

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

by
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A capstone project submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Management

Baltimore, Maryland
December 2020

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Abstract

Calls to defund police departments and instead invest in community-based solutions to violence have grown considerably in the wake of the uprisings around George Floyd's murder. These demands extend to the nation's capital—Washington, D.C.—where homicide rates have been on an upward trend since 2015, despite having the highest per-capita concentration of police officers compared to any major city in the United States. Violent crime has significant negative impacts on individuals, families, and communities. This capstone examines the potential impact of redirecting \$83 million, about a third of the Metropolitan Police Department's patrol services budget, toward expanding violence interruption and prevention programs in the District.

D.C. has initiated a number of violence prevention efforts in recent years, largely through the passage of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results (NEAR) Act. Though the nascent community-based programs in D.C. have not undergone rigorous evaluation, studies conducted on similar programs in Chicago, New York City, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles find that they are highly effective. Research on the efficacy of increasing police forces as a mechanism to prevent violence produces mixed results, with small effects. Ultimately, this memorandum concludes that the D.C. Council has a moral imperative to back evidence-based approaches to reducing violence, putting the safety of residents first.

Advisor: Paul Weinstein Jr.

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Charles Allen
Chairperson, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
District of Columbia City Council

FROM: Marika Weinstein

SUBJECT: Investing in community-based solutions to violence

DATE: September 7, 2020

Action-Forcing Event

The brutal killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota set off protests, riots, and social unrest across the country. Demonstrations have been ongoing in Washington, D.C. for over 100 days¹, with protestors demanding divestment from police and incarceration, an end to racist criminal justice practices, and a different way to address community violence.² Your office reported that contrast to the 22 people who signed up to testify for the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety budget in 2019, over 15,000 testimonies were submitted in 2020.³

¹ Lang, Marissa J. "After 100 days of demonstrations, unusual protest tactics are likely to remain." *The Washington Post*. Last modified September 5, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/protest-tactics-dc/2020/09/04/81a82cfa-ee74-11ea-99a1-71343d03bc29_story.html.

² Austermuhle, Martin. "Here's What Black Lives Matter D.C. Is Calling For, And Where The City Stands." *NPR.org*. Last modified June 9, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2020/06/09/872859084/here-s-what-black-lives-matter-d-c-is-calling-for-and-where-the-city-stands>.

³ Roussey, Tom. "As Street Protests Continue, Thousands Speak out on D.C. Police Budget Hearing." *WJLA*. Last modified June 12, 2020. <https://wjla.com/news/local/protests-dc-police-budget-hearing>.

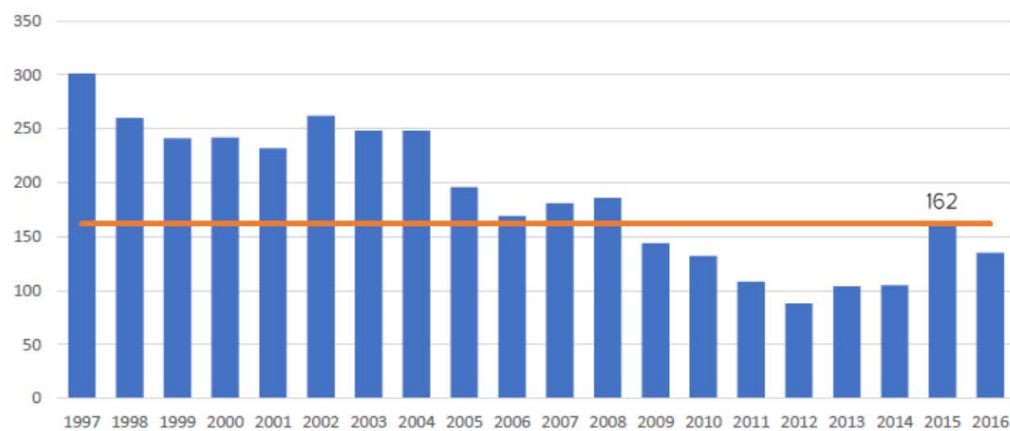
Statement of the problem

The problem this proposal seeks to address is homicide and violent crime in Washington, D.C. Though D.C. is no longer known as the “murder capital” of the United States⁴, violence and homicide are still prevalent and impactful. Since the beginning of 2020, there have already been over 100 homicides, over 100 cases of reported sexual abuse, and over a thousand assaults with a dangerous weapon in D.C.⁵ A declining trend of homicides over the course of the

Figure 1: Rising homicide levels beginning in 2015

Homicide levels in 2015 were highest since 2008, but still far below historic highs

Homicide totals in D.C., 1997 - 2016



Source: MPD

D.C. Policy Center



last few decades has reversed in recent years, showing an uptick since 2015. Comments from those who deal with homicides and their aftermaths everyday suggest that the uptick has been driven by a growing gap between those who have opportunity in D.C. and those who don't. The Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, Kevin Donahue, refers to “individuals who have had

⁴ Lewis, Aidan, and Bill McKenna. "From America's Murder Capital to Boomtown." BBC News. Last modified August 6, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28605215>.

⁵ "District Crime Data at a Glance." Metropolitan Police Department. Accessed September 20, 2020. <https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/district-crime-data-glance>.

a lot of trauma in their life, who feel a disconnect from the economic vibrancy we have in the city.”⁶ Some point specifically to gentrification, including a 2019 study showing that 20,000 African American residents in D.C. were displaced from their neighborhoods by more affluent, white outsiders between 2000 and 2013.⁷

There is little data available on the demographics of victims of violent crime in D.C. In 1999, the Urban Institute’s Justice Policy Center released a report entitled, “Violence in the District of Columbia” with detailed breakdowns regarding the type of violent incidents occurring, who was most impacted, who was committing the offenses, and more. Through a partnership with the Mayor’s Office, they analyzed almost 15,000 violent incidents in D.C. in 1999. One of the clearest trends was that youth (age 18-24) were victimized at a significantly higher rate than other age groups. They also found that Black residents of D.C. were disproportionately impacted by crime; while they made up only 62% of the population, they comprised over 80% of victims of all reported sexual, aggravated, and simple assaults, and 92% of homicide victims. Though the report did not explore why these disparities exist, it found that overall Black residents experienced a victimization rate of more than two times that of non-Black residents.⁸

While this data is two decades old, a more recent report across the United States also finds a disproportionate impact on Black Americans. A 2007 report released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that while Black people accounted for 13% of the U.S. population, they

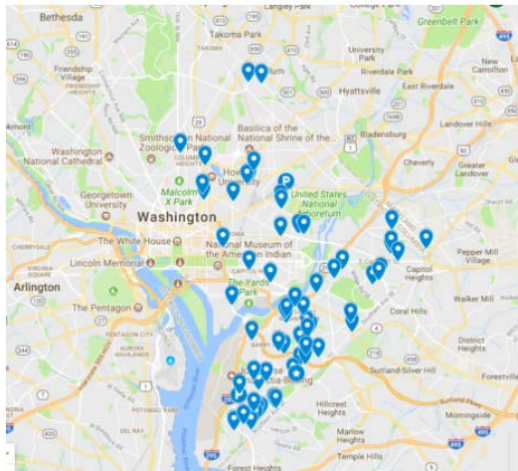
⁶ Gomez, Amanda M., and Alexa Mills. "Causes of Death: Why Is D.C.'s Homicide Count Rising Again?" Washington City Paper. Last modified August 28, 2020. <https://washingtoncitypaper.com/article/176824/why-is-dcs-homicide-count-rising-again/>.

⁷ Richardson, Jason, Bruce Mitchell, and Juan Franco. "Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities." National Community Reinvestment Coalition. Last modified March 18, 2019. <https://ncrc.org/gentrification/>.

