

March 25, 2021

Speaker Corey Johnson
City Hall Office
New York, NY 10007

RE: Pre-considered resolution adopting parts of Mayor de Blasio's policing plan, related to Governor Cuomo's executive order 203

Dear Speaker Johnson and members of the New York City Council,

As many of you know, the process led by the de Blasio administration, resulting in the resolution you will be voting on today, was shameful¹. We recognize that some Councilmembers have joined us in the past weeks to criticize the illegitimate process that resulted in the Mayor's draft "police reform & reinvention" plans that were released just weeks ago. We also acknowledge that the Council likely deserves credit for negotiating the removal of some of the harmful and non-sensical proposals² from the resolution – in response to concerns raised by many of the organizations signing this letter.

However, the 54 organizations signing this letter, are writing to make the following clear before you vote:

- **This resolution and the package of bills that are expected to be passed today do not begin to approach the kind of sweeping changes we need** in New York City to reduce police violence, increase police accountability, or decrease the outsized power, budget, scope and size of the NYPD and the five police unions in NYC.
- **It is deeply problematic that this 27-page resolution was voted on by committee this morning when the resolution was public for less than 24 hours.** It's also problematic and anti-democratic that the full Council will be voting on this resolution today with such a short window of time for Councilmembers and the public to review the resolution that was posted online late yesterday – and with no opportunity for public comment. This is especially egregious given the seriousness and complexity of policing in NYC - the issue that the resolution is meant to address.

¹ There has been significant public critique of the illegitimate process, including: initial town halls were led and organized by the NYPD and functioned largely as NYPD propaganda sessions instead of soliciting diverse public input; the First Deputy Mayor's office shut down a multi-stakeholder committee that was convened to help lead the City's planning process after only one meeting where attendees asked for changes to the structure and process (this committee was shut down without any direct communication with attendees); many of the groups in NYC with the longest consistent history of work on police accountability were not part of any meaningful engagement by the de Blasio administration (including public defenders and Black, Latinx and other community organizing groups that have led past movement efforts to reduce abusive policing like stop-and-frisk abuses). In addition to critique of the process, there has been significant criticism and opposition to the draft de Blasio plans released earlier this month, including this [letter](#) signed by almost two-dozen families of New Yorkers killed by the NYPD.

² One example is the de Blasio proposal to have the NYPD work with other city agencies to repair basketball courts, instead of simply ensuring other city agencies (e.g. NYCHA, Parks) have the funding and personnel to repair courts on their own.

- **Nothing in the resolution is likely to directly result in a decrease of police violence.** It's arguable that decreasing police violence should be the primary purpose of this resolution and yet the parts of the resolution that presumably touch upon this are vague, inadequate, and/or rely on myths and mistaken assumptions about policing.
- **Nothing in the resolution will directly result in increased police accountability or the firings of officers** who kill, brutalize, sexually assault, or harass New Yorkers, nor will it hold accountable officers who lie in official capacity, refuse to identify themselves, don't wear masks and engage in other misconduct.
- For the items in the resolution that are policing-specific,³ we want to make clear that:
 - Many are not new developments –they're summaries of what is already required by law⁴ or proposals that have previously been committed to by the de Blasio administration.⁵
 - **Many of the items will result in an increase in the budget, personnel, consultants, scope, size and power of the NYPD and policing in NYC⁶** while NYC should be focusing on a just recovery from the pandemic, which requires deep investments that should instead be directed to the health and wellness of communities that have been most impacted by the pandemic instead of adding to the bloated budget of the NYPD and policing.
 - **A number of items will create a system of monetary incentives to community groups, consultants and others to legitimize the outsized role of the NYPD and policing** - instead of questioning why the NYPD and policing have such massive footprints in the lives of so many Black, Latinx and other communities of color. This is money that should instead go directly into Black, Latinx and other communities of color to build community safety, health and power – not to build propaganda vehicles for the NYPD.

