

**Presbyterians for Police Transformation  
Takoma Park Presbyterian Church  
310 Tulip Avenue  
Takoma Park. MD 20912**

**Oral Testimony presented to the County Council  
regarding the 2027 Operating Budget  
April 8, 2026**

Good afternoon, I am Ferd Hoefner testifying on behalf of Presbyterians for Police Transformation, the police reform and racial justice ministry of the Takoma Park Presbyterian Church (TPPC). Since our inception in 2019, we have advocated for mobile crisis outreach teams, civilian oversight of policing, eliminating regular police presence in schools, improved data collection, transparency, and accountability, enhanced de-escalation and anti-bias training, and a shift in certain traffic enforcement activities to traffic agencies.

We support shifting a portion of public funds now going to policing to alternative civilian-led interventions that are less dangerous, more successful at de-escalation and preventing violence, and professionally capable of addressing crises related to mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness. Therefore, we urge the Council to adopt a final FY 2027 budget that transfers sufficient funds from the police department to achieve the following goals:

- increase the number of Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams to, at a minimum, the eight in the proposed budget request from the County Executive;
- fill all current MCOT vacancies;
- ensure that the salaries for therapists and peer counselors are competitive with other local jurisdictions, including by offering hiring bonuses to fill positions more quickly;
- fund the Takoma Park mental health outreach program, originally funded by DHHS via the City's federal ARPA funding but now requiring ongoing county support to replace the expiring federal funding;
- as recommended in the September OLO report, fund dedicated 24/7 telephone staff at the Crisis Center to triage calls and fund a public campaign to increase awareness of our crisis response system; and
- fund a mental health clinician position in the 911 center to assist dispatchers in evaluating and appropriately diverting mental and behavioral health calls.

We congratulate you for making important strides these past few years to improve public safety via increased MCOT funding. A fully robust crisis response system is within sight provided you allocate the necessary dollars now and into the future. Achieving that goal will require the courage to transfer funds by eliminating many of the vacant MCPD positions, ending funding for legal resources that maintain the MOU with the FOP that undermines Anton's Law, reducing weapons purchases that perpetuate a warrior culture, and recognizing that diverting more calls to civilian professional teams necessarily reduces the need for larger MCPD budgets.

We urge you to be courageous in standing up for equity and justice in public safety. Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.