



New York City Anti-Violence Project
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AVP Public Safety Hearing Testimony for May 22

To Chair Richards, and the Committee on Public Safety, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. We at the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP) are writing to express the harms of over-policing in LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities, offer alternatives to the city's enforcement of social distancing, and advocate that the City proportionally cut the NYPD's budget so that more funding can go towards social services and resources that our communities need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an organization that serves and works to empower Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Trans, Gender Non-Conforming (LGBTQGNC) and HIV-affected communities, we've heard first-hand experiences of the harms of increased policing. The community we serve has historically been profiled and targeted by law enforcement, and we believe in a different approach to create safety, one that doesn't include increased policing.

During this time of crisis, AVP's core client base are even more vulnerable and are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and over-policing. The people we serve includes: low-income (including homeless) individuals; transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) communities; undocumented immigrants including those seeking asylum; people of color; individuals who are incarcerated or entangled in the criminal legal system; sex workers; and those at the intersections of these identities. At a time Black New Yorkers are twice as likely to die from COVID, and fatalities among Latinx New Yorkers are the second highest in the city, and both these communities are both disproportionately policed in relation to their non-Black, non-Latinx counterparts, it is unacceptable that we are using policing to address the worst health crisis the city has seen in more than a century.

The city's method to enforce social distancing by deploying more police officers, by issuing summonses and fines is not only detrimental to the safety of our community, but also criminalizes vulnerable communities rather than protect them. As a member organization of Communities United for Police Reform (CPR), we urge the committee to push to suspend all arrests and policing of low-level offences during the pandemic. This includes a moratorium on illegitimate and abusive targeting of black and brown folks, immigrants, LGBTQ folks and sex



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workers as well as others in informal economies. As one of the organizations leading the efforts to repeal the Walking While Trans loitering law, we've seen the disparities of NYPD's targeting of TGNC communities, especially the targeting of Black and Brown trans women.

Instead of relying on NYPD to be the enforcers of reducing the spread of coronavirus, which has also led to the increase of NYPD's budget, we recommend, instead, to allow and invest in community based organizations to lead efforts to keep our communities safe and healthy. Community organizers, community members and leaders, faith institutions and folks on the ground are the best equipped and positioned to outreach to and protect their own communities. AVP is also a leading member of the NYC Against Hate coalition, where we believe and work towards an investment in community-methods of safety that are not reliant on law enforcement, and are instead predicated on community education and intervention. We demand the reallocation of NYPD funds to community based organizations and to community-centered social services and public health.

We hope that the committee can use a framework that considers systemic violence in their decision to rely solely on increased policing. Safety in a time of pandemic shouldn't mean more officers and harm, but it should mean more investment in social services and public health.

Sincerely,

Reem Ramadan

The New York City Anti-Violence Project

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