

Budget Public Hearing Comments  
May 24, 2021

**Comment 1:**  
**Durham People's Alliance (PA)**

Dear Durham County Commissioners:

On behalf of the Durham People's Alliance (PA), we are writing to express our thanks to you and the county staff for preparing the recommended FY 2021-22 budget. The proposed \$730 million budget is an important statement of our priorities as a community and should help support a healthy and just recovery from COVID-19.

As you know, the members of PA work towards a vision of a just, equitable, and inclusive community where all people thrive in several interconnected areas — economic justice, education, housing, environmental justice, and race equity. In support of this vision, we submitted a letter to the county commissioners on February 9, 2021 (later updated on April 29), with a number of important budget requests. The recommended FY 2021-22 budget presented on May 10 meets several, but not all, of those requests. Below (and attached), we outline where the proposed budget reflects our values and where it falls short. We hope you find this analysis useful as you and staff prepare for the planned public hearing on the budget on Monday and as you debate where to prioritize your federal COVID resources.

Where the Proposed FY 2021-22 Budget Meets Our Expectations

1. Plan for enhanced revenue for FY 2021-22. As our community begins the process of recovering from the public health emergency and economic slump caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we wholeheartedly support the proposed 1 cent General Fund property tax rate increase that will enable important investments in the health and prosperity of our community.

Where the Proposed FY 2021-22 Budget Only Somewhat Meets Our Expectations

1. Underinvestment in K-12 education. The recommended budget for FY 2021-22 increases funding for Durham Public Schools (DPS) by \$10 million. However, this amount is well below the \$18 million requested by DPS and underfunds teacher supplements, additional custodians, a request for \$2 million for nurses and social workers to address urgent health and student support needs, and other priorities.
2. Limited tax assistance for low-income homeowners. We recommended an investment of \$2.1 million for a long-overdue property tax assistance program for long-time, low-income homeowners to help them stay in their homes. While we are pleased to see the creation of this important tax relief measure in partnership with the City, the very low-income level for eligibility and the \$750 cap on assistance limits its effectiveness. In light of the proposed 1 cent tax increase countywide and 2 cents for City residents, which together will

- place an additional burden on low-income homeowners, we recommend that the County expand eligibility to more long-time, low-income homeowners and raise the cap to \$1,000.
3. Creation of new positions to advance race equity, but omission of commitment to creating a racial equity fund. We recommended that the County prioritize the creation of a racial equity fund with the City of Durham that is both sustainable and large enough to touch all aspects of Durham life, including education, housing, business ownership, health, environment, and criminal legal. The suggested budget includes new positions to advance race equity and additional funds for departmental race equity training but includes no commitment to a racial equity fund.
  4. Underinvestment in Durham Tech. Durham Tech has an essential role to play in addressing Durham's jobs crisis and preparing residents for living wage work following the COVID-recession. We recommended an increase of \$1.85 million in funding for Durham Tech to support a number of new initiatives, such as a critical Back-to-Work effort, stipends and success coaches to support opportunity youth/students of color in life sciences, and additional success coaching and financial aid to ensure that all students stay enrolled and succeed. The recommended budget only provided \$500,000 toward these important new initiatives.

#### Where the Proposed FY 2021-22 Budget Falls Short

1. No new investment in Green Jobs. Our recommendations included deepening the county's commitment to the Bionomic Educational Training Center (BETC) program and the Community Conservation Assistance Program. These programs are proven and provide green jobs and training to our youth, stipends to our teachers, and stormwater management assistance to low-income households. Instead, the recommended budget adds two FTEs for more traditional economic development activities, such as recruitment and workforce training. This is a missed opportunity at a moment when the need to address climate change creates an opening for investments in the Green economy that will further diversify our economy, expand job opportunities, and make our community healthier and more resilient. Additional investment in renewable energy is also necessary for this transition.
2. No commitment to diverting dollars from law enforcement to different models of public safety. PA has recommended reducing budget line items for armed law enforcement, weaponry, and new law enforcement vehicles, and diverting those dollars toward different models that embrace a holistic concept of what it means for us all to be safe and well. Instead, the recommended budget for FY 2021-22 includes 3 new FTEs in the Durham County Sheriff's Office and almost \$2 million to fund replacement vehicles.

We urge the county to address these gaps and shortfalls in the recommended budget and to fund fully all of the items above. Doing so will address many long-standing needs in our community, respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and move Durham closer to our vision of a just, equitable, and inclusive community where all people thrive.

**Comment 2: Mary Mills**

Please vote to fully fund the DPS School Board's budget request of \$18.2 million. To ensure that our students receive the quality healthcare we deserve, we need more social workers and nurses in DPS. After the pandemic last year, Student services will be overwhelmed helping students improve and protect their mental health. Please take this opportunity to make this a reality.

**Comment 3: Belynda Thorne**

Please, vote to fully fund the DPS School Board's budget request of \$18.2 million. We need more social workers and nurses in DPS because many of the students and staff are in need of mental health experts who have degrees in this field of work. I'm disappointed that the current budget proposal does not fully fund the \$18.2 million requested by Durham Public Schools. In addition, instead of spending \$1.83 million on replacement vehicles for the Sheriff's department, use those dollars to add nurses and social workers to support our students.

**Comment 4: Caroline Warren**

I am a math teacher at Northern High School. I am writing to ask you approve the full \$18.2 million for a nurse and social worker in every school. Since we have been on Zoom, I have had many kids share with me things that are going on at home, or things that are troubling them. I do my best to address these things, but they are best addressed by professionals. If we had more nurses and social workers for the kids to talk to, I would be able to teach Math 1 a lot more effectively, and the kids would learn a lot more effectively as well.

**Comment 5: Corbin Cansler**

Please vote to fully fund the DPS School Board's budget request of \$18.2 million. We need more social workers and nurses in DPS because of the demand for social/emotional/ physical health upon our return to in-person instruction. We are already behind on serving these needs for our students at this point in time, and those needs will only increase when every student returns to in-person instruction.

**Comment 6: Lauren Casteen**

I am a National-Board-Certified teacher in Durham Public Schools and resident of Durham County. I am writing to ask you to fully fund the \$18.2-million-collar budget requested for the next fiscal year. In just the past week, I have had to coordinate with our school social worker about a student who is homeless and a student in a mental-health crisis requiring hospitalization. As a high school, we are lucky to have a full-time social worker; many of the elementary and middle schools in our district are forced to share social workers the way we are forced to share our nurse with many other schools. When students get injured or ill on our campus, it falls to the front office staff, coaches, or public safety teachers to patch them up - which is not part of those staff members' jobs or qualifications. We can make do with our decrepit buildings and lack of resources, but our children's physical and mental health is at real risk every day. The need will only increase as we return to full-capacity teaching and learning in the fall. Please vote to fully fund this budget to help our students get the support they need to live and learn safely.

**Comment 7: Maggie Radack**

I'm a science teacher at Northern High School, writing to ask you to please vote to fully fund the DPS School Board's budget request of \$18.2 million. We need more social workers and nurses in

DPS because a lot of our students are uninsured and cannot access mental or physical health resources outside of our schools. Instead of spending \$1.83 million on replacement vehicles for the Sheriff's department, use those dollars (as well as additional dollars that were going to go into the fund balance) to fully fund the budget request and to add nurses and social workers to support our students.

**Comment 8: Ashley Smith**

Please vote to fully fund the DPS School Board's budget request of \$18.2 million. We need more social workers and nurses in DPS because our students have experienced an unprecedented year of education in the middle of a pandemic, where they were thrown into virtual learning without proper support, and lost essential relationships with their teachers, friends, and staff of their schools. Upon returning to the schools buildings in mass for in-person learning in the Fall of 2021, teachers and staff acknowledge the tremendous need for more social workers and nurses to support our students and their families thrive and not just survive.

**Comment 9: Stephan Gans**

Sheriffs and jails are not evidence-based practices for mental health, and yet we still keep using them that way. It's time to stop

**Comment 10: Tess Leuthner**

Thanks to the County Commissioners for your unanimous commitment to the success of the new Community Safety & Wellness Task Force. We hear your expressed willingness to move away from policing and jails and invest in human needs. We hear your expressed eagerness to strengthen Mental Health and develop compassionate, effective, preventative solutions to harm and violence. This is long-term work, and there are immediate steps that can be taken to reallocate resources to where they are urgently needed.

Now is an excellent time to divest from the Sheriff's department. Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

**Comment 11: Antonia Randolph**

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

**Comment 12: Manisha Dubey**

Please vote to divest from the police, who do not contribute to building community safety but rather over-police neighborhoods in need of additional resources. Please instead invest this money into preventing the root causes of many police encounters- unsupported mental health needs.

**Comment 13: Anita Silver**

Please use 10% of funds towards mental health instead of policing. Personally, as a white woman I have the privilege to have few interactions ever with law enforcement, and when I do, they are positive. I also have the privilege to afford counseling if/when needed for my mental health. Many people in Durham have neither of these privileges, and this proposal would help address that. Adequate mental health care is a basic need, and a lifesaver. Please vote to fund its provision to more citizens instead of more policing.

**Comment 14: Lewis Wallace**

I am a Durham County resident and live in a quiet area next to farmland. Just a couple of miles from me, I see sheriff's deputies all the time, policing the public housing development near me and harassing people routinely for "crimes" of poverty, even during a pandemic. And recently, I have witnessed several cases in which a neighbor called animal control, only to have someone show up in a sheriff's vehicle fully armed. In one instance, there were five armed officers in my neighbor's yard for one small potbellied pig...a threatening scene for the literal pig, myself, and my neighbors, and clearly not a good use of public funds!

As a county taxpayer, I would much rather see my dollars spent on mental health services and much-needed care than an abundance of armed officers who are not reducing violence or addressing the root causes of harm, and who are threatening and intimidating residents. The idea of using policing to reduce harm has been tried and isn't working.

I heard some of the commissioners at the Town Hall say they are unsure of how the money would be directed effectively. I deeply appreciate the intentional thought behind all of your work. And, that unsureness feels to me like an opportunity: perhaps some of the 10 percent needs to be spent on studying how best to use these dollars to ramp up mental health services where they are most needed? After decades of police and jails failing to make our communities safer, 10 percent shouldn't be too much to ask to test out solutions that we actually \*know\* are effective for people.

**Comment 15: Jacob Bolin**

I strongly support these investments to support a more safe and accountable county for all Durham residents.

**Comment 16: Anna Dombrovski**

By listening to residents and activists who worked hard and collaboratively to articulate their needs -- needs for public health services and not policing -- the board can make a transformative step, bettering lives and ultimately giving the message that you are here for us.

**Comment 17: Renee Ridolfi**

As a mental health professional, I have seen the impact on our community when we replace mental health supports with policing. We have divested from mental health support and education -- and invested in the militarization of our police force -- since the 1950s, and it's time to put that money back where community members need and want it. We elect you to advocate for us -- not other county officials. Therefore, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

**Comment 18: Carol Prince**

Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All are calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

We know, based on hundreds of conversations we've had with community residents through phone-banking and the years of organizing we've been doing in Durham, that robust mental healthcare is a top priority for our communities.

