

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

July 13, 2020

Mr. Bill de Blasio
Mayor
New York City
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

The horrifying death of George Floyd and the voices of millions exercising their First Amendment rights to protest injustices have laid bare the need for our country to confront an evil legacy of racism. To that end, we must come together to combat racial injustices while ensuring the availability of professional police forces that protect and serve their communities.

We know that the vast majority of the men and women in law enforcement are hardworking and honest professionals giving back to their communities. It is in everyone's best interest to have well trained professional law enforcement to uphold and enforce the laws passed by elected leaders.

At all levels of society there are discussions being held on how to effect needed changes, including in the halls of Congress. We are having vigorous bipartisan debates with the goal of reaching legislative solutions to enact real reforms. No single policy will solve all of our problems, yet there are real solutions within our reach if we work together to achieve them. It is unfortunate that the Senate Republican policing reform proposal failed and the Democrats in the House merely passed a partisan messaging bill with no chance of being taken up by the Senate and which the President has vowed to veto.

But defunding and dismantling our police forces is not a solution at all. Even if the sentiment behind calls to "defund the police" may be heartfelt and coming from a place of righteous anger, we are deeply concerned that the practical consequences of dismantling existing police forces altogether or haphazardly hacking away at their funding will lead to disastrous results, eroding public safety while making reforms more difficult to implement. Reform cannot come at the expense of turning our backs on the men and women in law enforcement, the vast majority of whom are dedicated public servants who put their lives on the line every day for their communities.

Reimagining the ways that police forces can contribute to our communities is essential in this moment. And community-based services have an appropriate place in working to reduce

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crime and divert people out of the criminal justice system. Yet, law enforcement is still a necessary part of a functioning society. Our Nation's police forces are integral to maintaining the rule of law upon which America was founded. Simply slashing police budgets will not make it easier for law enforcement to ensure a professional workforce. In fact, the contrary may occur further harming the minority communities such measures are intended to help.

We are especially concerned about recent developments in your city indicating a willingness to defund and dismantle the police forces.

Specifically, on June 7, 2020, you pledged to cut an undisclosed amount of police funding in coordination with the City Council.¹ On June 29, 2020, you and the City Council agreed to cut \$1 billion from the police department.² We are particularly concerned that such cuts are being considered even as violent crime appears to rise in New York due to a combination of a bail reform law limiting judges' ability to keep many defendants in pretrial custody, as well as releasing thousands of criminals from custody due to the COVID-19 outbreak.³ Indeed, it appears that 17 percent of recent shootings involved individuals on probation or parole.⁴

To help us better understand the decision-making process and the public safety effects in your city of dismantling or defunding the police, we respectfully request that your office provide documents or information sufficient to answer the following questions:

1. What impact will any proposed funding reduction or reorganization have on your police department's ability to protect persons and property while enforcing the laws enacted by elected officials?
2. How will any proposed funding reduction or reorganization impact efforts to ensure a more professional police force including by providing additional training on reducing discrimination, de-escalation tactics, and appropriate use of force?
3. How will any proposed funding reduction be allocated among the police department's budget?
4. Who was or will be consulted when determining whether to reduce funding and how much such funding will be reduced?

¹ Dana Rubinstein, *De Blasio Vows for First Time to Cut Funding for the N.Y.P.D.*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Jun. 7, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/07/nyregion/deblasio-nypd-funding.html>

² Dana Rubinstein & Jeffery C. Mays, *De Blasio and Council, Facing Fiscal Crisis Over Virus, Agree on Budget with Big Cuts*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Jun. 29, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/29/nyregion/nyc-budget-police.html>.

³ Ashley Southall & Neil MacFarquhar, *Gun Violence Spikes in N.Y.C., Intensifying Debate Over Policing*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Jun. 23, 2020), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/23/nyregion/nyc-shootings-surge.html?referringSource=articleShare>

⁴ *Id.*

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5. What criteria were or will be considered in determining whether to reduce funding and how much such funding will be reduced?
6. What effect will any proposed funding reduction or dismantlement have on your police department's ability to protect persons and property by timely responding to reports of criminal activity, especially where the victim may be a member of a particularly vulnerable class or minority?
7. What effect will any proposed funding reduction have on your police department's ability to investigate and respond to legitimate complaints against officers, as well as ensure departmental compliance with applicable civil rights laws?
8. What effect will any proposed funding reduction have on your police department's ability to coordinate with Federal law enforcement personnel, including in matters related to preventing and responding to terrorism, protecting critical infrastructure, and crimes against children?

To ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform staff at (202) 225-5074.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Government Operations



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform



Glenn S. Grothman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security

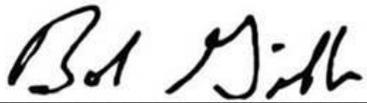


Mark E. Green, M.D.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment

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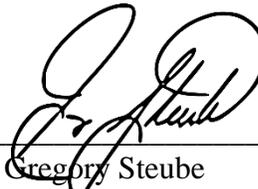
Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



Ralph W. Norman
Member of Congress



Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Fred Keller
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Harley E. Rouda, Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment