



# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL

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2<sup>ND</sup> DISTRICT COUNCILMEMBER

June 8, 2020

Mayor James F. Kenney  
City Hall, 2nd Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
*Sent via electronic mail*

Re: Police reform in Philadelphia

Mayor Kenney,

Philadelphia can't breathe. In the poorest big city in America, during a global health pandemic and a massive economic crisis, the people of our city are telling us that police reform cannot wait. We must hear them and act decisively.

Policing is difficult, dangerous work. It is vitally important work. For exactly those reasons, the Police Department must earn and maintain the trust of the communities it serves. Sadly, many of our most vulnerable citizens feel less safe, not moreso, in the presence of our police.

Meaningful policy changes will require a blend of legislation, executive action, collective bargaining, and other means.

First, we must recalibrate budget priorities. Our Police Department consumes a sixth of our annual operating budget, three quarters of a **billion** dollars. Since 2016, the police budget has increased by about \$120 million. Given that context, and the deep cuts proposed for virtually every other department, we cannot accept the proposed \$14 million increase to the police budget for Fiscal Year 2021.

The Police Department—along with the policing profession nationally—faces a crisis of legitimacy. A big part of the problem is that we too often ask the police to solve problems better addressed by social workers, healthcare providers, educators, housing counselors, and others. Rebalancing our



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budget priorities is a first step in resolving this problem. It is counterproductive to increase spending on the Police Department while cutting spending on public health, housing, social services, violence prevention, youth programs, libraries, parks, recreation centers, and the arts. I express this concern—that public safety requires a holistic approach—as vice-chair of Council’s Committee on Public Safety, with the support of the Committee’s chair, Curtis Jones, Jr.

Second, we must make meaningful policy changes to ensure transparency and accountability. Below are our initial recommendations, which include a set of reforms announced by Council leadership on June 5, 2020, as part of the New Normal Budget Act:

- Fully resourced, independent police oversight, including authority to conduct contemporaneous, independent review of civilian complaints and use-of-force incidents.
- Establishment of specific criteria for designation of an investigation as internal.
- Expanded reporting of civilian complaints and internal investigations, as well as specific criteria for limitation of information reported.
- Inclusion of community members and outside experts on the Use of Force Review Board (automatically reviews police-involved shootings) and Police Board of Inquiry (hears civilian complaints that are deemed sustained by Internal Affairs investigation). Charging and presentation of cases to both boards by independent civilian personnel. Notification to public of hearing time, location, and subject matter.
- Early warning systems to track indicators of risk for serious misconduct and to enable non-disciplinary remedial action.
- Systematic tracking and reporting of incidents in which officers witnessed the use of inappropriate or excessive force by a colleague.
- Non-punitive peer reviews of serious incidents, separate from criminal and administrative investigations, to identify systemic reforms that safeguard against such incidents. Incidents reviewed should include both incidents causing harm and “near misses.”
- Detailed guidance regarding the circumstances under which firearms may and should be unholstered or pointed. Require reporting of such actions, similar to reporting required for discharge of a firearm.
- Explicit prohibition of sitting or kneeling on a person’s neck, face, or head.
- Systematic reforms to eliminate unconstitutional “stop and frisk.”
- Outside review of police code of conduct to inform the collective bargaining process.



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- Inclusion of community representatives and outside experts in any collective bargaining process relating to law enforcement personnel.
- Council and community input, including a public hearing, on any collective bargaining agreement relating to law enforcement personnel.
- Restoration of residency requirements for police personnel.
- A plan to enhance racial and geographic recruitment diversity, with reporting on progress towards plan goals.

We look forward to working with you to restore public confidence in our Police Department and enhance public safety.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kenyatta Johnson".

Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson  
Second Council District

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell A. Clarke".

Council President Darrell Clarke  
Fifth Council District

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Councilmember Mark Squilla  
First Council District

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Gauthier".

Councilmember Jamie Gauthier  
Third Council District



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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Curtis Jones, Jr.'.

Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr.  
Fourth Council District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Maria Quiñones Sanchez'.

Councilmember Maria Quiñones Sanchez  
Seventh Council District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Cindy Bass'.

Councilmember Cindy Bass  
Eighth Council District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Cherelle L. Parker'.

Councilmember Cherelle Parker  
Ninth Council District

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Councilmember Kendra Brooks  
Member At Large

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Councilmember Allan Domb  
Member At Large



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Councilmember Katherine Gilmore Richardson  
Member At Large

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Councilmember Derek Green  
Member At Large

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen Gym".

Councilmember Helen Gym  
Member At Large

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Isaiah Thomas".

Councilmember Isaiah Thomas  
Member At Large

cc: James Engler, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Brian Abernathy, Managing Director  
Danielle Outlaw, Police Commissioner