**Comment 19: Sarah Mye**

Durham is one of the most progressive counties in the country - let's continue to set an example of what divesting from violence and investing in the community can do!

**Comment 20: Maxine Eloi**

The community needs care, kindness and wellness

**Comment 21: Quinn Osment**

For my own safety and the safety of my community, please listen to your constituents who are imploring you to reduce the sheriff's budget by AT LEAST 10 percent and invest in meaningful forms of safety for Durham. It's time to open our eyes to the violent reality of policing and create something new the truly keeps us safe.

**Comment 22: Jacob Stanley**

I join this call to redirect at least 10% of county funding for police and the jail to our community's urgent mental health needs. It's time to prioritize care over punishment and changing the priorities in the moral document of our county budget is a material step you can take right away.

**Comment 23: Malinda Lowery**

Hello! Thank you for your service to Durham County. I join Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All in calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

I live in Durham and the devastation of COVID -19 makes mental health a top priority for me.

I am grateful for your unanimous commitment to the success of the new Community Safety & Wellness Task Force. Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All are calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health. We know, based on hundreds of conversations we've had with community residents through phonebanking and the years of organizing we've been doing in Durham, that robust mental healthcare is a top priority for our communities.

Thanks to the County Commissioners for your unanimous commitment to the success of the new Community Safety & Wellness Task Force. We hear your expressed willingness to move away from policing and jails and invest in human needs. We hear your expressed eagerness to strengthen Mental Health and develop compassionate, effective, preventative solutions to harm and violence.

This is long-term work, and there are immediate steps that can be taken to reallocate resources to where they are urgently needed.

Now is an excellent time to divest from the Sheriff's department. In describing the jail, the sheriff's office states that it houses "approximately 400 detainees" but the department's graph shows that the average daily population was only 308 in FY21 and only 356 in FY20. The sheriff's office does not discuss if any cost savings have resulted. In fact, the budget includes an unspecified amount of additional overtime funding for the detention center.

Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need. I hear your expressed willingness to move away from policing and jails and invest in human needs. I hear your expressed eagerness to strengthen Mental Health and develop compassionate, effective, preventative solutions to harm and violence. This is long-term work, and there are immediate steps that can be taken to reallocate resources to where they are urgently needed.

Now is an excellent time to divest from the Sheriff's department. In describing the jail, the sheriff's office states that it houses "approximately 400 detainees" but the department's graph shows that the average daily population was only 308 in FY21 and only 356 in FY20. The sheriff's office does not discuss if any cost savings have resulted. In fact, the budget includes an unspecified amount of additional overtime funding for the detention center. As a taxpayer, I'd like to know that unspent funds go to support other vulnerable citizens.

Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

Thank you for helping out community recover from COVID-19.

**Comment 24: Laura Ucik**

I am a physician, and the health of my patients depends on this kind of social transformation.

**Comment 25: Victoria Morton**

The Board of County Commissioners needs to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health. Mental healthcare is a top priority for people of Durham. To that end, a great next step would be to divest from the Sheriff's department and to use those funds to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for

Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment. In the upcoming budget work sessions, it is essential that you advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, Durham residents are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need. Thank you for your time and support.

**Comment 26: Linda Seligman**

Our schools have been financially starved for years to shift from fully supporting public schools to private schools. I maintain the belief that the mission of public schools is to provide an equitable education for ALL students. To accomplish this, we must fund our schools properly. Please support our community by allocating appropriate funding to achieve these objectives. Thank you so very much for your support of our public schools.

**Comment 27: Brandy Stewart**

I would like the DPS budget request to be fully funded so that our schools can operate well and better serve the students. Money for teacher supplements, additional custodians and nurses and social workers is necessary and should not be looked at as optional. Please find a way to get DPS the 18 million it requested.

**Comment 28: Hiba Fatima**

Increasing access to mental health care will have many positive downstream effects and ultimately save the city money. Please consider divesting 10% from the police budget.

**Comment 29: Lein Soltan**

Now is the time to invest in mental health!!

**Comment 30: Alexa Goff**

We fund our priorities. Time and time again, teachers spend their own money to purchase the supplies students need to be most successful. Teachers do this because their students are their priority. The County Commission should fully fund the \$18.2 million requested by Durham Public Schools to demonstrate that strong public schools are a priority in this progressive county.

The full \$18.2 million will add 20 school nurses and social workers who can provide critical health supports for our students. It will allow for more support of our English language learners and EC students. Full funding will also allow for all students to have continued use of working laptops. Students worked hard to come through to the end of this complicated, isolating, and challenging school year. The Durham County Commission now has the opportunity to help make next school year easier, more connected, and more meaningful. But it must fully fund the DPS budget request in order to make that opportunity a reality.

**Comment 31: Nadeen Bir**

My name is Nadeen Bir and I have 2 children at George Watts elementary. I am writing to ask you to fully fund the DPS budget request. The funding would provide school nurses, social workers, and better opportunities for ESOL students. Teachers in consultation with parents and students



know what is best for our kids! You must fully fund our schools for our kids today and for the future of Durham.

Thank you for listening and taking action for our kids!

**Comment 32: Susan Arshack**

The pressure our community typically lives with has increased exponentially due to the pandemic and the impact of the lockdown on already stressed families. Investment in mental health access for Durham residents is needed now more than ever. I deliver food to people who do not have enough. One of the recipients worked as a cook for the company contracted to provide food services at Duke. He was let go with no benefits or protection last March. He is in his late 50's and has a bad leg. He has not been able to find work and has spent most of his 401K on the necessary expenses of everyday living. His wife cannot work due to illness. His house needs major repairs that he cannot afford and that the authorities are pressuring him to undertake. Last week he had yet another yet panic attack. He is at wits end and told me his story in tears. He needs to be embraced and supported by the community and increasing the funding available for mental health services will be of tremendous benefit to him and the thousands like him. Reallocating 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and investing these funds to strengthen Mental Health will help meet an urgent need and provide comfort to those who are hurting. I urge you to adopt a budget that helps meet the needs of our community.

**Comment 33: Keisha Parillo**

We need this if we want racial justice and a safe world for those outside the dominant culture.

**Comment 34: Megan Kratz**

The past year has been incredibly difficult for so many people. Now is the time to invest in care that will help our people heal, instead of policing which only causes further trauma and harm. We are calling on you to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget, \$3.8 million, and reinvest it in already existing, chronically underfunded, mental health programs in our community. The services offered by Lincoln Community Health Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, the Recovery Response Center, and Behavior Health Urgent Care would all benefit from increased investment. We want our tax dollars funding care, not the sheriff's department, and when we see our sheriff's department brag on social media about buying a fancy, unnecessary, new stealth car to better hunt us with, we know that there is money to move.

**Comment 35: Susan Nobblitt**

Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All are calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This investment in mental health is especially important to me as a woman with chronic and persistent mental health illness in my family. Access to the necessary care is expensive and of reach for so many people. Untreated mental health illness also leads to more contact with law enforcement which can be demeaning and derogatory at best and deadly at its worst. We have a tremendous number of resources in Durham that need more investment to better meet the needs of our community: Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center. In June 14th at the upcoming budget work session, can I count on you to make the necessary switch in our funding

priorities to keep everyone in Durham safe? 10% of funding from the Sheriff's Department to increase 10% for mental health resources in Durham offered outside the Sheriffs Office.

**Comment 36: Fiona Morgan**

I am a parent of a former E K Powe Elementary School student who may soon be a Riverside High School student. I have seen first-hand how acute the needs are for social workers, nurses, support staff, and all manner of human and physical resources in our public schools. I have seen the difference it makes in a child's life to have someone to talk to about the adverse experiences they're going through, to have a nurse care for them and help their parents navigate health resources.

I have also seen how hard-working the bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and other staff are and what a critical part they play in caring for children, especially those who are disabled or English language learners. These employees need a living wage and deserve to be treated with dignity, not just for their own sake but because the children require it.

That is why I am asking you to support the full \$18.2 million requested by Durham Public Schools. DPS needs these funds to add 20 school nurses and social workers this year as we move towards a nurse and social worker in each school. These were critically needed health supports for students even before the pandemic. This is also an equity issue as some students are uninsured and/or don't have access to mental health support outside of school. I am also asking that you supplement that amount with funds from the "rainy day fund" — after a pandemic year of online school and economic hardships, the rainy day is here! It will take extra support to get our students back on track.

I have come before you in the past as a DPS parent and asked you to support nurses and social workers, and a raise for classified employees, and I was deeply disappointed in the response. The county's lack of support for DPS is one of many factors that drove our family out of DPS, for now at least. We are waiting to see if our leaders will do the right thing and provide our schools and teachers with the funding and support our child and \*every child\* deserve.

**Comment 37: Erica Briola**

Durham is growing and changing, every single day, yet we are allowing the schools to quite literally crumble to the ground. This year alone, three chillers have gone out within the district. Children have been kept out of school because of failing infrastructure.

The way the commissioners have failed to fund the basic needs of the schools is unacceptable and ultimately will cost Durham more. We are a progressive city, and with that, we should be doing everything in our power to provide the best education possible. To help our children rise to the top and reflect the progressive and inclusive values they learned, here in Durham. Our schools are lagging as the rest of Durham thrives. Enough is enough. No more shall Durham be "cool, but the schools are awful." They are not awful, they are filled with heart and love, but they are underfunded. Yes, they take up the largest percent of the budget, and they should. Now is the time to really show what we value as a community and that can be done by fully funding our schools.

**Comment 38: Fern Hickey**

I join Durham Beyond Policing, Durham for All and many other impacted community members in calling on you to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's budget and invest those funds in increased mental health services. I am so grateful to the Board for your commitment to the success of the new Community and Wellness Safety Task Force. The launch of that task force was an important step in moving Durham towards a reality where we invest more fully in mental health and meeting basic human needs rather than policing and prisons, but there is much more work to be done.

I am an adoptive parent to an amazing young person who's life was impacted very early on by the current reality of over-policing and insufficient public investment in mental health services and support. My child was separated from a mom who loved him dearly, but who did not receive the mental health or housing support that she needed to provide him a safe and stable home. I cannot imagine life without my son. But I want to imagine and to fight for a future where kids do not have to experience the trauma of being separated from parents who love them due to systems that are designed to lock their parents up rather than provide the affordable housing options, mental health supports, and substance use services that would cultivate safety and wellbeing within their families and our community.

Another family member of mine in Durham is a therapist and I further witness the disfunction and inadequacy of our current investments and systems every time a mental health crisis is happening with a client and she has to call the police rather than calling a response team that is actually equipped to deal with crisis at hand. She is mandated to do this within the current system, but she is very clear that it is not the response that is needed and not a response that builds or ensures safety. Mental health crises call for mental health professionals that can respond to and address the mental health needs of our community, NOT armed police officers who are largely untrained in mental health or trauma response.