⁸ Gouvis, Caterina. "Violence in the District of Columbia: Patterns from 1999." Urban Institute. Last modified March 2001. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/62551/410008-Violence-in-the-District-of-Columbia.PDF>

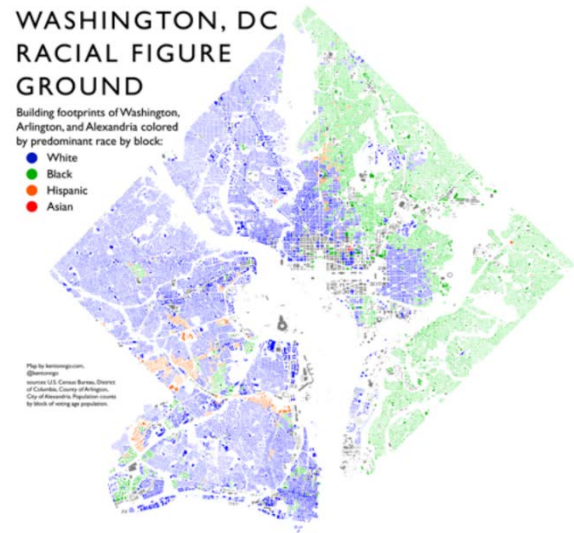
made up 15% of nonfatal violent crime victims and nearly half of homicide victims.⁹ And even a cursory look comparing a map of where homicides happen more frequently¹⁰ and which wards in D.C. are majority African American¹¹ displays a pattern: central and southeast D.C. have higher Black populations and are subject to higher rates of murders.

Figure 2: D.C. gun-related homicides, 2018



Map of all homicides that resulted from gun violence in Washington, DC, between Jan. 1 and Aug. 27.

Figure 3: Racial segregation in D.C.



The impacts of violence are significant: on individuals, communities, and the city as a whole. Those who experience violent crime report a wide array of socio-emotional problems, including distress and shifts in relationship at work, school, and home, including more arguments, inability to trust, and not feeling as close. A 2014 Bureau of Justice Statistics report found that 91% of violent crime victims experienced one or more emotional symptoms for at least a month, including feeling worried or anxious, angry, unsafe, violated, vulnerable,

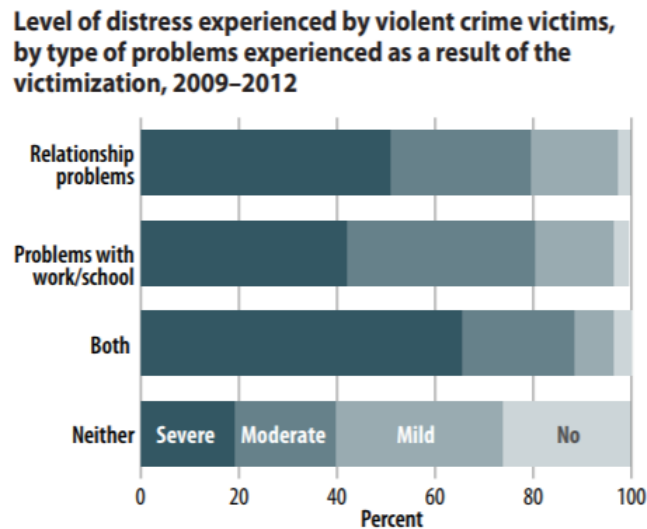
⁹ Harrell, Erika. "Black Victims of Violent Crime." Bureau of Justice Statistics. Last modified August 2007. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/bvvc.pdf>.

¹⁰ Mazancourt, Stephen. "Homicides in the District." DC Witness. Last modified August 29, 2018. <https://dcwitness.org/homicides-in-the-district/>.

¹¹ Malouff, Dan. "All the Buildings and Races of DC, Arlington & Alexandria on One Map." Greater Greater Washington. Last modified January 30, 2015. <https://ggwash.org/view/37159/all-the-buildings-and-races-of-dc-arlington-alexandria-on-one-map>.

distrustful, sad, or depressed. They found that 61% experienced physical symptoms for at least a month, including trouble sleeping, fatigue, upset stomach, muscle tension, headaches, problems with eating or drinking, or high blood pressure.¹²

Figure 4: Impacts of violent crime



Note: Excludes victimizations in which the level of distress was unknown. See appendix table 10 for estimates and standard errors.
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009–2012.

These impacts and disruptions have ripple effects out to friends and family, and can impact the behavior and well-being of victims for years. Theory and research points to associations between victimization (especially as an adolescent) and increased odds of being a perpetrator or victim of violence later in life, and increased odds of becoming engaging in substance abuse.¹³ Even beyond those who are directly impacted by the violence, there are negative externalities felt by communities where violence occurs. There can be impacts on the neighborhood quality, like declining property values and a reduction in new businesses. Kids are

¹² Langton, Lynn, and Jennifer Truman. "Socio-emotional Impact of Violent Crime." Bureau of Justice Statistics. Last modified September 2014. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/sivc.pdf>.

¹³ Menard, Scott. "Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Adolescent Victimization." National Criminal Justice Reference Service. Last modified February 2002. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/191210.pdf>.

kept indoors by concerned parents and people are less likely to go for walks, translating into an overall drop in physical activity.¹⁴

It is challenging to capture the economic cost of violent crime to society, because there are many intangible factors like the impact of pain and suffering. However, researchers have estimated that crime on the whole costs the United States somewhere between \$690 billion and \$3.41 trillion annually.¹⁵ In D.C., we spent \$1.4 billion under the Public Safety and Justice appropriation title in FY2020, just under 10% of total expenditures.¹⁶ This use of city resources means lost opportunities for funding affordable housing, healthcare, and other services that could benefit residents.

History and background

For many decades, D.C. has followed a similar policy response to other major U.S. cities: responding to homicide and violent crime by turning to large police forces and high rates of incarceration in the hopes that a higher police presence and punitive model would serve as a deterrent to violent crime. The number of homicides in D.C. peaked in 1991 at 482 deaths, leading to the epithet “murder capital” of the US.¹⁷ In 1990, the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) had just over 4,500 full-time sworn personnel. That amounted to a rate of

¹⁴ Janke, Katharina, Carol Propper, and Michael Shields. "Assaults, Murders and Walkers: The Impact of Violent Crime on Physical Activity." *Journal of Health Economics*. Last modified May 2016.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167629616000187>.

¹⁵ WatchBlog. "How Much Does Crime Cost?" Last modified November 29, 2017.

[https://blog.gao.gov/2017/11/29/how-much-does-crime-](https://blog.gao.gov/2017/11/29/how-much-does-crime-cost/#:~:text=Researchers%20have%20estimated%20varying%20annual,the%20intangible%20costs%20of%20crime.)

[cost/#:~:text=Researchers%20have%20estimated%20varying%20annual,the%20intangible%20costs%20of%20crime.](https://blog.gao.gov/2017/11/29/how-much-does-crime-cost/#:~:text=Researchers%20have%20estimated%20varying%20annual,the%20intangible%20costs%20of%20crime.)

¹⁶ "A Resident's Guide to the DC Budget." DC Fiscal Policy Institute. Last modified January 30, 2020.

[https://www.dcfpi.org/all/a-residents-guide-to-the-dc-budget-](https://www.dcfpi.org/all/a-residents-guide-to-the-dc-budget-2/#:~:text=How%20the%20District%20Spends%20its,appropriation%20titles%20(Figure%202).)

[2/#:~:text=How%20the%20District%20Spends%20its,appropriation%20titles%20\(Figure%202\).](https://www.dcfpi.org/all/a-residents-guide-to-the-dc-budget-2/#:~:text=How%20the%20District%20Spends%20its,appropriation%20titles%20(Figure%202).)

¹⁷ Lewis, Aidan, and Bill McKenna. "From America's Murder Capital to Boomtown." BBC News. Last modified August 6, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28605215>.

742 per 100,000 residents, the highest concentration of sworn officers out of U.S. cities with at least 250,000 residents. The city with the next highest concentration, Detroit, had just 447 officers per 100,000 residents.¹⁸

The force slowly shrank from that peak, and today MPD employs more than 3,750 sworn members.¹⁹ The latest available data, however, show that at a rate of 551 officers per 100,000 residents, D.C. still has the highest concentration of police for any major U.S. city.²⁰ These numbers only take into consideration MPD, which is the primary police force in D.C. Because of its significance as the capital of the U.S. and accordingly, all of the federal agencies that are located here, D.C. has numerous law enforcement agencies working in the city. This includes the metro transit police, capitol police, park police, the secret service, FBI police, ICE, and a host of police agencies specifically tasked with safeguarding particular offices or buildings.²¹

D.C. tops the charts when it comes to incarceration rates as well. Even when narrowing to just look at local offenses (i.e. not including federal charges), D.C. incarcerated residents at a rate of 930 people per 100,00 in 2016.²² That is higher than almost any state (Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama narrowly top 930²³) and higher than every urban

¹⁸ Reaves, Brian, and Matthew Hickman. "Police Departments in Large Cities, 1990-2000." Bureau of Justice Statistics. Last modified May 2002. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pdlc00.pdf>.

¹⁹ "Brief History of the MPDC." Metropolitan Police Department. Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/brief-history-mpdc#:~:text=The%20MPD%20of%20Today,more%20than%20600%20civilian%20employees.>

²⁰ "Police Employment, Officers Per Capita Rates for U.S. Cities." Governing. Last modified July 2, 2018. <https://www.governing.com/gov-data/safety-justice/police-officers-per-capita-rates-employment-for-city-departments.html>.

²¹ "Law Enforcement Agencies in DC." Washington Peace Center. Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://washingtonpeacecenter.org/law-enforcement-agencies-in-dc/>.

²² Austermuhle, Martin. "District Of Corrections: Does D.C. Really Have The Highest Incarceration Rate In The Country?" WAMU. Last modified September 10, 2019. <https://wamu.org/story/19/09/10/district-of-corrections-does-d-c-really-have-the-highest-incarceration-rate-in-the-country/>.

²³ Wagner, Peter, and Wendy Sawyer. "States of Incarceration: The Global Context 2018." Last modified June 2018. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2018.html>.

area except for Oklahoma City.²⁴ By contrast, Boston, which is a similar-sized city to D.C., incarcerates just 81 residents per 100,000.²⁵

However, in the last 10 years, there has been an interest in experimenting with other evidence-based approaches to addressing violent crime. Most significantly, the D.C. Council and Mayor Bowser's office both introduced legislation in 2015 in response to an uptick in homicides. Mayor Bowser's bill, the Public Safety and Criminal Code Revisions Amendment Act of 2015, focused on increased surveillance and punishments. Community advocates likened it to continuing down the failed "tough on crime" experiments of the 80s and 90s, which mostly just caused incarceration rates to skyrocket.²⁶ In contrast, Councilman Kenyon McDuffie introduced the Neighborhood Engagements Achieves Results (NEAR) Act, which was focused on reducing violence by using a public health approach, in part based on models from Richmond, CA and Chicago, IL. The goal was to focus on the underlying causes of violence, rather than just reacting to violence after it happens.

After an amendment was made to include some of the provisions from Mayor Bowser's proposal, the NEAR Act was unanimously passed by the D.C. Council in March 2016.²⁷ However, controversy continued to follow the NEAR Act. Detractors continued to believe that investing in police is the best way to keep residents safe. They criticized the NEAR Act as "paying criminals to stay out of trouble" and a spokesperson for the Mayor pointed to \$100 million already spent

²⁴ Widra, Emily. "How America's Major Urban Centers Compare on Incarceration Rates." Prison Policy Initiative. Last modified March 28, 2019. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/03/28/urban-incarceration/>.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Duckett, Tahir. "Why Bowser's crime bill won't reduce crime." The Washington Post. Last modified November 13, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-bowsers-crime-bill-wont-reduce-crime/2015/11/13/9772c132-79c9-11e5-b9c1-f03c48c96ac2_story.html.

²⁷ Cohen, Brent. "Implementing the NEAR Act to Reduce Violence in D.C." D.C. Policy Center. Last modified May 25, 2017. <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/implementing-near-act-reduce-violence-d-c/>.

annually on job training programs.²⁸ Conflict around the bill meant that neither the Mayor's office nor the Council fully funded the NEAR Act in the FY 2017 budget. By the next year, advocacy efforts pushed the Mayor's office into fully funding the NEAR Act, and announcing its intent to fully implement each provision.²⁹

The pieces of the legislation that garnered the most attention were the creation of two new offices: the Office Neighborhood Safety and Engagements (ONSE) and the Office of Violence Prevention and Health Equity (OVPHE). ONSE engages people who are the most likely to be future victims or perpetrators of violent crime. It offers a transitional employment program that aims to improve the employment, education, and training outcomes for participants. It also employs violence interrupters who maintain active relationships in the communities they are based in, and try to deescalate situations before they become violent. OVPHE employs a violence interruption model that includes placing trained staff from nonprofits in hospitals to provide counseling, mental health treatment, mediation and dispute resolution services, and trauma-informed care to victims of violence and their families.³⁰

Additional provisions of the NEAR Act require that police officers receive training on community policing, bias-free policing, and cultural competency. There are new data collection requirements for MPD to track crime, police stops, and use of force. MPD is now paired with mental and behavioral health clinicians for certain 911 calls.³¹ The Mayor's office set up a website to track implementation of the NEAR Act, which now reports that all provisions have

²⁸ Davis, Aaron. "Paying criminals to stay out of trouble? D.C. could be next city to try experiment." The Washington Post. Last modified February 7, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/paying-criminals-to-stay-out-of-trouble-dc-could-be-next-city-to-try-experiment/2016/02/07/f3cc2d76-ca9e-11e5-a7b2-5a2f824b02c9_story.html.

²⁹ "Full Implementation of the NEAR Act." Stop Police Terror Project DC. Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://www.sptdc.com/full-implementation-of-the-near-act>.

³⁰ Cohen, Brent. "Implementing the NEAR Act to Reduce Violence in D.C." D.C. Policy Center. Last modified May 25, 2017. <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/implementing-near-act-reduce-violence-d-c/>.

³¹ Ibid

been implemented.³² Community advocates are not convinced; the Stop Police Terror Project, a big supporter of the NEAR Act, has raised questions about the substantive implementation and the reporting of results and progress. For example, they point out that officers were required to be trained on limiting use of force. New training was codified in 2016, but in FY2017, the Office of Police Complaints report showed that use of force incidents had increased by 36%. They pose the question: how is the effectiveness or success of trainings being measured?³³

A number of other pilot initiatives have been started in D.C. in the last few years, including some that consider different approaches once violence has already occurred. One of these is the restorative justice program introduced by Attorney General Karl Racine in 2016 as an alternative to incarceration specifically for juvenile offenders. The program works to resolve conflicts by bringing together those affected by a crime with the goal to hold offenders accountable, empower victims, and repair the harm caused by crime. D.C.'s Office of the Attorney General is the first public safety agency to implement a restorative justice program in-house, where restorative justice specialists operate alongside prosecutors. This program does not take referrals for cases involving sex crimes, gun offenses, homicides, or intimate partner violence.³⁴

The Office of the Attorney General also has a juvenile diversion program which develops a customized program of wrap-around services with the goal of helping each child achieve success and avoid new criminal offenses. This program, called Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE), involves selecting participants based on a rigorous evaluation carried out by

³² "NEAR Act." Safer Stronger DC. Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://saferstronger.dc.gov/page/near-act-safer-stronger-dc>.

³³ "SPTP Annotation to Mayor's NEAR Act Status Tracker." Stop Police Terror Project DC. Last modified February 20, 2018. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxqBtYBKZRCMWHhiZERxcHk0WVlSSmNoWWxmcFBlXMxRGxZ/view>.

the prosecutor. It is run by the Department of Human Services, and service provision is customized based on the measurement of a child's level of stress, trauma, and behavioral needs. Services can include therapy, mentoring, tutoring, mental health treatment, or recreation.³⁵

Finally, the Office of the Attorney General also runs a program called Cure the Streets, which is a public safety pilot program focused on preventing gun violence. Violence interrupters are selected for their credibility, relationships, and influence within target neighborhoods in D.C. They engage with members of the community and try to resolve conflicts before they become violent. Outreach workers recruit and work with individuals who are at high risk of involvement with violence to reduce their risk factors.³⁶

The FY21 budget as initially proposed by Mayor Bowser included cuts to the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and the Cure the Streets program under the Office of the Attorney General. However, the community pressure on the D.C. Council to divest from MPD and instead invest in community services led to a different outcome in the final budget. The approved budget reallocated \$9.67 million and 50 FTEs from MPD to programs supporting violence interruption, restorative justice, and victim services. This included \$1.25 million for the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement.³⁷ However, the funds cut from MPD did not come from the Patrol Districts budget line—where patrol officers are paid from—which saw a \$100 thousand increase in the budget approved for FY21.

³⁵ "Juvenile Diversion Program." Attorney General Karl A. Racine. Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://oag.dc.gov/public-safety/juvenile-diversion-program>.

³⁶ "Cure the Streets: OAG's Violence Interruption Program" Attorney General Karl A. Racine. Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://oag.dc.gov/public-safety/cure-streets-oags-violence-interruption-program>.

³⁷ Office of the Budget Director. (2020, July 6). *FY 2021 budget and financial plan*. <https://www.dccouncilbudget.com/blog/2020/7/6/fy-2021-budget-and-financial-plan>

Policy proposal

The goal of updated Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results (NEAR) Amendment Act of 2020 is to prevent violent crime in the District of Columbia. It would aim to bring down the number of homicides to pre-2015 levels or lower, specifically to fewer than 100 homicides per year by 2025. It will accomplish this by investing significantly more resources in violence interruption and prevention programs and by creating more transparency around the implementation of these programs.

