On the Move
MuslimARC, the Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund
New York City Anti-Violence Project
New York Communities for Change
New York Harm Reduction Educators
Nodutdol for Korean Community Development
Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Peoples Power Assemblies
Picture the Homeless
The Poverty Initiative
Rockaway Youth Task Force
Streetwise & Safe
Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change
UPROSE
Urban Youth Collaborative
VOCAL-NY

Cc: Mayor de Blasio, New York City Council Members

Enclosure