

**COMMUNITIES
UNITED FOR
POLICE REFORM**

**Oral Testimony of Communities United for Police Reform (CPR)
Anthonine Pierre**
(CPR Steering Committee and Deputy Director of Brooklyn Movement Center)

(NOTE: Separate written testimony is longer, with citations)

**Delivered to
New York City Council Finance Committee
May 21st, 2020 Public Hearing on FY21 Budget**

My name is Anthonine Pierre, I'm the Deputy Director of Brooklyn Movement Center, and I am speaking today on behalf of Communities United for Police Reform (CPR).

Thank you to Finance Committee Chair Dromm, Finance Committee members & other Councilmembers who are tuned in for inviting the public to testify on the proposed FY21 budget.

We have separate written testimony, so I will focus my few minutes on a few key points.

Everyone in NYC has been impacted in some way by COVID-19. However **Black, Latinx and other communities of color** – including low income people, homeless New Yorkers, immigrants, LGBT and gender non-conforming, elders, youth, women, informal sector workers, government workers, and other subsets of communities of color -- **have been disproportionately devastated by a combination of high numbers of coronavirus-related deaths, COVID-19 infections, economic devastation, and abusive policing.**

The **deep inequalities that existed in our city before COVID-19 have been starkly revealed and exacerbated by the pandemic.**

The Mayor's proposed FY21 budget is unacceptable. It would be devastating to communities of color and all New Yorkers.

We are calling on the City Council to reject the immoral priorities laid out in the executive budget, and to pass a budget that will truly ensure an equitable recovery for Black, Latinx and other communities of color most devastated by all of the impacts of the pandemic.

As you know, the executive budget includes hiring freezes in many agencies and has devastating cuts to core social services, programs and infrastructure that are crucial to Black and other communities of color. However, the NYPD budget has been left essentially untouched with less than ½ of 1% of cuts proposed.

As a city, we can not continue to use policing as the way we deal with societal crises and historic underinvestment in our communities.

Police will not protect us from a virus and as we've seen recently with viral video after viral video, violent and abusive and always-present policing is adding to the devastation and fear Black and other communities of color are experiencing in this pandemic.

In fact, Legal Aid Society just released a report that shows that the NYPD's social distancing policing targets Black & Latinx communities even tho other neighborhoods have been getting more 311 social distancing calls.

Budgets are roadmaps to a government's priorities and morals.

We are calling on you to ensure that the FY21 budget makes significant cuts to the NYPD's bloated almost \$6B budget (closer to \$10B if you count fringe and pensions).

These cuts should include:

- **Hiring freeze on NYPD, including school safety officers.** We can't afford to have a hiring freeze on school personnel like guidance counselors and social workers who have long been under-staffed, while we continue to hire officers. And the CCRB has a proposed hiring freeze, even though last fall's Charter vote mandates an increase of CCRB personnel, but the NYPD is facing no freeze.
- **Cancellation of cadet classes which are non-essential when compared to the 48% cut faced by DYCD and major cuts faced by other agencies.**
- **Stop the expansion of NYPD into social service delivery –** The NYPD should not have a role in social services or outreach. **Monies currently budgeted for personnel and OTPS for NYPD homeless outreach, mental health response, youth initiative and social distancing enforcement should be redirected to the relevant public health agencies, youth and community programs, and supports for permanent affordable housing for all.**

- **Cuts to protect NYers from abusive policing – and hold the department accountable for continued abusive policing and their systemic failure to fire and discipline officers who harm New Yorkers.** Even recently, with the viral incident in the Lower East Side, Officer Francisco Garcia was not even subjected to suspension for his violence that we all saw on video.
- **Cuts to non-essential items in the NYPD’s budget,** which includes a massive public relations budget and other areas.

For communities of color to have a chance at an equitable recovery from the devastation we have faced in this pandemic, we need an FY21 budget that puts major financial resources into our public health infrastructure, social safety net, and programs that will enable our communities to not only survive but thrive through/after the pandemic.

The only way to do this requires the Council to be willing to reduce the NYPD’s massive, non-transparent and unaccountable budget as part of an overall budget justice strategy.

Please feel free to reach out to us at CPR & our member groups would like to partner with Council members to fight for a budget our communities deserve. And please use the hashtag: #NYCBudgetJustice