Our current way of dealing with mental health, substance use, and violence in our community is not working. I believe that Durham has the community resources and leadership necessary to invest in real safety and I am counting on you - and on all of us - to advocate for that investment. Divesting 10% from the Sheriff's department and re-directing those funds to strengthen mental health service in our city will not make that vision a reality but it is a concrete and doable step in the right direction. Your support of the Community Safety and Wellness Taskforce helped to initiate and signal an urgently needed shift in how we approach safety. Please continue that fight by taking this next important step toward safety and well-being in Durham.

**Comment 39: Kevin Lloyd**

We need our Durham County Commissioners to approve \$18 million to pay for much-needed personnel and salary increases. We work hard every day in challenging conditions, and we deserve the dignity of putting food on the table and a roof over our heads. Cost of living in Durham has skyrocketed over the last 10 years and there has not been a corresponding raise in pay for many of us. Additionally, our kids need new laptops. The chromebooks they have now are so old and underpowered and are falling apart.

**Comment 40: Lorisa Seibel**

Thank you very much for funding Property Tax Grants for very low-income homeowners. Thank you for funding Emergency Rental Assistance to prevent Evictions. And thank you for building Affordable Housing downtown. I hope you will continue to fund these essential housing programs.

Please fund more Access Transit for people with disabilities, seniors, and other low income residents of Durham. Access is not able to meet the needs of people who need transit to dialysis and other essential medical services. People are waiting to be scheduled for rides to dialysis. Others have been too late for appointments. We need more vans, people, and facilities to meet the needs of people in Durham.

**Comment 41: Carl Newman**

Instead of spending \$1.83 million on replacement vehicles for the Sheriff's department, use those dollars to add nurses and social workers to support our students. The Sheriff could have already bought some of those cars, but apparently opted for so-called "ghost cars," instead. There is not a shortage of deputies on the road. There is a shortage of nurses and social workers in our schools.

**Comment 42: Honoria Middough**

With the cost of living increases, increase in multilingual families throughout DPS, the expectation of maintaining safety & cleanliness post- pandemic, layered responsibilities of general Ed, EC and ELL educators (of which I am the latter), it is pitifully obvious every single day how underfunded and under resourced we are and have been at least for the past 2 years.

It feels like a slap in the face each time I think about how dedicated myself and colleagues have been, providing excellent instruction and connecting with families in person and virtually- only to know that we struggle with resources needed and personnel needed to do our jobs more effectively and also knowing many of us turn around and struggle personally because we are not compensated in a way that competes with the rising costs of society and commensurate with the tasks and service we give each and every day (even on Wellness Wednesdays) for our community.

It's great to verbally thank us, but it's even greater to show us! If we don't do something because it's the right thing and it's overdue to be done, DPS will continue losing those "valuable" educators, and staff members because we are tired of fighting to get the basic courtesies of the profession... at least I've been here 9 years, and I am!

**Comment 43: Katherine Metcalf**

I'm a teacher at Northern HS. Please vote to fully fund the DPS School Board's budget request of \$18.2 million because some students are uninsured and/or don't have access to mental health support outside of school. While teaching during a pandemic, I understand now more than ever the importance of having nurses who can assist students with medical needs and social workers to help students with their mental health needs. The district needs both nurses and social workers so all students can learn and thrive in and outside of school.

**Comment 44: Vanessa Barnett-Loro**

I am writing to express support for a full funding of the budget appropriations for Durham Public Schools for 2021-2022 as recently approved by the Board of Education. As a graduate of DPS and a public school teacher myself, I personally appreciate the immense importance of paying

classified staff a living wage (\$15/hour), of investing in the physical, social, and emotional health of students (nurses & social workers), and of updating and improving the buildings that serve as working and learning environments for teachers and students (capital investments). These areas deserve our community's enthusiastic support via the budget.

Please fully fund the DPS budget. Thank you for your support of our DPS students, families, and staff!

**Comment 45: Joseph Walker**

I sure hope I don't hear a lot of words or complaints from commissioners about the \$18.2 million requested by Durham Public Schools. That amount won't even come close to fully funding our schools because, as we all know, Phil Berger and Tim Moore are leading a sustained attack on public education in North Carolina. But Berger and Moore don't control the Durham County budget -- you do -- and that means we need you to step up and do everything you can here at the local level to get our kids and educators and schools the resources they need to thrive.

**Comment 46: Brian Vannah**

I'm writing you to express my support for the propositions of the 10 to Transform campaign, with an emphasis on a reallocation of 10% of the County budget for policing and jail toward the budget for mental healthcare access for all. Taking money away from the sheriff and jail budget to fund more effective and just mental health services would benefit everyone in Durham. As I'm sure you read in other emails, now is an excellent time to divest from the Sheriff's department. In describing the jail, the sheriff's office states that it houses "approximately 400 detainees" but the department's graph shows that the average daily population was only 308 in FY21 and only 356 in FY20. The sheriff's office does not discuss if any cost savings have resulted. In fact, the budget includes an unspecified amount of additional overtime funding for the detention center.

Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

**Comment 47: Kym Register**

Hey y'all - I think I would count this message as at least 50 other messages... I know so many people that are invested in this work of reallocating funds to an unarmed response team and have been for years that just won't make this deadline. Please - listen to our community. Let's not add anybody else to the death toll. Let's heal our city / county by investing in mental health care - ESPECIALLY NOW. We are deeply in need of healing. We are deeply in need of healthcare. If not now - When? Those needs are imminent. Thank you for your time - and please understand the power behind this movement. These comments are important but cannot do justice to the massive amount of community support behind reallocation. If not now - when???

**Comment 48: Sofia Trovato**

As a social worker, I've seen the adverse affects of police presence in our communities especially for people of color. There is trauma which needs to be unpacked, and behavioral health services could provide space for that. If 10% of the Durham County Sherrif's department budget was allocated to mental health services, it would be a good start. It would show that there is a real

interest and investment in the healing of the community. Healing is crucial in reducing violence and harm, and we want to keep each other safe.

**Comment 49: Sandee Washington**

We need emergency mental health workers, we need living wage jobs, we need good childcare, we need ways to wash clothes and buy wholesome food when people don't have a car, we need the book mobile coming through our poor neighborhoods. We need evictions to stop. We need LESS police and more support for families to live healthy, trauma free lives.

**Comment 50: Veronica Correa**

As a North Carolinian I believe it's important to have safe, healthy city communities. Spending more money on jails and law enforcement will not reduce crime - however, other robust investments in our community can. That's why I'm asking the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to mental health initiatives. This may include (but is not limited to) funding Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center. By taking this action you will not only be listening to the calls of your community but help increase access to mental health care.

**Comment 51: Indigo Dutton**

I'm writing to voice my support for cutting the Durham County Sheriff's department budget by 10% and reallocating those funds to strengthen mental health services in our community. It's vital that we have more harm prevention rather than just investing in punishment after harm has already been done. So much of harm prevention is about supporting people in their mental health needs. This can be particularly effective as offered through Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center. I believe Durham will benefit far more from spending the money there than by paying more overtime to policing.

**Comment 52: Kasey Sorrell**

Thank you for participating in the Town Hall this past Thursday, it was wonderful to hear everyone's perspective. I absolutely understand the desire to want to know exactly how 10% of reduced funding would impact the Sheriff's Dept, especially before making the decision to vote in favor of the divestment. However, I do believe also this is a time where we can no longer postpone divesting in policing. It is also a time where mental health support is critical, we are in a global pandemic and considering mental health was underfunded to begin with- I'd imagine accessibility has grown even smaller. Several mental health centers like Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment. In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need. Please take action in considering the immediate needs of the people of Durham.

**Comment 53: Tia Byers**

Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment. In a time of endless precarity and trauma from the past year, it is vital to boost mental health efforts in the city of Durham. Increasing or sustaining the police budget during a mental health crisis gives a message to the city that the value of the city is in property not people. The people of Durham are counting on you to shift 10% from the Durham County Sheriff Department to strengthen mental health services

**Comment 54: Nathan Plummer**

We need more public safety solutions that offer preventative measures rather than reactive ones. By investing in public safety solutions that focus on mental health, the county can signal to its residents that it actually does put residents first as well as show that it's willing to invest in public safety alternatives that prevent the expansion of the carceral state that disproportionately affects Black communities. I'm echoing requests from Durham Beyond Policing and Durham for All - please divest 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's budget and reallocate those funds to mental health initiatives that can have lasting, positive change in our community.

**Comment 55: Kate Newman**

I am a supporter of Durham Beyond Policing and Durham for All and am writing to express my support for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health services. As a resident of the Southside neighborhood in Durham for the past 10 years, I have seen first-hand the dire need for mental health services in Durham that are accessible and available for ALL residents. It's been wonderful to see the County Commissioners listen to the voices of citizens and commit to examining how to keep Durham safe and healthy. The creation of the Community Safety & Wellness Task Force was a great first step and now it is time to continue this work. I am counting on you to adopt a budget that includes the divestment from the Sheriff's Department on June 14th. Thank you!

**Comment 56: Lydia Zakel**

Police don't protect us. Healthcare for all, well-funded education, and funded infrastructure that's available to ALL residents is what protects and keeps us safe.

**Comment 57: Ivenita Hooper**

This correspondence comes to express the urgency in moving swiftly to approve the full funding of the proposed DPS Budget. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and Mental Health & Wellness Manager for the Durham Partnership for Children. This is not the time to delegitimize the needs our children and the additional supports that are required. Nor is this the moment to second guess the thoughtful care invested in the creation of said budget. We are in this together. Let's move forward!

**Comment 58: Elizabeth Simpson**

I am writing you to uplift multiple budget requests for this season, namely the PA request for a penny for prosperity tax increase and tax assistance grants for low-income homeowners, DAE's request for more school funding for nurses and social workers, and DBP's divestment request from the sheriff. After a year of covid and protest, it is not time for a status quo budget. It is time to

move decisively in the direction of our community's values. Those include investing in our public school children's full flourishing and well-being, and moving resources away from the carceral state, as well as keeping families in their homes. These programs are not enough but we must not reject them simply because they are insufficient. We must take decisive steps in the direction of our goals and dreams. Thank you for your service.

**Comment 59: Sam Hoeffler**

Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All are calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

Do the right thing and show courage. Stand up against the police department and begin to curb their power. Hold them accountable to keep people safe and stop brutalizing communities.

**Comment 60: Joanna Rutter**

Durham residents will benefit more from mental healthcare investment than they will from investing in prisons and policing. Please listen to us. This is a make or break cultural moment for our city and could be a life or death difference for a Durham neighbor.

**Comment 61: Elliott Turnbull**

As a Durham resident, I join Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All, asking you to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate these funds to strengthen mental health.

I assure you that it is my family and friends, and the wellness resources and wonderful people in our community, that uplift the quality of my daily life – not policing of particular neighborhoods more than others or unnecessary weapons at traffic incidents.

