

Hello. My name is Wesley Eplin and I serve as the Director of Health Equity at Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, a policy think tank focused on improving people's health by advancing health equity. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Health & Medicine is a member of the #NoCopAcademy Coalition. I am relaying Health & Medicine's opposition to the City's plan to build a new cop academy. Today, we say, No cop academy!

Under Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago has a pattern of taking resources from programs that help people, and spending more money on policing. This hurts Chicagoans and contributes to violence.

For example, in August of 2016, Mayor Emanuel announced layoffs of 1,000 teachers and support staff at Chicago Public Schools. The next month, the Mayor announced a plan to hire 1,000 new police positions. The message and pattern of disinvestment from social uplift is clear.

The purported reason for police investment is concern about violence. **However, the root causes of violence are items that police do nothing to help control, and some of which they exacerbate. Among these are: poverty, community disinvestment, marginalization of people, and systemic inequity of racism, classism, and sexism.** Moreover, the Chicago Police Department has repeatedly demonstrated itself to be a violent, unjust force, operating with impunity. In January, the US Department of Justice reported in graphic detail the CPD's rampant racism, gender and class inequity, and lack of accountability. **The CPD's violence and disproportionate policing is an attack on the human rights and health of individuals, families, and communities—worsening health inequities. The CPD has worsened violence through their unjust patterns of policing and lack of accountability. We should all be disgusted by and motivated to end this injustice.**

The City of Chicago and CPD have not fixed these problems, instead seeking to hire more police and spend \$95 million on a new cop academy—to say nothing of the hundreds of millions spent on settling police abuse lawsuits in the midst of a litany of scandals. Funding the police academy would be a misuse of the public's funds and a betrayal of our trust in your stewardship and governance.

Communities have protested the CPD's abuse for decades. I guarantee you, each of you has constituents being harmed by the over-investment in and impunity for policing. This also comes at the cost of other investments that would reduce violence and other public health problems.

**Is it necessary to hire more police officers or build a new cop academy? No, absolutely not!** Chicago already has among the highest ratios of police per capita in the US—spending 40% of its corporate fund, roughly \$1.5 billion per year—on police. At what cost? Our schoolchildren don't receive enough support from social workers and other services. Mental health care access for adults and children remains very limited. Large swaths of our city need investment in infrastructure, public services, and jobs.

**Community disinvestment and marginalization create conditions of inequity. Inequitable conditions and forces of oppression are root causes of violence. Spending more money on police and a new cop academy will only worsen these inequities.** Instead of spending on policing, Chicago should focus on achieving fundamental fairness by investing in Chicago communities. Given this, we can judge that the proposal to expend \$95 million on a new cop academy is a foolish one.

To conclude: We demand accountability for the police and divestment from policing. **Health & Medicine urges you to vote against the plan for a new Chicago cop academy. No Cop Academy!**