



**Testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Finance
Preliminary Budget Hearing**

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Good afternoon Chairperson Dromm and committee members, my name is Ashley C. Sawyer and I am the Senior Director of Campaigns at Girls for Gender Equity. Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) is a Brooklyn-based, national policy and youth development organization that advocates to remove the systemic barriers which prevent cisgender and transgender girls and gender non-conforming youth of color from leading self-determined lives.

The past year has been one of the most tumultuous and challenging years for people all over the world, including youth of color. Now, more than ever, communities of color, especially Black communities, are looking to people with power to make budget choices that reflect a commitment to justice, equity, and healing. With that in mind, it is painful to imagine what will become of New York City, if this year's budget does not *dramatically* invest in city agencies and programs which allow young people to rebuild after a year of upheaval. [Last year, we provided research indicating the devastating impact](#) of an austerity budget that intended to cut youth employment and gave the School Safety Division of the NYPD their largest budget in history. Once again, we are imploring this committee to ensure that the City's budget invests in schools, youth employment, and community development in a manner that meets the current need.



As a gender equity and racial justice organization we also know that if New York City continues to pour resources into policing and surveillance, it will only exacerbate racial disparities and the violence that Black and Latinx communities experience. Our data show that Black girls make up a disproportionate percentage of the students who are arrested in schools, and are overrepresented in every area where police data is collected. [Across the country](#), students have been forced to witness brutality at the hands of school police, in the past month alone, there have been two “viral” moments where Black girls were assaulted by school police, including one where a student was tossed to the ground and made unconscious. In New York specifically, [Black girls were 57% of all school police interventions involving girls](#) despite the fact that Black girls are only 25% of the student population.

The presence of school police exacerbates what is known as the “school-to-prison-pipeline” or school pushout, and further entrenches these racial disparities. Policing is harmful both in and around schools, our analysis of the more recent CCRB data shows that [girls of color are disproportionately impacted by NYPD misconduct](#). For these reasons we are imploring this body to ensure that this year’s budget does not further these inequities. To be clear, **we are in complete opposition to the hiring of 475 new school police and call on Council to block the rollout of this plan – set to begin in March – as well as question the Mayor’s Office and Management and Budget – said to be in talks with the NYPD – on their misaligned priorities. For this coming fiscal year, we are again calling for the complete divestment from the School Safety Division of the NYPD, and the reallocation of those resources into education ([community schools](#) and deeply-rooted restorative programs), and community-based supports for young people.** We are opposed to any budget that allows the School Safety Division to continue to grow while schools are forced to do even more with less.



Thank you councilmembers for your dedication and responsiveness to these critical issues. We look forward to continuing this conversation and offering our expertise as you enter into the budget negotiation process.