



Department of Finance  
Bureau of the Budget and Management Research

---

# City of Baltimore

## Fiscal 2021 Virtual Taxpayers' Night

### Testimony Submissions

Compiled by Bureau of the Budget and Management Research

The Board of Estimates and the Department of Finance's Bureau of the Budget and Management Research (BBMR) presented the Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Budget Plan and Virtual Taxpayers' Night on Tuesday, April 7, 2020. This event was hosted online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure access for residents to provide testimony, BBMR collected testimony via email and voicemail through April 10, 2020. This document compiles all testimony provided on the Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Budget Plan via the virtual event, testimony sign-up, email, and voicemail. Please note that some of these submissions have been edited for clarity and ease of reading.

## Testimony Submissions: Taxpayers' Night Hearing

**Submitted by:** Katrina Odom

**Submitted via:** Testimony Sign-up

**Testimony:** Greetings:

Walter P. Carter Elementary/ Middle #134 (WPC), is going through the 21st Century School Buildings Plan. At the end of the rebuild, in January 2021, the school will house students from Guilford Elementary/Middle School and Lois T. Murray Elementary/Middle - a school that serves students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The Walter P. Carter Rec Center, which was attached to the school building, has been torn down. The Baltimore City Public Schools Constructions and Revitalization Act of 2013 funds cannot be used to improve the recreation centers that are attached to school buildings. The Act only requires up to 3000 sq. ft. of community partner space, a significant down grade from the 8000-sq. ft. that was available at the WPC Rec. There is 3000 sq. ft. of shared community space for a school that will serve what used to be three schools.

We residents have to fight for recreation, parking that will not be a hardship for us due to the larger school, and to be heard. On Taxpayer's Night 2020, as we did in 2019, we ask for capital funding for a stand alone recreation center in our neighborhood. That will provide a safe place for year-round programming for school and neighborhood children and families. As a life-long community member, wife, mother, grandmother, and homeowner who pays taxes in this neighborhood, I ask for your consideration. My husband and I stayed in this community when we could have moved our family away. Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

Katrina L. Odom, Secretary

Wilson Park Northern Neighbors Association (WPNNA)

---

**Submitted by:** Carlton Perry

**Submitted via:** Testimony Sign-up

**Testimony:** Thank you for hearing and taking this testimony into account.

My name is Carlton Perry and I'm a lifelong resident of both Baltimore City and the Edmondson Village community. Tonight, I want to provide testimony that speaks to my concerns for my community, and our city as a whole.

This is a time of unprecedented turmoil, as we face the Covid-19 pandemic and the most drastic economic downturn since the great depression. These challenges will disproportionately impact the lives of vulnerable citizens in my community, specifically the elderly and economically disadvantaged youth.

The current budget proposal is centered on funding for law enforcement. Increased spending on police can't address everything that's currently needed by the community. We need a budget that's fairly allocated. We need a budget that addresses public health, economic and resource disparities, as well as community based law enforcement. With this budget, the leadership of Baltimore has the opportunity to use the current climate as a catalyst to remedy long-standing problems in our community.

---

**Submitted by:** Katherine Klosek

**Submitted via:** Testimony Sign-up

**Testimony:** Public parks have served as a venue for people to maintain their physical and mental health during the Coronavirus crisis, while recreation centers have served as meal sites for children who are suddenly out of school. Due to this critical role as open-air recreation sites and familiar meal service locations — not just during this crisis, but year round — Baltimore City elected officials need to ensure that our parks receive funding that is on par with other comparable park systems around the country.

Staff at Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP) are tasked with delivering services and improving infrastructure within a limited budget. In some communities, residents and organizations come together to create Master Plans to prioritize the projects and investments that should be made in their parks when funding is available. We should match this civic pride with sustained funding for park operations and maintenance.

While we understand that budgetary decisions are tighter than ever, we know that investing in parks is critical to the vibrancy of our City. And we're not the only ones - in a 2019 survey, nearly 93 percent of respondents in Baltimore City said the City should spend a little more or much more on its parks. And 94 percent said that supporting and maintaining safe, quality parkland should be a priority for city government.

Considering the volume of public support for parks, and their critical role in this crisis and year round, the Recreation and Parks Department operations budget needs to be prioritized in fiscal year 2021, and going forward, to properly fund maintenance and operations of our parks and recreation centers.

Katherine Klosek

---

**Submitted by:** Melissa Schober

**Submitted via:** Webex Event, transcribed during event

**Testimony:** Good evening, thank you for holding this virtually, I know that the FY21 numbers are very preliminary, and just that, very preliminary and to be amended. However, in looking through the FY21 numbers I noticed that in the Dept. of Health there is a \$755,000 cut to three lines of service: clinical services, substance abuse and mental health services, and a \$271,000 cut to school health services. Of particular interest to me in these times given our limited resources is how we can best allocate those funds.

