

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One year ago – long before the coronavirus and the recession; long before the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and David McAtee; long before the new civil rights movement that has filled the streets of Louisville and this country – this council asked the Center for Health Equity to analyze the impacts we were about to make by cutting \$25 million worth of programs and services from the city budget. And we asked CHE for recommendations to make sure our next budget – this budget – would be equitable.

We received their report Friday. And it says: “Louisville Metro Government will need to begin reallocating existing efforts and investments from activities that maintain racial inequity toward activities that improve public health. Future reductions should be prioritized from allocations which do not reflect community priorities, received fewer cuts in FY20 and allocations that are not best practices for improving public health. For example, incarceration exacerbates health inequity but LMPD receives the greatest proportion of budget allocations and received a smaller percentage of budget cuts... Transformational solutions to consider for reallocation may include... the development of robust disaster behavioral response teams, or mental health first responders, embedded within community to reduce contact with law enforcement.”

We also received another communication Friday. Entitled “A Path Forward for Louisville,” and signed by 64 community and religious leaders, the 20-page letter addresses the issues of jobs, justice, education, health, housing and more. It includes a long list of best practices and demands. The very first one: “We demand investments in the education, health and safety of Black people, instead of investments in the criminalizing, caging, and harming of Black people... It is time for Louisville to begin investing in qualified first responders and reducing police presence and influence in our personal lives, community affairs, and city/organizational budgets... To that end... we are demanding an immediate reduction and reallocation of LMPD’s current budget and a move toward divestment in police and investment in the appropriate first responders. Nurses, psychologists, and social workers are better equipped than police to handle belligerent patients, homeless people, and those with mental illness. They do it every day. And they do it without lethal force.”

Policing in America and Louisville is changing. That’s a fact. LMPD’s leadership, union contract, independent oversight, standards, practices and more are already in flux. As both the Budget Equity Assessment and A Path Forward for Louisville explain, our police officers have been burdened with workloads and responsibilities that are beyond the scope of their tools and training – and the result, naturally, has been poor outcomes for everyone involved. It is time to start the process of reassigning some of these tasks – and some of the funding that goes with them – to a broader, more diverse public safety team.

This is not a transformation that can happen overnight, which is why I have proposed a transition plan between now and the end of the Fischer administration, over the next three budgets. FY22 and FY23 are conversations for another time but I am asking this committee to take the first step today and reduce the mayor’s recommended LMPD general fund appropriation from \$178,850,500 to \$169,907,975. That decrease is \$8,942,525 – five percent – still resulting in total funding of \$181,605,675. Last year, this council cut the budgets of more than a dozen different departments and agencies by more than 5% – meanwhile, we added \$360,200 to the police budget.

I have suggested we take this year’s 5% from police recruit classes, Kentucky Derby Festival events and completely divesting from military-style weapons, ammunition and law enforcement equipment. But there are other options, of course – overtime instead of one or two of the recruit classes, for example.

Similarly, I have suggested how to spend the 5% instead: increase community health and social service staffing by 50 workers, double the general fund appropriation for the Office for Safe & Healthy Neighborhoods, reinstate and double the Small Business Development team we cut last year, earmark \$1

million for participatory budgeting to reinvest in black communities and fully fund seasonal pool operations. I understand there is an amendment to support the Louisville Community Grocery, which I applaud, so I would send the rest of the money to jobs for opportunity youth. Again, there is no perfect answer but my math works...

One other item. Last year, this council also cut \$425,000 from the budget that was earmarked for Jefferson Resquared, a beautiful plan to renovate Jefferson Square into the city's premier public plaza. Instead of restoring that funding, which could be used to properly honor both Breonna Taylor and the fallen public servants traditionally recognized in the square, the current budget proposes to spend the near identical amount – \$435,000 – to demolish the historic Odd Fellows Building, owned by the Omni Hotel and subsidized to the tune of \$139 million dollars, way prematurely under local law and according to the development agreement. One day, Metro may be obligated to demolish the building “within a reasonable time following notification from Omni that Omni intends to proceed with the development of the...Parcel,” but at this time the hotel giant has no concrete redevelopment plans whatsoever and the building will still be tied up in administrative and court hearings 365 days from now. The Omni can wait; honoring the citizens and the sacred public space at the center of this historic moment in our community cannot. I am asking you to make that switch in your amendment...

The last 100 days have been unlike anything in our lifetimes and terms in office. The doors to City Hall have been closed. Our chambers have been empty. The demonstrations, emails and phone calls have been disorienting. But we are hearing from the public louder than ever before. We are seeing the problem with our own eyes and in real time. And we are feeling the consequences, all of us. Now, either this body is going to make the next 100 days the beginning of the more peaceful and just society and city of Louisville that we all want, or else 26 other women and men are going to do it for us one day, after the people literally vote tomorrow and in the fall, and again in 2022... I say, let it be us, now.

Thank you very much.