



Eric T. Costello
Baltimore City Council, 11th District

May 19, 2022

Shantay Jackson
Director
Mayor's Office of Neighborhood and Safety Engagement
100 N Holliday St, Suite 250
Baltimore, MD 21202
Via Email To: shantay.jackson@baltimorecity.gov

Director Jackson,

Thank you for your work and the work of the men and women at the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) on behalf of the City of Baltimore.

The City Council's Ways & Means Committee is preparing to hold FY2023 budget hearings during the week of May 31 – June 07, 2022. The Bureau of Budget and Management Research (BBMR) has already been in touch with representatives from your agency to advise on the format of hearings, your specific date / time slot, and a request for an updated organizational chart along with cell phone numbers for Command Staff (Major and above in rank) and key civilian personnel, to be submitted to BBMR by no later than May 31, 2022. The Ways & Means Committee looks forward to discussing your agency's progress in FY2022 and your proposed plans for FY2023.

At the beginning of this term (December 2020), Mayor Scott tasked MONSE with reducing gun violence by 15% each year. Baltimoreans are painfully aware that for the second year in a row, murders and nonfatal shootings are instead on the rise. This is not sustainable. While I recognize that your focus has been on long term solutions to crime reduction, our City is currently in the midst of an unprecedented wave of violent crime. Citizens in every corner of our City are concerned about violence and we need immediate action along with those longer term solutions you are working to establish. Appropriate levels of funding and staffing have been put in place to start to accomplish this goal.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Additional MONSE Positions - The Mayor committed \$50,300,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for MONSE to triple the size of its staff and to award tens of millions of dollars to non-profits, state agencies, and for-profit companies at your discretion. Despite expending only a small fraction of ARPA funds (\$75k) allocated for the current fiscal year ending in June, MONSE is requesting several budget enhancements from Baltimore City's General Fund for FY2023. In addition, there has been significant growth in positions within MONSE over the past fiscal year.

Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRs) - Perhaps the most critical component of MONSE's work is the GVRs, which MONSE is attempting to pilot in the Western District.



Eric T. Costello
Baltimore City Council, 11th District

Of the \$50 million of ARPA funds allocated to MONSE, \$13,630,000 is earmarked for the GVRS, as reported to the City Council in a hearing on March 30, 2022. GVRS, when implemented effectively, is a proven approach that focuses on group members at the highest risk of being involved in gun violence. It requires strong partnerships for community members to convey powerful anti-violence messages, law enforcement to make credible promises to swiftly hold these group members accountable if they continue to commit violence, and offer outreach and support for individuals who want to stay alive and out of prison, according to the National Network of Safe Communities at John Jay College.

Both MONSE and the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) have repeatedly told the City Council that this intervention is Baltimore's best chance to quickly and substantially reduce gun violence. In June 2019, Commissioner Harrison proposed bringing GVRS to Baltimore in his "5-year Strategic Vision" because he saw first-hand that this strategy reduced group-member involved homicides by 32% in New Orleans. One year later, BPD's "Year One Crime Review" reiterated its comment to the approach, "Among the initiatives that BPD is undertaking to address this violence include the launch of focused deterrence and group violence intervention. Experience with these programs in New Orleans, as well as in other cities where successfully implemented has demonstrated substantial reductions in homicides and gun violence to levels not seen in decades".

In May 2021, MONSE announced a \$1.2 million contract to the nonprofit Youth Advocates Program (YAP) to provide immediate and long-term services to participants of a GVRS pilot in the Western District. The City Council was told that the pilot didn't launch until nine months later when the first custom notification was delivered on January 21, 2022, according to MONSE's agency comment report on City Council Resolution 21-0055R. By March 30, 2022, YAP only successfully contacted six referrals to offer support, according to testimony provided at a City Council hearing on March 30, 2022. Despite MONSE receiving over \$13 million in federal ARPA funds and nearly \$1 million from the local philanthropy community to support GVRS services, zero participants have been offered transitional employment, zero participants have received financial incentives to engage a life coach, and three or fewer individuals received emergency relocation assistance. At this pace, MONSE will fail to even get close to the target it set for itself of enrolling 125 participants in case management services in year one of GVRS.

Core to GVRS is directly communicating with the roughly 700 group members driving gun violence in the Western District. A June 2020 BPD report explained that it planned to re-institute "call-ins" to put these high risk individuals on notice. "After a significant enforcement operation occurs, BPD determines which individuals from the organization or surrounding organizations are on parole or probation but are still active and on the street. After identifying a list of individuals, the Department of Parole and Probation requires them to report to a designated location for the call-in. At the call-in, the United States Attorney, the Baltimore City State's Attorney, the Police Commissioner, and the Mayor all give presentations that emphasize the message of 'putting the guns down' so they can avoid being remanded to prison on a parole or probation violation. The USAO will use other notable takedowns from the past to illustrate the consequences of continuing to participate in future violence" according to the BPD Crime Reduction & Departmental Transformation Plan.