Through a recent MPIO request, I discovered that City Schools police and Baltimore police are executing literally hundreds of emergency petitions to transport children to emergency rooms for mental health disorders every year. Over the past three years, the BPD has transported 1,310 times and the City Schools police has transported 280 times. Those are hours that men and women who are not trained in mental health services are transporting children and youth into a pipeline that sends them to juvenile services, to child welfare, and to suspension and expulsion. These numbers are extremely alarming, and the cuts to mental health services that are reflected in the preliminary 21 budget are unjust and immoral.

I want to know why Mayor Young would support a budget that would cut three quarters of a million dollars from the health functions of this city at the same time that the BPD admin and information technology department receives \$594,000 more, the SWAT unit receives \$570,000 more, the mounted unit receives \$204,000 more, and the marine unit \$116,000 more. Are our children who are being transported because they are a danger to self or others less important? Because that's what your budget seems to reflect Mr. Mayor. Thank you.

---

**Submitted by:** Ruth Schober-Levine

**Submitted via:** Webex Event, transcribed during event

**Testimony:** Can you hear me? So, I know my mom just said about the school fund for nurses. I want to discuss: We are going through a pandemic, and yet the Mayor is cutting school health services, which not only includes services for physical health, but it also includes services for mental health which can be very important during times of distress. When there was news coming out about Coronavirus, a bunch of kids were going to counseling because they were scared that they were going to end up dying. So why are we cutting these vital services that we need for our children? Thank you.

---

**Submitted by:** Mark Matthews

**Submitted via:** Testimony Sign-up

**Testimony:** My concern is for the continuation and hopefully, the increase in funding to an agency federally mandated, more than 50 years ago, to move people from poverty to self-sufficiency. That agency has taught Baltimoreans how to open and succeed with their own business, created the first female master welder in the state, provided CNA/GNA certifications to women who are now employed and providing for their families. It created partnerships that provided music lessons,

recreational activities, senior activities, community cleaning employment opportunities healthcare programs and so much more. There was even a credit union to help residents purchase property homes and establish businesses.

Over the years, the agency has been known as Model Cities, Mayor's Stations and most recently the Community Action Partnership. These Community Action Agencies, created by federal legislation, will be needed now more than ever as we enter the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. A CAP will play an essential role in establishing best practices and service coordination via communication and collaboration with the national network. Again, by federal mandate, every city and county in the nation has at least one Community Action Agency. They provide all manner of services including but not limited to services for veterans, seniors, youth, students, parents, vocational training, food, housing, etc. as the constituent boards see fit. In recent years, the agency has suffered from a mission shift. Most indicative of this shift is the placement of this national initiative under the auspices of an 'office' that offers no direct services, case management nor ongoing engagement with the community for which it professes to advocate.

As a Baltimore native, former director of a community association, co-founder and president of another, before the community's gentrification, I am aware of the symbiotic relationship between residents and the municipality. Having been raised by parents who were in their early '20s during the depression years, I heard first-hand accounts of the hardships that may well be waiting for us in the not too distant future. I was told how everyday people coped and where local government helped and fell short. For at least 2 decades, I have worked with reentry advocates and agencies to advocate for legislation and policies to help the formerly incarcerated make the transition from nothing to something. At its core, CAP was created to be managed by residents who consulted residents to create programming to move residents along the continuum of life. It is the ONLY agency designed to utilize the knowledge, fortitude, and creativity of the average citizen to make the city better by creating avenues to self-sufficiency for the poor and thereby increasing the tax base of the city.

I urge the Board to continue funding the Community Action Agency to a degree that will allow it's increased capacity while, if the Board sees fit, make recommendations to the revamping of the agency to better meet the needs of the City and its constituents.

---

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Saxton

**Submitted via:** Webex Event, transcribed during event

**Testimony:** As was said, the main revenue streams for the fiscal budget are going to be hit. One of the biggest revenue streams is property tax, yet the biggest property owner in the city is still not paying its property tax per its PILOT agreement. I am talking about Johns Hopkins and other anchor institutions that are given the payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT). Given the emergency, it seems pertinent to look into opening up the PILOT agreement, for the Mayor and for those running for Mayor at the moment.

