

DC Police Union

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Testimony of DC Police Union for House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Hearing

Good morning, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify. As the Chairman of the D.C. Police Union, I speak on behalf of approximately 3,200 sworn police officers, detectives and sergeants who serve the District of Columbia as members of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). I am a Detective Grade 1, and I have worked for the MPD for eighteen years. I take great pride in serving this city.

I would like to focus the scope of my testimony today on issues related to public safety, crime, and law enforcement. More specifically, how numerous actions by the D.C. Council, to include their rhetoric, has resulted in a mass exodus of sworn law enforcement officers and an exponential increase in violent crime.

Beginning in June of 2020, the D.C. Council began introducing anti-police legislation designed, in their own words, to “listen to the voices of District residents and act accordingly to bend the arc of justice.”

I’d like to provide a list of just some of the legislation the D.C. Council would introduce over the course of the next two and a half years:

- Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Emergency Amendment Act (7x)
- Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Temporary Amendment Act (4x)
- Strengthening Oversight and Accountability of Police Amendment Act of 2021
- Revised Criminal Code Amendment Act of 2021
- Reducing Law Enforcement Presence in Schools Act of 2021
- Law Enforcement Qualified Immunity Cessation Act of 2021
- Law Enforcement Present Sense Impression Act of 2021
- Law Enforcement Vehicular Pursuit Reform Act of 2021
- School Police Incident Oversight and Accountability Amendment Act of 2021
- White Supremacy in Policing Prevention Act of 2021

The rhetoric that Councilmembers used when speaking publicly about law enforcement amounted to nothing short of virulent attacks on all police officers in the District. One

Councilmember stated in a public hearing, “I know for a fact there are police in the District who are bad actors and who have been going on without the proper penance.” and he felt the need for Metropolitan police officers to receive “some kind of retribution.”

Other Councilmembers bragged about “defunding” the department or making “the biggest reduction to MPD” he had ever seen.

Without delving into the granular details of how terrible these bills are, or how blatantly awful the rhetoric used by the Council was, I can assure the members of this Committee that the direct result was a mass exodus of police officers from the department.

To put a finer point on the issue of attrition, when I took office as head of the Police Union in April of 2020, membership reports showed that we had 3,626 members of the rank-and-file, which is, all officers, detectives, and sergeants. Our most recent membership report from March 24, 2023, states that we are down to 3,167. This is a net loss of 459 union members.

Since the beginning of 2020, the MPD has lost 1,194 officers, one-third of the department. 484, nearly 40%, of these separations were resignations; employees who just walked away from a career with MPD.

While there is much rhetoric around the concept of the number of police and the amount of crime, the following facts are indisputable. Over the past six years of plummeting numbers of police, homicides have increased 75%, armed carjackings have increased 227%, armed robberies have increased 46% and most tragic and alarming, is that last year alone the juvenile homicide rate doubled. These statistics I have mentioned are citywide. If one parses out the data to the neighborhood level, some of these communities have grown to look like warzones.

Additionally, the ability for MPD to hire new officers appears to be almost non-existent. Between October 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023, just a five-month window, the MPD lost 165 sworn members, while only hiring 68, a deficit of 97 officers. If these deficits continue, MPD will lose 396 employees per year. This negative trend currently shows no signs of stopping, meaning that the concept of increasing the number of officers is completely unattainable without immediate and comprehensive changes to the way employees are treated by their elected officials.

Over the past two-and-a-half years, our Union has been sounding the alarm about this problem to anyone within earshot, including the D.C. Council. We tried to inform our elected leaders of the unintended consequences of these policies. Unfortunately, we were ignored.

Now, over two years later, we have all seen the results of the D.C. Council’s experiment. The empirical data is in, and we know for certain that their efforts have been an abject failure, resulting in thousands of more victims of crime in this city. The lasting impacts of these horrible policies will not be fully realized for some time, and the efforts to repair the damage done could take decades without swift and thoughtful actions.

The purpose of my testimony here today is to inform the Committee on this ongoing crisis that exists in the District and to publicly state that we are prepared to assist in any way we can.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify and I welcome any questions the Committee may have.



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Chairman
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