



July 27, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
House Majority Leader  
H-107, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Clyburn  
House Majority Whip  
H-329, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
House Judiciary Chair  
2142 Rayburn  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
Senate Judiciary Chair  
224 Dirksen  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, Whip Clyburn, Chair Nadler, Leader Schumer, and Chair Durbin,

On behalf of Color Of Change, the nation’s largest online racial justice organization representing 7 million members, working to move decision-makers in government and corporations to create a more human and less hostile world for black people, Civil Rights Corps, one of the nation’s leading impact litigation and policy organizations, working to dismantle criminal-legal injustice and advance holistic approaches to community safety, the American Civil Liberties Union, one of the nation’s preeminent organization leading the fight for civil liberties and constitutional rights for over a century, and the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 6375, the **COPS on the Beat Grant Program Reauthorization and Parity Act** of 2022 and other bills relating to law enforcement funding.

The United States already has the highest rate of incarceration in the world,<sup>1</sup> with Black people substantially overrepresented amongst those incarcerated.<sup>2</sup> **We urge you not to take up any legislation**

<sup>1</sup> See Widra, Emily, and Herring, Tiana. “States of Incarceration: The Global Context 2021.” *Prison Policy Initiative*. Sep. 2021. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2021.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See Sawyer, Wendy, and Wagner, Peter. “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2022.” *Prison Policy Initiative*. March 14, 2022. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2022.html>; “Race and ethnicity.” *Prison Policy Initiative*. [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/race\\_and\\_ethnicity/#:~:text=Percent%20of%20people%20in%20prison,who%20are%20Black%3A%2048%25%20%2B](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/race_and_ethnicity/#:~:text=Percent%20of%20people%20in%20prison,who%20are%20Black%3A%2048%25%20%2B) (noting that while Black people make up only 13 percent of the

**that perpetuates these harmful realities and doubles down on the broken and discriminatory criminalization-first approach to public safety.** We believe there are more than enough resources for law enforcement. Moreover, our extensive research and policy work on non-carceral, evidence-based approaches to community safety overwhelmingly indicate that there are far more effective ways to keep our families and communities safe. **We urge you to embrace these forward-looking, high-impact approaches, and reject programs whose lack of results should doom its request for additional resources and bureaucratic structures.**

### **Reauthorizing and Funding COPS Threatens the Transformative Change This Moment Demands**

The events of the last three years—from the countless tragedies involving police brutality to the COVID-19 pandemic and recent white supremacist violence—have amplified longstanding disparities and shined a bright light on the systemic racism that underlies the U.S. criminal-legal system. Millions of individuals have joined together to protest the perpetuation of this oppressive system and demand our nation embrace a holistic, transformative vision of community safety – one that shrinks the footprint of policing and prioritizes investments in economic opportunity, education, health care, and other community-led solutions. **Congress must meet our current moment by reexamining existing funding for criminalization-focused programs such as the COPS program and shift those resources toward initiatives that will support individual well-being and promote safe communities for all.**

Many situations that escalate into officers using excessive, often deadly force are connected to underlying factors such as inadequate social services and supports, high poverty rates, income inequality, and housing insecurity. As a society, we must strive to reduce police-involved crisis response by providing prevention and support services as well as ensuring that the proper experts respond to crisis situations. This includes shifting resources from police budgets to violence interruption programs that intervene in ongoing conflicts and prevent future violence by changing behavior and increasing opportunities for high-risk individuals.<sup>3</sup> It also requires investing in mental health and substance use supports such as crisis hotlines, walk-in centers, mobile crisis teams, and peer support units so that every health crisis is met with trained social and medical personnel, not armed law enforcement. Rather than blindly funding programs that criminalize and incarcerate people, we must divert resources to programs that provide the education, employment, and affordable housing opportunities that strengthen communities and improve public safety.<sup>4</sup>

For years, the COPS program has put untenable financial burdens on states and localities and contributed to the under-resourcing of many critical social services by forcing jurisdictions to absorb the costs of COPS-funded police hiring at the expense of resourcing other local priorities, all while facing little

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population of the United States, they comprise 40 percent of people in jails and prisons, and 48 percent of people serving life, life without parole, or “virtual life” sentences).

