

Millions of people have protested for ending systemic racism and police violence against Black people. How do you understand the relationship of policing and systemic racism? To address systemic racism, how much would you emphasize reforming the police versus reinvesting policing funding elsewhere? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

Reform to our so-called criminal “justice” system in Boston requires that we extract the poisons of white supremacy and systemic racism from institutions, including the Boston Police Department (BPD). It’s clear that our systems of public safety aren’t keeping every community safe. Our nationwide and citywide reckoning with racial injustice demands that we drive forward structural change. We need to ground public safety in public health. By taking a public health approach we can use our resources as a city to enable health, community well being, and dismantle the systems of racist oppression that disproportionately impact Black and Latinx communities.

Budget Priorities

According to a June 2021 poll by Suffolk University and the Boston Globe, 60% of Boston voters supported taking funding from police and using that funding for social services, compared to 31% of voters who were opposed. The Boston Police Department’s spending has been over \$399 million since fiscal year 2017-2018. The police have advocated for additional staffing and funds. This year many groups and residents advocated to cut the BPD budget by \$120 million or 30%.

Do you support divesting a portion of the Boston Police budget to put towards social services and community wellness? *

Yes

No

If yes, how much of the current \$400 million police budget would you cut? Please give a numeric answer in millions. (If you answered no to the previous question, enter 0.) *

0

Local, grassroots organizations led by people impacted by police violence, are calling locally and nationally for funding to support transformative approaches to harm, violence, and crisis in our neighborhoods that relies on community members, their relationships and mutuality, rather than a reliance on the police force.

Do you support funding a community-led initiative for transformative justice that focuses on community wellness and safety, completely disconnected from law enforcement? *

Yes

No

If yes, how much funding from the city budget would you put towards this community-led initiative? Please give a numeric answer in millions. (If you answered no to the previous question, enter 0.) *

0

Community groups have called for decreasing the number of police, including through a hiring freeze and moving positions out of the police department to social services and other new community initiatives. The police department is calling for increasing the size of the police force. In FY19, FY20, and FY21, there was one police academy class; the current FY22 budget includes two police academy classes for a total of 250 potential new officers, one beginning in the summer of 2021 and one beginning in early 2022.

Would you support a hiring freeze for BPD (i.e. no new classes) from Nov. 2021-Jun 2023? *

Yes

No

What is your position on the number of police officers that there should be compared to the current size of the police force, and what is your plan for reaching your goals for the size of the police force? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

Rather than thinking about the right number of police officers in a vacuum, I'm eager to have conversations with all stakeholders to determine the appropriate roles and staffing levels across our entire ecosystem of public safety and public health infrastructure. I've been leading the charge to create an alternative crisis response team, moving calls related to substance use disorder, homelessness and mental illness out of the BPD's purview. My blueprint for police reform also includes removing sworn officers from purely administrative positions, freeing up resources that can be reinvested in the community.

A report from the ACLU of Massachusetts argues that there has been no relationship between spending on overtime and the size of the force for at least 20 years. The Boston Police Department has advocated for increasing hiring to address their consistent overspending on the overtime budget. What will you do to address the issue of BPD exceeding its overtime budget? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

Reducing wasteful overtime spending is necessary not only to free up resources to be re-invested in the community, but also to begin to rebuild trust with the community after a series of scandals related to overtime fraud. The next police union contract must establish procedures to minimize routine overtime, including eliminating the 4-hour minimum court appearance policy and building in transparency around decision-making for assigning overtime shifts for large public events. In addition to wholesale overtime reform, I also support individual caps on overtime pay to prevent the most egregious abuses and build a new culture of accountability.