Policy Implementation Tool

The proposed legislation is an update to the 2018 NEAR Act, building on the existing legislation to provide substantially more resources to support approaching violence as a public health issue, rather than one of law enforcement. The two components of the bill are: (1) moving \$83 million dollars from the Metropolitan Police Department budget to the budget for the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and the Cure the Streets program under the Office of the Attorney General, and (2) increasing transparency and accountability for the full implementation of violence prevention strategies.

The \$83 million would be removed from the Patrol Districts budget line item, which includes “patrols, responds to calls for service, and coordinates police services to residents, visitors, and commuters.”³⁸ With an approved FY21 budget of over \$249 million, Patrol Districts comprises almost half of the Metropolitan Police Department’s \$545 million budget.³⁹ The \$83

³⁸ Office of the Chief Financial Officer. (n.d.). *Metropolitan Police Department*. https://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/fa_mpd_chapter_2021a.pdf

³⁹ Ibid

million would cut the Patrol Services budget by about a third, reducing the number of sworn patrol officers in D.C. by the same proportion. The funds would be directed to two different agencies: The Office of the Attorney General for their Cure the Streets violence interruption program, and the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement. These programs would direct the funds toward expanding violence interruption and prevention programs across all eight wards of DC, including hiring more violence interrupters and increasing the number of participants in the Pathways program. It would also include the creation of a communications function within the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement.

The second element of the legislation would require regular reporting from both the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and from the Mayor's office. Each would be responsible for producing an annual report that would be provided to the D.C. Council and publicly available on their websites. The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement would report on their activities and key performance indicators. The Mayor's office would report on the specific actions they have taken on NEAR Act implementation, including responses to public comment.

Both of these provisions would go into full effect as soon as the legislation is passed and the subsequent budget is approved. The cut of \$83 million from the MPD's Patrol Services budget would require immediate layoffs for patrol staff.

Policy Authorization

This bill would be introduced in the FY21 legislative session for the D.C. Council,⁴⁰ with the goal of being fully funded in FY22. As the NEAR Act of 2016 demonstrated, it is possible for

⁴⁰ *How a bill becomes a law.* (2018, February 15). Council of the District of Columbia. <https://dcccouncil.us/bill-becomes-law/>

initiatives to go unfunded even once they are enacted. The actual implementation of the substance of this proposal requires an approved budget from both the D.C. Council and the Mayor's office once the legislation is passed.⁴¹

Policy analysis

The primary goal of this legislation is to reduce the number of homicides that are committed in the District of Columbia. There are several examples to help evaluate the effectiveness of similar violence interruption programs that have been implemented in other jurisdictions. A 2012 study carried out by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and John Hopkins University evaluated the use of a violence reduction program in Baltimore, called Safe Streets. Three of the four program sites experienced statistically significant reductions in homicides or nonfatal shootings over the course of the study. In one community, there was a 56% reduction in killings, and 34% reduction in shootings. Participants also showed changes in their attitudes toward violence; they were four times more likely to show little or no support for gun use.⁴²

Similar success has been seen in other cities that utilize the same approach as the violence interruption work in D.C., all of which are modeled after the CeaseFire program in Chicago. In Philadelphia, researchers from Temple University found a 30% reduction in shootings when compared the 24 months prior to the implementation of CeaseFire to the 24 months

⁴¹ Office of the Budget Director. (n.d.). *Budget Process (Step-by-Step)*. <https://www.dccouncilbudget.com/budget-process-step-by-step>

⁴² Webster, Daniel, Jennifer Whitehill, and Jon Vernick. "Evaluation of Baltimore's Safe Streets Program: Effects on Attitudes, Participants' Experiences, and Gun Violence." John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Last modified January 11, 2012. <https://1vp6u534z5kr2qmr0w11t7ub-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Safe-Streets-full-evaluation.pdf>.

after.⁴³ A Cure Violence program in New York City saw a 63% reduction in shootings and 37% reduction in gun injuries in the South Bronx. It also saw a 50% reduction in gun injuries in East New York, each of these compared to neighborhoods with similar demographics and crime rates but no intervention.⁴⁴ While many studies emphasize the impacts on homicide rates, a study based in Los Angeles examined whether or not violence interruption programs translate into lower over rates of gang-related crime. The theory is that these programs interrupt cycles of violent tit-for-tat retaliation, and so other violence aside from homicide could be impacted as well. They found a 45.3% reduction in gang retaliations independent of policing effects.⁴⁵

Chicago was home to the predecessor for many of these programs. A 2013 evaluation of CeaseFire found that it led to a 31% decrease in killings, a 1% decrease in total violent crimes, and a 19% decrease in shootings, on top of declining crime trends in the city as a whole. The effects of the intervention were found to occur immediately, within the first month of implementation.⁴⁶ However, funding for CeaseFire was cut significantly in 2015, which coincided with a steep increase in shootings and killings. The districts where the program was cut saw the highest increased in violence, accounting for 94% of the total citywide increase in shootings.⁴⁷

⁴³ Roman, Caterina, Hannah Klein, and Kevin Wolff. "Quasi-Experimental Designs for Community-Level Public Health Violence Reduction Interventions: A Case Study in the Challenges of Selecting the Counterfactual." Last modified 2017. https://1vp6u534z5kr2qmr0w11t7ub-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Roman_etal2017JEC_SelectingtheCounterfactual_CeaseFirePrepubcopy.pdf.

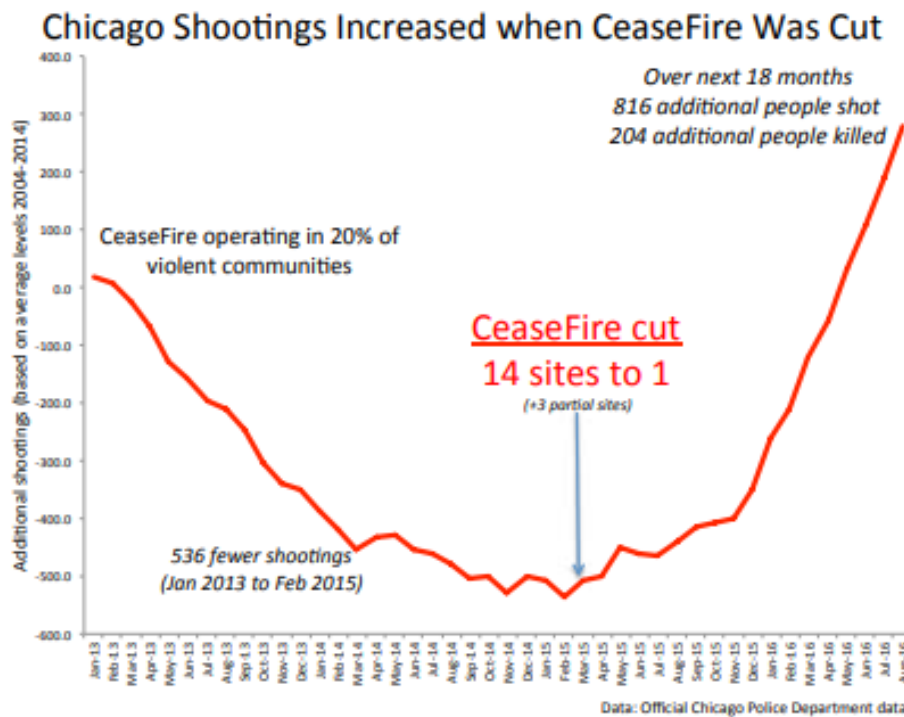
⁴⁴ Delgado, Sheyla, Laila Alsbahi, and Kevin Wolff. "The Effects of Cure Violence Programs in 2 New York City Neighborhoods." John Jay College Research and Evaluation Center. Last modified October 2, 2017. <https://johnjayrec.nyc/2017/10/02/cvinsobronxeastny/>.

⁴⁵ Brantingham, P Jeffrey, Baichuan Yuan, and Nick Sundback. "Does Violence Interruption Work?" UCLA Statistics. Last modified June 7, 2017. <https://www.stat.ucla.edu/~frederic/papers/brantingham2.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Henry, David, Shannon Knoblauch, and Rannveig Sigurvinsdottir. "The Effect of Intensive CeaseFire Intervention on Crime in Four Chicago Police Beats: Quantitative Assessment." Last modified September 11, 2014. https://1vp6u534z5kr2qmr0w11t7ub-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/McCormick_CeaseFire_Quantitative_Report_091114.pdf.