<sup>3</sup> See Letter from Center for Popular Democracy, et. al, to Chairman Jerrold Nadler and Ranking Member Doug Collins. U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary. June 9, 2019. <https://populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20Letter%20to%20Congress%20--%20COPS%20program.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See “Vision for Justice 2020 and Beyond: A New Paradigm for Public Safety.” The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. Sept. 2019. <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/reports/Vision-For-Justice-2020-SHORT.pdf>.

congressional oversight.<sup>5</sup> Though the COPS program allows police departments to make initial hires or re-hires, 25% of the salaries of newly hired officers—and ultimately full funding of these officers—must be funded through local appropriations.<sup>6</sup> Localities have therefore been forced to bear the burden of increases to their already large police budgets, some of which total more than 50% of their general funds<sup>7</sup> once federal grants are exhausted.<sup>8</sup> Now, the spread of COVID-19 and its economic devastation have compounded this dynamic by exposing the significant under-resourcing of schools, hospitals, and other vital services necessary to combat the pandemic. It is irresponsible to use public resources to further expand law enforcement budgets, especially without rigorous oversight, at a time when almost a million people are currently sick with the coronavirus,<sup>9</sup> 5.9 million Americans are out of work,<sup>10</sup> and state and local governments are struggling in the absence of additional federal aid. **Moreover, it is particularly heedless to expand the size, power, and other resources of police departments just as recent Supreme Court decisions have given police and prosecutors new powers to police our families, our homes, and even women’s bodies.** Granting police more resources now is exactly the wrong move for a country whose court decisions are steadily bringing law enforcement deeper into our lives and our most private decisions. As people take to city streets and town squares nationwide, advocating for their fundamental civil rights, we cannot fuel the very entities now tear gassing and otherwise assaulting them.<sup>11</sup> Now, more than ever, we must think critically about whose power we are entrenching and how.

### **COPS Lacks Accountability and Transparency**

While accountability and transparency are unequivocally vital characteristics of any system of public safety, both have long been absent in the COPS program. Though authorization for the program expired in 2009, Congress has continually appropriated funding despite little oversight of its use, distribution, or efficacy. No congressional hearings have ever been held to specifically examine the COPS program or

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<sup>5</sup> Since 2010, neither the Senate nor House Judiciary Committees have held hearings explicitly focused on the COPS program, and the COPS program has only been discussed in four hearings: House Judiciary Committee Hearing: Justice Department Oversight (2011), <https://www.c-span.org/video/?299299-1/justice-department-oversight-part-1>; House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations Hearing: Oversight of Department of Justice Grant Programs (2017), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115hrg27070/pdf/CHRG-115hrg27070.pdf>; House Judiciary Committee Hearing: Oversight Hearing on Policing Practices (2019), <https://judiciary.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=2278>; and House Judiciary Committee Hearing: Oversight of the Department of Justice (2020), <https://judiciary.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=3140>

<sup>6</sup> “COPS Hiring Program (CHP).” U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/chp#:~:text=CHP%20awards%20will%20provide%2075,of%20%24125%2C000%20per%20officer%20position>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; “What Policing Costs: A Look at Spending in America’s Biggest Cities.” Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities>

<sup>8</sup> “Freedom to Thrive: Reimagining Safety & Security in Our Communities.” Center for Popular Democracy. July 2, 2017.

<https://populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Freedom%20To%20Thrive%2C%20Higher%20Res%20Version.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Covid Data Tracker Weekly Review, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (July 2022, 2022),

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html>.

