February 24, 2021

Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Dermot Shea
New York Police Department
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Shea:

The revelation made during a City Council Education Committee hearing on February 18, 2021, that the NYPD is planning to hire 475 new school safety officers, at the expense of $20 million, is outrageous.

The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing racial disparities in education for Black, Latinx, and other students of color throughout NYC schools. Many NYC schools don’t have nurses or restorative justice programs – and it’s widely recognized that system-wide there is an inadequate number of counselors, social workers and educational staff. Hiring officers instead of addressing needs that educate and nurture students is the wrong move – and we are calling on you to cancel these planned hires.

NYC already spends $451 million on school safety officers who police New York City’s public schools. To allocate an additional $20 million to hire 475 new school safety officers instead of increasing access to social, emotional, and mental health supports for young people is unacceptable.

We are calling on you to:

- **Immediately cancel the projected hiring of 475 new school safety officers** and reallocate those monies to support the educational and wellness needs of students and their families;

- **Center the leadership and needs of youth in schools** to end the school to prison pipeline, including ending the criminalization and abuse of Black and Brown youth in schools while building safe, supportive, and inclusive schools; and

- **Create a plan to remove policing and invasive security measures out of schools** and that centers social, emotional, and mental health needs of students returning from a public health pandemic.
Students in New York City have made it clear—they need access to high-quality educational, social, emotional and mental health resources, not more policing, especially now. As you know, the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing racial disparities in education. Black, Latinx, and students of color have been less likely to be able to connect to remote learning resources.1 Students living within New York City’s shelters had little to no access to internet during the worst months of the pandemic, a situation so egregious it prompted a lawsuit against the City.2

Investing the $20 million directly in educational and wellness resources would better serve all students, than investing in more policing. For example, according to analysis by Girls for Gender Equity3, with $20 million, the City could hire more than 200 school nurses, 200 school psychologists, or 200 counselors. Any of those are better choices than hiring more officers.

Many of the signers of this letter joined a campaign last year for #NYCBudgetJustice and achieved commitments from the Mayor and the City Council that the FY21 budget would include a $1 billion cut from the NYPD’s budget, to redirect to core needs in communities of color. Unfortunately, the FY21 budget that was approved last year by the City Council used funny math and budget tricks to avoid reallocating at least $1 billion from the NYPD4 to core needs in communities of color, in spite of Mayor de Blasio’s claims otherwise. One of the Mayor’s most egregious false budget claims last year was that school safety officers would be removed from the FY21 NYPD budget5. While moving school safety officers from the NYPD to the Department of Education was never a demand of the #PoliceFreeSchools movement, it also never happened in the FY21 budget.6 The current plan to hire more officers for schools in the context of last year’s false budget claims by your administration and the ongoing pandemic is hard to comprehend.

Last year, a hiring freeze was imposed on almost all city agencies except the NYPD and programs that could help communities are facing huge potential cuts in the coming budget (e.g. $40 million from school allocation memorandums and $45 million in reduced funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program). The more than 5,000 existing school safety officers is already a larger force than the police departments of many cities across the country. To spend $20 million on hiring 475 new school safety officers while we are still fighting to survive the coronavirus pandemic is a cruel misallocation of resources.

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3 https://campaigns.ggenyc.org/gge-rallies-following-news-that-the-nypd-plans-to-hire-475-new-school-police/
Young people deserve culturally responsive education, wellness resources and restorative justice programs in all schools — not more policing.

We are calling on you to immediately cancel the 475 new school safety officer hires and reallocate the related funding to educational resources, the emotional well-being of our students, and services that will help them and their families during and after the pandemic.

Signed,
Communities United for Police Reform
Girls for Gender Equity
Make the Road New York
New York Civil Liberties Union
Alliance for Educational Justice
Alliance For Quality Education
Apogee
The Arab American Association of New York
Best Practices Policy Project
Brandworkers
BronxWorks Family Shelters
Bronx Defenders
Brooklyn Community Foundation
Brooklyn Community Pride Center
Brooklyn Defender Services
Brooklyn Movement Center
Brotherhood/SisterSOL
CAAAAV Organizing Asian Communities
Center for Community Alternatives
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Family Representation
The Center for Independence of the Disabled – NY
Center for Law and Social Justice
Center for NuLeadership on Human Justice and Healing (CNHJH)
Center for Popular Democracy
Citizen Action of New York
Churches United for Fair Housing
Coalition for Educational Justice
College Access: Research & Action (CARA)
Color of Change
Community for a Cause
Community Service Society of New York
Community Voices Heard
Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility project (CLEAR)
Defending Rights & Dissent
Dignity in Schools Campaign-NY
Drug Policy Alliance
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving
Empire State Indivisible
Equality for Flatbush
Faith in New York
Families for Freedom
FIERCE
Five Borough Defenders
Freedom Agenda
The Gathering for Justice and Justice League NYC
Good Old Lower East Side, Inc. (GOLES)
Graham Windham
HERE
Hetrick-Martin Institute
Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)
Housing Works
Immigrant Defense Project
IntegrateNYC
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club
Justice Committee
Kairos Center for Rights, Religions, and Human Rights at Union Theological Seminary
Katal Center for Health, Equity & Justice
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Legal Action Center
Legal Aid Society
Legal Services NYC
LGBT FAITH LEADERS OF AFRICAN DESCENT
Literacy Assistance Center
Malcom X Grassroots Movement
Metropolitan Community Church
METROPOLITAN RUSSIAN AMERICAN PARENTS ASSOCIATION
Mijente
Mixteca Organization, Inc
MomsRising
National Campaign for Police Free Schools
The National Panhellenic Council of NYC, Inc
Neighborhood Defender Services of Harlem
Neighbors Together
New Economy Project
New Kings Democrats
New Settlement Parent Action Committee
New Women Space
New York Appleseed
New York City Anti-Violence Project
New York Communities for Change
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Math Academy and Coaching Services
New York Working Families Party
North Star Fund
NYC-Democratic Socialists of America
Peoples Climate Movement-NY
Prison Writes
Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College
Public Science Project
Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) Campaign
Safety Net Project - Urban Justice Center
ST. James Presbyterian Church, NYC
Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center
S.T.R.O.N.G. Youth, Inc.
Showing Up for Racial Justice - NYC
Sister Diaspora for Liberation
TakeRoot Justice
Tarab NYC
Transgender Law Center
Teachers Unite
TREEage
UPROSE
Urban Youth Collaborative
Violence Intervention Program
VOCAL-NY
WITNESS
Yalla Brooklyn
Youth Represent

cc: NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson and Councilmembers
NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer
NYC Department of Education Chancellor Richard A. Carranza