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Students, Supporters, Council Member-Elects Tell Incoming Mayor & Council: “All We Want for the Holidays Is #PoliceFreeSchools!”

Holiday-themed press conference followed release of [data brief](#) outlining the racial disparities of school policing in NYC’s public schools from 2016-2021

*[*Click here for a livestream of the press conference*](#)*

NEW YORK—Today, nearly 100 students with the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC), their peers, parents, educators, advocates, and Council Members-elect Alexa Avilés and Crystal Hudson stood on the steps of Tweed to call out Mayor de Blasio and the City Council for their failure to deliver police-free schools, while calling on incoming elected officials to right this wrong.

The holiday-themed press conference and rally followed the release of UYC’s new data brief titled, “[The Systemic Racism of School Policing: An Analysis of New York City’s School Policing Data \(2016-2021\)](#).” The brief analyzes the NYPD’s school policing data throughout the years of the de Blasio administration and highlights how students of color are disproportionately impacted by policing in schools. It finds:

- On average, Black and Latinx youth represented **90.9%** of arrests, **89.7%** of juvenile reports, and **92.3%** of court summonses issued, despite being only **66.2%** of the student population.
- Black students were disproportionately impacted by school policing across the board. On average, Black students were only **25.7%** of the youth population, yet were subject to **54.5%** of all policing incidents.
- Child in crisis incidents made up nearly **1 in 5** cases in which a young person was handcuffed. Black and Latinx youth were on average **92.4%** of youth handcuffed across all categories.

“The safest schools have the most resources—not the most police. ” said **Council Member-Elect Alexa Avilés**. “I saw more drugs and illegal activity in this very wealthy school. The difference was there was no police. There was no getting caught in a criminal legal system that continues to trap you and make sure you have no opportunity for a real future. That was what was reserved for the Black and Brown children in our community. There is a better way. In the midst of the pandemic, New York City hired 250 more cops and increased metal detectors in our schools instead of giving us what we needed to keep us safe. It’s unconscionable. ... Our children, my children who are NYC public school students, deserve to be in a community that dignifies them, that invests in their promise. ... We want police-free schools. Invest in our young people, not in police. ”

“I’m here to uplift all of the Black girls who are disproportionately impacted by policing in our schools,” said **Council Member-Elect Crystal Hudson**. “For their hair, for their clothing, for their bodies, for the language that they use—we need to stop the disproportionate policing that, particularly students of color, LGBTQ students, face. . . . I’m here to . . . promise in the Council, we will work with you and center the students in the solutions we put forward.”

“As a Black gender non-conforming student, everytime I go through a metal detector at my school, I feel intimidated and threatened by the officers,” said **Nia Morris, a sophomore in Staten Island and youth leader with Make the Road NY**. “Schools are supposed to be welcoming, we should feel encouraged to follow our dreams. . . . Police in school don't make us feel safe.”

“There was a time when I went to school and the school cop said that they would only let me in if they checked my bag and guitar case for a gun, and I got scared, I felt nervous, and wanted to cry,” said **Josh Melendez, Bronx middle school student and youth leader with Sistas & Brothas United**. “Shame on the City Council and Mayor de Blasio for letting this happen to me and thousands of other youth across the city.”

Funding for school policing in NYC’s schools has increased by \$70 million throughout the de Blasio administration—from \$380 million in the 2016-2017 school year to \$450 million today. NYC spends more than any city in the country on its school police staff of 5,511—10 times more than Los Angeles, the 2nd most populous school district, which has a school police staff of 211. Mayor de Blasio, who has been a staunch supporter of school policing, announced late October that the city would be hiring a new class of 250 school police officers while increasing unannounced scannings at schools.

“That is a disgrace that the city continues to invest more and more in racist school policing,” said **Jolie Santiago, a Brooklyn sophomore and leader at Make the Road NY**. “Recently, one of my friends argued with another student and got dragged away from the situation by a school police officer with no social worker or guidance counselor around to help. . . . There is no evidence that school police safety agents make schools safe and if you ask me or many of my friends we'll tell you they do quite the opposite.”

“I’ll never forget in my freshman year, I went through the metal detector with boots that had a little bit of metal on the laces,” said **Cristian Flores, a senior in Brooklyn and a youth leader with Future of Tomorrow**. “The metal detector went off and the school police officers pulled me aside and started aggressively patting me down . . . searched my bag and unnecessarily dropped my belongings, making me feel like some sort of criminal. . . . I believe that many of us would feel more welcomed in our schools, and more driven to succeed if the city spent resources on making sure the faculty was more integrated into our support systems, rather than to fund our criminalization.”

“[In middle school] I had to commute to school at least 30 minutes to an hour earlier to make sure I arrived early enough to still end up waiting in a long-line to get through scanning,” said **Samantha Charles, a junior in Brooklyn and youth leader at New York Civil Liberties**

Union's Teen Activist Project. "Ultimately I still ended up missing valuable class time. I had this terrible experience, while a predominately white-school across the street didn't have any metal detectors."

About the Urban Youth Collaborative: The Urban Youth Collaborative is a student-led coalition of NYC youth organizing groups fighting to end the school-to-prison pipeline and transform the city's public schools into supportive learning environments. Member groups include Future of Tomorrow, Make the Road NY, and Sistas and Brothas United.

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