

**From:** [Andrea Zians](#)  
**To:** [Stevenson, Kirsten](#)  
**Subject:** letter regarding defunding the police  
**Date:** Thursday, September 10, 2020 6:28:00 AM

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I have been asked to direct my letter to both city council and to the police services board. See below:

I am writing to voice my concerns about defunding the police. For starters, I would like to say that I am neither for nor against divesting funds to other sources. My concern at the present moment is that the issue at hand is being debated and at risk of immediate action without proper analysis, debate and research.

Instead of putting our chief of police in the hot seat, asking him to defend his current department, I ask the following of our city officials:

1. Do you have any **empirical** data which determines that police brutality and systemic racism exists in our Hamilton police department? If yes, to what extent does it exist and is defunding the police the only solution to it? Are there alternatives that have been looked at (increasing partnerships like COAST, additional training) that would be a better use of resources and preserve the safety of our community?

2. Do you have a plan to replace crucial police services? How will you address all the areas of society that will be affected by cuts? Have you done a needs assessment to determine which services should be cut or added? How will you offload some of these services from the police to other service providers? Can these service providers handle this and what will happen if they can't? Do we have any evidence that some of these alternatives will sufficiently replace police services and keep our communities safe?

3. What metrics are you currently using and plan to use to make sure this change is done appropriately and in a safe manner? How extensive is this plan?

My fear is that "Defunding the Police" is a new concept and that city council's entertaining this idea is a reaction to street pressure and sensationalized media. For city officials to make decisions under these circumstances without doing the proper work would be irresponsible and in my opinion quite dangerous.

Unfortunately, our community is familiar with cuts to our fundamental services. I fear that reducing funding to the police force will have many of the same effects that we have seen by reductions to our health care funding. I know I do not need to elaborate because there is not a resident of our city that has not had to wait excessive amounts of time for either emergency treatment or to see a specialist. We also have several Hamiltonians that cannot find a family doctor. How will we make sure that the divesting of funds from the police will not result in our community waiting for emergency response when needed, or that we continue to provide a safe and secure community?

I just want to close by stating that I am grateful to the police for all that they do for our community. They risk their lives on our behalf. They are community stakeholders as well and we really need to make them partners in a better Hamilton instead of vilifying them. We need to make sure that this is not a knee jerk reaction to what is happening across the border. Slow down this process, do some homework, do the right thing, and do it out of concern for our community, don't just scapegoat our police.

Thank you,

Andrea Zians