

**Statement on behalf of the
American Civil Liberties Union of the District of Columbia
before the
D.C. Council Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
Budget Oversight Hearing for the
Metropolitan Police Department
By
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Hello Chair Pinto and members of the Committee. My name is Ahoefa Ananouko, and I present the following testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of the District of Columbia (ACLU-D.C.).

The past year has reminded us of the importance of safeguarding fundamental civil liberties and rights of District residents. More than ever, it is critical that the District invests its limited resources into public safety approaches that respond to the real needs of D.C. residents, that center impacted communities, and move away from carceral-centric strategies—strategies that decades of observation and research have made clear do not work, do not make the best use of resources, and certainly do not make communities safer. Carceral strategies are not enforced equally, as they are disproportionately used against Black and poor communities.¹ They are an ineffective,² costly approach that cause more harm by continuing cycles of economic injustice,³ trauma, and violence—issues that are often reflective of failed policies and divestment from communities.⁴ These are not issues the District can simply police its way out of. But since police are involved in current public safety schemes, they must be held to high standards and held accountable when they break the law or cause harm—regardless of their rank and the agency they work for.

For years ACLU-D.C. has been advocating for sensible, evidence-based public safety solutions. These have included recommendations to pass and implement enforceable

¹ National Conference of State Legislatures, “Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Criminal Justice System.” <https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-the-criminal-justice-system>.

² Vera Institute of Justice, “Why Punishing People in Jail and Prison Isn’t Working.” <https://www.vera.org/news/why-punishing-people-in-jail-and-prison-isnt-working>.

³ Prison Policy Initiative, “10 ways that mass incarceration is an engine of economic injustice.” https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2024/08/27/economic_justice/.

⁴ Reimagining the Civic Commons via Medium, “A Narrative for Disinvested Neighborhoods.” <https://medium.com/reimagining-the-civiccommons/a-new-narrative-for-disinvested-neighborhoods-d9fb16d444a9>.

measures that address the lack of accountability and transparency we continue to observe from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD, the Department). The current federal occupation of D.C. and the overzealous policing we are witnessing from federal law enforcement agencies alongside MPD officers, are a symptom of years of District leaders not responding strongly to issues and concerns raised by D.C. communities that are most heavily policed. Black, immigrant, and other marginalized people have always borne the brunt of this country's abusive policing system; and with the ongoing federal interference and the proliferation of agents who now feel a new sense of unbridled power, the current moment is no different.

Among other things, ACLU-D.C. urges the Council to put pressure on MPD to implement all recommendations from the Office of the D.C. Auditor (Auditor) and Office of Police Complaints (OPC); pass legislation prohibiting all District government entities, including all entities designated as law enforcement, from collaborating with any federal agency for the purpose of carrying out immigration enforcement; and taking a more compassionate approach to concerns about youth misbehavior, by investing in proven crime prevention strategies, rather than punitive ones, like the youth curfew.

I. Full Implementation of All Recommendations by Auditor's Office and OPC to Improve Staffing and Accountability

Auditor's Recommendations

Every year, MPD leadership, the Mayor, the Police Union, and even some Council members harp on the supposed staffing challenges MPD is facing. Requests are made for more resources for recruitment, such as tens of thousands in funds for sign-on bonuses. And every year, the Council acquiesces, even though there is no evidence to support the notion that more police on the force will lead to more safety. There is also no evidence that recruitment bonuses are keeping people on the force, and therefore, that may not be the issue. The issue is also not that the standard requirements for police are too high and should, therefore, be reduced.

During his appearance at the February 25, 2026 performance oversight hearing for MPD, Interim Police Chief Jeffery Carroll suggested that some of MPD's requirements for recruits were too high. He focused on the 60 college credit hours that recruits are required to obtain prior to being eligible to become a sworn police officer.⁵ Title III ("Public Safety") of the mayor's proposed Budget Support Act (BSA) includes a subtitle that reflect Carroll's suggestion, along with other subtitles that would lower eligibility standards for senior police officers and modify residential requirements for the cadet program.⁶

⁵ February 25, 2026 MPD performance oversight hearing. https://dc.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=28.

⁶ Proposed FY27 Budget Support Act. <https://lms.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/61627/Introduction/B26-0661-Introduction.pdf?id=236283>.

Subtitle E, “Metropolitan Police Department Training Academy College Credit”, would count credit hours earned through MPD training as part of the 60 college hours minimum required to become a sworn officer, at MPD’s discretion. It is not clear how the determination was made to make those requirements equivalent, as the subtitle does not clearly lay out what activities would qualify. It is also not clear the circumstances that encompass “MPD’s discretion”.

