

*Refund Raleigh Freedom Committee & UE Local 150 Chapters Present:*

## **Divest from Police Injustice & Invest in Economic Justice We Demand a Dignity Wage for City Workers & Community Safety**

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **What is public safety?**

Public safety involves safe-guarding people from disasters, crimes, pitfalls, and threats; ensuring that they can live healthy and productive lives. As you might imagine, public safety means more than just increasing police surveillance. Education, transportation, wages, and healthcare are vital to public safety.

No matter how much money cities direct towards police budgets, we must ask ourselves: are people really safe if they don't have secure homes and clean neighborhoods to return to at night? Are communities really safe if members can't afford to access mental health or substance abuse treatment? Are families really safe if minimum wage workers are paid so little that they can't afford basic household needs?

#### **Why a no-police community safety initiative?**

Raleigh PD has a history of killing and brutalizing people in crisis. Denver's no-police Crisis Response Team responded to 2,700 crisis calls in 6 months, helped community members get to safety, **and led to 0 arrests and no police violence**. Let's bring this resource to Raleigh and keep our community safe!<sup>1</sup>

#### **How much does Raleigh allocate to its police budget?**

Every year more and more money is funneled into Raleigh's police budgets, while community budgets are underfunded. These steady increases include:

- \$99 million in 2017-18
- \$103 million in 2018-19
- Over \$110 million in 2019-20
- And over \$111million in 2020-21.
- \$116 million in 2021-2022.<sup>2</sup> This singular allocation is more than any other item in the entire annual budget of Raleigh — more than affordable housing, infrastructure maintenance, parks, arts and so much more that ensure people in Raleigh thrive.

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<sup>1</sup> "Thousands of calls later, Denver's acclaimed program that provides an alternative to police response is expanding," Denver Post, accessed April 15, 2022, <https://www.denverpost.com/2022/02/20/denver-star-program-expansion/>

<sup>2</sup> "FY21 Proposed Budget." 15 Aug. 2021, <https://cityofraleigh0drupal.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/drupal-prod/COR11/fy21-proposed-budget.pdf>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2021.



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### **Does raising wages impact public safety?**

Studies have shown that raising the minimum wage reduces crime.<sup>3</sup> We know that a lot of “crime” happens because people are trying to do what they can to survive in a system that traps them into jobs with poverty wages, limited-to-no healthcare, and severe lack of resources to support themselves and their family. In 2016, the Council of Economic Advisors, a group that advises the president on national economic policy, found that raising the minimum wage to a mere \$12 an hour could prevent as many as half a million crimes annually.<sup>4</sup> Higher wages for workers has been shown to reduce adolescent crime, property crime, and violent crime. A 10 percent increase in wages for non college educated men, results in a 10 to 20 percent reduction in crime rates, according to economic advisors.<sup>5</sup> Ensuring that people earn dignified wages targets one of the roots of poverty cycles that force people into so-called “crime” in the first place.

### **How do city workers impact public safety?**

Raleigh city workers play a vital role in creating public safety by: (1) cleaning our streets and neighborhoods, (2) operating our youth and afterschool programs, (3) repairing our water lines, sewer lines, and our public buildings, (4) collecting our recycling and solid waste, (5) maintaining our parks and recreation areas, and more. Can you imagine how our city would be if city workers didn’t provide these services? By paying all of its workers a living wage, regardless of educational degrees and status, Raleigh can set an example for other employers and invest in public safety.

### **Is Raleigh an expensive city to live in?**

Raleigh is the most expensive city in North Carolina.<sup>6</sup> Raleigh residents can live off of \$13 an hour if they are single with no children. However, single parents with just one child need at least \$26.02 an hour to live comfortably. A single parent of two needs an annual income of \$60,000 (\$30 per hour) to make ends meet. Even if there are two working adults in the household with just one child, both adults need to make at least \$14.38 an hour to live comfortably.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the average home price in Raleigh has increased to over \$300,000.<sup>8</sup> The average rent is \$1,224, which is a 53% increase from 2010.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Raising the Minimum Wage to Reduce the Crime Rate: A New ...." 3 May. 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/05/raise-the-minimum-wage-reduce-crime/480912/>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2020.

<sup>4</sup> "Obama's advisers just revealed an unconventional solution to mass ...." 25 Apr. 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/04/25/how-to-reduce-crime-without-courts-or-prisons/>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2021.

<sup>5</sup> "Raising the Minimum Wage to Reduce the Crime Rate ... - The Atlantic." 3 May. 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/05/raise-the-minimum-wage-reduce-crime/480912/>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2021.

<sup>6</sup> "Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Raleigh, NC." <https://livingwage.mit.edu/metros/39580>. Accessed 18 Feb. 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "Raleigh NC Home Prices & Home Values | Zillow." <https://www.zillow.com/raleigh-nc/home-values/>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2020.

<sup>9</sup> "How much have rent prices increased in Raleigh this decade ...." 18 Dec. 2019, <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article238511623.html>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2020.



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### **Hasn't Raleigh already raised its minimum wage?**

In January of 2017, Raleigh approved a “living wage” policy that gave its lowest paid workers a 14.5% raise, from \$12.01 an hour to \$13.76 (or \$28,621 a year).<sup>10</sup> The wage is supposed to be recalculated every year, but we’ve seen that the wages of lowest paid workers remain largely unchanged, despite the ever-increasing cost of living. In 2017, one living wage calculator offered by city staff found that city workers needed \$15.26 an hour to live comfortably in Raleigh. Despite these findings, City leaders decided to deduct \$1.50 from the calculation, determining that workers didn’t need the full amount since the city offered them health care benefits.<sup>11</sup> We know that the City isn’t going to reassess & raise wages without demands from city workers and community supporters, therefore we must support calls to divest from police budgets and invest in living wages.