Between 2017 and 2020, police collectively earned on average just under \$27 million each year working just construction details—roughly the size of the entire Parks Department budget. In addition, the Boston Police Department testified last year that they fill only roughly half of all requested details. While the average BPD employee working details earned about \$17,000 last year, a budget of between \$25 and \$50 million could create hundreds of full-time, union jobs. If you had complete control of construction details, who would you want working construction details and what department in the city should handle them? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

We need to ensure we're able to fill all the requests for construction details, and I support creating a workforce development pipeline for civilians stepping into this role to close that gap and create good jobs for Boston residents. It's not sustainable from a financial or public safety perspective for officers to consider construction details an essential part of supplementing their income. We also need to reform how details are assigned by removing sworn officers from this administrative role.

Open response: please share any additional thoughts or explanations for your answers from this section. (Word Limit: 100 Words)

No candidate can honestly commit to reinvesting a specific dollar amount from the BPD budget into community services, because true reform necessarily runs through the police union contract. I'm the only candidate to lay out a blueprint for how I will approach collective bargaining with the police unions to get to the root of the cultural and systemic changes we need at BPD – full transparency and true accountability for misconduct; reducing wasteful overtime spending to reinvest those funds in neighborhood-level services; and removing certain functions from the department's purview.

Militarization & Surveillance

The Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) was established in 2005 by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to reduce crime and prevent terrorism, and includes representatives from DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). BRIC administers the gang database and runs the Real Time Crime Center. BRIC collects and shares information between the Metro Boston Homeland Security Regional (MBHSR) communities, private-sector stakeholders, universities, and state- and Federal-level partners. MBHSR includes Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Quincy, Revere, Somerville, and Winthrop.

Many community members and organizations have advocated for abolishing the gang database because of its racial disparities and the impact it has on Black and Brown people in Boston. Do you support abolishing the gang database? *

Yes

No

BRIC officers and analysts have advocated for additional staffing and funding to support the Real Time Crime Center, which includes surveillance feeds from at least 750 cameras across Boston. The BRIC is capable of accessing camera footage from the Boston Transportation Department, the MBTA and the Boston Housing Authority. According to Stanford University, Boston has the highest density of surveillance cameras of large American cities. Many Bostonians don't know that these cameras exist and feed to a surveillance center that connects local, state, and federal law enforcement.

Do you support eliminating the Real Time Crime Center? *

Yes

No

What is your stance on BPD's use of surveillance technology, including cameras, license plate readers, and ShotSpotter? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

I'm proud to have worked in partnership with a broad coalition of activists and advocates for more than four years to pass legislation banning the use of racially discriminatory facial recognition technology. We're continuing that work on the City Council to ensure community oversight and accountability for the use of surveillance technology at BPD and throughout City government. It takes a foundation of trust to strengthen communities, and Boston should be a leader in setting policies for privacy, transparency, accountability, and community oversight over what technologies are used and how.

During 2014-2016, BRIC surveilled social media targeting Muslims for using common terms like ummah (community) and Black activists using #BlackLivesMatter. Former City Councilor Tito Jackson had a facebook post on racial inequality included in BRIC's surveillance. BRIC's impact on Black, Muslim and Immigrant Bostonians has led to many community organizations advocating to abolish the BRIC. Do you support abolishing the BRIC? *

Yes

No

BRIC is just one of the two fusion centers in Massachusetts, the other one being the Commonwealth Fusion Center. Fusion centers were created by DHS to facilitate information sharing between law enforcement agencies at all levels. What is your stance on BPD's participation in the Commonwealth Fusion Center? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

I support eliminating BRIC and discriminatory practices and was proud to be part of a unanimous City Council vote in passing the Trust Act, prohibiting BPD from enforcing ICE civil detainer requests. I've been working to pass a surveillance oversight ordinance that places additional limits on information sharing between BPS school resource officers and the BRIC to protect immigrant students and their families. I have also been vocal about supporting the Safe Communities Act to prohibit law enforcement agencies from participating in any discriminatory registry and enhance due process for immigrants.

Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF) are run by the FBI in 106 cities across the US, including Boston. At least five cities have pulled out of task forces since 2017 due to issues of transparency in leadership and accountability to local protocols on police conduct. These officers are authorized FBI agents and don't have to abide by local law enforcement regulations, making them immune to civilian lawsuits (e.g. the FBI can investigate anyone with no criminal predicate). JTTFs often impact Muslims through unexpected and intimidating interrogations at their homes. Community groups have advocated for ending the Boston JTTF. Do you support ending Boston Police participation in the Joint Terrorism Task Force? *

Yes

No

Since 2003, the Anti-Defamation League has sent delegations of law enforcement officers from the US to Israel for a counter-terrorism training to learn from the Israel National Police and Israel Defense Forces. Organizations in the US, like Jewish Voice for Peace, have called for an end to these exchanges where local and federal law enforcement learn “worst practices.” Durham, North Carolina became the first city to ban its police from training with foreign security forces and in that same year, Northampton canceled its police chief’s plans to attend the ADL sponsored trip. Would you ban the Boston Police Department from participating in foreign security trainings, including these ADL sponsored trips to Israel and similar counterterrorism trainings? *

Yes

No

Open response: please share any additional thoughts or explanations for your answers from this section. (Word Limit: 100 Words)

I’ve led the fight on the City Council to demilitarize the BPD, beginning with requiring a comprehensive accounting of all military-style equipment in the BPD’s possession and transparency around when and how these weapons are deployed. After an outsized police response to community protests against police violence in 2020, I filed a 17F order requiring the Walsh administration to provide a full inventory of the BPD’s militarized equipment, such as sniper rifles and grenades; records and footage related to ‘no-knock’ warrants; and the results of internal affairs investigations into use-of-force complaints filed against BPD officers.

Police Contract

The next mayor will have a major role in negotiating new contracts with all the major police collective bargaining units, whose contracts all expired in 2020. Most of the major initiatives relating to public safety in Boston—including alternative emergency response, civilianizing construction details, and controlling overtime in the BPD—will depend on the results of these negotiations. If you are mayor, how do you envision involving the community in the contract process, which has traditionally been conducted entirely out of public view? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

We need structural changes that go beyond announcements or goals, and instead are embedded in the collective bargaining agreements with the City. As Mayor, I'll make regular updates to the public about the timeline for renegotiating and finalizing collective bargaining agreements so that the City Council and community members have meaningful ways to weigh in. And I'll ensure that the next contract explicitly mandates regular, proactive reporting of data on use-of-force, FIOs, arrests, complaints, search warrants, and warrantless searches and seizures disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and zip code data to enable public accountability and trust.

Schools & Youth

Boston Public Schools is currently in the process of changing some aspects of their school policing program (previously named the Boston School Police), while keeping much of the program structure and funding intact. Some of these changes include shifting to newly designed plainclothes uniforms and renaming the program. School police also had their powers reduced because of the police reform law passed by the state legislature in 2020. An alternative vision for school safety is that holistic approaches such as school counselors and restorative justice programs are under-resourced, and that the school police program should be completely eliminated in favor of expanding and creating programs with no basis in law enforcement.

Do you support eliminating the current school police program and replacing it with safety and wellness initiatives based on a community- and student-led planning process with no basis in law enforcement? *

Yes

No

Describe your vision for maintaining, changing, eliminating, or replacing the current school police program, and how community and students would be part of planning safety and wellness initiatives in schools. (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

We must follow the lead of youth organizers who have been calling for an end to the criminalization of students, including by removing SROs and metal detectors from school buildings. To commit to safety and wellness in schools, we need to invest in mental and behavioral healthcare, trauma supports, and programs like BAM and WOW that teach emotional wellbeing and conflict resolution. The design of all of these programs must be driven by students, guardians and educators so that all BPS students have learning environments that are safe and supportive.

The Boston Police department runs a number of programs and initiatives to engage community members, including an ice cream truck, fishing with young people, National Night Out, and youth jobs based out of the police department. Previously, Boston police participated in a community policing program called Youth and Police Initiative Plus, which targeted Somali youth based on the racist and Islamophobic assumption that they are prone to becoming violent. Due to community advocacy, the BPD ended their participation in this program but continues to control funding for youth programs or engage other youth who are deemed “at-risk” of becoming violent through Shannon grants, Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI), the Youth Violence Strike Force (aka the gang unit) and other initiatives.

What is your stance on police officers engaging youth, especially minors, through this type of programming? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

It is crucial that Boston’s youth have autonomy over their level of engagement with law enforcement and the manner in which they feel safely and comfortably able to interact. This also means that young people deserve a say in how funds are spent within their neighborhoods, as community policing is effective only when the community has tangible power in decision-making. We need full transparency around all BPD-involved youth programs, including those funded by external grants, to ensure that the public has a voice and an opportunity to design public safety programs in their communities.

Would you support moving funds from these initiatives to community-led and youth-led violence prevention work where police are not involved or do not control the funding? *

Yes

No

Open response: please share any additional thoughts or explanations for your answers from this section. (Word Limit: 100 Words)

Healthcare and Crisis Response

According to a recent report from Citizens for Juvenile Justice, over 75% of incidents that the Boston Police respond to are not “violent.” This includes a wide variety of incidents, from animal incidents (dog bites, lost dogs, etc) to verbal disputes between Bostonians. About 6.5% of all incidents are “sick assists” which include mental health incidents. The city of Boston is currently developing alternative ways to respond to mental health crises. The current plan from Health and Human Services is to (1) enhance BPD’s current collaboration with Boston Medical Center clinicians, aka the BEST team; (2) to establish a new co-response team with clinicians and EMTs; and (3) to fund a community led process to establish a community-led response.

Do you support establishing non-police response to mental health crises? *

Yes

No

Do you support establishing non-police response to a larger set of incidents beyond mental health crises? *

Yes

No

Of the three models that Boston is currently pursuing for responding to mental health crises (listed above), which would you put the most emphasis on? *

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3

In a two week period in July three people died in the Suffolk County House of Correction at South Bay. One of these three was a woman who died in a holding cell after being involuntarily, civilly committed for substance use disorder, under the Commonwealth's G.L. c. 123, Section 35. The Boston Police Department will, among other methods, use Section 35s when confronting people with substance use disorder. How do you think the city should use its resources to confront the overdose crisis and what initiatives, such as safe injection sites or improved options for treatment, would you pursue to ensure that the city takes an equitable and effective public health approach to the overdose crisis? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

Criminalization has failed as a response to public health crises. Our approach to the overlapping public health crises of homelessness, substance use disorder, and mental illness must recognize the dignity of every single Boston resident. We urgently need investment in outreach workers and care coordinators to connect people with medical care, housing resources, legal aid, and other essential support services, and we need to expand access to medication-assisted treatment at community health centers. We need to take every action to prevent overdoses and save lives, with treatment and harm reduction services that are integrated into our broader public health infrastructure.

Thousands of people are arrested each year in the City of Boston for minor offenses like driving without a license, drug possession, and disorderly conduct. In turn, police involvement in actions like traffic stops and the Field Investigation Observation program have been shown to disproportionately affect Black people. As reported in the Boston Globe, a recent study has found that “not prosecuting low-level crimes was more successful in directing nonviolent offenders away from the criminal justice system.” Rachael Rollins has sought to pursue such a policy for many low-level offenses during her term, but she has now been nominated to be a U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts. Regardless of who the new District Attorney may be, to what extent would you want the police and the legal system involved in managing these low-level offenses? And what policies would you want your Police Commissioner and the Department of Health and Human Services to enact to approach these issues? (Word Limit: 100 Words) *

The role of police commissioner is one of the most impactful positions in the city, and we need a leader who can build trust with our communities to deliver deep structural and cultural reforms. I've been leading the push on the City Council to create an alternative crisis response program led by public health professionals, removing calls related to substance use, homelessness, and mental illness from the BPD's purview, and as Mayor, I will lead a comprehensive vetting process and national search to engage our communities in choosing a permanent police commissioner who is committed to this public health approach.

Open response: please share any additional thoughts or explanations for your answers from this section. (Word Limit: 100 Words)

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