

TESTIMONY FROM TONY HAUSNER TO COUNTY COUNCIL
ON OPERATING BUDGET 4/13/23

My testimony is based on 20 years of experience in criminal justice programs, 30 years in Federal health policy and research, and 45 years of community action in Montgomery County. My criminal justice experience includes my doctoral dissertation, 7 years as Founder and President of Safe Silver Spring, and continued consultation with national experts in criminal justice. This testimony addresses the recent increases in county crime especially in Silver Spring.

I recently shared with the Council an op-ed that I had published in MoCo360. I will highlight some of those recommendations. See

“Opinion: Strategies to improve Montgomery County’s criminal justice system”

<https://moco360.media/2023/03/22/opinion-strategies-to-improve-montgomery-countys-criminal-justice-system/> via [@MoCo360Media](#) (see attachment)

The following is a brief summary of that article. I consulted a set of national experts in making these recommendations.

- The County Police is significantly understaffed and has had small recruiting classes this past few years including this one, which is still much below earlier years. Therefore, provide police with either housing or a housing subsidy so they can live in Montgomery County and not have to commute from Frederick. Further, help pay their college loans.

- Expand several successful programs such as truancy court, and mental health court. Further, consider expanding the drug court, mental health court, etc. to teenagers.
- Evaluate whether or not the Positive Youth Development Initiative should be expanded.
- Develop training programs modeled after California's highly recognized training system.
- I recommend that you consult with a panel of experts such as the ones I have suggested. One of my key advisors is Cynthia Lum of George Mason University, with whom I have worked closely over the last 10 years. Cynthia leads the top criminal justice research program in the country. Her longitudinal project with the Fairfax Police was just written up in the Washington Post last Saturday. Such a study could also be of value to our county. (See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/04/07/fairfax-county-police-gmu-study/>)
- A recent set of recommendations that I received after the above op-ed was published includes:
 - Develop a broader set of preventive youth programs that address at-risk kids
 - Involve police in more community programs, such as meet with parents and kids in school, various youth programs, etc. Especially with higher risk populations.

[This testimony can be found at: <http://rebrand.ly/MoCoTestimonyTH041323>]

Attachment

MoCo360 Opinion: Strategies to improve Montgomery County's criminal justice system

Uptick in crime requires focused prevention efforts.

by [Tony Hausner](#) March 22, 2023

Letters to the Editor

As the founder of Safe Silver Spring and president from 2009-2017, I have been very concerned with the recent rise in serious crime in Silver Spring this past two years.

Between 2020 and 2022, Montgomery County experienced a significant increase in serious crime countywide, but especially in Downtown Silver Spring. Between 2020 and 2022, violent crime increased countywide by 21% and increased by over 30% in Downtown Silver Spring.

At the same time, the number of police officers has significantly declined with an increase in the number of retirements and a dramatic decrease in the number of new police recruits.

These recommendations are some of the key ideas that I have generated from a variety of local and national sources, national experts, etc. The following suggestions do not address the concerns about race relations between police and the community as that has been addressed by the county task forces.

Financial strategies for police officers

Provide financial support to assist police officers to live in Montgomery County housing. Many of our police cannot afford the high cost of housing in this county. Thus, they need to commute from far distances, such as Frederick. Providing police officers with housing at no cost or much reduced cost would reduce their commute time and provide an opportunity for their families to benefit from our highly regarded school system.

Assist police officers in paying off college loans. Our police officers are generally required to have a college degree. Many incur debts to pay for college. Helping officers to pay off these loans will reduce financial pressures on them and their families.

Determine if expansions of successful programs have merit.

Truancy court, drug court, mental health court and Street Outreach Network have been highly successful in Montgomery County. Several of them were successfully developed elsewhere and adopted here. The truancy court program focuses on students who are truant from school. Rather than taking punitive actions against them, the students meet in groups with a counselor to motivate them in positive directions.

The drug court and mental health court are designed for children who have either drug or mental health problems. Rather than place them in more general corrective programs, they are assigned to counseling programs that work with youth on these problems. Again, these programs have been quite successful. The Street Outreach Network, operated by our Health and Human Services Department, is designed to work with teens who are in gangs or have the potential to join gangs. It provides them with a more positive set of programs.

Determine if expansion of the Positive Youth Development Initiative (PYDI) Committee has merit.

The PYDI Committee consists of representatives of all programs and departments in the county that play a major role in dealing with youth programs that address children that are either involved with the juvenile court system or have the potential for such. The committee is led by the police, Health and Human Services and recreation

departments. The PYDI initiative has convened conferences that have led to the implementation of a number of positive programs, such as some of those described above. It tends to meet on a quarterly basis and currently has an advisory and communication function.

California operates the Little Hoover Institute Training program for local police departments. This model provides continuous training for local police officers. Not on a one or two times a career approach, but on a more continuous basis throughout a person's career. This system is considered the best in the country by several criminal justice experts including Cynthia Lum, professor of Criminology, Law and Society and the director of George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy. Not only do police officers go through frequent training, but the commission is continuously improving its training program.

Convene in person or virtually a panel of experts from the academic and police institutes to provide recommendations.

I have a list of recommendations such as Cynthia Lum, George Mason University; Anthony Petrosino, director of WestEd's Justice & Prevention Research Center; Denise C. Gottfredson, Professor Emerita, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, University of Maryland; Ethan Rarick, executive director of the Little Hoover Commission and Brett Cowell, senior project associate for the National Police Foundation. The individuals come from academic settings, police training institutes, etc.

Tony Hausner, Ph.D., is the founder of Safe Silver Spring.

This op-ed can be found at: <https://moco360.media/2023/03/22/opinion-strategies-to-improve-montgomery-countys-criminal-justice-system/> via [@MoCo360Media](#)