You hold the power to help Durham further become the model and leader that it is renowned to be, as a creative and compassionate community. Given the past year across the globe with increasing awareness of racial and healthcare inequities, mental health is a top priority for addressing the roots of these life challenges.

With the success of the new Community Safety & Wellness Task Force, Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center will all benefit from increased public investment – as then will every single one of us residents in this community!

Thank you for your willingness to listen and to respond with action to move away from policing and jails and invest in human needs. This is long-term work. Let it begin with you reallocating our resources to where they are needed this June 14.



**Comment 62: Chelsea Earles**

I've lived in Durham for over 20 years, the last 14 as a single parent of an amazing kid who is a public school student with specific developmental needs. My family and our loved ones have not always received the school support and mental health care we have needed. The educators' union's demand to adequately fund and staff our schools with health care and social support professionals, and then 10 to transform demand to put 10% of the sheriff's budget into mental health care instead, are exactly what we need. If more of us receive the care and support we need, many crises will be prevented. I can attest to the amazing resource Lincoln community health center is, including the mental health care department. They do so much, lets help them do more.

**Comment 63: J. Tommy White**

I have lost multiple loved ones to mental illness, suicide, and covid-19 itself this past year. However, even before this pandemic, local access to mental health resources was DIRELY insufficient to relieve the suffering of the many, many members of Durham who are so profoundly affected by ever-rising wealth inequality, anti-Black racism, ableism, transphobia, misogyny, anti-Black racism, and other systems of oppression. Lord help us all AFTER this pandemic, following so much collective loss and trauma that so profoundly affects the developing minds and bodies of youth, especially. This is an urgent need.

Thus, I implore you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham Co. Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

Thank you for your willingness to invest in strengthening Mental Health and developing compassionate, effective violence prevention in the long-term such as through the new Community Safety & Wellness Task Force.

**Comment 64: Cassandra Rowe**

I'm calling on Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's budget and reallocate to mental health services, which is so critically needed. It's time for our county to invest in the services that promote our residents wellbeing, including mental healthcare - investing in SAFETY, not policing/incarceration.

**Comment 65: Karen Jones**

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

**Comment 66: Abby Williamson**

Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All are calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

We know, based on hundreds of conversations we've had with community residents through phonebanking and the years of organizing we've been doing in Durham, that robust mental healthcare is a top priority for our communities.

Thanks to the County Commissioners for your unanimous commitment to the success of the new Community Safety & Wellness Task Force. We hear your expressed willingness to move away from policing and jails and invest in human needs. We hear your expressed eagerness to strengthen Mental Health and develop compassionate, effective, preventative solutions to harm and violence. This is long-term work, and there are immediate steps that can be taken to reallocate resources to where they are urgently needed.

Now is an excellent time to divest from the Sheriff's department. In describing the jail, the sheriff's office states that it houses "approximately 400 detainees" but the department's graph shows that the average daily population was only 308 in FY21 and only 356 in FY20. The sheriff's office does not discuss if any cost savings have resulted. In fact, the budget includes an unspecified amount of additional overtime funding for the detention center.

Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

**Comment 67: Michelle Heavener**

I would be thrilled if the budget was allocated towards addressing mental health and access to those services for those in our community. I absolutely agree that the Behavioral Health urgent care, Recovery response center, 24 hour mobile crisis unit, and the Lincoln community health center could all benefit from increased investment. Honestly, I didn't know the names of those centers until now, but it makes so much more sense to invest in care centers that focus on addressing folks as people with complex issues.

My personal experience with mental health involves anxiety (generalized anxiety and postpartum anxiety) and I greatly benefit from seeing a therapist regularly and have been for years! I also had a chance to see therapists in my 20's in Florida, after I got into trouble with the law, when I didn't have access to resources that I do now. Even then, when I was not as conscious about my actions and consequences, or boundaries or stating what I needed, I still greatly benefited from talking to someone about my experience and getting perspective on things. I had time to breathe and sort things out. Not everyone gets a chance to do that and imagine the space we could cultivate if we \*did\* offer that. I believe everyone deserves to have access to health care, mental health services, and care centers that focus on listening to folks and giving them what they need when they need it.

I hope you consider reallocating funds that would normally go to the police department to services that would greatly serve our community in a preventative and compassionate way.

**Comment 68: Samantha Clarke**

It's time for Durham to divest from the police and put more money toward the community and mental health assistance. We don't need more police.

**Comment 69: Faye Koenigsmark**

I am writing to urge you to advocate for divesting 10% of the County budget from the Sheriff's budget and reallocating these funds to strengthen Mental Health.

Let's talk about Mental Health. My family has a history of mental illnesses. Depression, anxiety, bipolar, paranoia, eating disorders... Adequate care is expensive and inaccessible. In my case, I was able to access the care I needed (over 10 years) and recover only because my mom had excellent health insurance and some disposable income. There were so many instances where I would have had to sacrifice my school and career aspirations and, in some instances, my life, had I not gotten the care I needed. Survival shouldn't be a privilege. It's a fundamental human right.

Despite so many folks experiencing mental crises, the budget allocated to Mental Health last year was only ~17% of that allocated to the Sheriff's department. This is a gross representation of the County's priorities. Policing is NOT a mental health solution, and in many cases, can exacerbate mental health crises. Rather, true solutions come in the form of increased access to compassionate, skilled care that's available around the clock.

I urge you to support the reallocation of these funds. You have the power to positively shape the future of Durham.

**Comment 70: Naomi**

Hi, I'm Writing to support the call for greater accountability and care for Durham residents, by divesting 10% from the police budget and investing that money in robust mental health resources for our community. Nearly half of police shootings involve someone undergoing a mental health crisis. Individuals with untreated mental conditions are over 15 times more likely to be killed by police. For low income Durham residents like me, it's often excessively difficult to access adequate mental health care. The same people who can't access care are the ones most endangered by relying on police to act as mental health professionals. We need to end this cycle of death. By reinvesting money from the police budget in supportive services like the 24-hour mobile crisis unit and community health centers, we can approach our vulnerable population from a perspective of humanity and care. Policing and incarceration are not the remedies to mental health crises. Thank you to the county commissioners for hearing and supporting this investment in our community.

**Comment 71: Jeni Grant**

My mother in law had multiple mental health crisis last year. In every case, if we or her friends tried to get help, police who weren't trained in mental illnesses or substance use disorders showed up on our doorstep, traumatizing myself (former DV victim whose abuser used the cops as a method of control and vindiction) and my MIL. Durham desperately needs emergency public mental health services that don't involve officers no one trusts. Please divest 10% - or more - of the Sheriff's budget to mental health services. In traditionally Black counties cops are a nuisance and a danger, with over 50% of police fatalities occurring when a mentally ill person encounters law enforcement. Cops don't keep Durham safe. Community initiatives to address the systemic problems leading to violence keeps Durham safe.

**Comment 72: Alaire Hughey**

Police don't keep us safe. They haven't keep me safe from the multiple experiences of gender based violence I've experienced and, though I have sought legal recourse for violent assault, police were never able to bring justice or healing to what happened to me. And we all know that I am one of thousands of people with similar stories.

I believe in abolishing policing, because I want to use my tax dollars to create spaces of healing for my community instead of the white supremacist violence policing is set up to enact. I believe in divesting from policing and investing in mental health resources not because I don't have experience with- and anger at - perpetrators of violence, but because as a survivor, I know policing isn't an effective way to stop harm. We stop harm by stopping the systems that perpetuate violence and investing in systems that help us all heal from trauma.

So please, as an ally to survivors and representative of the hundreds of citizens who are aligned with Durham Beyond Policing and Durham for all: vote to reduce the Sheriff's budget by just 10% and help us invest in a Durham that is actually safe.

**Comment 73: Freddie Bell**

We need to divest from the police budget YESTERDAY. Members of our community struggle to survive and thrive every day. That fight could be supported by investing in community mental health support services. I am a certified peer support specialist and have worked closely with some of our most marginalized members of our community. These are bright, resilient, loving and funny people of all ages who are your neighbors. Many of whom face larger challenges due to police interaction. A young man with an IDD who lacks the funds to pay court fees. An older black man who struggles to maintain a job due to paranoia. An older black woman managing her PTSD triggered by police while also grieving the loss of her son. They all deserve to know that their community sees them and cares about their well-being. That can be shown by investing more in the organizations who support them. Thank you for considering this vital reallocation of funds.

**Comment 74: JP Hyzy**

I am calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen mental health initiatives in Durham. Mental healthcare is a top priority for so many communities here in Durham and this portion of the police department's budget could do so much good if reallocated for these causes. Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in mental health services access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit greatly from increased public investment. In the upcoming budget work sessions, I would appreciate if you would advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen mental health programs. This June 14, I am counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

**Comment 75: Chris Nobblitt**

I support reinvesting 10% of the Sheriff's budget into mental health care. it would go a long way to supporting my own struggles with finding affordable local mental healthcare, and for my wife, our friends, and family. Durham does not need so much staff, as we've been keeping less and less people detained. thank you

**Comment 76: Celia Donnelly**

I am writing today to urge you to divest 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and to reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health resources for the Durham community.

I write to you as a 21-year-old Durham resident who has lived in Durham all my life.

I have seen how community care can strengthen relationships and community through simple actions such as community food programs that offer a sliding scale payment method or free meals for Durham residents. This is just one example of community care, and I ask you to imagine the limitless possibility of what community care looks like when widened to include mental health resources and meaningful investments in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

I strongly believe that in reallocating 10% of the Durham Sheriff's budget, we together, as a community, can create many more resources for Durham residents to thrive and stay safe. Community mental health care is vital for people to flourish. When budgets for mental health are widened, I know we can create more compassionate, effective, and preventative solutions to harm and violence.

I see that community care goes beyond policing, and while I know this is long-term work, work that requires direct, participatory action and engagement, I also believe that by reallocating 10% of the Sheriff's budget we can take more immediate steps to better care for one another where it is most urgently needed. Again, thank you for your time. I look forward to seeing community care prioritized in Durham and to continue fostering care and compassion for my fellow Durham residents. I hope you will join me in this next step too.

**Comment 77: Youngmee Hahn**

My name is Youngmee and I am a member of Durham for All. First, I would like to thank each of you for attending the May 20th Town Hall organized by Durham for All and Durham Beyond Policing. I appreciate the time and energy each of you invested in engaging with your constituents in this way.

I would like to reiterate the urgency of the message highlighted during the Town Hall--based on the many phone banking conversations I have had with community members over the past 9 weeks, I have heard a strong consensus of support for divesting 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

During the town hall, I was heartened by your unified support of the new Community Safety & Wellness Task Force, and your agreement with the principle of moving away from reliance on policing and jails and investing in human needs. I appreciate your eagerness to strengthen the services offered to members of the Durham community who struggle with mental health issues, and your interest in building care-based resources to improve safety in our community by preventing harm and violence rather than imposing punishment after an incident occurs. This kind of work takes a concerted, long-term effort, and there are immediate action steps that can be taken

right in this year's county budget to start moving in the direction that we are asking for, and that you have expressed philosophical agreement with.