<sup>10</sup> “The Employment Situation - June 2022” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. July 8, 2022

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Francis, Matthew R. “Police Who Tear-Gas Abortion-Rights Protesters Could Induce Abortion.” *Scientific American*, Scientific American, 20 July 2022,

[www.scientificamerican.com/article/police-who-tear-gas-abortion-rights-protesters-could-induce-abortion/](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/police-who-tear-gas-abortion-rights-protesters-could-induce-abortion/).

other problematic provisions of the 1994 Crime Bill. Consequently, COPS Office funds have been subject to little scrutiny to examine their compliance with statutory requirements—let alone the harmful impacts they have had on communities. According to a 2013 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, COPS program funds have frequently been used to supplant, rather than supplement, state and local funding for the hiring of police officers.<sup>12</sup> Not only does this contravene program requirements, but it also insulates state and local departments from the true costs of over-policing.

More importantly, experts have long questioned the efficacy and utility of the COPS program as a whole. Studies show that, on average, police officers spend only about 4%<sup>13</sup> of their time handling violent crime. A Washington Post analysis found no correlation<sup>14</sup> between spending on police and crime rates. And leading research shows that funding from the COPS program itself had “little to no effect on crime.”<sup>15</sup> According to the Government Accountability Office, additional police officers from 1993 to 2000 drove only 5% (1.3 percentage points) of the overall crime rate decline.<sup>16</sup> It is no wonder, then, that experts and leading advocates have called to eliminate COPS completely. David Mulhausen, director of the National Institute of Justice under President Trump recognized that “[t]he COPS program has an extensive track record of poor performance and should be eliminated.”<sup>17</sup> And the Movement for Black Lives has called specifically for the elimination of the COPS program as part of its core demands to End the War on Black Communities.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this, far from being in need of additional federal funding, state and local police departments have received more than \$14 billion in COPS funding over the past 25 years. Even as the calls for a transformation of our criminal-legal system have grown louder, these massive expenditures and their corresponding expansion of the criminal-legal system have continued. Funding has steadily increased for the program since 2016. And in Fiscal Year 2022, \$512 million was appropriated for the program—more than double what it was a decade earlier.

### **COPS Promotes the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

Besides putting more police officers on the streets, the COPS Office has also been the chief source of federal funding for police in schools. Throughout its existence, the COPS Office has provided

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<sup>12</sup> Government Accountability Office. *Community Policing Grants: Cops Grants Were a Modest Contributor to Declines in Crime in the 1990s: Report to the Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives*, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Asher, Jeff, and Ben Horwitz. “How Do the Police Actually Spend Their Time?” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 19 June 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/upshot/unrest-police-time-violent-crime.html?smid=tw-share](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/upshot/unrest-police-time-violent-crime.html?smid=tw-share).

<sup>14</sup> Bump, Philip. “Analysis | over the Past 60 Years, More Spending on Police Hasn't Necessarily Meant Less Crime.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 7 June 2020, [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/06/07/over-past-60-years-more-spending-police-hasnt-necessarily-meant-less-crime/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/06/07/over-past-60-years-more-spending-police-hasnt-necessarily-meant-less-crime/).

<sup>15</sup> Worrall, John L., and Tomislav V. Kovandzic. “Cops Grants and Crime Revisited\*.” *Criminology*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2007, pp. 159–190., doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.2007.00075.x.

<sup>16</sup> *Supra* note 12

<sup>17</sup> Mulhausen, David. “Defunding COPS: Eliminating a Wasteful and Ineffective Grant Program.” *The Daily Signal*. July 22, 2013.

<https://www.dailysignal.com/2013/07/22/defunding-cops-eliminating-a-wasteful-and-ineffectivegrant-program/>.

<sup>18</sup> “End the War on Black Communities.” M4BL.