Subtitle D, “Metropolitan Police Department Senior Police Officer Eligibility”, would allow MPD to hire officers who had previous determinations of serious misconduct, but did not receive a suspension of 20 days or more in the five years prior to their retirement. Currently, applicants are ineligible from being sworn officers if they were previously terminated or forced to resign for disciplinary reasons, or previously resigned to avoid adverse disciplinary action or termination. Historically, MPD has caught flack for not disciplining its officers to the extent allowed, if they are disciplined at all. As OPC has pointed out in the past, there are too many cases in which the discipline officers receive for misconduct does not align with the gravity of their actions (e.g., education-based training where someone should be suspended). Police misconduct costs the District millions of dollars every year. Those are dollars that could be invested in community resources that address the underlying causes of crime.

Subtitle B, “Metropolitan Police Department Cadet Program”, would undermine the District’s attempts to ensure that the people on the police force reflect the people in the communities they are sworn to serve. This subtitle would expand eligibility for the cadet program to allow high school graduates from any jurisdiction that is a part of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to join. Currently, only D.C. residents can join the program.

At a time when police are rightfully facing more scrutiny over their abuses of power and inadequate training, lowering requirements would be a slap in the face to communities who have to endure the harms caused by police misconduct. The Council should reject the above proposed subtitles and instead push MPD to fully implement recommendations put forth by the Office of the D.C. Auditor, for improving the Department’s staffing needs.

In September 2024, the Auditor’s office released a report where it concluded that MPD’s Patrol Services is adequately staffed, however, there was misalignment in staff assignments and the work they were assigned to.⁷ According to the report, “MPD urgently needs to gather more comprehensive data on how [Patrol Services] and [Investigation Services Bureau] personnel spend their time,” including having a better understanding of time consumed on activities like guarding arrestees at hospitals and homeland security duties.

⁷ Auditor’s report. https://dcauditor.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/MPD.Staffing.Report.MPD_.9.12.14.pdf.

With regard to Patrol Services, the Auditor recommended that MPD address “where and when patrol officers are needed rather than increasing or decreasing them.”⁸ With regard to the Investigative Services Bureau, the Auditor recommended that MPD make policy changes or practices for specific units and fill some of the positions with other professional staff (i.e., staff to handle administrative tasks), which would in turn free up detectives. The Auditor further recommended that MPD develop a workload-based staffing model that allocates officers and professional staff to areas that reflect needs (types and volumes of community service calls, crimes, and proactive policing functions).

ACLU-D.C. supports the Auditor’s recommendations, to both better serve the D.C. community and to make MPD more cost-effective. We urge the Council to move forward with a budget for MPD that is informed by this information.

OPC Recommendations

In January 2026 OPC published its most recent update on MPD’s progress on reports and recommendations from the agency.⁹ OPC is one of the agencies tasked with oversight of MPD and has made recommendations over the years to improve functionality, discipline, and community relations at MPD. The latest update included recommendations from 2024. Of the eight recommendations covered, MPD had only fully implemented one. Two were partially implemented and the rest have not been implemented at all. The recommendations were related to involuntary emergency hospitalization, discipline, field contacts and investigatory stops, and protective pat downs.

One of the recommendations that have not been implemented at all concerns education-based training in lieu of discipline for officer misconduct. OPC recommended that MPD follow its own general order and impose discipline from the existing table of penalties, in particular adverse or corrective action. MPD agreed in part to the recommendation, but marked it as closed, stating: it “will continue to follow DC Code and MPD policy regarding the imposition of discipline including the administration of education-based development (EBD) for eligible officers when appropriate.”¹⁰

The recommendations from the Auditor and OPC would make MPD more fiscally responsible, transparent, and accountable. This is especially needed now when the Department is working against the wishes of District residents on immigration enforcement.

II. End Federal Immigration Enforcement Collaboration & Fund Accountability Measures

⁸ Auditor’s report, p.1.

⁹ OPC/PCB update on MPD reports and recommendations.

https://policecomplaints.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/office%20of%20police%20complaints/publication/attachments/FY24%20Implementation%20Update_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰ OPC report, p.4.

During MPD’s February performance oversight hearing, it became clearer that MPD not only works with a different understanding of what it means to “collaborate with federal agents for the purpose of immigration enforcement”, but that the Department was willfully exploiting a loophole left in D.C.’s Sanctuary Values law. Currently, the law prohibits cooperation with federal immigration agencies, “absent a judicial warrant or order issued by a federal judge or federal magistrate judge... that authorizes a federal immigration agency to take into custody the person who is the subject of such warrant or order.”¹¹ This includes holding a person in custody after they would have otherwise been released; providing equipment or any facility for the of search or inquiry into a person in the District’s custody; and permitting federal immigration agents to interview a person in the District’s custody.