Now is an excellent time to divest from the Sheriff's department. In describing the jail, the sheriff's office states that it houses "approximately 400 detainees" but the department's graph shows that the average daily population was only 308 in FY21 and only 356 in FY20. The sheriff's office does not discuss if any cost savings have resulted. In fact, the budget includes an unspecified amount of additional overtime funding for the detention center.

Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

My day-to-day work involves providing employment-related services to homeless individuals in Durham. Frequently, my clients' medical, mental health, and substance addiction-related needs come up as we discuss barriers to stable employment. Lincoln Community Health Center, Behavioral Health Urgent Care, and the Durham Recovery Response Center are all resources that I have either recommended to clients, or that clients have mentioned to me in stories of where they went for support when they did not have the means to access other, higher-cost services in the area. As Dr. Jamie Carter of the Lincoln Center mentioned during the town hall, increasing funding to these important resource centers would allow them to serve individuals in deep need of assistance even more effectively, and go a long way toward creating a healthier community with fewer individuals driven to the margins at which interpersonal violence and criminalized activity often occur. On the other hand, in my work I regularly meet with individuals experiencing homelessness whose primary obstacle to obtaining gainful employment is a criminal conviction on their record. Time and time again, I have worked with people who have a strong work ethic and deeply desire to do high quality work to contribute to their community and become financially self-supporting, and face a steep uphill battle to do so because of a conviction from their past. These are the long-term ramifications of a society and a culture that emphasizes criminalization, incarceration, and punishment over care, nurture, and development. I believe that in Durham, we have it in us to do much better. In the upcoming county budget, we have the opportunity to put action behind the progressive, inclusive values that Durham has become known for; the opportunity to make our actions consistent with our reputation, to practice true integrity in a world where much lip service is given to advancing equity but action in that direction is harder to find. Changing systems and patterns that have become deeply ingrained in all of the US, not just Durham, is a long-term and dauntingly complex task. This fact is not, in the least, lost on me. But every climb to the top of the mountain starts with the first step. There is no other way to get to where we want to go but to start moving.

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

Thank you for all the hard work that you do to better this community, and for the time and consideration you have generously given to this issue.

**Comment 78: Katherine LeVigne**

Please take the time to thoroughly investigate how to best fund more public health services, especially those focused on mental health, by appreciating which resources the Sheriff's office genuinely need and do not need to do their job in a world where policing is never fatal, cruel, or indifferent to the human lives they effect. We do not live there yet, we have to create it.

**Comment 79: Caitlyn Case-Cohen**

The organizers of Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All are listening to the people of Durham and I am listening to them -- it is clear that as Durham residents, we want a city where we take care of each other, where people can get the mental healthcare they need to prevent crisis, not get locked up. As my 4-year-old child has reflected in our conversations about safety and policing, oftentimes "the police just don't know how to help." I want to tell my child that the our city government is spending our city's money on care that will help people, not on the system that will jail people. Thank you Durham County Commissioners, for your commitment to making our city safer for everyone.

**Comment 80: Ben Carroll**

I support Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All calls for the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health

**Comment 81: Jacqueline Molyneaux**

I have been a Durham resident for 8 years now and I've seen a lot support and community from individuals in this city. I'd love to see a city-wide change in that direction too. To me that includes divesting from policing and investing in mental health care and affordable housing.

Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All are calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health and I strongly support those efforts and encourage you as my representative to do the same.

Access to affordable mental health care would literally change my life. I know that I need and want to see a therapist but cannot afford to. There are many others like me in this exact same position. With a city-wide push to reallocate funds into mental health care and away from policing we can support and care for our community in a tangible way.

**Comment 82: Rachel Ward**

I'm writing today to voice my support for divesting 10% of our county's policing budget to be reallocated for mental health care infrastructure investment. We must reassess the role of policing in our community, it doesn't keep us safe. Ensuring that everyone has the support network and healthcare they need is what's going to keep our community safe.

**Comment 83: Anna Grant**

I'm so concerned that the current budget proposal does not fully fund the \$18.2 million requested by Durham Public Schools. As a community school coordinator, I see first-hand every day the impossible choices we are forced to make at the expense of meeting every one of the many, many critical needs our students present. We cannot do it alone. This request from DPS would provide

more support for our EC students and English language learners, for ALL of our students below grade level and in need of additional support, and would ease the burden on our custodial staff by adding 11 full time and 38 part time custodians. Please - we are working tirelessly and we need all of the adult supports that we can get. Thank you for considering.

**Comment 84: AJ Williams**

As a longtime Durham resident and native, I'm personally asking the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

**Comment 85: Karen Tarkulich**

Hello! I just wanted to express my hope that the Durham County Commissioners divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's budget and reallocate those towards mental health.

Super thankful to y'all for your unanimous support of the Community Safety & Wellness Task Force--reallocating budget funding towards mental health is the logical next step of support. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment. It makes sense that the funding would come from the Sheriff's budget--the number of folks detained in FY20 and FY21 run around 50-100 individuals lower (308 in FY21 and 356 in FY20) than what the sheriff's office reported ("approximately 400") and there should be no reason that the number goes back up--especially if funding is reallocated towards mental health, which can prevent detentions when individuals get adequate mental health support they need. I've worked with a number of individuals in the past year alone who are detained in the jail when really all they need is mental health support--and finding the funding to get them has been challenging. The amount of money spent on jailing these individuals, and time spent in court for the charges to ultimately be dropped on account of mental health issues would be far better used on the front end to provide individuals the mental health support they need--and ultimately cheaper for the tax payers.

I'd expect y'all to advocate for divesting away from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and vote on June 14th to pass a budget that meets the urgent mental health needs of the community.

**Comment 86: Megan Honig**

I am writing in support of the 10ToTransform initiative that would divert 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to support mental health care for the community.

We know that our community, and particularly those experiencing mental illness, are best served by trained, culturally competent mental health professionals, not by police. We know that accessing mental health care is a challenge for many of us.

Our community will be safer and healthier when we put resources toward community care instead of policing. The Community Safety & Wellness Task Force is a substantial first step, and I am urging you to back that step up by reallocating 10% of the Sheriff's budget to community mental health.



**Comment 87: Karen Ziegler**

We spend a ridiculous amount of money on policing in Durham, and I am asking you to spend AT LEAST 10% of that money instead on mental health access. It is easier to buy a gun in Durham than it is to get mental health care. I used to work as a nurse practitioner in the acute psychiatric ward of the VA, and I know that our homeless shelters and prisons are full of vulnerable people who can't access medications. Without these medications and people who can form caring relationships with these folks, they become psychotic, homicidal, suicidal, or manic. 10% is very doable. Please do it.

**Comment 88: Claire Alexandre**

As someone who works as a public artist all across Durham, I've had extensive conversations with community members about their homes, neighborhoods, loved ones and their safety. As a member of Durham Beyond Policing, I believe that now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents, after a year of so much loss due to the pandemic. I want the people I create with to feel loved and seen and supported by our city. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

**Comment 89: Ryan Sweeney**

As a resident of Durham County would like to see the Board of Commissioners divert 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's Department and reallocate those funds to mental health.

As a tax paying resident, I would like my tax dollars to go to the betterment of our community by investing in root care. The ultimate crime prevention comes from social programs designed to address needs, instead of locking people up.

**Comment 90: Mika Hunter Twietmeyer**

My name is Mika Twietmeyer and I am a science teacher at Riverside High School, where I have worked for the past 13 years, the entirety of my teaching career. Every year around this time educators are faced with the frustrating task of advocating for the funding our students deserve. Our schools do not have the support staff, the resources, or the infrastructure to provide the best for our students. Educators have become accustomed to working without the resources and supports we need to do our jobs. We are commended for our resilience and ability to do more with less. Durham has the opportunity to fund an education budget that will move Durham Public Schools forward by providing a nurse in every school, additional social workers and counselors to support the needs of our students, and more. I encourage you to fully fund DPS's budget request. Our students deserve nothing less. Thank you.

**Comment 91: Philip Marschall**

Please support the proposal to reallocate 10% of the sheriff's department budget to providing access to mental health care for everyone in Durham county. Policing and incarceration are not appropriate responses to most community issues, especially mental health crises. I am a clinical mental health counselor who specializes in addiction treatment, and my work in community mental health in the past few years in this area has made it clear that lack of funding is a significant barrier in providing appropriate care and support to our most vulnerable community members, neighbors,

and loved ones. I know you share a vision of Durham as a community where safety and wellness of everyone is a priority, and this would be an important step in that direction. Physicians, nurses, therapists, social workers, and other support staff are constantly asked to do more with less, causing long wait times for services, less time with each patient, and high rates of burnout and turnover at Lincoln Community Health Center and Durham Crisis Response Center. More funding would help alleviate these issues and provide access to quality care to more Durham community members. Our budget demonstrates our values as a community - do we want to prioritize wellness and evidence-based treatment or do we want to prioritize incarceration as our response to mental illness? (If it isn't obvious, we want the first one!)

**Comment 92: Jennifer Scherer**

Please fully fund DPS. The pandemic shone a light on how essential our public schools are to our society, and our students deserve nothing less than fully funded schools.

**Comment 93: Claire Charny**

Mental health needs to be a top priority for the county's budget and divesting from the Sheriff's department is a great place to start. As a Durham resident/citizen, I strongly support the call to reallocate 10% of the Sheriff's fund to address our county's mental health needs. Thank you for seriously considering this important step to long term change.

**Comment 94: Tim Hoffman**

I am urging the county commissioners to divest 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate these funds to strengthen mental health services for the community. Durham County Jail has continued to kill members of the community despite continued increased funding. It is time to stop funding means to kill people and put that money toward the vital services that our community needs. This means divesting a minimum of 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's budget. Thank you.

**Comment 95: Teresa Parkinson**

I am a proud DPS teacher and a member of DAE. I am asking that you please support the full \$18 million requested by the Durham Public Schools. My school has a social worker that shares her position with one or two other schools - I rarely see her in the building that is why I don't know how many schools she actually serves. I have not seen a nurse in my building since we reopened. I repeat - I have not seen ONE nurse in my building since we opened. These are critically needed positions. I gladly made home visits during the height of remote learning. but having a full time social worker to build a deeper relationship with a family and follow up with a teacher concern is how we maintain a healthy community. Our students and families need to feel supported. Thank you.

**Comment 96: Joyce Ventimiglia**

Please prioritize Mental Health. As a Durham resident, I favor reallocating 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

**Comment 97: Jenneca Graber-Grace**

Please fully fund the DPS budget request.

**Comment 98: Meg Goodhand**

I have given 30+ years to DPS because our future citizens deserve our love and support. It is the most important thing we can do for our future society. As a principal it was painful to have to decide what to cut (eg a teacher or a counselor). I sure hope I don't hear a lot of words or complaints from commissioners about the \$18.2 million requested by Durham Public Schools. That amount won't even come close to fully funding our schools because, as we all know, Phil Berger and Tim Moore are leading a sustained attack on public education in North Carolina. But Berger and Moore don't control the Durham County budget -- you do -- and that means we need you to step up and do everything you can here at the local level to get our kids and educators and schools the resources they need to thrive.