<https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/end-the-war-on-blackcommunities/>

approximately \$1 billion in federal grants to state and local governments for the policing, surveillance, and militarization of schools.<sup>19</sup> Federal support for school-based law enforcement directly promotes the school-to-prison pipeline. The largest sustained effort of this sort was the Cops in Schools (CIS) program, which funded the hiring and training of thousands of school resource officers (SROs) by local law enforcement agencies.<sup>20</sup> This program was crafted to ensure local governments would sustain school policing even after they stopped receiving federal dollars by requiring agencies accepting CIS grants to “commit to continuing the grant-funded SROs” for an additional year after federal funding stopped.<sup>21</sup> Although funding is no longer appropriated for the CIS program, jurisdictions may still use grants obtained through the COPS Office to hire SROs.<sup>22</sup> These grants have had a profound impact on the number of law enforcement officers in schools. Almost 57% of public schools nationwide reported having security staff present at least once a week in 2016,<sup>23</sup> a number that stands in stark contrast to the 22% of schools with a law enforcement presence in 1997,<sup>24</sup> and the mere 1% of U.S. schools that reported having a stationed law enforcement officer in the 1970s.<sup>25</sup>

Much like law enforcement presence more generally, the increase in officers in schools disproportionately harms students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ students. In 2018, nearly 64% of students in schools that were majority students of color had security staff on campus at least once a week.<sup>26</sup> The direct consequence of police in schools, coupled with the systemic biases and failures of police departments across the country, is the criminalization of typical adolescent behavior,<sup>27</sup> with deep and disturbing discriminatory implications.<sup>28</sup> For example, while Black students represent only 15% of the

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<sup>19</sup> “School Safety Policies and Programs Administered by the U.S. Federal Government: 1990–2016.” Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. Aug. 2017. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/251517.pdf>. (Past programs included: School-Based Partnerships (1998–1999; \$30 million), COPS in Schools Program (CIS) (1999–2005; \$823 million), Justice-Based After School Program (2000–2001; individual sites received nearly \$3 million), Secure Our Schools Program (SOS) (2002–2011; \$123 million), and Making Officer Redeployment Effective (MORE)).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> “A Guide to Developing, Monitoring, and Succeeding with Your School Resource Officer Program.” U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services. 2003. <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=785365>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> “Percentage of public schools with security staff present at school at least once a week, by type of security staff, school level, and selected school characteristics: 2005–06, 2015–16, 2017–18.” U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Studies. 2019. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_233.70b.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_233.70b.asp)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> “A Brief History of School-Based Law Enforcement.” Texas School Safety Center. Feb. 2016.

<https://txssc.txstate.edu/topics/law-enforcement/articles/brief-history>.

<sup>26</sup> “Percentage of public schools with security staff present at school at least once a week, by type of security staff, school level, and selected school characteristics: 2005–06, 2015–16, 2017–18.” U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Studies. 2019. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_233.70b.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_233.70b.asp).

<sup>27</sup> See “Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff Is Harming Students.” American Civil Liberties Union. 2019. [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf) (listing 25 most common behaviors that lead to school arrest and criminal charges. The number one criminal charge is “disrupting school” for “spraying perfume, fake burping, fake fart spray, refusing to change a t-shirt, and criticizing an officer”); see also Advancement Project, et al. “Police In Schools Are Not The Answer To The Newtown Shooting.” March 2018. <http://dignityinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PoliceIn-Schools-2018-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Theriot, Matthew T. “School Resource Officers and the Criminalization of Student Behavior.” *Journal of Criminal Justice*. 2009. Pgs. 37, 280–287. See also Nance, Jason P. “Students, Police, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline.” *University of Washington Law Review* 93 (919). 2016.

student population nationwide, they make up 33% of those arrested<sup>29</sup> despite research showing that students of color do not misbehave more than their White counterparts.<sup>30</sup> Troublesome disparities also exist for students with disabilities, who are nearly three times more likely to be arrested than students without disabilities.<sup>31</sup>

These arrests and other disciplinary actions can significantly impact students' educational attainment and devastate young people's futures. One study found that experiencing an arrest for the first time in high school nearly doubles the odds of a student dropping out, and a court appearance nearly quadruples the odds of a student dropping out.<sup>32</sup> Strikingly, recent research directly linked the Cops in Schools grant program to decreased graduation rates, noting that "exposure to a three-year federal grant for school police decreases high school graduation rates by approximately 2.5% and college enrollment rates by 4%".<sup>33</sup>