I'd like to echo what was shared before, that I'm concerned about an increase in the police budget at the moment especially when we are short with education funding. Not only because, like it was said

before that we can't police our way out of this moment, the Blueprint for Baltimore survey (which had a sample size of 5,000 Baltimoreans) showed that a majority of residents don't want increased spending on police, don't want increased police officers to handle public safety. In fact, the majority preferred alternative options such as Safe Streets and tackling mental health and drug abuse issues without police. So, I wonder how our elected officials might explain an increase in the police budget given that it's democratically not favorable. Thank you for your time.

---

**Submitted by:** Kuijuan Jackson

**Submitted via:** Testimony Sign-up

**Testimony:** Thank you for hearing and taking this testimony into account.

My name is Kuijuan Jackson and I am 21 years old and a resident of Baltimore City. I grew up in Baltimore City. It is my home so it breaks my heart when I find out that the City cares more about the police and greed than our school system.

I have been given the pleasure to go to not one but two schools in Baltimore City. But both schools were underfunded and both schools lacked the resources to teach kids about general life skills such as how to manage money, how to get a job and how to keep the job. The youth of Baltimore suffer more because we are forced to go to schools that lack a lot of resources, and we have to deal with teachers who are underpaid.

The Baltimore City Police Department does not need \$545 million dollars to do their jobs. This is \$20,000 more than last year. There are youth who can't read, there are homeless people in our city. There are people dealing with drug addiction and mental health and those things are more important than our police department getting funds to spend on more police and new toys or equipment.

I have ADHD and depression and I have family members who have been homeless, and members who are in the Baltimore City public school system including myself.

Our murder rate is also terrible and has been terrible for years and the police don't seem to be solving the issue.

As you can see our city plays host to a lot of problems and you all need to get this budget changed for the betterment of our city before more people suffer at the hands of a lack of money and resources.

Once again, my name is Kuijuan Jackson and thank you for listening to me.

---

**Submitted by:** Steven Merrick

**Submitted via:** Webex Event, transcribed during event

**Testimony:** Greetings, my name is Steven Merrick. I will be presenting a Baltimore Budget Analysis on behalf of Communities United. This is the second year we have done an analysis of the budget, and yet again, we see that are more funds being allocated to the Baltimore City Police Department than investments in Baltimore City communities. Proposed spending on Police and Sheriff's Departments is \$535 million, which is up more than \$20 million from the current year.

Baltimore is spending so much more per capita than districts with similar urban challenges. It's about as high as any city we know of, and now you're just increasing it. Per-capita spending would reach a high of \$902 per resident, up from \$817 in the current year. This greatly outsizes other cities. In Fiscal Year 2017, when Baltimore spent \$772 per resident, Detroit spent \$450, NY spent \$581 and Houston spent \$383.

There is also outside spending on the Police and Sheriff's Department compared to spending on substance use and mental health. 888 people died from drug and alcohol related deaths in Baltimore in 2018, compared to 309 homicides. Both of those figures were higher in 2019, with drug and alcohol related deaths well surpassing the 2018 record. I would also like to highlight that this budget spends more on Police than it does providing the much needed resources our kids need in order to ensure them the quality education they deserve. As you can see, more than twice as many people are dying of overdose than murder, and yet the budget proposes spending a mere penny on substance abuse and mental health programs for every dollar spent on police, for the second year since we've done this analysis.

In the last 10 years combined, General Fund spending on the Police Department and Sheriff's Department has grown by 62.4 percent from \$329.6 million in Fiscal Year 2011 to \$553.3 million in Fiscal Year 2021. This growth outpaces growth of the total General Fund, which increased by 54 percent over the same time period. In 2019, Baltimore City spent nearly \$50 million on police overtime. With \$50 million, we could drastically reduce the number of drug and alcohol related deaths in our city, and provide funds for our schools. This budget needs to be seriously re-evaluated, and I urge you to do so. Once again, my name is Steven Merrick, and thank you so much for taking the time to listen.

---

**Submitted by:** A. Thompson

**Submitted via:** Testimony Sign-up

**Testimony:** I am writing to urge the city to reconsider how large of a budget continues to be allocated to the Baltimore Police Department. We know, from looking historically, that the increase in police budget has neither increased safety nor decreased crime. Baltimore continues to be nationally recognized more often than not for its murder rate, instead of the wealth of community, arts, and ingenuity consistently demonstrated by Baltimore's long-term residents.

It is in the benefit of everyone in the city to direct funding towards the development of equitable education, mental healthcare, and a harm-reduction response to the opioid crisis.

These address both root causes affecting residents' daily lives, as well as ensures a stable future for the city that focuses on the growth of our people instead of the cycle of trauma and incarceration we have been trapped in for years.

Thank you.

---

**Submitted by:** Mark Matthews



**Submitted via:** Webex Event, transcribed during event

**Testimony:** My concern is that post-pandemic, the citizens of Baltimore are going to be in dire straits, putting demands upon the municipal services that have not been seen for decades.

There is an agency within city government that has been formed 50 years ago to meet these types of demands, which specifically is in moving people from a poverty position to a position of self-sufficiency. So my concern is that agency, which is the Community Action Partnership, continue to receive funding, and most likely will be determined at some point, hopefully that the agency may even need to be expanded. That agency has a 50-year history here in Baltimore, moving from something known as model cities, to the Mayor stations, and now community action. It has trained people in employment and health care, helping people form businesses, which have included healthcare services, child services and so forth. There are currently five centers within the city, which at one point there were eighteen, so that citizens could have access to services that they will desperately need once we come out the other side of this pandemic.

So I would just urge the board to consider taking a look at the line items for the CAP and see what can be done to maintain if not expand that agency. Thank you all and be safe.

---

**Submitted by:** Gassoh Goba

**Submitted via:** Webex Event, transcribed during event

**Testimony:** Thank you all for making this Taxpayers Night as accessible as possible for folks during this pandemic and I hope folks are keeping safe during this time.

So, my name is Gassoh Goba from Sex Workers Outreach Project here in Baltimore City and I just want to lift up all the concerns everyone else has raised about how this pandemic is going to impact some Baltimoreans who are the most vulnerable. I am talking about people who are living with chronic health issues, people who are formerly incarcerated, incarcerated right now, are selling sex in the street, are using drugs in the street, are homeless, a wide variety of vulnerabilities that folks have in Baltimore City. I am again pleading the with the BOE and all the folks who have the political currency to act in good faith for Baltimoreans who do not have the political and social currency that y'all do. That people who have homes do, that people that own homes. What about homeless folks who do not pay property taxes, what about their needs?

We are again, as many of my comrades have lifted up, that many of my community members have lifted up, taking money away from vital services in Baltimore City that help the most impacted and vulnerable amongst us to increase funding for the Baltimore City Police Department who we know, continues to assault black and brown and white poor working class folks here in Baltimore City. It is ridiculous. It is enough.

We need to implement harm reduction preventative measures instead of looking to policing, instead of looking to surveillance, instead of looking to incarceration. I am sure many of you have undergraduate degrees, master's degrees, even doctorates. You have an understanding of what happens when we do not fund critical services that people need. We have an understanding of what



happens to individuals when their basic needs are not met. Housing, quality education, healthcare that doesn't discriminate against you, police officers who don't see you as less than human.

Again, I am urging you to reconsider how you allocate these funds, and stop for the love of God giving so much money to a police force who would rather see black and brown and poor white, sex workers, people who are using drugs, and people who are homeless in jail, to line their pockets. Thank you very much, and thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak for my community, and folks that I love.

---

**Submitted by:** Mark Matthews

**Submitted via:** Testimony Sign-up

**Testimony:** My concern is the continued funding of the community action partnership. A 50-year-old federal program mandated to move people to self-sufficiency. Post pandemic this agency's role will be more significant than ever before.

---

**Submitted by:** Kim Trueheart

**Submitted via:** Testimony Sign-up

**Testimony:** Covid-19 will severely disrupt children's learning in Baltimore City. How will the 2021 Budget mitigate this eventuality?

## Testimony Submissions: Email and Voicemail

**Submitted by:** Kendra Whye

**Submitted on:** April 6, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** Greetings:

This communication is in response to The Baltimore City Public Schools Construction Act of 2013 funding. The demolition of Walter P. Carter Elementary school included the much used Walter P. Carter Recreation Center. This was an 8000 sq. ft. space that was successfully shared by the Community. The rebuild allocates 3000 sq. ft. which is a major reduction in space.

As a diverse community, the use of this space provides opportunities to share cultural experiences, develop programs for youth and the elderly. This area is continually plagued with fiscal challenges that stem from State decisions. The reality is 3000 sq. ft. is insufficient space for a very active community. The prior location was frequently used and, more importantly, allowed productive activities for all ages.

Baltimore City residents willfully pay extremely high taxes because they love the city and what it offers to its citizens. I have lived in Baltimore all my life and raised my children as responsible citizens who are proud to say they are from Baltimore. I am respectfully asking for funding consideration for an 8000 sq. ft. stand-alone recreation facility. There is value in investing in the communities that remain loyal. The community asks for someone to acknowledge our determination to keep the community growing and prospering by providing funding for the stand-alone recreation

Regards,

Kendra Whye

---

**Submitted by:** Scott Richmond

**Submitted on:** April 7, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** Please accept the following written testimony on my behalf for the Fiscal Year 2021 Taxpayer night.