**Comment 99: Juno Liang**

The people you serve want more investment in public mental health services. The police budget is bloated. It's very simple. Put OUR money to good use in public wellness, rather than buying shiny new toys for the cops.

**Comment 100: Hannah Baumgardner**

I want to join the coalition of Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All in calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

It's fantastic that y'all have committed to the success of the Community & Wellness Taskforce and divesting 10% from the Sheriff's department to mental health is another step forward. Our community needs and deserves this change, as well as continued support and changes going forward. I want our community to be healthy and thriving and this is an important step.

**Comment 101: Danielle Purifoy**

I am writing to urge you to do your part in affirming Black lives in Durham County by divesting 10% of the sheriff's budget (including the jail) to be devoted to mental healthcare.

There is no system more directly structured for the casual and untimely demise of Black people than our policing and prison system. As we have observed numerous times in our own community, most recently with the death of J'Mauri Bumpass in the sheriff's custody (Dec 2019), not to mention at least 11 jail deaths since 2011, we can have no expectation of safety from policing and prisons because of the active and targeted harm that they cause. None of that harm is accounted for in our tallies of violence in our city or county, and no one is ever held accountable because the harm is construed as justified. The system works as intended.

But it is not enough for the system to simply not cause harm. Even if we were to reform the sheriff's department so that no one was physically harmed, it would still ultimately be ineffective because 1) policing, surveillance, and imprisonment don't prevent violence and other forms of harm in our communities, 2) policing, surveillance, and imprisonment contribute heavily to community climates of suspicion, punishment, and disposability, rather than collaboration, mediation, and collective accountability, and 3) caging people has no positive relationship to their "rehabilitation"

or wellness; it merely signals their disposability to the public and marks them for further abuses and dislocations from their own communities.

How could we possibly uphold a system that causes so much harm and fails at its stated purpose?

A 10% divestment in the sheriff's department and corresponding investment in our much needed mental healthcare systems is a first step in getting us out of the cycles of violence and harm perpetuated by policing and prisons. Our mental health systems need high visibility and seamless access. Increasing their budget from \$6.3M to \$10M will be a first step in getting us there and saving lives. We cannot afford to wait.

**Comment 102: Olivia Linn**

First, many thanks for being at the 10 to Transform town hall last week; it's the first time I've been in a meeting with you all (rather than just watching your meetings on the website), and it meant very much to me to share space with you, to hear your questions, and to know how seriously you are taking our concerns.

I'm writing to urge you to move forward on transferring 10% of funds from the Sheriff's office into mental health care services Durham urgently needs. As an advocate on Durham's domestic violence and sexual assault hotline, I have frequently sat with clients in desperate and dangerous mental health crises for hours as we waited for support from critical and critically underfunded county resources like the mobile crisis unit. And sometimes that support doesn't arrive. As we wait, I am the person asking if they have considered suicide and if they have a plan; I am the person de-escalating and ensuring my client doesn't have access to weapons or other things that they might use to harm themselves. That is a terrifying position to be in, for both me and the survivors I work with. Durham desperately needs better funding for the resources that already exist to address mental health crises, but that don't have the staff, mandate, or resources to do so adequately.

We know the Sheriff's Department is vastly overfunded, as it is in every city in America; we know the Sheriff's Department claims to house 400 detainees regularly, though the average daily population in FY21 was just over 300, and despite this, the budget includes an unspecified amount of additional overtime funding for the detention center. We know that the county has historically devoted a small fraction of the money to mental health as it does to the Sheriff's Department. It is painful for me to see these funding decisions year after year when I and the people I serve are struggling to stay safe.

Please reallocate this funding to meeting the urgent needs of your constituents.

**Comment 103: Nat Lazakis**

I'm a Durham resident writing to urge you to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget, and invest the funds in mental health services.

It is time for Durham to move away from policing, and focus instead on eliminating scarcity of crucial resources such as affordable healthcare and housing. More specifically, local social justice organizations have found overwhelming support within the Durham community for prioritizing improved mental health resources.

Additionally, there is evidence that the Sheriff's department has lower funding needs than in previous years. It has been reported that detainees in its jail have dropped from 400 to an average daily population of only 308 in FY2021.

In view of the above, please help to develop better alternatives to policing by advocating for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating the funds to mental health services.

**Comment 104: Heather Hall**

Now is an excellent time to divest from the Sheriff's department. In describing the jail, the sheriff's office states that it houses "approximately 400 detainees" but the department's graph shows that the average daily population was only 308 in FY21 and only 356 in FY20. The sheriff's office does not discuss if any cost savings have resulted. In fact, the budget includes an unspecified amount of additional overtime funding for the detention center.

Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

**Comment 105: Leah Whitehead**

I work at the Community Empowerment Fund in Durham and almost every day I am talking with community members who are trying to access mental health care. There are almost no options for affordable private therapists, especially not Black and Brown therapists. Talk about emergency behavioral healthcare? We are literally next door to Carolina Outreach, and refer folks there all the time, but what is someone to do if they are having a mental health crisis after 3pm on a Friday? When it comes to Lincoln, have you ever tried to get an appointment there? We are often talking about 6+ weeks waiting time for people to get the mental healthcare they need and that's just getting in the door. The availability and variety of mental healthcare is extremely limited and supported by overworked and underpaid staff. Half the time they are having to refer back into the community to get someone ongoing therapy only to find that there are no resources for ongoing therapy in the community. When it comes to mobile crisis, you are lucky if mobile crisis shows up within two hours of calling them. Does that sound like crisis support to you?

I don't blame any of these services for this delay in support. We MUST give them the resources they need in order to expect them to do the jobs they are supposed to do. Please take this opportunity to do that. Our budget is a moral document and we are trusting you to do the right thing with it.

**Comment 106: Bjorn Pedersen**

I write as someone who has struggled with their mental health for most of my life. I've experienced firsthand how appropriate mental healthcare can transform a situation that feels hopeless and I've been privileged enough never to have to worry about losing my access to that care. The proposal before you now represents the bare minimum that can be done to begin to extend a guarantee of similar care to every member of our community who needs it.

That should be enough reason to support this funding shift, but it is not the only reason. Happier, healthier people are less likely to commit crimes and less likely to be victimized by them. They are more engaged with their communities. By every metric, investing in these people's lives will improve public safety in a way that the retributive hand of law enforcement simply cannot. I urge you not only to approve this redistribution of funds but to go much further and defund the entire sheriff's department and reinvest those funds in the community. If you believe in the people of Durham, you will not be disappointed.

**Comment 107: Cole Parker**

I currently work as a community organizer with Carolina Jews for Justice, but I previously spent many years working with homeless youth. In that capacity, I was a mandated reporter, and among other things, I was required by law to engage the police if one of my youth disclosed that they were feeling suicidal. I knew -- and my youth knew -- that police intervention was NEVER going to help the situation; that it would more than likely make matters worse. On more than one occasion, that legally required call to police resulted in a breaking of trust and a subsequent unwillingness/inability of my youth to access desperately needed services and support.

What was needed in those moments was not police intervention -- what we needed was robust mental health support. In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Durham's mental health services. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit greatly from increased public investment, and this is your chance to make that happen.

**Comment 108: Meghan O'Rourke**

I've personally seen first-hand the damage that can be done when communities invest more in policing than in mental health services. When my brother was having a mental health crisis, he was arrested for 'disturbing the peace' rather than getting the mental health services that he needed. I don't want to see this happen to anyone else. A reallocation of 10% of the county budget for policing and jail towards mental health services is a great first step.

**Comment 109: Hope Tyson**

Hello! First I want to thank the County Commissioners for coming out to the Durham for All / Durham Beyond Policing event on May 20th to hear from the community about how much we want to divest from policing and fund mental health care. Commissioners Jacobs, Carter, Howerton, Burns, and Allam - thank you!

I wanted to write and tell you about my experiences in the community with mental health care needs. I have been a domestic violence crisis counselor volunteer on a local 24 hour hotline for almost seven years. I love this work and am committed to supporting people who are facing interpersonal violence and to interrupting the power inequities that are created and perpetuated by this problem.

On the hotline, I talk to people just about every single shift who are experiencing mental health-related challenges. From people facing domestic violence in their lives who are experiencing anxiety and depression as a result of their situation to people who are seriously mentally unwell

and having psychotic episodes, I have seen how inadequate our mental health resources are (both in Durham county and more widely) to support their wellness. We refer these folks to treatment and support, but much of the time, there simply aren't enough resources to support them. Other times, they have had extremely negative interactions with police when well-meaning neighbors or family members have called the authorities for help. Hearing these stories over the years has affirmed my commitment to improving mental health care in Durham - my home.

We need better solutions. I don't doubt that our sheriff's office and the DPD are trying their best, but the mental health of our community requires more diverse and robust options. For those who are struggling from mental illness catalyzed by trauma as well as for those who will deal with lifelong challenges - we need better.

I urge the Commissioners to advocate for reallocating 10% of the County Sheriff's budget to mental health care for Durham. After this past year, we have an opportunity to take a new perspective on what safety and wellness mean in our community.

I also want to say that I urge the Sheriff's department to make their budget publicly available for community review and discussion by the Commissioners. The lack of transparency makes collaborative discussion and problem-solving difficult if not impossible. Good faith public service requires more transparent conversation.

Thank you, Commissioners, for all you do for our County and I hope to remain in touch.

**Comment 110: Linden James**

When I was in middle school, I had a mental health crisis and the police were called. While I appreciate their efforts to help me, I believe that Durham now more than ever needs increased public investment in mental health services, as I know myself and many others would benefit from this. Thank you!

**Comment 111: Sarah Ralston**

As a psychiatrist who has provided care for residents of Durham and the Triangle for the past 15 years, I am joining Durham Beyond Policing and Durham for all in the call to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health. With the privatization of mental health care, long wait lists present a major barrier to treatment at an adequate level, particularly for those with limited financial resources. Additionally, the involvement of law enforcement officers in responding to mental health crises adds both stigma (suggesting a criminal nature to mental health crises) and danger of harm to individuals in crisis. Divesting these funds to support mental health will allow for both treatment before the point of severe crisis and also a response to crisis that provides care and nuanced assessment rather than requiring control and compliance, which can exacerbate the situation at hand.

I have also provided care in the carceral setting and have witnessed the ways in which incarcerated people are often "othered" and seen as an enemy to keep down, which results in, at best, a passive, half-hearted approach to rehabilitative missions to help these individuals grow or heal, and at worse, active degradation. Individuals returned to the community at even more of a disadvantage than when they arrived. In order to truly serve all members of our society, rather than just those

privileged enough to avoid interactions with the criminal justice system and who benefit from the disappearance of those without such privilege, we must invest in strategies that support mental health (along with other fundamental needs such as housing).