In addition to its troubling consequences for student success, the increased presence of law enforcement officers in schools supported by COPS Office funding undermines student safety. Although proponents of school policing often cite student safety as their primary justification, there is no substantial evidence to support that assertion.<sup>34</sup> In fact, several studies have suggested that the presence of prison-like conditions such as armed officers may actually make students feel *less* safe than if there were no police in the school.<sup>35</sup> Some researchers have even found that mass shooters are actually drawn to locations with armed

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<sup>29</sup> "Which Students Are Arrested the Most?" Education Week. 2017.

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/projects/2017/policing-americas-schools/student-arrests.html#/overview>.

<sup>30</sup> Advancement Project, et al. "Police In Schools Are Not The Answer To The Newtown Shooting." March 2018. <http://dignityinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Police-In-Schools-2018-FINAL.pdf>, ("[P]olice officers perceive Black youth differently than they do white youth, and this bias, not any actual difference in behavior, leads to the over-criminalization of students of color. Police see Black children as less 'childlike' than their White peers and overestimate the age and culpability of Black children accused of an offense more than they do for white children accused of an offense.")

<sup>31</sup> "Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff Is Harming Students." American Civil Liberties Union. 2019. [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Sweeten, Gary. "Who Will Graduate? Disruption of High School Education by Arrest and Court Involvement." *Justice Quarterly* 23(4). 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Weisburst, Emily K. "Patrolling Public Schools: The Impact of Funding for School Police on Student Discipline and Long-Term Education Outcomes (A Sub-project of "Building Pathways to College Access and Beyond")." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 0(0). 2019. Pgs. 1-28

<sup>34</sup> "Research on School Security: The Impact of Security Measures on Students." National Association of School Psychologists. 2013. (citing Garcia, C. "School Safety Technology in America: Current Use and Perceived Effectiveness." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 14(1). 2003. Pgs. 30-54; Addington, L. "Cops and Cameras: Public School Security as a Policy Response to Columbine." *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52(10). 2009; Borum, R. & Cornell, D. & Modzeleski, W. & Jimerson, S. "What Can be Done About School Shootings? A Review of The Evidence." *Educational Researcher* 39(1). 2010; Casella, R. "Selling Us the Fortress: The Promotion of Technosecurity Equipment for Schools." Routledge. 2006). See also American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations." *American Psychologist* 63(852). 2008.

<sup>35</sup> "Research on School Security: The Impact of Security Measures on Students." National Association of School Psychologists. 2013 (citing Schreck, C. and Miller, J. "Sources of Fear of Crime at School: What is the Relative Contribution of Disorder, Individual Characteristics and School Security?" *Journal of School Violence*, 2(4). 2003. Pgs. 57-79; Gastic, B. "Metal Detectors and Feeling Safe at School." *Education and Urban Society*, 43(4). 2011. Pgs. 486-498).

guards, as many are seeking a violent end to their own lives.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, in schools with predominantly Black and brown youth—where SROs are concentrated—children are often victims of violent and unchecked attacks by SROs, many of whom are trained to enforce the criminal code rather than help foster a nurturing environment.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast, supportive approaches to improving school climates—such as wraparound services, restorative and trauma-responsive practices, positive behavioral interventions and supports, mental health care, and additional counselors, nurses, and social workers—have proven to be effective at producing a safe and supportive learning environment by helping students address the root causes of conflict and reducing school infractions.<sup>38</sup> Most schools with SROs, however, do not have counselors, mental health professionals, or other individuals specifically trained to help students cope with stress or trauma.<sup>39</sup> Instead, at a time when the suicide rate among children is alarmingly high, many law enforcement officers are handcuffing, arresting, and shepherding students into the justice system rather than addressing the underlying causes of disciplinary incidents.<sup>40</sup> Federal funding must incentivize the replacement of school-based law enforcement—including funding through the COPS Office—with evidence-based practices, identified in collaboration with communities, for maintaining school safety, inclusion, and support to ensure child well-being. For too long, the presence of school-based law enforcement has come at the expense of personnel and services that create safe, healthy, and inclusive school climates. School safety funding should support school counselors, mental health professionals, community intervention workers, and supportive professionals who build positive learning environments, not any iteration of career law enforcement officers in schools.