Baltimore City's Recreation and Parks Department is in desperate need of an increased operations budget to properly maintain our parks and recreations centers in fiscal year 2021 and beyond. At the very least, improved operations budgets at the Recreation and Parks Department needs to become a priority in upcoming budgets as parks and recreation centers have an important effect on the quality of life for Baltimore residents. In particular, studies show that well maintained and managed parks increase property values, decrease crime, improve physical and mental health and have environmental benefits. Recreation centers likewise add opportunities for physical activity, provide important opportunities for organized sports and act as a community hub.

Despite the importance of parks and recreation centers, the Recreation and Parks Department is underfunded to a large degree. Budget data from the Trust for Public Land's City Park Facts Report indicates that the Recreation and Parks operations spending is three times less per acre of parkland than other high-density cities. For example, in fiscal year 2016, Baltimore's operations spending per acre of parkland was \$7800. Other high-density cities averaged more than \$25,000 per acre. Similar disparities exist today. This large disparity in operations spending along with long-standing maintenance issues in Baltimore parks and recreation centers, indicates a problem that demands correction.

Improved funding for maintenance and operations of our park system can have a positive impact on Baltimore residents with little to no downside. Additionally, improved recreation centers and parks benefit all residents equally regardless of the differences between income levels, political affiliation or age. Considering such advantages, and the outsized role that parks and recreation centers are currently undertaking in Baltimore City, the Recreation and Parks Department operations budget needs to be prioritized in fiscal year 2021 and going forward to properly fund maintenance and operations of our parks and recreation centers.

Scott M. Richmond

---

**Submitted by:** Mark Matthews

**Submitted on:** April 7, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** To The Members Of The Board,

My concern is for the continuation and hopefully, the increase in funding to an agency federally mandated, more than 50 years ago, to move people from poverty to self-sufficiency. That agency has taught Baltimorean's how to open and succeed with their own business, created the first female master welder in the state, provided CNA/GNA certifications to women who are now employed and providing for their families. It created partnerships that provided music lessons, recreational activities, senior activities, community cleaning employment opportunities healthcare programs and so much more. There was even a credit union to help residents purchase property homes and establish businesses.

Over the years, the agency has been known as Model Cities, Mayor's Stations and most recently the Community Action Partnership. These Community Action Agencies, created by federal legislation, will be needed now more than ever as we enter the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. A CAP will play an essential role in establishing best practices and service coordination via communication and collaboration with the national network. Again, by federal mandate, every city and county in the nation has at least one Community Action Agency. They provide all manner services including but not limited to services for veterans, seniors, youth, students, parents, vocational training, food, housing, etc. as the constituent boards see fit. In recent years, the agency has suffered from a mission shift. Most indicative of this shift is the placement of this national initiative under the auspices of an

'office' that offers no direct services, case management nor ongoing engagement with the community for which it professes to advocate.

As a Baltimore native, former director of a community association, co-founder and president of another, before the community's gentrification, I am aware of the symbiotic relationship between residents and the municipality. Having been raised by parents who were in their early '20s during the depression years, I heard first-hand accounts of the hardships that may well be waiting for us in the not too distant future. I was told how everyday people coped and where local government helped and fell short. For at least 2 decades I have worked with reentry advocates and agencies to advocate for legislation and policies to help the formerly incarcerated make the transition from nothing to something. At its core, CAP was created to be managed by residents who consulted residents to create programming to move residents along the continuum of life. It is the ONLY agency designed to utilize the knowledge, fortitude, and creativity of the average citizen to make the city better by creating avenues to self-sufficiency for the poor and thereby increasing the tax base of the city.

I urge the Board to continue funding the Community Action Agency to a degree that will allow it's increased capacity while, if the Board sees fit, make recommendations to the revamping of the agency to better meet the needs of the City and its constituents.

Cordially,

Mark P. Matthews, Sr

---

**Submitted by:** Charles Eubanks

**Submitted on:** April 7, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** Hello honorable members of the Board of Estimates.

First, thank you to all of the officials and government workers who put so much effort into this budget process. Our city, in fact our world, is in the beginning of a catastrophic pandemic that will undoubtedly impact all of our lives for a long time. At a time like this, we all need each other, and we need a strong city government prepared to take necessary actions to protect and provide for its people, especially those most vulnerable. This budget barely contemplates the dire emergency that we find ourselves in now. I know a lot more work and planning is probably ongoing, in order to make necessary adjustments. One of those adjustments could be to reopen and renegotiate the 2016 PILOT agreement with the city's nonprofit medical and educational institutions, including Johns Hopkins hospitals and teaching institutions. Another vital adjustment could be to end tax-based incentives for wealthy businesses and institutions, generally.