Eric T. Costello
Baltimore City Council, 11th District

To date, zero call-ins have taken place. In the first three months of this year, BPD has visited two individuals to deliver a deterrent threat and five individuals have received a custom notification from both law enforcement and community members. In addition to being concerned that only seven out of the 700 individuals driving the violence in the Western District have been contacted, I'm frustrated by the lack of "notable takedowns" by either the US Attorney's Office or Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office to drive home the message that violence will not be tolerated. BPD has successfully formed a robust unit of officers dedicated to intelligence-driven constitutional policing to support GVRS, but this approach will not be successful unless City Hall fulfills its commitments.

In a September 2021 op-ed in the Afro, Mayor Scott, Commissioner Harrison, and State's Attorney Mosby wrote, "Baltimore has attempted elements of GVRS twice before and failed due to a lack of stability, commitment and coordination among city leaders; we will not allow that to happen again." I'm increasingly concerned that this is exactly what is happening for a third time. The stakes are simply too high.

Citiwatch Cameras -in addition to the record level of funding committed to MONSE through both ARPA and the General Fund, the agency oversees the City's network of approximately ~755 Citiwatch cameras. It has been reported that up to 17% of the City's entire portfolio of cameras are not operating at any given time.

MONSE Coordination - MONSE also plays a critical role in coordination with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Service's Division of Parole and Probation (DPSCS P&P), and staffs the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC).

By no later than June 03, 2022, please provide the following, in writing via email:

1. **ARPA Funding** - a detailed explanation of how the ~\$50 million in funds will be programmed, what funding has been spent and with what outside organizations, what demonstrable outcomes have been achieved to date and what you hope to achieve.
2. **MONSE Job Descriptions** - job descriptions for each authorized position at MONSE, the status (filled or vacant), name of the MONSE employee if currently filled, along with the date the position was created and the date it was filled. Please include the funding source for each position and the length of time that funding source is expected to remain in place.
3. **GVRS - Status** - a complete timeframe for the effective rollout of GVRS in the Western District along with successful demonstration of proof of concept so that it may begin to be scaled Citywide. This should include the total number of residents who received any level of GVRS services along the way, at each and every milestone that one could possibly receive GVRS services.



Eric T. Costello
Baltimore City Council, 11th District

4. Citiwatch Cameras

- a. **Status** - what is the current percentage of Citiwatch cameras that are out of service, how long have they been out of service and who is responsible for repairing them?
 - b. **Notifications** - what is the notification process when a camera is out and how can you improve that process to ensure that the City prioritizes repairs? Does a real-time outage dashboard exist and, if not, can one be created?
 - c. **Expansion** - what are the future expansion plans for the Citiwatch camera system?
5. **Summary of Coordination with DJS, DPSCS P&P, and CJCC** - a complete summary of MONSE's efforts to effectively coordinate with DJS and DPSCS P&P. In addition, a summary of MONSE's efforts to adequately staff the CJCC along with a complete timeline of all activities to date.
6. **Background on Sage Wellness Funding** - during a City Council hearing on May 17, 2022, it was explained that a for-profit entity, Sage Wellness, was being awarded \$750k. This justification was based on their previous "strong performance in previous work with MONSE and its predecessor agency, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice". As requested during the May 17 hearing, please provide documentation of this performance and why the decision was made to make this award.

Should you have questions, please feel free to contact me directly at eric.costello@baltimorecity.gov or 410-396-4816.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric T. Costello".

Eric. T. Costello
Baltimore City Council, 11th District

CC: Honorable City Council President Nick Mosby
Honorable City Council Vice President Sharon Green Middleton, 6th District
Honorable City Council Members
Lawrence Anderson, Chief of Staff to Council President
Bob Cennamo, Director of BBMR
Michael Harrison, Police Commissioner
Michael Huber, Chief of Staff to Mayor
Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations to Mayor
Eric Melancon, Chief of Staff at BPD
Marilyn Mosby, State's Attorney for Baltimore City
Chichi Nyagah-Nash, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Chris Shorter, Chief Administrative Officer
Andy Smullian, Deputy Chief of Staff at BPD
Matt Stegman, Director of Fiscal and Legislative Services to Council President
Nina Themelis, Deputy Director of Government Relations to Mayor
Michelle Wirzberger, Director of Government Relations at BPD