I am grateful that the County Commissioners have already demonstrated an understanding of this need to invest in human needs over policing and jails through a commitment to the Community Safety & Wellness Task Force. I ask that you expand the reach of that commitment at this time by advocating for the divestment of 10% of the Durham County Sheriff department's budget and the reallocation of those funds to Mental health.

**Comment 112: Melui Kimathi**

This is the LEAST that could be done for the MOST beneficial change. This is the time. WE are the ones. Durham is the place. Let's make good on the legacies of all we've sacrificed and otherwise lost... let it be!

**Comment 113: Holly K**

We know the toll the pandemic has taken on the mental health of our country, state and town and pre-pandemic wasn't much too brag about anyway. Durham needs to be a leader in strengthening mental health services and better addressing the health needs of our community than through the sheriffs department. I value the role our sherrifs department has in the community but they cannot be counselors, social workers and crisis managers and thankfully those are roles we already have in the community. Please adopt a budget that fully supports the needs of the community by reallocating to strengthen mental health.

**Comment 114: Ashley Low**

Please divest 10% of the police & jail budget towards strengthening Mental Health. I urge you to vote for this on June 14th. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center all need strengthening of their budget. These services are so important to myself personally as someone who struggles with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and also to our community. Invest in our community!

**Comment 115: Mary Kay Bryan**

My husband and I are new to Durham and family here. It is imperative that Durham embrace and fund services that will promote both health and responsible governance for all citizens. We agree that shifting 10% of the funding from the Durham county sheriff's budget to services that demonstrate investment in the community such as Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, 24 hour Mobile Crisis Unit and Lincoln Community Health Center. Thank you for making Durham stronger.

**Comment 116: Gabriel Baldasare**

I support the 10 to Transform Campaign's efforts to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health access for Durham residents. We've been investing a lot of money in punishment, cages, and criminalization for decades and from my perspective on the data, it doesn't seem to have reduced harm or violence. Caging people is violent. Taking people away from their families and support systems is violent. Allowing corporations to profit off of the jailing of Durham residents is cynical and leads to the



encouragement of policies that increase criminalization and caging. We need to spend as much money and as many decades funding mental health access and housing as we have spent funding the jail. This 10% reallocation is a good first step towards the much greater investment we need to place in support systems and anti-poverty efforts. Please heed the wise and well-researched ask being made to you by this brilliant coalition. Thank you.

**Comment 117: Ginne Hench**

Thank you all for spending time Thursday night listening to DBP and DFA members and for sharing your positions.

I respect that many of you have deeply personal connections to police violence and community health and I appreciated the way many of you spoke about working together as a council.

Strengthening mental health resources matters to me because I've experienced the difference that access to a robust support system makes in the midst of a crisis and for ongoing crisis prevention. As a graduate student, long before I needed resources, awareness campaigns normalized knowing where and how to get help. When I was in the midst of a crisis, I knew exactly where I could go. I was able to receive counseling immediately and the counselor kindly helped me develop a plan to move forward. I didn't have to worry about prohibitive costs or future bills that might show up weeks later. I wish for everyone in Durham to have access to mental health resources in the same way I got to experience during that time. From phone banking with DFA over the past few months, I know many Durham feel the same. We can move towards that by increasing our investment in Mental Health resources in Durham County.

There is still time for you all to come together around moving 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget towards strengthening Mental Health resources.

**Comment 118: Catherine Berman**

First, I want to thank all five county commissioners for your eagerness to strengthen mental health resources; develop long-term effective, preventative solutions to harm and violence; and collaborate with the new Community Safety and Wellness Task Force to enact these solutions.

This budget hearing is a chance to translate your public support into action. I join with Durham Beyond Policing and Durham for All in calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's Department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen mental health care. Robust mental health care is a top priority for our communities, based hundreds of phone banking calls and years of Durham for All's and Durham Beyond Policing's organizing with Durham residents.

All of us in this room likely know someone who has struggled deeply with mental health and many of us know someone who needed but could not access mental health services. Preventative and responsive mental health solutions are direly needed in our county – when our families, youth, and people most impacted by harm and violence have access to these resources, we all benefit. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center are all examples of organizations that would benefit from increased public investment to support this urgent need.

Our communities are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department and reallocating those funds to strengthen mental health, a crucial step in prioritizing preventative solutions for wellness and safety. We urge you to vote on June 14 to adopt a budget that reflects this vital need.

**Comment 119: Grace Nichols**

Several years ago, I had a mental health crisis. After expressing a need for support at a crisis center, I was sent to a detox center so they could "keep an eye on me." I was transported in a cop car and treated as a liability to the state and a problem that needed to be dealt with, rather than a human reaching out for help. The presence of police did not make me feel safe, supported, or comforted.

I am very fortunate to have since developed crisis plans with my family, friends, and community members and mental health care professionals. I feel best supported when i can be in charge of my own care and choose who can support me.

Reliance on police officers who are not mental health professionals is terrifying and often leads to more trauma and death than support and healing. Redistributing 10% of the durham county sheriff's department budget would be so hopeful, meaningful, and transformative for so many of us.

Please act in alignment with this community led ask in support of mental health over police!

**Comment 120: Susan Rigby**

I want to begin by thanking you for taking the time to read my comments, work on the budget, and commit to increased mental health support for our communities.

I am writing to voice my support as Durham Beyond Policing and Durham For All are calling on the Board of County Commissioners to divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

In my personal experience, with a mother with mental illness, the police are often poorly equipped to handle these issues. I've asked police to perform wellness checks on her - they're told me they were hesitant to knock on the door if she's "dangerous". After a few of these interactions I've become fearful that they might be so on edge that something terrible will happen. That they will feel threatened and retaliate with violence. Nobody feels safe in that situation. Not me, not my mom, not the police. I've also never been able to gain resources or learn what steps could be taken to help my mother through interactions with the police.

I love my mother. I'm not equipped to protect her and neither are the police. I know I'm not the only one with this type of experience. Through phonebanking and the years of organizing we've been doing in Durham, we know that robust mental healthcare is a top priority for our communities. Our communities need mental health support - now more than ever.

Thank you again for your time! It is truly appreciated.

**Comment 121: Tobi Lippin**

I write to urge you to support reallocating 10% of the county's law enforcement and jail budgets for accessible mental health services. I participated in the community meeting last week in which you all spoke. I understand the statements made by Chair Howerton regarding the need to gather accurate data to better understand how current funding is used. I'm all for data driven decisions. However, I believe 10% of jail and sheriff budget funds should be reallocated in the budget which you will vote on June 14. There have been countless documented situations in Durham and elsewhere to know that our mental health budgets and emergency response is woefully inadequate and that policing and jail budgets are disproportionately higher. We also know that responding to mental health crises with armed law enforcement who lack extensive de-escalation training usually leads to unnecessary harm and further trauma. The fact that current documentation, assessment and evaluation of law enforcement outcomes and effectiveness is absent or obfuscated in public records is proof enough to me that the current system is not working. I believe you can reallocate funds from the law enforcement and jail budgets and apply them for accessible mental health services. You can designate some funds for the first quarter to do the analysis and recommendations you seek to launch new initiatives that are targeted to support community members who need accessible mental health support versus being met at the end of a gun. Please act NOW. Durham County should lead the way.

**Comment 122: Ken Templeton**

I am a Durham resident and I teach at DSA. Please vote to fully fund the DPS School Board's budget request of \$18.2 million. We need more social workers and nurses in DPS. The past year has revealed what educators have known for a long time: students learn best when they are healthy-both physically and emotionally. Many people advocated for schools to return to in-person learning this year because of concerns for students' mental health, but returning to school in-person must be accompanied by robust supports for students, not band-aids.

**Comment 123: Kathryn Diamant**

As a local healthcare worker, occupational therapist, community member, loved one, and friend to those impacted by both the Durham sheriff's department and jail and our local mental health resources, I am asking you to please divest 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocate those funds to strengthen Mental Health.

As an occupational therapist who has worked in recent years with community populations with serious mental illness and our community's children, I can say without a doubt how deeply our community needs mental health resources that help individuals with mental illness before they end up in a crisis situation in which the police and sheriff's department get involved. Having worked with many a client with previous experience with the police and jail, I can say with confidence that not one of them benefited from our became a more productive member of society because of the experience more than they would have if given the mental health supports they needed at the time.

As an OT working with young children, I can say with confidence that my young clients benefit exponentially more when their parents are given mental health support than when they are incarcerated and taken away from their children.

As a loved one of mentally ill family members who have been in jail due to bipolar disorder, I can speak deeply to the impact that effective treatment of that disorder would have had on my whole family.

Thank you to the County Commissioners for your unanimous commitment to the success of the new Community Safety & Wellness Task Force. We hear your expressed willingness to move away from policing and jails and invest in human needs. We hear your expressed eagerness to strengthen Mental Health and develop compassionate, effective, preventative solutions to harm and violence. This is long-term work, and there are immediate steps that can be taken to reallocate resources to where they are urgently needed.

Now is an excellent time to divest from the Sheriff's department. In describing the jail, the sheriff's office states that it houses "approximately 400 detainees" but the department's graph shows that the average daily population was only 308 in FY21 and only 356 in FY20. The sheriff's office does not discuss if any cost savings have resulted. In fact, the budget includes an unspecified amount of additional overtime funding for the detention center.

Now is a critical time to meaningfully invest in Mental Health access for Durham residents. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24 Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment.

In the upcoming budget work sessions, we are counting on you to advocate for divesting 10% from the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen Mental Health. This June 14, we are counting on you to vote to adopt a budget that meets this urgent need.

**Comment 124: Antonio Alanis – signed by 36 Durham Residents, 10 non-Durham Residents and 1 Anonymous Person**

ISLA wholeheartedly supports Durham Public School's current budget request for 18.2 million dollars. We are writing to support Durham Public Schools' proposed budget because it pays attention to the whole child, helps remedy our current students' and family's needs, and is tied to the mission, vision, and work we are currently doing. However, by not providing the fully funded budget, we jeopardize the access students at DPS deserve and have not received for decades. For example, not supporting the full budget puts at-risk resources needed by our Exceptional Children Services, The Office of Equity Affairs, and Multilingual Resource Center. It is time to make a difference and take action in providing a sound education for all students.

Durham County commissioners should be the example to other county commissioners across the state who prioritize different needs over education. Be the change we want to see. Fully fund our children's education. Community Leaders, participants from our Padres con Voz (Parents with a Voice) Leadership program, and families from DPS shared with ISLA the importance of this budget being approved in its totality: "We need more interpreters and language access for our families — the number of interpreters we have currently is not enough for our family's needs. We need to strengthen the Multilingual Resource Center and other departments within the system. We need to increase the capacity to interpret in multiple languages for parents who speak Spanish and indigenous languages from Latin America. In addition, we have people whose language is not Spanish and are just learning about the school system, and we need multiple ways to interpret for people." We are getting through one of the most challenging years for our community, whereas

as a state and country, we saw how not prioritizing language access led to lack of information, lack of proper health support, and more importantly, the MAJOR impact it had on our school community. By not FULLY funding this budget, you put this support at risk.

Parents also shared: "We request more individualized support. We need more personnel and hands to fulfill our family's needs. We are asking for increased capacity, including family liaisons, to meet our families where they are. It's essential to support our families as they learn about and navigate current expectations around education in Durham. It's necessary to create the appropriate pathways so that families know where to find the information they need.

"Finishing with our Exceptional Children's Services, our parents expressed that this" budget will also support our children's learning differences, especially in early childhood interventions. Schools are receiving children with disabilities which are being discovered at later ages. Finding students' needs earlier will allow our families to obtain the necessary support that they deserve and need. We are asking for more therapists and more support staff because schools need more guidance and support for our families. We request attention to students who are going through life changes, including pre-adolescents and high school students."

Our schools and teachers know our students best, and we fully support DPS's need for Durham County to fund the \$18.2 million.

**Comment 125: Kaitlin Heatwole**

I am writing to support divesting 10% of the Durham County Sheriff's department budget and reallocating those funds to strengthen mental health programming. Specifically, Behavioral Health Urgent Care, the Recovery Response Center, the 24-Hour Mobile Crisis Unit, and Lincoln Community Health Center would all benefit from increased public investment. Thank you!

**Comment 126: Dabney Hopkins**

Please vote to fully fund the request for Durham Public Schools. This budget was not developed without a careful look at our NEEDS, not our wants. While it is true that Durham funds our schools at a relatively high rate as compared to other NC school systems, when our tax base is taken into consideration, we are much lower on the list of NC counties. We do not fund our schools at the level that we can afford. Many other NC counties do better at local funding than we do. Unfortunately, we have many students in our district who need extensive support through nurses, extra intervention teachers, etc., so when we fund at a lower rate than we can afford it hurts students and families that can least afford it. Thank you for your consideration of fully funding the Durham Public Schools budget!

**Comment 127: Michelle Burton**

I am a school library media specialist at Spring Valley Elementary and currently serve as the President of the Durham Association of Educators.

I am asking that the Durham County Commissioners to fully fund the \$18.2 million that the Durham Public Schools is asking for the 2021-2022 school year.

These items are much needed. For example, EC and ELL services are federal mandates, which means the teaching staff must be provided to educate our students who are EC and ELL. Now that DPS is a true 1:1 district, the technology must be maintained and up to date so our students can complete their assignments. And we need nurses and social workers especially since we are still in the midst of a pandemic. Children will still get sick at school and families we still need supports to get through the economic downturn.

Also, our school buildings are in disrepair. We can't keep neglecting the conditions of our school buildings. A bond needs to be on the ballot for 2022. \$18.2 million is really just a drop in the bucket for what our students need. We ask that you please figure out where you can find the dollars to make this happen.

**Comment 128: Anna MacDonald**

Thank you for attending the 10 to transform meeting. I'm a social worker from Durham and fully supportive of the request to reallocate 10% from the Sheriff's office to mental health resources.

A couple of years ago I had the unnerving experience of being stalked- physically at work, on my work and cell phones, and on social media. We had no personal relationship. This person fixated on me after a mental health crisis exacerbated by substance use following years of sobriety. I felt that involving the policing and justice systems was unfair, because I didn't want them to be punished for a mental health crisis, but I didn't have another choice to get help for both of us. This was in a neighboring county, but I assume I would be faced with the same dilemma in Durham County. Involving police/sheriffs added to the trauma for me. After the initial no contact order and 5 months of court dates, ironically I still had no recourse, because the sheriff's office didn't notify this person about the order using proper protocol.

We can and must do better to provide preventive, appropriate and compassionate mental health resources so that we all can thrive. Please start by reallocating 10% of funds.

**Comment 129: Millie Rosen**

Instead of spending \$1.83 million on replacement vehicles for the Sheriff's department, use those dollars to add nurses and social workers to support our students. The Sheriff could have already bought some of those cars, but apparently opted for so-called "ghost cars," instead. Don't just pay lip service to supporting public schools - put your money where your mouth is and fully fund this request for DPS.

**Comment 130: Gregory Herschlag**

I am voicing support to fully fund the budget put forward by the Board of Education for Durham Public Schools. Our schools help define our community. Investing in them will pave the way for a more just, equitable, and integrated Durham.

**Comment 131: Emily Wilkins**

We are blessed with a wonderful Sheriff in Durham, Clarence Birkhead. Taking money out of a budget is often viewed as a lack of confidence, which it is most certainly not my case.

Yet, when a colleague noticed a car full of belongings parked for a couple of days in a parking lot, I made sure to remind her that if she called the local number for the police or sheriff's department to investigate, she should emphasize the need to send a mental health specialist as the car bore a Black Lives Matter sign in the front windshield.

That I, a white woman, now understand how important protecting our vulnerable neighbors is, is progress. With that fear of another shooting of an unarmed black or brown person in our town, I beg the county commissioners to set aside 10% of the County Sheriff's budget to support local, responsive, informed, and passionate advocates for mental health services in the next budget cycle. If killing is wrong, then we must prioritize services for those who might get caught in the unintentional web of "justice" as they try to live their best lives with challenges most of us cannot comprehend or appreciate.

**Comment 132: DeWarren Langley**

I recommend the Durham Board of County Commissioners immediately approve the MBK Durham Advisory Board, commission a Boys & Young Men of Color Local Action Plan with appropriation in the 2021-2022 budget for the plans development and earmark \$5 million dollars of the American Recovery Act Plan funds to fund academic support, workforce readiness and stipends for boys and young men of color.

Nine months ago, on September 7, 2020, I emailed the Durham Board of County Commissioners recommending the creation of a MBK Durham Advisory Board to ensure stakeholder engagement and accountability in identifying innovative solutions to eliminate gaps and increase achievement opportunities for boys and young men of color in Durham County. In addition, I recommended a revised Boys & Young Men of Color Local Action Plan created by a cross section of stakeholders to improve coordination, strengthen collaboration & share responsibility, and systemic reforms with clear goals and measurable outcomes to inform our service delivery.

Since the submission of the recommendation, thousands of jobs have been announced by companies such as Fidelity Investment, Apple, Google, Biotech with over \$200 million investment in Durham County. In addition, the Durham Board of County Commissioners have received presentations on the Durham County Early Childhood Action Plan and Durham Master Aging Plan which heightens my interest and renew my advocacy for a revised Boys & Young Men of Color Plan for Durham.

With COVID-19 and the consistent rise in gun violence having a disproportionate impact on communities of color, we can only expect the academic, opportunity and professional gaps facing young men of color to grow unless we are proactive in our data assessment, collaboration and strategy development and execution. We have an opportunity to develop and fund a strategy to change the narrative, outcomes and economic stability for boys and young men of color in Durham.

The MBK Durham Advisory Board should consist of government, community, philanthropic and youth representatives with a history of and commitment to eliminating the gaps in opportunity and achievement and work toward improving the lives of young boys and men of color through violence prevention, education, health and education aligned with the local action plan. In addition, the Board should create a local action plan with annual reports submitted to the Durham

Board of County Commissioners on yearly activities, progress toward goals and outcomes accomplished.

The economic landscape in Durham is changing rapidly and we must ensure we have a vision, plan, strategy and capacity to provide the needed leadership, services and support to position our young boys and men of color for long-term competitive advantage in the classroom and workplace or we risk them opting for alternatives such as gangs and drugs.

We can stop the violence in Durham by equipping our young black boys and men with the education, skills and experience necessary to obtain high paying employment opportunities or to lead their own entrepreneurial ventures. We have the capability and resources to create a new reality if we make the proper investments in providing pathways to viable opportunities for socioeconomic success which will diminish the appeal of the gang and drug enterprise that often entice boys and young men of color which leads to justice involvement or death.

In order for stakeholders who are working to advance black male success and achievement in Durham to learn, think and act strategically, we must first have a transparent and accurate evaluation of data as it relates to the entire population of black males ages 11 to 24 in Durham County.

We must focus on addressing these gaps from cradle to career, using evidence-based interventions from the community, private, public, and social enterprise sectors. The singular work of individual organizations working with boys and young men of color is insufficient without system change through collective strategy and impact.

The Charles Hamilton Houston Foundation, Inc. is committed to strengthen workforce equity strategy by providing programming to prepare boys and young men of color to enter and succeed in postsecondary education/training that leads to employment in high skilled, high wage, and in-demand occupations and economic stability and mobility. Our Young Men of Excellence and Career Pathway Programs provides our participants with information, guidance, support and coaching needed to connect with and navigate postsecondary education, training, career-oriented options, job market and pathways to economic security.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am excited to engage further and look forward to hearing from you soon regarding the recommendation for the creation of the MBK Durham Advisory Council, revision of the Local Action Plan and earmarking \$5 million dollars of the American Recovery Act Plan funds to fund academic support, workforce readiness and stipends for boys and young men of color. We need action now!

I welcome the opportunity to schedule a meeting with each of you to discuss further.

**Comment 133: Fran Langstaff**

I am certainly in favor of having unarmed, compassionate and skilled mental health professionals available to assist in cases where armed personnel is not required. I do question whether it is necessary to take 10% from the Sheriff's budget, or 10% from the police budget to accomplish this.



I believe that presently open positions exist not because these departments do not urgently need more personnel but because with the pay scale offered for these positions in Durham County as opposed to other smaller jurisdictions adjacent to Durham City/County, Durham is not competitive in hiring.

Additionally, I believe that with the numbers of new residents coming into the Durham area and several large corporations that are moving in, bringing thousands of new hires at high salaries, that more services will be required of the Police Department and Sheriff's Department and that the tax revenues generated by these new residents should provide funds for these mental health positions.

In any event, I have several questions that I feel need to be answered regarding the establishment and operation of these mental health responders:

1. Has an infrastructure been established already to provide for the mental health services requested in the D4A statement?
2. If so, is there a physical location already specified?
3. Under whose jurisdiction would this group operate?
4. Are qualified supervisors already identified?
5. What would be the hiring mechanism for "unarmed, skilled and compassionate responders"?
6. Are there presently parameters set for the educational and experience requirements of these "responders"?
7. Would there be "responders" available immediately 24/7?
8. Would "responders" be answering 911 calls, calls from safety officers, calls from the general public?
9. What would the requirements be to receive a response from one of these "responders" and who would make that decision?
10. Would these "responders" be allowed to decide not to answer a call on their own? If so, how would this work? Whom would they notify?
11. Are there sufficient qualified mental health professionals who would be able to fill these "unarmed, skilled and compassionate responder" positions?
12. What is the estimated salary requirement for each "responder"?
13. Considering the problems the Durham City Police Department and the Durham County Sheriff's Office have filling positions—particularly considering the lower pay in Durham than surrounding areas, will the same problem exist for "responder" positions?

