

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

**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 Equity<sup>3</sup>, 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 NYPD<sup>4</sup> 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 budget<sup>5</sup>. 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.<sup>6</sup> **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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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/ny-remote-learning-attendance-disparities-20201015-nbqfas4ocvennajcuxiky4qqne-story.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-new-york-education-idUSKBN2842LY>

<sup>3</sup> <https://campaigns.ggenyc.org/gge-rallies-following-news-that-the-nypd-plans-to-hire-475-new-school-police/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/statement-by-new-york-city-comptroller-scott-m-stringer-on-fy-2021-adopted-budget/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2020/06/29/de-blasio-confirms-hell-cut-1b-from-nypd-budget-1295930>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2020/07/02/school-safety-agents-will-stay-under-nypd-this-year-despite-citys-claims-of-1b-cut-1296868>

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  
CAAAY 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