MPD interprets the law as only prohibiting those actions if an individual is in their custody (under arrest, for example). Therefore, MPD does not see any issue with sharing information about a person or allowing federal agents to question or apprehend an individual, or use Department facilities for the purpose of immigration enforcement. This major loophole has been to the detriment of District residents who are currently vulnerable to the indiscriminate and discriminatory immigration enforcement practices being ramped up by the current federal administration.

The public’s perception that D.C. entities are collaborating with federal agencies for the purpose of immigration enforcement, is actualized when they see MPD officers on the scene with agents from ICE, Homeland Security, or any of the number of agencies that have been deputized to carry out immigration enforcement. The use of D.C.’s limited resources to fund actions expressly prohibited by District law (no matter the semantics) or unrelated to MPD’s self-proclaimed goal of addressing crime and community concerns, is also costing trust in District leaders, including the Council. Because that is time and resources that could be used to solve actual crime or allocated to actually meeting community needs.

ACLU-D.C. urges the Council to pass the recommendations set forth in the January 8 report by the Committee on Public Works and to work with the Mayor to take actions needed on her part. These include:

1. The Mayor rescinding Mayor's Order 2025-090, the “Safe and Beautiful Emergency Operations Center” order, which authorized indefinite local coordination with federal immigration authorities. This should not be in effect, especially considering the emergency declaration has ended and there is no justification to continue cooperation for immigration enforcement.
2. The Interim Chief of Police MPD immediately sunseting the order on immigration enforcement, which authorizes MPD officers to share information about people not in their custody, such as those they interact with during traffic stops, and to provide transportation for federal immigration officers and people they have detained.

¹¹ Sanctuary Values law, <https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/laws/23-282>.

3. The Council reaffirming the Sanctuary Values Act and strengthening its protections by closing any gaps that have expanded the Executive’s power to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. This includes holding a hearing on B26-549, the “Safe Community Places and Policing Amendment Act of 2025,” which has been referred to the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, and acting swiftly to move it through the Council.
4. The Council should exhaust all means to require that federal law enforcement officers are subject to the same restrictions imposed on MPD officers not to wear masks or face coverings and to provide identification.
5. The Office of Human Rights should continue to collect data and work with the Committee to continue oversight on human rights issues.

ACLU-D.C. commends the Council for the steps it has already taken, such as reversing the Mayor’s veto to move through B26-614, the “Full Accountability in Arrest Reporting Emergency Amendment Act of 2026” (FAAR).¹² FAAR would require MPD “officers to document identifying information for all law enforcement officers present at the scene of an arrest and any use of force in documentation supporting the arrest, including probable cause affidavits.”¹³ We urge the Council to fund any aspect of both B26-614 and B26-603, the “Body-Worn Camera Transparency for Use of Force Amendment Act of 2026.”¹⁴ B26-603 would require the release of body-worn camera footage of MPD officers present during an incident of serious use of force or officer-involved death involving federal agencies.

Given the Council’s and the public’s frustrations around the lack of clarity as to the nature of MPD’s collaboration with federal agencies, and the fact that the District cannot compel federal agencies to share data, it is critical that D.C. leaders do everything in their power to obtain as much information that can be gathered through MPD. These measures would fill a major information gap that currently exists.

The Council should also work with MPD to identify ways to enhance current reporting tools to be able to track how they are working with federal agencies.

III. Invest in Young People, Not Punitive Measures

ACLU-D.C. urges the Council to reject any attempts to continue the implementation of youth curfews and zones, including reversing course on the permanent bill that has been put forth for consideration. While curfew zones may be an easy go-to strategy for attempting to control

¹² FAAR was introduced by Councilmember Robert White and Co-introduced by Councilmembers Allen, Lewis George, Trayon White, Bonds, Nadeau, Parker, Felder, and Crawford.
<https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B26-0614>.

¹³ B26-614 engrossed act. https://lims.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/61344/Signed_Act/B26-0614-Signed_Act.pdf?Id=235860.

¹⁴ B26-603 was introduced by Councilmember Pinto and co-introduced by Chairman Mendelson.
<https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B26-0603>.

the movement of young people in the District, its implementation over the past couple of years indicate that they do not improve public safety, do not deter large groups of young people from congregating, and lead to more police abuses of power, in addition to providing cover for federal agents and the National Guard who target Black youth.

