

CITY OF OAKLAND



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Date: July 21, 2020
To: Members of City Council and Members of the Public
From: Council Member Nikki Fortunato Bas
Council President Rebecca Kaplan
Subject: **BUDGET Amendment MEMO - Investing in Vital Community Needs**

Dear Colleagues on the City Council and Members of the Public,

We have heard from many people about the importance of ensuring that funding is dedicated to vital community needs, including those to address racial disparities, violence prevention, and public health. Oakland police officers themselves say “we can’t arrest ourselves out of the problems.” To address the root causes of violent and serious crimes, our residents need mental and physical health services; youth programs; safe, affordable and stable housing; remedying homelessness and protecting public health and access to safe quality jobs.

To address public calls for service that do not require a police officer to respond, including non-violent and non-crime 911 calls, our residents need trained, trauma-informed crisis responders who are trusted by the community, as well as a community support helpline that is not part of the police department. Over a year ago, we proposed and passed funding for an initial study, to develop a civilian response model for mental health needs. This program, now titled MACRO, is now being funded for launch this year – which is possible in part because of strong community advocacy and because the funding for the initial steps was provided by Council action in the previous budget vote in 2019. This budget proposal builds on this and takes further steps, both in terms of additional changes in the current fiscal year, and in terms of providing the funding to study and pilot improved resources for community needs, and set us up for further success ahead.

As a City, we must answer the calls from an overwhelming number of community members to divert police spending to community needs. This includes an immediate commitment in this FY 2020 - 2021 budget to re-allocate \$25 million in the OPD budget, and to make a commitment to develop a plan for a 50% reduction in the OPD budget for the next two-year budget cycle, and to include community stakeholders in that process. In order to make this future commitment real and realizable, we propose to take certain initial steps now, in this budget, in order to make sure we will have the plans and resources to accomplish this goal. This also means talking about not only what we don’t want – but also about what we do want – including funding that takes into account issues raised in the Black New Deal and elsewhere to ensure we are funding needed health supports and economic protections for our hardest hit communities, including responding to needs around homelessness, sanitation, protecting local small businesses, and more. In addition, this budget restores positions and services that reduce blight and fire risk.

This includes taking action now to provide for trained mental health responders for mental health needs, instead of relying on police to respond to mental health needs. It includes revising the methods for handling of Special Events, saving money for community organizations and making event planning more coherent. Serving the needs of the community also means we need to cut police arrests for bicycle and pedestrian violations, and heavy-handed policing of demonstrations, and to support civilian helpline support for those in need. It includes laying the ground work for further planned changes, including options for revising traffic enforcement methods, and engaging with stakeholders and with our State and County leaders, to help make these changes happen. And setting up our processes and input for taking next steps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Kaplan".

Rebecca Kaplan
Oakland City Council President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nikki Fortunato Bas".

Nikki Fortunato Bas
Oakland City Council Member, District 2