### **Why \$22 per hour?**

Some will argue against raising wages by saying that \$22 an hour is an unachievable goal. At one point, similar arguments were used against fast food workers who demanded \$15 an hour. Fast food workers began organizing 8 years ago and \$15 is just now finally being embraced by public officials.<sup>12</sup> Even further, after living wage policies are adopted, the wage increases often take three to five years to phase in. During this time, the cost of living continues to rise, so that the new wages may be inadequate when they are finally implemented. Meanwhile, the minimum wage for city workers has remained stagnant at \$13.76 an hour.<sup>13</sup> If it chose to, Raleigh could allocate a portion of its huge police budget towards living wages, transportation, education, and more. For less than a fifth of the 2020-21 police budget, Raleigh could provide all of its workers with a \$22/hr minimum wage. Ensuring that all of its employees can live in the city that they work for.

### **Why not other reforms? How would divesting from police and investing in our workers make us safer in Raleigh?**

#### **Policing does not address the root causes of our unequal society, but ultimately reinforces them:**

Community members cannot live safe and dignified lives without quality jobs, housing, food, and education. Investing and strengthening the police is a way to criminalize and punish those who are victims of the racist, capitalist, and patriarchal system that governs our communities. Defunding and reallocating funds is a way of dismantling an institution that protects and maintains a system rooted in dispossession and enslavement.

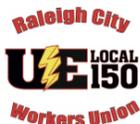
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<sup>10</sup> "Living wage ordinance offers raises for Raleigh ... - WRAL.com." 17 Jan. 2017, <https://www.wral.com/raleigh-adopts-living-wage-ordinance/16443133/>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.

<sup>11</sup> "Raleigh adopts 'living wage' - Raleigh News & Observer." 17 Jan. 2017, <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/counties/wake-county/raleigh-report-blog/article127017229.html>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.

<sup>12</sup> "About Us - Fight for \$15 - FightFor15.org." <https://fightfor15.org/about-us/>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.

<sup>13</sup> "Living wage ordinance offers raises for Raleigh employees :: WRAL ...." 17 Jan. 2017, <https://www.wral.com/raleigh-adopts-living-wage-ordinance/16443133/>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2021.



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**It is a myth that increasing policing significantly lowers crime rates:** [Many experts have concluded there is no evidence to suggest that higher rates of policing lower crime rates.](#) The “Government Accountability Office concluded that while there was a 26 percent decline in overall crime from 1993 to 2000, only 1.3 percent of the decline could be attributed to additional police officers.

**Our reality calls us to move beyond demanding implicit bias training for police:** [While countless studies reveal that implicit bias](#) is rampant in police departments and implicit bias determines which communities are [over-policed and victimized by police](#), there is little to no evidence that implicit bias training and community relations initiatives actually help. [Many of these reforms had been implemented in Minneapolis before George Floyd was murdered by police.](#)

We know that in the history of this country, **“criminality” has always been crucial to racist and anti-Black narratives to justify brutalizing, imprisoning, and killing Black people:** In fact, police themselves were invented as a [“method of control to enforce and protect a key economic foundation in the development of American \(and global\) capitalism: slavery.”](#) In Southern States specifically — like North Carolina — police originally emerged as slave patrols. Therefore, the notion of crime and Black criminality is entirely seeped in white supremacist legacies and anti- Black stories. Not only do we know that stories about crime, police, law and order are all about stoking racist fear, but we also know that when we invest in our communities instead, “crime” decreases. In order to effectively “fight crime” we must reject the idea that police keep our communities safe. Our community benefits from more jobs, educational opportunities, community centers, and general and mental health resources.

### **What do we do when we are in crisis or in danger? What happens then?**

**Our first answer to this question is to consider how the current system of police, prisons, and punishment does not work to keep us safe in the first place.** Therefore, we’ve never been able to rely on them to really answer the call to keep us safe from crisis or danger. Let’s do the work of imagining true safety together.

**Police don’t spend most of their time fighting ‘crime’ and ‘putting away the bad guys’ the way we have been told they do. They’re actually really bad at it:** As Mariame Kamba [explains](#): they “spend most of their time responding to noise complaints, issuing parking and traffic citations, and dealing with other noncriminal issues.” According to a [review](#) of 10 major city police departments done by the *New York Times*, “serious violent crimes made up around 1 percent of all calls for services.” [Another report](#) shows that of the 10.6 million arrests made by police yearly, only 5% are for violent offenses — and the arrests for non-violent and low-level offenses are disproportionately of Black and Brown people.

**What about violent crime?** We know that [only around 40%](#) of crime victims report to the police what they experienced, and only about 25% percent of those reported crimes are “cleared by arrests.” The rates for ‘solving’ murders is similarly dismal. Nationally, [only about 60%](#) of murder cases are cleared, and that [rate drops to 45%](#) when it’s gun-involved homicide.



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**What about rape and sexual violence?** We know the current system of police, punishment, and prisons has done very little to curb sexual violence and rape culture. [Less than 25%](#) of sexual violence cases get reported to the police in the first place. While we know there are many reasons survivors don't report their experiences of sexual violence, [13% cite fear](#) "that the police could not or would not do anything to help." Survivors' distrust that the criminal punishment system will do little to keep those who harmed them away is fair: only around 2% of sexual assault cases get a felony conviction. To add insult to injury, police themselves are found to commit sexual assault and domestic violence at alarming rates — [around 40% of officers](#) have intimate partner violence in their households, compared to the 10% of the public. Police officers have also been found to commit [troubling rates](#) of sexual misconduct on the job. Ultimately, police and punishment do little to stop sexual violence, and have instead been known to commit egregious forms of sexual violence.