### **Better Alternatives Exist to Keep Communities Safe**

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<sup>36</sup> Ingraham, Christopher. “For many mass shooters, armed guards aren’t a deterrent, they’re part of the fantasy.” *The Washington Post*. March 1, 2018.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/03/01/for-many-massshooters-armed-guards-arent-a-deterren-t-theyre-part-of-the-fantasy/>

<sup>37</sup> Weisburst, Emily K. “Patrolling Public Schools: The Impact of Funding for School Police on Student Discipline and Long-Term Education Outcomes (A Sub-project of “Building Pathways to College Access and Beyond”).” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 0(0). 2019. Pgs. 1–28 (listing examples of officers: in South Carolina slamming a student to the ground; in Baltimore slapped, kicked, and yelled at a student while another officer watched; in Philadelphia punched a student and put him in a chokehold after the student tried to use the restroom without a pass; in Pittsburgh punching out a student’s tooth; and in Pinellas Park, Florida, using a stun gun on an unarmed student). See also “We came to learn: A Call to Action for Police-Free Schools.” Advancement Project. <http://advancementproject.org/wp-content/uploads/WCTLweb/index.html#page=2>, (stating “[s]afety does not exist when Black and Brown young people are forced to interact with a system of policing that views them as a threat and not as students” and mapping over 60 instances of police brutality on students).

<sup>38</sup> Nance, J. “Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline.” *Arizona State Law Journal* 48. 2016 (citing Johnson, D. & Allensworth, E. & Steinberg, M. “Student and Teacher Safety in Chicago Public Schools: The Roles of Community Context and School Social Organization.” Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute. May 2011. <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2018-10/SAFETY%20IN%20CPS.pdf>).

<sup>39</sup> “Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff Is Harming Students.” American Civil Liberties Union. 2019. [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* Pg. 22 (noting that nearly a third of the U.S. students—at least 14 million—attend schools that reported having a law enforcement officer onsite while lacking any School Based Mental Health Provider such as a counselor, nurse, psychologist, or social worker).

Against this backdrop, our community of criminal-legal advocates, grassroots organizations, and allies believe that a different way forward is both possible and urgently needed. We support approaching public safety through a public health lens, while making bold, life-affirming investments to address violence and harm before they happen. We have a wealth of evidence uplifting interventions that work to make communities dramatically safer. Ground-level interventions, like investing in affordable housing<sup>41</sup> and healthcare,<sup>42</sup> have produced dramatic crime-fighting effects. Violence prevention programs such as Cure Violence<sup>43</sup> and hospital-based peer intervention<sup>44</sup> have produced dramatic reductions in arrest and harm rates. School-based violence prevention models significantly reduce violent behavior at all grade levels.<sup>45</sup> Wraparound education services in high-risk areas reduce juvenile arrests<sup>46</sup>, as well as child abuse cases. Safe Passage to School programs may reduce violent crime by 14 percent.<sup>47</sup> Increasing youth employment, such as through summer jobs programs, has reduced violent crime by as much as 43% .<sup>48</sup> And the list goes on.<sup>49</sup>

Over the years, evidence has shown that programs of violence prevention and non-carceral crisis response dramatically improve community safety — even though they have received far less funding than traditional criminal-legal approaches. Fully 80% of gender-based violence survivors report being somewhat or extremely afraid to call the police during a crisis.<sup>50</sup> And yet, many non-police crisis responders have been highly successful at stemming violence. A study of Safe Streets, a Baltimore non-carceral “violence interruption” program, found that its outreach workers reduced serious violence by 69%.<sup>51</sup>

We agree that Congress should pass a legislative package that makes bold, historic investments in community safety. **We believe, though, that this package should be grounded in evidence and community needs—not in interventions that misdirect much-needed safety resources and actually**

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<sup>41</sup> Freedman, Matthew, and Emily G. Owens. “Low-Income Housing Development and Crime.” *Journal of Urban Economics*, vol. 70, no. 2-3, 2011, pp. 115–131., doi:10.1016/j.jue.2011.04.001.