⁴⁷ Ransford, Charles. "The Relationship Between Cure Violence (CeaseFire) and the Increase in Shootings and Killings in Chicago." Cure Violence Global. Last modified November 2016. https://1vp6u534z5kr2qmr0w11t7ub-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2017.02.15_Chicago-Increase-Research-Summary.pdf.

Figure 5: Correlation between Ceasefire funding and number of shootings



The same level of evaluative rigor has not been applied to the nascent programs in D.C. as it has in other cities. While homicide rates have continued to rise in D.C., there has been no counterfactual analysis to look at the effects in the areas where violence interruption programs are active versus are not. However, there is some program output data from the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement. The city data shows that as of May 2019, their violence interrupters had connected roughly 130 people to resources after tragic events, in some cases with the intent to prevent retaliation. The teams had also negotiated five successful ceasefires between feuding neighborhood groups.⁴⁸ The Pathways program, which aims to reduce gun violence by targeting high risk individuals with wrap-around services and resources to heal, had

⁴⁸ Hall, Lorenzo. "He's Been Shot At. He's Lost Friends." WUSA9. Last modified May 16, 2019. <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/dc/hes-been-shot-at-hes-lost-friends-inside-the-life-of-one-of-dcs-most-violent-neighborhoods/65-c1075db8-8f3a-445d-a822-5b94f7a548d1>.

three cohorts complete the program by the beginning of 2020. Together, they served 73 men with an 84% overall promotion rate. As of November 2019, about half of the group was employed, and fewer than 7% had recidivated. A requirement for annual reporting will provide more robust data about these programs.

The Office of Attorney General's Cure the Streets program similarly provides promising anecdotes, but no formal analysis. Attorney General Karl Racine testified to the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, when the program had only been active for five months in January 2019. At that time, neither of the pilot sites had seen any homicides in the five months since the program started, compared with surrounding areas that saw 9 homicides collectively.⁴⁹ A data dashboard on the Cure the Streets website provides more up to date information, providing data through August 2020. Across all sites from January to August of this year, violence interrupters have organized 54 community events, engaged almost 10,000 residents, worked with 105 active participants, mediated 107 conflicts, and responded to 13 violent incidents to try to prevent retaliation. Across their sites, there were 6 gun-related homicides in 2018, 12 in 2019, and 4 in 2020.⁵⁰

However, the effectiveness of this proposal is not cut and dry. The high number of police officer layoffs required by this legislation could necessitate large transition costs for those individuals, which would impact the amount of cost savings available to invest in community-based solutions in the immediate term. And while the potential gains in community safety are significant based on the existing literature, there is an opportunity cost to this investment. This

⁴⁹ "Testimony on Next Steps in the District's Public Health-Based Approach to Violence Prevention and Intervention." Attorney General Karl A. Racine. Last modified January 31, 2019. <https://oag.dc.gov/release/testimony-next-steps-districts-public-health-based>.

⁵⁰ Attorney General Karl A. Racine. Last modified August 1, 2020. <https://oag.dc.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/CTS-Data-Dashboard-Trinidad.pdf>.

proposal would cut \$83 million from the patrol services budget for MPD, leading to a cut in patrol officers by about a third, or about 1,200 officers. The research body examining the effectiveness of police (and specifically, number of police) in deterring violent crime is complicated with mixed results. An executive session on policing carried out by the Harvard Kennedy School and the National Institute of Justice in 2008 noted that the standard practices of policing (e.g. employing more sworn officers, random motorized patrolling, foot patrols) did not affect crime rates. In fact, they went so far as to quote one of the authors, David Bayley, from 1994 saying that “one of the best kept secrets of modern life” was that police do not prevent crime, and further that “experts know it, the police know it, and the public does not know it.”⁵¹ However, the report also acknowledges that many of those studies took place in the 70s and 80s, and crime rates have dropped significantly since then.

The more recent literature is more mixed. Some research shows that lower level crimes, like auto theft, decreased when mobilizing additional officers, but not violent crime.⁵² Other studies show that increasing the number of officers or patrols does have a significant impact on reducing violent crime.⁵³ In 2018, a study looked at a huge surge in federal funding for local police staffing as part of the 2009 stimulus bill. It was able to use quasi-random experimental design, comparing cities that did not receive the grants to those that did. They found that the 3.2% increase in police staffing levels was associated with a 3.5% drop in crime, with the suggestion that homicides were reduced as well. They found that one additional officer

⁵¹ Bayley, David, and Christine Nixon. "The Changing Environment for Policing, 1985-2008." National Criminal Justice Reference Service. Last modified September 2010. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/ncj230576.pdf>.

⁵² Klick, Jonathon, and Alexander Tabarrok. "USING TERROR ALERT LEVELS TO ESTIMATE THE EFFECT OF POLICE ON CRIME." Last modified February 16, 2005. <https://mason.gmu.edu/~atabarro/TerrorAlertProofs.pdf>.

⁵³ MacDonald, John, Jonathon Klick, and Ben Grunwald. "The effect of private police on crime: evidence from a geographic regression discontinuity design." University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School. Last modified July 2015. <https://www.law.upenn.edu/live/files/8949-179jrss831pdf>.

prevented .11 murders.⁵⁴ These studies demonstrate the possibility that decreasing the number of officers in D.C. could lead to an increase in overall crime rate, or even in homicides specifically.

Other research focuses on the importance of how officers are deployed, rather than the strict number of patrols. New York City, for example, made a decision to reduce the number of cops, and still saw a decrease in crime. They cite a data-driven model used to determine where to deploy officers based on 911 calls as part of their success.⁵⁵ A study out of Duke University found that putting more resources into investigation (versus patrolling) explains the difference in clearance rate between homicides and nonfatal shootings. Their takeaway is that police departments should shift more resources towards investigation.⁵⁶ It remains difficult to predict the impact on crime of significantly reducing the number of patrol officers in D.C. on violent crime. However, a plausible consequence would be an increase in nonviolent crimes, as studies more clearly demonstrate the link between number of officers and preventing property crimes. This is not an insignificant outcome. Nonviolent crime can have some of the same deleterious impacts as violent crime on the community.

There are fewer studies that look at the efficiency of violence interruption programs. One cost analysis study found that hospital-based violence intervention programs are a cost-effective means of preventing recurrent firearm injuries.⁵⁷ However, less formal estimates have been made. A Cure Violence program in Jacksonville, Florida estimates that every dollar spent

⁵⁴ Mello, Steven. "More COPS, Less Crime." Princeton University. Last modified February 15, 2018. <https://www.princeton.edu/~smello/papers/cops.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Weichselbaum, Simone, and Wendi Thomas. "Is the Answer to Crime More Cops?" The Marshall Project. Last modified February 13, 2019. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/02/13/is-the-answer-to-crime-more-cops>.

⁵⁶ Duke University. "Sustained Police Effort Explains Higher Arrests for Gun Murders." EurekAlert!. Last modified August 1, 2019. https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-08/du-spe072519.php.

⁵⁷ Chong, Vincent, Randi Smith, and Arturo Garcia. "Hospital-centered Violence Intervention Programs: a Cost-effectiveness Analysis." PubMed. Accessed April, 2015. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25728889/>.

on the program saves the city nearly \$16 in medical and criminal justice costs.⁵⁸ Thomas Abt, a senior fellow at the Council on Criminal Justice, estimates that it costs a city about \$30,000 to prevent one homicide using violence interruption. Direct municipal costs for homicides are high, between emergency services, investigation costs, court processes, incarceration, and lost tax revenue. Cost estimates from the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform provide a range of \$765,000 to \$2.5 million per fatal shooting. That puts the range of return on investment for violence prevention at 26-fold to 83-fold. These estimates don't take into account other costs, like pain and suffering and housing values.⁵⁹

On the flip side, there are some questions about the efficiency of this proposal. The biggest question is that it is unclear how these programs operate at scale. Most of the existing programs are smaller pilot initiatives that have not been resourced to the extent that this proposal suggests. It is possible that there is a high return on investment when initially investing in a program, but that there are diminishing marginal returns as the investment goes up. For example, it may be that the programs are effective at identifying high risk individuals who will be receptive to their intervention, whereas other potential perpetrators of violence will not be willing to engage.