I was disappointed to see that increased funding for schools, as a part of meeting the KIRWAN commission's recommendations and funding the blueprint for Maryland's future, was to be accomplished with cuts to city services, instead of by increasing revenues by taxing those organizations with the most wealth and income. Now this seems even more ill-fated, since many of our neighbors will be suffering, unable to work, perhaps facing medical emergencies with their own

astronomical price tags, and even losing loved ones to this pandemic. Many more city residents will ultimately depend on city services. This is a time for everyone to chip in, based on their ability, not to be cutting deals to pay less taxes. It is time for wealthy non-profits, developers, and other companies to step up to the plate, and it is time for our leaders to stand up for their constituents. Please consider these funding recommendations. Thank you for your time and consideration.

---

**Submitted by:** Jesse Salazar

**Submitted on:** April 7, 2020

**Submitted via:** Voicemail, transcribed

**Testimony:** Hi, my name is Jesse Salazar. I was participating in the budget discussion that took place on Webex this evening. I live in Station North and wanted to give input, which is that the Baltimore City employment rate typically lags behind the national unemployment rate. And so, my concern is that in the age of COVID, where unemployment is quickly rising, we might have greater job needs than other cities. And so my hope is that the budget will be sure to invest in reskilling our workforce and preparing it, while still creating jobs for the 21st century. Thank you.

---

**Submitted by:** Jesse Salazar

**Submitted on:** April 7, 2020

**Submitted via:** Webex Q&A

**Testimony:** Could we get a better understanding of how the budget will fuel economic growth and opportunity in the city? Baltimore frequently lags the nation's unemployment rate. Our budget should invest in enablers of economic growth. The economic impacts of the current crisis will likely lead to significant job losses, and I'd love to be sure we are investing in reskilling workers who lose their jobs.

---

**Submitted by:** Jessi Ahart

**Submitted on:** April 9, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** Dear President Brandon Scott,

My name is Jessi Ahart and I live in Parkville. I am concerned about the Preliminary Baltimore City Budget FY21. In normal times, this document would not reflect what I value and prioritize for my city. In the face of this pandemic and as we struggle to recover, the needs of Baltimore's residents are in even starker contrast to the values presented in this budget.

I see the city's budget as a moral document that reflects our collective values. We are overspending on the Baltimore Police Department relative to all other city agencies. Proposed spending on the police and sheriff's departments is \$545 million -- up more than \$20 million from the current year!

Per capita spending would reach a whopping \$903 per resident up from \$817 in the current year. This greatly outsizes other cities. In FY 2017, when Baltimore spent \$772 per resident, Detroit spent \$450; New York, \$581; and in Houston, \$383.

This "law and order" approach hasn't worked to reduce violence in Baltimore City in the past, and it isn't working now.

Shift spending in the final budget into programs and supports that are proven to work: improvements to schools, youth opportunities and education, strategic and impactful harm reduction investments, working to reduce joblessness and homelessness and focused efforts to provide meaningful access to high quality, culturally appropriate care for city residents that includes mental and physical health, as well as mitigating of historic exposure of Black communities to environmental hazards. Use the final budget to lift Baltimore residents out of the slump that will surely come once social distancing measures can be relaxed.

Sincerely,

Mx. Jessi Ahart

---

**Submitted by:** Kyle Long

**Submitted on:** April 9, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** Dear President Brandon Scott,

My name is Kyle Long and I live in Baltimore. I am concerned about the Preliminary Baltimore City Budget FY21. In normal times, this document would not reflect what I value and prioritize for my city. In the face of this pandemic and as we struggle to recover, the needs of Baltimore's residents are in even starker contrast to the values presented in this budget.

I see the city's budget as a moral document that reflects our collective values. We are overspending on the Baltimore Police Department relative to all other city agencies. Proposed spending on the police and sheriff's departments is \$545 million -- up more than \$20 million from the current year! Per capita spending would reach a whopping \$903 per resident up from \$817 in the current year. This greatly outsizes other cities. In FY 2017, when Baltimore spent \$772 per resident, Detroit spent \$450; New York, \$581; and in Houston, \$383.

This "law and order" approach hasn't worked to reduce violence in Baltimore City in the past, and it isn't working now.

Shift spending in the final budget into programs and supports that are proven to work: improvements to schools, youth opportunities and education, strategic and impactful harm reduction investments, working to reduce joblessness and homelessness and focused efforts to provide meaningful access to high quality, culturally appropriate care for city residents that includes mental and physical health, as well as mitigating of historic exposure of Black communities to environmental hazards. Use the

final budget to lift Baltimore residents out of the slump that will surely come once social distancing measures can be relaxed.