³ It's notable that a number of items in this "police reform & reinvention" resolution, including some that may be positive in implementation, have nothing to do with police reform, police accountability or decreasing the budget/size/scope/power of the NYPD – and instead move attention to other criminal legal system issues that are important, but do not decrease the front-end driver (policing) that is the subject of the resolution.

⁴ Examples of resolution items that are not new policy changes arising from the de Blasio EO 203 process include: the "early intervention system" that was first passed as law by the Council years ago; and the law that was passed to remove the NYPD from enforcement of street vending, made possible by the years of organizing led by vendors and groups like Street Vendors Project.

⁵ An example is the proposal to shift primary responsibility for homeless outreach from NYPD to Department of Homeless Services – this was already committed to in 2020, still does not seem to have been fully implemented, and the resolution language indicates that NYPD will not be fully removed from this role and is silent on the continued practice of NYPD sweeps of homeless people (a practice that even the CDC has said should not occur during the pandemic).

⁶ There are numerous examples throughout the report of items that will require new and additional funding to the NYPD, including more training in areas where significant training has already been invested, more money for administrative systems, and the resolution includes items that the NYPD will undoubtedly request additional funding for increased personnel to carry out. One example that stands out is the section that describes surveying that the NYPD will do to gauge community perceptions – with no mention of how this will be different from the multi-year contract the NYPD had with Elucd. The [NYPD paid over \\$3.4 million to Elucd for years of "Sentimeter" polling and abruptly canceled the contract last year after the initial George Floyd protests](#), while refusing to make data collected for years public.

- Some items, like the transfer of school safety officers from the NYPD to the Department of Education, are in **direct conflict with long-standing movement demands** (e.g the PoliceFreeSchools movement led by Black, Latinx and other youth/students of color).

Many of the organizations signing this letter have worked on police accountability issues for decades in NYC. One thing we have learned is that **police violence cannot be significantly reduced unless we reduce the outsized power, budget, size and scope of the NYPD and policing**. With a few exceptions, the items in this resolution go in the opposite direction – expanding funding to the NYPD, and entrenching and expanding policing in various ways that will not increase safety or police accountability.

We understand that the Council is in a challenging position, since executive order 203 threatens to withhold state monies if a resolution isn't passed by April 1.

However, this plan is not a meaningful step towards police accountability, and it is not a meaningful step towards decreasing police violence or shrinking the budget, size, power and footprint of policing in NYC. **The resolution should be rejected.**

Sincerely,

Communities United for Police Reform
Apogee
The Arab American Association of New York
Arc of Justice
Bronx Defenders
Brooklyn NAACP
The Brotherhood/Sister Sol
Center for Community Alternatives
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Family Representation
Center for Popular Democracy
Citizen Action of New York
Common Cause/New York
Defending Rights & Dissent
DRUM- Desis Rising Up & Moving
Faith In New York
FIERCE
Five Borough Defenders
The Gathering for Justice and Justice League NYC
Girls for Gender Equity
GMACC
Hetrick-Martin Institute
Immigrant Defense Project
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
Jim Owles liberal Democratic club

Justice Committee
Justice for Families
Katal Center for Equity, Health & Justice
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Legal Aid Society
Life Camp Inc
Literacy Assistance Center
Make the Road New York
Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
Mixteca Organization, Inc
MomsRising
Neighbors Together
New York Appleseed
New York City Anti-Violence Project
New York City Democratic Socialists of America
New York Civil Liberties Union
New York Communities for Change
Not Another Child
Peoples Climate Movement-NY
Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College
Public Science Project
Safety Net Project at the Urban Justice Center
Showing Up for Racial Justice - NYC
TakeRoot Justice
Theatre of the Oppressed NYC
Transgender Law Center
Violence Intervention Program
VOCAL-NY
Youth Represent

cc: Mayor de Blasio
Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
Comptroller Scott Stringer