This proposal has deep implications for equity. It is well established that the current system of policing and incarceration in America—what has been the nation's answer to homicides and violent crime—is fraught with structural racism. From traffic stops⁶⁰ to stop and

⁵⁸ Landman, Keren. "Studies Show That Violence Prevention Saves Cities Money — Lots of Money." Juvenile Justice Information Exchange. Last modified June 4, 2020. <https://jjie.org/2020/06/04/studies-showing-that-violence-prevention-saves-cities-money-lots-of-money/>.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Pierson, E., Simoiu, C., Overgoor, J. *et al.* A large-scale analysis of racial disparities in police stops across the United States. *Nat Hum Behav* 4, 736–745 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0858-1>

frisk⁶¹ to police killings⁶² to predictive policing algorithms⁶³, racial disparities abound. Broken windows policing, or an approach that involves cracking down on minor offenses in an attempt to prevent more serious crimes from occurring, has led to racially biased but heavy enforcement of actions like turnstile jumping in New York City.⁶⁴ Washington, D.C. is no exception. Studies have shown that police enforcement disproportionately impacts Black residents. An ACLU report shares that Black individuals make up 47% of D.C.'s population, but 86% of its arrestees.⁶⁵ The pattern exists for low-level offenses like those arrested for driving without a permit and public marijuana consumptions, as well as for more serious crimes like assault.⁶⁶ A program was launched in February 2019 to address gun violence by charging those caught illegally possessing guns under federal statutes, a harsher penalty. It came out in September that the initiative was only being enforced in three predominantly Black wards, rather than citywide as initially announced.⁶⁷

The proposal will address equity not just by taking resources away from police, who have a clear record of being more punitive against Black residents in D.C., but by putting resources into historically under-resourced communities. Though MPD has a program to preference applicants from within the District, they can live anywhere in D.C. and most officers

⁶¹ Stolper, Harold, and Jeff Jones. "The Enduring Discriminatory Practice of Stop & Frisk." Community Service Society of New York. Last modified April 16, 2018. <https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/stop-and-frisk>.

⁶² Peebles, Lynne. "What the data say about police shootings." Nature. Last modified September 4, 2019. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02601-9>.

⁶³ Heaven, Will D. "Predictive Policing Algorithms Are Racist. They Need to Be Dismantled." MIT Technology Review. Last modified July 17, 2020. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/07/17/1005396/predictive-policing-algorithms-racist-dismantled-machine-learning-bias-criminal-justice/>.

⁶⁴ Flagg, Anna, and Ashley Nerbovig. "Subway Policing in New York City Still Has A Race Problem." The Marshall Project. Last modified September 12, 2018. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2018/09/12/subway-policing-in-new-york-city-still-has-a-race-problem>.

⁶⁵ ACLU. "Racial Disparities in D.C. Policing: Descriptive Evidence from 2013–2017." Last modified July 31, 2019. <https://www.acludc.org/en/racial-disparities-dc-policing-descriptive-evidence-2013-2017>.

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Hsu, Spencer, and Keith Alexander. "D.C. crackdown on gun crime targeted Black wards, was not enforced citywide as announced." The Washington Post. Last modified September 3, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/dc-crackdown-on-gun-crime-targeted-black-wards-was-not-enforced-citywide-as-announced/2020/09/03/f6de0ce2-e933-11ea-970a-64c73a1c2392_story.html.

live in Virginia or Maryland. In 2014, just 17% of MPD's nearly 4,000 officers lived in DC, with almost two thirds living in Maryland and 20% in Virginia.⁶⁸ By definition, violence interruption programs look for credible messengers who live in and know the communities they serve.

There are minimal considerations to account for when looking at administrative and technical feasibility. These are programs that already exist, and would be expanded in their current capacity. One administrative consideration is the need to coordinate between two different agencies in D.C. that each engage in violence prevention work: the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, and the Office of the Attorney General. The political feasibility and social acceptability of the proposal is a bigger question, which will be explored in more depth in the next section.

Political analysis

There are several key stakeholders to consider in thinking through the political ramifications of this proposal. The first group is the D.C. Council itself, who would need to endorse and pass this legislation. Charles Allen, who heads the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety and to whom this proposal is addressed, has expressed an openness to and interest in shifting funding away from policing toward more community-based violence intervention programs. When Mayor Bowser proposed cutting funding for existing violence interruption programs for FY2021, he opposed the cuts. He stated "We're going to change that

⁶⁸ Stein, Perry. "D.C. Residents Make Up Less Than 20 Percent of Police Force." Washington City Paper. Last modified October 29, 2014. <https://washingtoncitypaper.com/article/447592/d-c-residents-make-up-less-than-20-percent-of-police-force/>.

because I don't believe that we can handle fewer violence interrupters, I think we need more - and I think that's what our communities need."⁶⁹

Allen has recognized more generally that policing doesn't get at the root of violence, but rather that "Almost every case is between individuals where there is some type of conflict. And so if we can find who the individual is, who is in conflict, identify the relationship that is in conflict and in work to try to remove them from that situation, as well as remove the firearm for that situation. We aim to reduce gun violence overall."⁷⁰ This represents a shift in thinking from the traditional tough-on-crime pro-policing stance. There are other Councilmembers who join him in this viewpoint. Kenyon McDuffie, the original author of the NEAR Act, told Police Chief Peter Newsham that the approach to crime has been "increasing funding for law enforcement, and therefore an increase in public safety. I think the premise is not accurate."⁷¹ In other instances he has explained that defunding the police, which as a slogan is very controversial, does not mean zeroing out the police budget. Rather, it means taking money that has contributed toward over-policing of communities of color and shifting it to actually investing in those communities.⁷²

⁶⁹ Jodie Fleischer, Rick Yarborough, Jeff Piper, Evan Carr. "DC Councilman Vows to Find More Funds for Violence Interrupters Amid Mayor's Proposed Cuts." NBC4 Washington. Last modified June 16, 2020. <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/dc-councilman-vows-to-find-more-funds-for-violence-interrupters-amid-mayors-proposed-cuts/2335460/>.

⁷⁰ "How D.C. Is Addressing An Ongoing Spike In Gun Violence." NPR.org. Last modified March 2, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2020/03/02/811194978/how-d-c-is-addressing-an-ongoing-spike-in-gun-violence>.

⁷¹ Harmann, Peter. "D.C. police department faces tough talks on budget amid calls to defund." The Washington Post. Last modified June 15, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/dc-police-department-faces-tough-talks-on-budget-amid-calls-to-defund/2020/06/15/48e8b0e4-abfb-11ea-a9d9-a81c1a491c52_story.html.

⁷² "Here's What Defunding Police Could Mean in DC." Wusa9.com. Last modified June 8, 2020. <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/protests/heres-what-defunding-police-could-mean-in-dc/65-6993dde4-24f4-413c-af6e-4f1a2bcf8e48>.

Councilmember David Grosso has gone further—calling for Police Chief Newsom’s resignation and a reduction in the police force.⁷³ He put forward legislation that would cap the number of officers at 3,500, but it was rejected for being an arbitrary number.⁷⁴ However, he and others also recognize that with Mayor Bowser acting as a staunch supporter of the police, it will be difficult to make substantial changes. Councilmembers Robert White and Charles Allen have both made statements about change needing to happen slowly and deliberately. As White stated, “This is new territory, so it will take some time. And the last thing any of us want to see is a failure in trying to transition from traditional policing to services that will assist communities in a safer and more sustainable way.”⁷⁵ Councilmember Grosso put it in more blunt terms—that the city does not have the “political will” right now to make big changes, and “There are too many people still stuck in the old ways of a law-and-order kind of approach.”⁷⁶

Mayor Bowser is another important stakeholder. She has sent mixed messages about her support of violence interruption work, but decidedly does not support those programs taking away funding from MPD. Both when the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement introduced their initial partners, and when Cure the Streets was started, the Mayor released supportive messages in tandem. She stated in February 2019 about the launch of Cure the Streets that “We know that breaking cycles of violence requires more than just law enforcement. These investments recognize that as a government and as a community, we must stay focused on how we connect more Washingtonians to good-paying jobs and careers, how

⁷³ Nirappil, Fenit, and Peter Hermann. “D.C. activists and lawmakers confront challenges of ‘defund police’ movement.” The Washington Post. Last modified June 25, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-police-cuts/2020/06/25/dacff0e2-b6f2-11ea-a510-55bf26485c93_story.html.