Sincerely,

Mr. Kyle Long

---

**Submitted by:** Joanna Merry

**Submitted on:** April 9, 2020

**Submitted via:** Voicemail, transcribed

**Testimony:** Hello, this is Joanna Merry calling, I'm a student at the University of Maryland School of Social Work and I work with youth organizing around environmental issues in the city. I'm just calling because it has been brought to my attention that the proposed budget for 2021 is going to undergo some pretty significant adjustments due to the City losing revenue during the COVID-19 crisis.

Often when there is an epidemic of some sort, natural disasters, we've already seen in the past month several environmental regulations being cut, bans that were supposed to be implemented being dismissed or postponed, or means in order to support environmental regulations are withdrawn from budgets. I want to stress very strongly that the environment needs to be considered and it needs to be thought of in every single line item that is on the City's budget. We are currently undergoing a climate crisis and we need to make sure every single line item on the City budget reflects the fact that we are facing one of our biggest battles, that we haven't even seen the full outcomes of yet.

We need to make sure that we are reducing emissions through funding our public transportation, switching to electric vehicles, if possible. We also need to be supporting the zero waste initiative resolution that was passed in City Council on Monday, which would have us diverting by 2040 90 percent of the waste that we produce as a city. There is a lot of money to be had in composting and a lot of carbon sequestration that happens with composting and it will help heal our region, help heal our earth, and help people see that they can actively be a steward of the earth in the way in which we are intended to be. Thank you very much for your time and once again please be sure to consider the environment through all aspects of planning the City's budget. Thank you.

---

**Submitted by:** Pernetha Taylor

**Submitted on:** April 10, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email, transcribed from photo attachments

**Testimony:** Hello, My name is Pernetha Taylor.

There is too much focusing on the law enforcement and there are still many unsolved killings in Baltimore, Maryland, and it doesn't make any sense. We have innocent people that are incarcerated and having life sentences for crimes they didn't commit. I think more money should be focused on the homeless, the schools, health care issues.



I had two strokes, a brain aneurysm surgery, and a FPO enclosure in my heart. I have been trying for months to get the necessary insurance I need but I have been getting the run-around, and it's very frustrating. When all my life I worked, and once I get a disability I can't get any health care insurance.

And also now I am having a bad toothache, I went to the dentist several months ago and I was told it would cost me 385.00 dollars to have my tooth extracted. This is ridiculous I can't even get dental insurance, and have been in pain since December. I can't afford to have my tooth extracted. I receive SSDI. The majority of my check goes to paying my rent and my water bill; I can't at times afford to pay my BGE bill. Should anyone whom worked two jobs sometimes have to go through this, it's like having insurance for health care doesn't matter or no one cares if you live nor die. It's really sad and devastating, I am still with the pain of having a toothache.

---

**Submitted by:** Megan Shook

**Submitted on:** April 10, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** My main concern is the bloated police budget. Need to reduce spending on Police Department by 20%.

I think the City would benefit from increasing Parks and Recreation budget by 20%. Upgrading Druid Hill Park swimming pool MUST go forward.

Megan Shook

---

**Submitted by:** Madeline Becker

**Submitted on:** April 10, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** Dear President Brandon Scott,

My name is Madeline Becker and I live in Baltimore. I am concerned about the Preliminary Baltimore City Budget FY21. In normal times, this document would not reflect what I value and prioritize for my city. In the face of this pandemic and as we struggle to recover, the needs of Baltimore's residents are in even starker contrast to the values presented in this budget.

I see the city's budget as a moral document that reflects our collective values. We are overspending on the Baltimore Police Department relative to all other city agencies. Recently, it was reported that officers were coughing on folks, this is unacceptable. We have been steadily increasing funding to the BPD for years, decades, and it has not changed anything. In fact, relationships have deteriorated over time, as evidence in recent behavior by officers coughing and recently, shooting people of color.

Proposed spending on the police and sheriff's departments is \$535 million -- up more than \$20 million from the current year! Per capita spending would reach a whopping \$903 per resident up

from \$817 in the current year. This greatly outsizes other cities. In FY 2017, when Baltimore spent \$772 per resident, Detroit spent \$450; New York, \$581; and in Houston, \$383.

This "law and order" approach hasn't worked to reduce violence in Baltimore City in the past, and it isn't working now.

During last years Tax Payer Night, which was a full house of folks, there was a similar outcry about over spending on police. We need recreation centers. We need access to WiFi for all, such inequitable access has been revealed by the COVID19 outbreak. I teach in the Baltimore City Public School system and the inequities have been clear as we switch to distant learning.