It is deeply disconcerting that despite lack of any conclusive evidence indicating its effectiveness, District leaders continue to push permanent youth curfew zones as a viable public safety strategy. This is an example of the type of decision that leads certain D.C. communities—typically Black communities and other marginalized groups that are generally over-policed—to conclude that their voices do not matter and that their elected officials do not listen to them and/or do not care about them. Because the communities most impacted by the curfews have been clear: it is not working.

As District leaders, including members of the Council and even the Interim Police Chief, have acknowledged, what young people need are more supportive services and opportunities, trusted adults, and places to engage in activities that *they* want to engage in. Instead of over-policing young Black people, who are not the only ones that congregated in big groups or hang out in certain parts of the city, District leaders must make concerted efforts to invest in resources that directly support young people, their families, and communities. District leaders must commit to doing the hard work needed¹⁵ and collaborate with communities impacted by violence, as well as community-based organizations that serve them, to support and implement more effective and creative solutions to youth-centered public safety strategies—strategies that may not be as easy as corralling and detaining¹⁶ children or popular with the “tough on crime” crowd, but that will lead to safer communities in the long term.

Policies like youth curfew zones can be used as cover for police abuse of power, providing an excuse for police to racially profile, harass, and provoke young Black and brown people—the primary, if not the only, groups of youth being targeted by police in these zones. Harsh curfew policies rob young people, especially Black youth—who are already barely allowed to be children—¹⁷of their adolescence and impede on their right and ability to explore the place they call home without fear. Further, curfew zones lead to increased police interactions for young Black people, endangering their lives—as police presence can

¹⁵ ACLU-D.C. commends Councilmember Parker and the Committee on Youth Affairs for scheduling a round table (to take place April 30, 2026) to discuss concerns about “teen takeovers” and how to better support young people. Like the committee, ACLU-D.C. recognizes the importance of youth voices in these discussions, as policy decisions directly impact young people’s day-to-day lives. We hope that youth voices will not only be listened to, but that they are treated as thought partners in coming up with solutions.

¹⁶ Note that MPD says they do not “detain” or “arrest” young people who are in violation of curfew policies. However, it is important to note that, whether a young person is being taken home to their families or to a Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services location for services, the experience of being placed in a squad car has the same effect of being formally placed under arrest. Interim Chief Carroll has stated, that youth are being stopped or detained for other issues in curfew zones. This can be interpreted as a loophole.

¹⁷ Georgetown Law Professor Kristin Henning on criminalization of Black youth.

<https://www.law.georgetown.edu/news/professor-kristin-henning-exposing-what-black-children-endure/>.

unnecessarily escalate a mundane or slightly heated situation to a violent one with excessive use of force, which can cause life-long trauma.¹⁸

Local cop watch groups have been witness to and have documented MPD officers unnecessarily running after young people who happened to be in curfew zones, stopping those trying to get on the metro so that they could go home (or at least away from the zones), and even attacking young people. Just last week, a video circulated on social media showing the abusive and arbitrary manner in which MPD officers are executing the curfew policies.¹⁹ In the video, a white male presenting MPD officer forcefully pulled two young Black female presenting people off of bicycles, causing them to stop abruptly. The officer was also shown taunting and threatening other young people in the metro station trying to come out.

In another video that circulated the weekend prior, MPD officers acted in a hostile and antagonistic manner towards young people who were leaving an event that the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) held for teens. In the video police were grabbing young people (who happened to be Black) who were trying to leave and preventing them from entering a metro station. One officer (who happened to be a white male) is seen being very aggressive, yelling at the young people and adults trying to deescalate, as he pointed a pepper spray gun at them. Community members were shocked at the aggressive response, because this event was held due to the success of a similar event DPR held the night prior. The key difference community members noted was the stark contrast in the large number of police present on the second day versus the first, and their hostile posture.

These types of interactions, facilitated by the curfews, add to the mistrust and inherent fear a lot of Black and brown youth already have of the police. Black and Latine children are constantly being policed. They have more police in their neighborhoods,²⁰ are more likely to have more police in their schools,²¹ and are confronted with police on public transportation on their way to school or while just going on about their day. Young people's safety, particularly that of Black youth, should not come second to other people's sense of discomfort, safety, or wellbeing. They are as deserving of protection and care as the people who treat them as a nuisance—if not more so, since they are often maligned for simply being Black youth. It does everyone a disservice when Black youth are treated as inherently criminal and, therefore, only worthy of ridicule and punishment. It does not engender a positive sense of self-worth, optimism about the future, or that they can (or should) change. The only way to change the misbehavior young people exhibit is to address the underlying

¹⁸ The National Child Traumatic Stress Network on child trauma. <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma>.

¹⁹ Video of MPD officer dragging young people off bike. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/public-safety-and-emergencies/general/mpd-officer-accused-of-dragging-cyclists-in-navy-yard/ar-AA21gQfO>.

