



Takoma Park Mobilization Testimony on Funding for the Montgomery County
Police Department in the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget

April 7, 2021

Good afternoon Councilmembers. My name is Emil Parker. I am testifying on funding for the Montgomery County Police Department in the FY 2022 Operating Budget, on behalf of Takoma Park Mobilization.

Our goal is to reduce the number of unnecessary interactions between police and the community, interactions that have been shown to result in discrimination against people of color, including excessive use of force that can result in serious injury or death. We believe the MCPD budget should reflect this reduction.

The police should be focused on responding and, to the extent possible, preventing violent crimes. Other functions wholly unrelated to violent crime, which now take up the majority of officers' time, can be better handled by other parts of County Government. This shift would free officers to focus on what should be their priority and reduce the frequency of avoidable encounters between police and the community that do not promote public safety. In many cases these encounters end with members of our community humiliated, subjected to unjustified force, and even seriously injured. As you know, data collected by this Council's Office of Legislative Oversight confirm that there are significant racial disparities in traffic enforcement, school-based arrests, and the use of force against Montgomery County residents.

Neither increased training nor other tinkering will eliminate or even significantly reduce these massive disparities, nor is there any need to engage in such a fruitless effort.

The Reimagining Public Task Force recommends that the County move to fully (or expanded) automated traffic enforcement through expansion of speed and intersection camera programs, and reduce FTE sworn officer positions in proportion to the time they currently spend on in-person traffic enforcement.

Unfortunately, the County Executive's proposed FY 22 Operating Budget does not act on his Task Force's recommendation. The Council should remedy this oversight by transferring the function and funding for traffic enforcement from MCPD to MCDOT, and greatly expanding automated traffic enforcement, to the extent permitted by State law.

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The Task Force also recommends eliminating SRO programs and shifting the funding to youth counseling and development programs. The County Executive is apparently proposing to convert SRO to CROs, who would still be a regular presence in schools. Such tinkering is misguided; there is no need for police, however they are labeled, to be walking a “beat” in our schools. The Council should pass Expedited Bill 46-20 and reject Bill 7-21, which is a cosmetic non-solution. The funding for SROs should be removed from the budget and transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services for the provision of mental health and counseling services for students, to enable MCPS to meet the recommended student to mental health and counseling staff ratios.

Thank you for your time.