<sup>42</sup> Vogler, Jacob. “Access to Health Care and Criminal Behavior: Short-Run Evidence from the ACA Medicaid Expansions.” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2017, doi:10.2139/ssrn.3042267.

<sup>43</sup> Butts, Jeffrey A., et al. “Cure Violence: A Public Health Model to Reduce Gun Violence.” *Annual Review of Public Health*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2015, pp. 39–53., doi:10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031914-122509.

<sup>44</sup> Becker, M, et al. “Caught in the Crossfire: The Effects of a Peer-Based Intervention Program for Violently Injured Youth.” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2004, pp. 177–183., doi:10.1016/s1054-139x(03)00278-7.

<sup>45</sup> “School-Based Violence Prevention.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 22 June 2017, www.cdc.gov/policy/hst/hi5/violenceprevention/index.html.

<sup>46</sup> See *Freedom to Thrive*. The Center for Popular Democracy, populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Freedom%20To%20Thrive%2C%20Higher%20Res%20Version.pdf.

<sup>47</sup> McMillen, Daniel, et al. “Do More Eyes on the Street Reduce Crime? Evidence from Chicago’s Safe Passage Program.” *Journal of Urban Economics*, vol. 110, 2019, pp. 1–25., doi:10.1016/j.jue.2019.01.001.

<sup>48</sup> Heller, Sara B. “Summer Jobs Reduce Violence among Disadvantaged Youth.” *Science*, vol. 346, no. 6214, 2014, pp. 1219–1223., doi:10.1126/science.1257809.

<sup>49</sup> See Sebastian, Thea, et al. *Getting Smart on Safety*. Civil Rights Corps , 2022, civilrightscorps.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Getting-Smart-On-Safety.pdf.

<sup>50</sup> Valente, Rob (Roberta), and TK Logan TK Logan. *Who Will Help Me? Domestic Violence Survivors Speak Out About Law Enforcement Responses*. . National Domestic Violence Hotline, www.thehotline.org/wp-content/uploads/media/2020/09/NDVH-2015-Law-Enforcement-Survey-Report-2.pdf.

<sup>51</sup> Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. “Evaluation of Baltimore’s Safe Streets Program: Effects on Attitudes, Participants’ Experiences, and Gun Violence.” *Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence*, 28 Apr. 2015, www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/center-for-prevention-of-youth-violence/.



**undermine safety goals. It should center bills like *The People's Response Act*, which would create a new Division of Community Safety at the Department of Health and Human Services, and the *Break the Cycle of Violence Act*. It should include bills to expand non-carceral crisis response and other programs that prevent violence and harm before they happen. Under no circumstances should this package include the COPS on the Beat Grant Program Reauthorization and Parity Act of 2022 and any other bills relating to law enforcement funding. These programs will move us backward, not forward, at a time when the stakes have never been higher.**

We look forward to engaging you, your colleagues, and leaders nationwide to design a visionary safety package that will make a positive difference in *all* of our communities. These police expansion bills are simply not the path to begin this process.

If you have any questions or want to discuss any items uplifted here, please contact Thea Sebastian, Director of Policy, Civil Rights Corps ([thea@civilrightscorps.org](mailto:thea@civilrightscorps.org)) or Sakira Cook, Co-Interim Vice President of Campaigns, Color of Change ([sakira.cook@colorofchange.org](mailto:sakira.cook@colorofchange.org)).

Sincerely,

Civil Rights Corps

Color of Change

American Civil Liberties Union

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

American Friends Service Committee

Movement for Black Lives

MomsRising