Our number one priorities should be education and inspiring kids and young adults to follow their questions and curiosities, to be innovative and creative. This does not happen when families witness officers shoot family members and cough of family members.

Please allocate more funds to our schools, recreational facilities and funding for trans and queer communities. Trans and queer communities are also often at odds with officers. We are left out of the census, as it did not even have options beyond "male" and "female," therefore can receive no funding. This can be fixed on the local level. Do not overlook us.

Please work harder to really hear the community. I can't believe how similar this budget is to last years. It is shocking considering communities came out and voiced their needs, none of which are reflected in this budget.

It will soon be the fifth year anniversary of Freddie Gray's death, and it feels similar to those times in the way different parts of the city are policed differently according to zip code. In honor of all those who have fallen in this city, hear us, listen to us, and change this budget.

Shift spending in the final budget into programs and supports that are proven to work: improvements to schools, youth opportunities and education, strategic and impactful harm reduction investments, working to reduce joblessness and homelessness and focused efforts to provide meaningful access to high quality, culturally appropriate care for city residents that includes mental and physical health, as well as mitigating of historic exposure of Black communities to environmental hazards. Use the final budget to lift Baltimore residents out of the slump that will surely come once social distancing measures can be relaxed.

Sincerely,

X Madeline Becker

---

**Submitted by:** Andrew Dupuy

**Submitted on:** April 10, 2020

**Submitted via:** Email

**Testimony:** In reviewing the Preliminary Budget Plan for FY21, I'd like to see some emphasis on improving non-car transportation in this city, and ameliorating some of the deadly and pernicious

aspects of car culture here that affect public health and discourage more walkable, high-quality-of-life neighborhoods:

1. (p. 20) Focus on Sustainable Transportation (690) and Traffic Safety (697), including pedestrian (and cyclist) safety, and adding traffic calming measure. (For example, I live on a residential street, across from a college dorm and a block from an elementary school. Yet Waze-directed drivers recklessly fly down my street, not stopping at stop signs, cutting between MLK and I-83. We need traffic calming and enforcement.)
2. (p. 23) Net Parking Revenues: As there are projected decreases in these revenues, increase the costs of parking meters. Baltimore's meters are very cheap. (Annual residential parking permits -- including the one I use, as I lack a driveway -- are also far too cheap. Significantly increase this fee.) Increasing meter costs will close revenue gaps, improve parking turnover to increase availability, and encourage use of other modes of transportation.
3. (p. 25) Red Light & Speed Cameras. Baltimore drivers are reckless and deadly. Given the understandable lack of police manpower to enforce traffic laws, add more speed and traffic cameras to improve safety while increasing revenues.
4. (p. 44-45) Public Safety. I'd like to see reference and resources directed to traffic enforcement in the Police section.
5. (p. 54) Recycling Rate. Non transportation related. But you'd create an incentive to recycle more if you charged households for garbage service based on how much trash they produce (size of bin), as the City of Austin, Texas did when my husband and I lived there.

Sincerely,

Andrew N. Dupuy

---

**Submitted by:** Onyinye Alheri

**Submitted on:** April 14, 2020

**Submitted via:** Voicemail, transcribed

**Testimony:** Hi, my name is Onyinye Alheri. I live in Upton. I'm calling to comment on the proposed budget for 2021, which in my opinion is even worse than the budget that you all proposed last year.

I don't understand how of all the City agencies the only ones getting additional funding are the Police Department, yet again. Increasing our expenditures on them by another \$20 million is ridiculous. Especially now, in the time of COVID, I think it's pretty clear that we need to invest in communities and in one another and not in policing. Policing does not make us safer, so if we keep going with that narrative, we're just going to see more crime in our city, more waste of money paying for people to sit in their cars and look at Instagram, when we're being told that they're here to protect us. And it gets me really frustrated, but I won't go into that. I only have two minutes.

The point I'm trying to make is that this is our time to reshape our society and that starts with reallocating funds to the sources that actually need them, to the agencies that actually need them, and the Police Department is not that agency, I guarantee it. I want you to look at the records from the last year, since you upped their budget last year. Has there been a decrease in any crime at all? I'm pretty sure we've seen the same amount of murders that we had last year, if not more. What we need to invest in is saving people's lives from overdose, we need to invest in our children through schooling and housing, and we need to invest in our people, our elders, our young ones, and our working class people who make the city so great.

So please, I urge you as the City Council, I know that you don't have much power if Mayor Young decides otherwise, but I urge you to pressure him to use that big brain in his head and make the right decision about this. Stop spending so much money on policing and give the money to the agencies that need it the most. Thank you.