

# MEMORANDUM

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Council President Pro Tempore Sheng Thao  
DISTRICT 4

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**Date:** September 7, 2021  
**To:** The Oakland City Council and Members of the Public  
**From:** Council President Pro Tempore Sheng Thao  
**Re:** Thao Hiring Plan For Public Safety

Members of the City Council and of the Public,

Oakland is caught amid multiple crises. In addition to the historic abuse, neglect, and disenfranchisement of communities of color, the painful history of racism and unequal outcomes of justice in the United States, and an unprecedented global pandemic, Oakland is experiencing a crisis of gun violence not seen in years.

I have heard from Oaklanders throughout the City of their fear, trauma, anger, heartache, and frustration.

The violent moment effecting Oakland is not simply the cause of unforeseen circumstances, though those do play a part. Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed underlying faults in the City's routine, with disastrous consequences.

For example, for years our police academies have had a graduation rate of roughly 40%. The Police Department has told the Mayor, the Council, and the public that officer retention has been a large force driving the chronic officer vacancies as well. The Council has heard on numerous occasions that frequently police cadets receive training in Oakland and within several years leave the Oakland Police Department for similar departments of other public agencies.

This is why in June, when the Council passed the biennial budget for fiscal years 2021-23, I said that I would be supportive of adding an additional police academy only if changes were made to the way Oakland conducts its police academies. Following the passage of that budget, I spoke with Chief Armstrong and brought a fifth police academy to the Council, which passed.

The ongoing violence in Oakland and assurances from Chief Armstrong that he has improved the academy system are why I am bringing an additional academy to the Council at this time.

At the same time, Oakland must deploy new, innovative approaches to effect real change. At this time, we do not have sufficient data to assess whether Chief Armstrong's changes to our police academy structure will yield the officers required to fill OPD's budgeted vacancies. That is why I am also proposing that the City Council direct the City Administrator to hire an independent recruiting firm to conduct a nationwide search for trained officers with no history of misconduct. To assist in the search, I am proposing to further direct the City Administrator to incentive new officers from other public agencies with a \$50,000 signing bonus, and a \$20,000 signing bonus for Oaklanders who become police cadets. There are many talented, gifted people right here in our city who are able to serve it. We should cultivate our homegrown talent and reward it.

To address the chronic condition of retention in the Oakland Police Department, my Hiring Plan will also direct the City Administrator to work with the recruiting firm require that any officer that receives the hiring bonus and leaves the Police Department before eighteen months of service repay the financial incentive in full, and officers that leave before five years of service repay a prorated amount based on their tenure with the Department.

And because the makeup of a law enforcement entity is critical to the success of that entity, my proposal also directs the City Administrator to emphasize to the independent recruiting firm the urgency and priority of bringing diverse police officers to the City of Oakland, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, and women.

Again, public safety is my top priority as an elected official. My Officer Hiring Plan will result in fewer OPD vacancies which will result in faster 911 response times and fewer unsolved violent crimes. I remain committed to effective, innovative solutions for the good of Oakland.

In Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheng Hu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sheng" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Hu".