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NYC Students Take over Brooklyn Bridge Demanding NYC Divests from School Policing and Invests in Real School Safety in City Budget

In the wake of the school shooting in Uvalde, students and allies called out the Mayor and City Council for planning to fund 100s of new school police in the city budget instead of restorative justice, support staff, and mental health.

NEW YORK— Today, in the final weeks before the NYC budget is finalized, hundreds of students with the Urban Youth Collaborative and their allies marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to demand police-free schools. Students called on the Mayor and City Council to [pass a budget](#) that eliminates the proposed hundreds of new school police positions in the executive budget, fully divests from school policing, and fully invests in restorative justice, mental health support, school counselors, social workers, and other proven solutions to school safety.

The march took place in the wake of the school shooting in Uvalde, in which Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks responded by calling for more police in schools and new scanners, despite the fact that school police there failed to keep students safe. In fact, a study of 133 school shootings actually found a higher mortality rate in schools with school police. In NYC, school policing disproportionately harms students of color, with Black and Latinx students making up 90% of school police incidents despite them being 66% of the student population.

Keneisha Buckley, youth leader at the Urban Youth Collaborative, said, “I have been fighting for Police Free Schools since I was in 8th grade. I’m now a senior in high school. Last year, a close family member became a victim of gun violence. Never have I felt that if even more police were in my community he would still be here. Instead, I’ve feared more police being put in my community instead of the resources we need. Similarly, after the shooting in Texas, it was proven that police don’t prevent violence. Yet, now I have to fear more police being put in my school instead of the resources we need.”

Jolie Santiago, youth member at Make the Road New York, said, “As a student, I don’t feel safe with the police in our schools. It feels like we’re being targeted and criminalized by those who are supposed to be responsible for our safety. We are often targeted by the color of our skin by school police that are meant to be a safety measure but end up becoming nothing more than the cause of daily traumatic experiences. We demand Mayor Adams treat students with the respect we deserve by hiring more support staff and programs, and eliminating the more than four hundred million dollars on the school policing budget.”

Vivian, leader with the NYCLU Teen Activist Project said, “Going to school with the police does not make me feel safe. While our lawmakers continue to praise the efforts of policing,

increase their budget, increase their presence, our students are suffering and struggling with our mental health. NYC funds more school police positions than counselors, social workers or restorative justice coordinators—and the mayor’s executive budget continues this detrimental pattern. We demand more funding for mental health and restorative justice coordinators. We demand the removal of police from schools.”

NYC Comptroller Brad Lander, said, “14 million students across the country attend schools with a police presence but no counselors, social workers, or nurses. Black students are more likely to attend a school with more police on site than mental health staff, while studies indicate that police in schools negatively impact students’ mental health. Schools should be safe places of equitable learning and nurturing—and we must fund staffing that fosters the social and mental wellbeing of our children.”

“The establishment wants us to believe that the way to safety is more funding increases to the NYPD. We know that safety is hiring more counselors and social workers. We know that children don't need to be policed, they need conversations with trusted staff,” said **City Council Member Kristin Richardson Jordan**.

"In order to attain the educational, safety and health outcomes we all want, and to set the young people of New York City up for successful, fulfilling lives, there are so many things we should be investing in,” said **City Council Member Tiffany Caban**. “These include: mental and physical health resources available to every student in every school; abundant socio-emotional, artistic, physical, and sexual education; and a school environment and culture that is welcoming to students of all backgrounds, languages, sexual and gender identities, and more. School policing simply cannot achieve this. The more we invest in systems of violence, control, and enforced order, the more our schools become precursors to prison, with all of the trauma, fear, and racist double standards that entails. It is time to get police out of schools, so that our students have the freedom to grow, heal, and thrive.”

“After two years of a traumatizing pandemic, what our students need is a steep investment in their social and emotional well-being and healing. We need an unprecedented investment in counselors, social workers, restorative justice professionals, and smaller class sizes for more meaningful student-teacher interactions. I am impressed by and honored to stand with the students from the Urban Youth Collaborative and the Dignity in Schools Campaign in fighting for their demands,” said **City Council Member Sandy Nurse**.

City Council member Lincoln Restler said, “It’s simple — the NYPD should be removed from our schools. Instead of police, we should prioritize putting guidance counselors and social workers trained in anti-racist principles who will lead with compassion and care in our schools.”

The students demands include:

- Eliminating funding for the NYPD's School Policing Division
- Eliminating funding for new school police officers to replace current vacancies
- Eliminating funding for new or existing student scanning and surveillance equipment
- \$75 million in restorative justice coordinators
- \$45 million in restorative justice training
- \$75 million new counselors
- \$75 million in new social workers
- \$75 million in community member positions
- \$5 million baseline funding for a mental health continuum

With more than a **\$400 million** school policing budget geared towards **4,000** existing school police, NYC surpasses spending on school police than any other city in the country by far. To compare, Los Angeles hosts more than half of NYC's student population, yet has a school police presence that is **20x** less. In fact, NYC funds more school police than counselors, social workers, and restorative justice coordinators — this pattern is being perpetuated even further by the mayor's FY23 executive budget.

The march took place in the wake of the school shooting in Uvalde — in which Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks responded by calling for more police in schools and new scanners — despite the fact that school police there failed to keep students safe. In fact, after the Columbine shooting, Congress began providing federal funding for school police, spending **\$1 billion** on them to date. After each school mass shooting, the response to valid safety concerns is to add police, security guards, metal detectors, and surveillance cameras to school. However, a study has shown that 133 school shootings had higher mortality rates in schools with police present.

It is clear that school police are unable to prevent harm, nor do they increase the overall safety of a school. Instead, school policing harms students — disproportionately students of color as **Black and Latinx NYC students make up 90% of school police incidents despite being 66% of the student population.** In a survey conducted of students of color, the majority of them said they want police removed from schools — with 60% saying they have experience or know someone who has experienced at least 1 negative interaction with school police. For Black students, this percentage **was up to 78%.**

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The [Urban Youth Collaborative](#) is a student-led coalition of NYC youth organizing groups fighting to end the school-to-prison and deportation pipeline and transform the city's public schools into nurturing, inclusive, and supportive learning environments