⁷⁴ Auster Muhle, Martin. “Protesters Called On The D.C. Council To ‘Defund The Police.’ Did That Actually Happen?” DCist. Last modified July 10, 2020. <https://dcist.com/story/20/07/10/protesters-called-on-the-d-c-council-to-defund-the-police-did-that-actually-happen/>.

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Nirappil, Fenit, and Peter Hermann. “D.C. activists and lawmakers confront challenges of ‘defund police’ movement.” The Washington Post. Last modified June 25, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-police-cuts/2020/06/25/dacff0e2-b6f2-11ea-a510-55bf26485c93_story.html.

we prevent violence before it happens, and how we expand opportunity so that every person in our city feels a strong sense of hope, purpose, and dignity.”⁷⁷

Despite this statement of support, Mayor Bowser’s initial budget proposal for FY21 included completing cutting the \$3.7 million for Cure the Streets, and decreasing the funding for the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement by 11.4%.⁷⁸ In the same proposal, she proposed adding more than \$17.5 million to the MPD budget.⁷⁹ As mentioned earlier in this proposal, Mayor Bowser initially opposed the NEAR Act, which marked the initial investment in a public health approach to violence in DC. There is no question, however, regarding Mayor Bowser’s support of the MPD. In her initial FY21 budget proposal, she told NPR that what she requested for MPD was exactly what was needed, and she was not reconsidering her position.⁸⁰

When Mayor Bowser received the ultimate budget put forward by the D.C. Council for FY21, which decreased the amount of funding she put in for MPD, she was not pleased. "I understand the Council's goal of responding to recent incidents involving excessive force by police officers in other jurisdictions and the national public sentiment regarding the need to reform police operations," she wrote, trying to displace responsibility outside of D.C., "But changes to the MPD budget should be made in a more thoughtful and coordinated manner, and

⁷⁷ "As Part of Her Push for a #SaferStrongerDC, Mayor Bowser Announces \$6 Million Investment in Violence Prevention and Workforce Development Efforts." Last modified February 1, 2019. <https://dc.gov/release/part-her-push-saferstrongerdc-mayor-bowser-announces-6-million-investment-violence>.

⁷⁸ Chamberlin, Victoria. "Violence Interrupters Fight An Uphill Battle East Of The River." WAMU. Last modified May 29, 2020. <https://wamu.org/story/20/05/29/violence-interrupters-fight-an-uphill-battle-east-of-the-river/>.

⁷⁹ Jodie Fleischer, Rick Yarborough, Jeff Piper, Evan Carr. "DC Councilman Vows to Find More Funds for Violence Interrupters Amid Mayor's Proposed Cuts." NBC4 Washington. Last modified June 16, 2020. <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/dc-councilman-vows-to-find-more-funds-for-violence-interrupters-amid-mayors-proposed-cuts/2335460/>.

⁸⁰ Doubek, James. "D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser: 'Not At All' Reconsidering Police Funding." NPR. Last modified June 10, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/06/10/873371574/d-c-mayor-muriel-bowser-not-at-all-reconsidering-police-funding>.

I am concerned that the Council's proposed cuts will make District residents less safe."⁸¹ Her statement went on to imply that the cuts now will just translate into more overtime pay later, rather than reducing the number of patrols.

Police Chief Newsham and the MPD are predictably opposed to any cuts to their funding. Newsham claims that underfunded departments lack proper training and equipment, which creates circumstances where officers are more likely to use excessive force. Patrick Burke, a former assistant police chief who now heads the D.C. Police Foundation, criticized the D.C. Council for redirecting funds to violence interruption, saying that the three years of efforts to date "haven't reduced homicides or gun violence yet."⁸² Newsham has made his position clear over the years; he believes in a "lock 'em up" law-and-order approach to crime. In 2018, he co-wrote a letter to the Washington Post criticizing a commission's vote to decrease sentence length for felons convicted of illegally possessing a firearm. He argued that reducing sentence lengths made D.C. less safe.⁸³ In response to the emergency police reform legislation that passed in June 2020, a leaked video of Newsham showed him declaring to officers that the D.C. council had "completely abandoned" them.⁸⁴

There are a number of activist groups in D.C. that have been pushing to defund the police and shift resources into community-based solutions to violence as well as other necessities, like healthcare and affordable housing. A coalition of these groups, including Black

⁸¹ Gathright, Jenny. "Bowser Says Proposed Cuts To Her Police Spending Plan Are 'Not Sound Budgeting'." NPR. Last modified July 20, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2020/07/20/893117369/bowser-says-proposed-cuts-to-her-police-spending-plan-are-not-sound-budgeting>.

⁸² Nirappil, Fenit, and Peter Hermann. "D.C. activists and lawmakers confront challenges of 'defund police' movement." The Washington Post. Last modified June 25, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-police-cuts/2020/06/25/dacff0e2-b6f2-11ea-a510-55bf26485c93_story.html.

⁸³ "Easing penalties for illegal gun possession makes the District less safe." The Washington Post. Last modified August 5, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/easing-penalties-for-illegal-gun-possession-makes-the-district-less-safe/2018/08/05/6c8292e8-972d-11e8-810c-5fa705927d54_story.html.

⁸⁴ Cloherty, Megan. "Stakeholders React to \$15M in Proposed Cuts to DC Police Budget." WTOP. Last modified June 25, 2020. <https://wtop.com/dc/2020/06/stakeholders-react-to-15m-in-proposed-cuts-to-dc-police-budget/>.

Lives Matter D.C., the Stop Police Terror Project, and the Working Families Party, have launched a campaign to defund MPD. One of their key demands is to invest in community safety through “an expansion of community-led violence interruption programs that are independent of law enforcement.”⁸⁵ On the whole, they were unimpressed with the FY21 budget ultimately put forward by the D.C. Council. An organizer with the Black Youth Project 100, Dominique Hazzard, commented, “We did see some moves to invest in Black communities, especially as compared to the very troubling budget proposal that Mayor Bowser put out. We saw the restoration of funding for violence interruption. We saw some funding put in for mental health support in our schools. But at the same time, you know, that’s half of what we’re asking for. And frankly, those investments were not enough.”⁸⁶

It's not just activist groups that are calling for a reallocation of resources. The Washington Interfaith Network, a coalition that represents over 40 congregations in D.C., urged the Council to redirect \$100 million from MPD to invest in violence prevention programs and mental health and domestic violence teams to respond to crises.⁸⁷ More than 18,000 residents submitted comments to the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety budget hearing, and those comments overwhelmingly favored reducing the MPD budget.⁸⁸

However, there is clearly not a uniform stance when it comes to D.C. residents. While some, as demonstrated above, believe that policing is fundamentally broken, and reforms have

⁸⁵ "DEFUND THE DC POLICE, BUILD BLACK FUTURES." DefundMPD. Accessed November 16, 2020. <https://www.defundmpd.org>.

⁸⁶ Auster Muhle, Martin. "Protesters Called On The D.C. Council To 'Defund The Police.' Did That Actually Happen?" DCist. Last modified July 10, 2020. <https://dcist.com/story/20/07/10/protesters-called-on-the-d-c-council-to-defund-the-police-did-that-actually-happen/>.

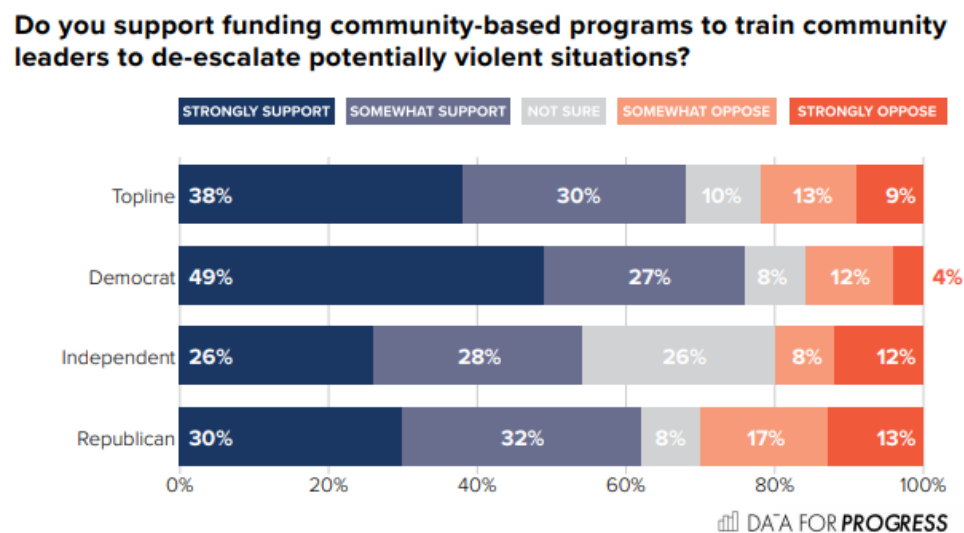
⁸⁷ Harmann, Peter. "D.C. police department faces tough talks on budget amid calls to defund." The Washington Post. Last modified June 15, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/dc-police-department-faces-tough-talks-on-budget-amid-calls-to-defund/2020/06/15/48e8b0e4-abfb-11ea-a9d9-a81c1a491c52_story.html.