²⁰ Smartphone Data Reveal Neighborhood-Level Racial Disparities in Police Presence, <https://direct.mit.edu/rest/article/107/6/1734/117710/Smartphone-Data-Reveal-Neighborhood-Level-Racial>.

²¹ Education Week, "Schools With More Black and Latino Students Likelier to Have Police." <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/schools-with-more-black-and-latino-schools-likelier-to-have-police/2023/04>.

challenges they are facing. This is backed by social science research and reports from entities right here in the District.

In September of last year the D.C. Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) released a report titled: “Reducing Juvenile Involvement in Violent Crimes: Perspectives From DC Youth, Families, And Community Members.”²² In the report, CJCC found that there were four primary drivers of young people's involvement in violent crime (i.e., robberies, carjackings, and shootings). These included:

- Economic instability and unmet needs – which increase youth vulnerability to risk-taking and violence.
- Easy access to guns, neighborhood violence, institutional [under-protection], and cycles of conflict and retaliation – which contribute to ongoing violence, with many youth carrying firearms primarily for protection.
- Peer pressure, lack of belonging, and social media conflicts—which can escalate tensions and lead to violent behavior both online and in real life.
- When school feels unsafe or irrelevant—young people are more likely to disengage, which leaves them unsupervised and vulnerable to violence.

The report also found that youth and families fear and distrust police and systems, but rely on community-led supports; that strong parental, mentor, and peer bonds discourage violence; and that access to trustworthy mental health care is critical to prevention. Participants also shared that education that connects to real-life job opportunities deters violence; safe, connected neighborhoods decrease the perceived need for youth to carry weapons, and that they prioritize rehabilitation and reintegration over punishment for youth. These findings are echoed in an ACLU-D.C. report published last November, in which we highlight both local and national initiatives that have been more effective or promising than policing in youth crime prevention.²³

To be clear, ACLU-D.C. is not suggesting that young people who cause harm should not be held accountable. What we are saying is that the current approaches, which focus on criminalization and being more punitive, and cast too broad a net, are not working and are more harmful to young people and their communities. We implore the Council to seriously consider these recommendations as well as others that have been presented by myriad

²² CJCC report, “Reducing Juvenile Involvement in Violent Crimes: Perspectives From DC Youth, Families, And Community Members.”

<https://cjcc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cjcc/CJCC%20Youth%20Focus%20Groups%20Report%2009262025.docx.pdf>.

²³ ACLU-D.C. report, “Building Safety Through Resources.”

<https://www.acludc.org/app/uploads/2025/10/2025-ACLU-D.C.-Report-Building-Safety-Through-Resources.pdf>.

District entities such as the Police Reform Commission,²⁴ the Justice Policy Institute,²⁵ as well as the Auditor’s office and the Council for Court Excellence.²⁶

Conclusion

Time and again, District leaders have been presented with non-punitive, non-police-centric solutions for public safety concerns, including youth engagement in crime. And time after time, District leaders revert to outdated “tough on crime” tactics that decades have proven to be ineffective, costly, and racist. The mayor’s proposed FY27 budget reflects this trend by investing more resources into policing, while reducing standards for them, and cutting funds for youth recreation and mental health services, while making it easier for them to come into contact with police.

To help young people thrive and avoid the school-to-prison pipeline, D.C.’s elected officials, advocates, and communities must prioritize non-carceral approaches that address the underlying challenges that young people face. Young Black people cannot continue being used as scapegoats for failed policies, and police cannot continue to be the go-to solution for overall public safety. District leaders should seriously consider the kind of adults they want young people to grow into in the future, the kind of communities they want to see in the District, and the kind of relationships they want to have with the most vulnerable segments of their constituents. District leaders must reflect on whether the solutions they are putting forth and the budget investments they make reflect that future.

As always, ACLU-D.C. stands ready as a partner to continue working to bring about a future where all District residents feel heard, safe, and protected by those who took an oath to do so.

²⁴ D.C. Police Reform Commission final report. “Decentering Police to Improve Public Safety.” <https://dccouncil.gov/police-reform-commission-full-report/>.

²⁵ Justice Policy Institute, YRA and Emerging Adult Strategic Plan. https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/DC_YRA_Strategic-Plan_2020-2025.pdf.

²⁶ ODCA and CCE report, “A Broken Web: Improved Interagency Collaboration is Needed for D.C.’s Crossover Youth.” https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/659c0df344c9c8325dd821ca/6671a96fa86bae1c4a0d05d1_Crossover.Youth.Report.5.28.24.Final.pdf.