⁸⁸ Nirappil, Fenit, and Peter Hermann. "D.C. activists and lawmakers confront challenges of 'defund police' movement." The Washington Post. Last modified June 25, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-police-cuts/2020/06/25/dacff0e2-b6f2-11ea-a510-55bf26485c93_story.html.

not ended killings or racial disparities in law enforcement, others have different views. City leaders often hear from residents who seek additional patrols in their neighborhoods, including right after there are shootings or other violent incidents. The matter does not sit cleanly along racial lines either; Troy Donté Prestwood, an elected advisory neighborhood commissioner in the predominantly black Anacostia neighborhood, said his constituents often ask for more police, not fewer.⁸⁹

Public polling has been conducted across the U.S. on this issue as well. A study published in June 2020 found that roughly four out of five voters (78%) support violence interruption strategies for reducing violent crime, and about two thirds (65%) believe such programs make more sense than increasing the number of police in communities. The poll found strong bipartisan support for violence prevention, and a recognition that programs designed to interrupt and prevent gun violence are more cost effective than increasing police.⁹⁰

Figure 6: Public support for community-based solutions to violence



⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ "The Case for Violence Interruption Programs As An Alternative to Policing." The Justice Collaborative Institute. Last modified June 2020. <https://filesforprogress.org/memos/violence-interruption.pdf>.

Further polling has been conducted to determine public sentiment around the idea of defunding the police, with particular attention paid to verbiage. Most Americans oppose the idea of defunding the police (58% to 31%), but are more in favor of moving money currently going toward policing into other programs. For example, in the same poll, “redirecting funding for the police department in [their] local community to support community development programs” was supported by 43% of respondents and opposed by 42%, a much more even split.⁹¹

The bottom line on the political analysis of this proposal is that there is no clear political win. Stakeholders on both sides of the issue claim they want the same thing—safety and justice in our communities—but are deeply entrenched in their view of how that should be accomplished. Passing this legislation would represent a political win for a large chunk of constituents in D.C., but would be seen as extreme by some, and would almost certainly involve backlash from Mayor Bowser and MPD. It would involve the immediately loss of MPD jobs, which would face criticism, but most of those jobs would be from Virginia or Maryland residents. That is one angle that could be used to ameliorate the political costs of this proposal; it would be shifting resources back into the District. Personnel is the largest cost of MPD, and the vast majority of officers are not D.C. residents. By definition, investing in community-based violence prevention would require hiring and investing in D.C. communities that have been historically excluded and divested from.

⁹¹ Rakich, Nathaniel. "How Americans Feel About 'Defunding The Police'." FiveThirtyEight. Last modified June 19, 2020. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/americans-like-the-ideas-behind-defunding-the-police-more-than-the-slogan-itself/>.

Recommendation

I recommend that you sponsor this legislation and make it a high priority in the FY21 legislative session. The safety and well-being of D.C. residents should be the chief concern of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. Violence has implications not just for the immediate people who are impacted by the incident, but for their families, friends, peers, neighbors, and community. Formal evaluations of violence prevention efforts in numerous cities across the U.S. have shown extremely effective results, creating a moral imperative to invest in these efforts in a substantive way. And, these programs have been able to achieve substantial reductions in killings and gun-related injuries with a fraction of the budget that police forces utilize by getting at the root causes of violence.

This proposal poses not only an evidence-based solution to save lives, reduce violence, and increase public safety, but an opportunity to begin creating a more equitable distribution of resources across D.C. In 2013 and 2014, white households had a net worth that was 81 times greater than Black households in D.C.⁹² Disparities show up in education, employment, wages, housing, and health.⁹³ While not all of these are the province of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, creating equitable outcomes requires a concerted effort from across the D.C. government. This proposal would contribute to equitable outcomes by shifting employment from individuals who primarily live in Virginia and Maryland to individuals who live in the parts of D.C. that need the most investment. Their role in the community also explicitly involves promoting employment opportunities, education, services, and care.

⁹² Kijakazi, Kilolo, Rachel Atkins, Mark Paul, Anne Price, Darrick Hamilton, and William Darity, Jr. "The Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital." Urban Institute. Last modified November 2016. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/85341/2000986-the-color-of-wealth-in-the-nations-capital.pdf>.

⁹³ Hendey, Leah, and Serena Lei. "A Vision for an Equitable DC." Urban Institute. Last modified April 16, 2019. <https://www.urban.org/features/vision-equitable-dc>.

The strongest pushback will be resistance on the premise that the drastic decrease in police officers will lead to more crime in D.C. However, this reduction only appears drastic in relation to the current policing apparatus in D.C. Reducing the number of patrol officers by a third would bring down the rate of officers to about 367 per 100,000 residents. That would put us on par with cities like Atlanta, GA and Newark, NJ, who are still in the top 10 major U.S. cities by police concentration.⁹⁴ This still doesn't account for the numerous other law enforcement agencies present in D.C. If we could police our way out of violent crime, surely D.C. would have proven that by now.

It seems highly unlikely that Mayor Bowser would sign off on a budget that includes such a large decrease in funding for MPD. However, she will be up for reelection in 2022, and public support has shifted dramatically in the direction of defunding the police since she last campaigned for public office. Ultimately, this Committee has a responsibility to serve the safety of D.C.'s constituents, and this legislation provides a clear step in the direction of safety and justice.

⁹⁴ "Police Employment, Officers Per Capita Rates for U.S. Cities." Governing. Last modified July 2, 2018. <https://www.governing.com/gov-data/safety-justice/police-officers-per-capita-rates-employment-for-city-departments.html>.

Marika Weinstein

WORK EXPERIENCE

Impact Justice • Washington, D.C.

Program Manager

Jan 2020–present

Program Specialist

July 2018–Dec 2019

Program Associate

July 2017–July 2018

- Manage the Food in Prison Project, including managing timelines, budget, and operations for the project; oversee research and program activities; support fundraising and communications efforts
- Support the audit function of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Resource Center, a national training and technical assistance provider tasked with furthering efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment in confinement settings
- Provide strategic and program support to management of audit data, including design and implementation for a heavily customized and integrated Salesforce instance

AGH Strategies • Washington, D.C.

Project Lead

July 2016–July 2017

- Managed database implementation and custom development projects related to CiviCRM, an open-source CRM that empowers nonprofits to strengthen relationships with their supporters
- Consulted on best practices for database design and configuration to maximize automation and efficiency for nonprofits with varying programmatic set ups, data structures, goals, and needs
- Implemented database configurations; led user and administrator trainings in-person and online

Food Recovery Network • College Park, Maryland

Manager, Programs and Evaluation

Dec 2015–May 2016

- Directed first-ever evaluation strategy, including management, implementation, and analysis of network-wide evaluation tools; developed and refined customized Salesforce database
- Managed team of expansion fellows; supported the creation of 50+ new food recovery programs
- Co-produced National Food Recovery Dialogue, a conference with 400+ attendees

Member Support and Metrics AmeriCorps VISTA

Aug 2014–Aug 2015

- Mentored students at 45+ universities to increase their capacity to donate surplus food
- Supported production of three conferences; facilitated community building between chapters
- Created processes to better measure the success of the chapters and national organization

EDUCATION

Johns Hopkins University • Washington, D.C.

Masters of Arts: Public Management, expected graduation May 2021

- Capstone – “Investing in Community-Based Violence Prevention Strategies in Washington, D.C.”

Robert D. Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon • Eugene, Oregon

Bachelor of Arts: Planning, Public Policy and Management, *summa cum laude*, June 2014

- Minor in Biology
- Teaching Assistant for Geographies of Inequality – Oregon State Penitentiary, 2014
- Honors Thesis – “The relationship between US crop insurance subsidies and planting decisions”
- Presented co-authored paper “Divided Education in Northern Ireland” at 16th UNESCO-APEID International Conference – Bangkok, 2012