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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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March 1, 2023
Start: 10:19 a.m.
Recess: 3:08 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Kamillah Hanks,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Joann Ariola
- Erik D. Bottcher
- Justin L. Brannan
- Tiffany Cabán
- Carmen N. De La Rosa
- Robert F. Holden
- Rita C. Joseph
- Darlene Mealy
- Althea V. Stevens
- Alexa Aviles
- Shahana Hanif
- Chi Ossé
- Julie Won
- Jennifer Gutiérrez
- Public Advocate Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S

Arva Rice
Interim Chair of the Civilian Complaint Review
Board

Jonathan Darche
Executive Director of the Civilian Complaint
Review Board

Isabelle Leyva
NYCLU

Rebecca Phipps
New York Defender Services

Gina Mitchell
Queens Defenders

Andrew Case
Supervising Attorney at Latino Justice PRLDEF

Rigodis Appling
Public Defender with the Cop Accountability
Project of Legal Aid Society

Jackie Gosdigian
Brooklyn Defender Services

Antoni Albergotti
Court Administrative Student Certified by the
State of New Jersey Judiciary

Ibrahim X.
Crown Heights Brooklyn New York

Margot Barrat
Representing self

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Lori Kim Alexander
Representing self

Toff Biafongenber
Southeast Asian Abolitionist

Kimberly Bernard
Activist and Organizer

Jay Walker
Queer Liberation March

Julie Bowen
NYCFAR

Ariana B.
Representing self

Adelina Serrato
Representing self

Phil Campbell
Photography Teacher, I am a Journalist and I'm a
student at Hunter College

Maximilian Clark
Patriots

Sophia Costanzi
Bronx Native, Theatre Artist and Musician

Walter Ditman
Representing self

Miriam Fischer
Representing resident of NYC

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

1
2
3 Chanelle Gandhari
4 Representing self

5 Melody Garcia
6 NYCLU

7 Jon McFarlane
8 Representing self

9 Michael Genese
10 Representing self

11 Alfredo Gil
12 Speaking on behalf of migrants who were recently
13 terrorized by the SRG

14 Jeremy Burton
15 Center for Constitutional Rights

16 Terrell Harper
17 Representing self

18 David Jenkins
19 Representing self

20 Christopher Leon Johnson
21 Representing self

22 Griffin Jones
23 Representing self

24 Eden King
25 Representing self

Deven Krishnaswamy
Representing self

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

1
2
3 Jose Lasalle
4 Founder and Leader of a group called Copwatch
5 Patrol

6 Brenna Lipset
7 Representing self

8 Jon McCarry
9 Retired NYPD Lieutenant

10 Eileen Mayor Maher
11 Vocal New York

12 Walter Masterson
13 Speaking for NYPD

14 Julian Miranda
15 Representing self

16 Luis Mejia
17 Representing self

18 Lauren Molina
19 ACLU

20 Trulie Nix
21 Harlem NYC

22 Irvinia Moody
23 30 years at NASA

24 Alexandra N.
25 Representing self

26 Joanna Smith
27 Past officer of my local NYPD Precinct Community
28 Council

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Elissa Paskin

Witness to a lot of progress in the Gay Rights
Movement

Milton Perez

From the Bronx Puerto Rico

Hannah Carlin

Representing self

Kelly Grace Price

Close Rosie's

Micah Phillips

Representing self

Rick

Testifying for Ashwin Rastogi

Garon Scott

Representing self

Sarah Sitzler

Representing self

Jessie Spellman

Representing the people

Jeff Strabone

Former Vice Chair of Community Board 6 in
Brooklyn

Kelly Young

Vocal New York

Christopher Morris Perry

Representing self

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Lovelle Shaw
Representing Christopher Morris Perry

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Testing, testing. Today's
3 hearing is on Public Safety. Today's date is March
4 1, 2023. The location is the Chambers. Recorded by
5 Walter Lewis.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Welcome to the
7 Committee on Public Safety. At this time, please
8 place your phone on vibrate or silent mode. Thank
9 you for your cooperation. Chair, we are ready to
10 begin.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: [GAVEL] Good morning
12 everyone. I am Council Member Kamillah Hanks and I
13 am Chair of the Committee on Public Safety and I am
14 joined today by Council Member Ossè, Bottcher, Won,
15 Joseph, Brannan, Cabàn, Hanif and Avilès. We are
16 also joined by Public Advocate Jumaane Williams.

17 I want to note for the record. The NYPD was
18 invited to testify but has since submitted a written
19 statement that will be available to members of my
20 Council Members and the public. It was also
21 submitted for the record. I agree.

22 Okay, I look forward today to today's hearing
23 where our Committee will seek to examine NYPD's
24 Strategic Response Group also known as SRG.
25 According to NYPD, the mission of SRG is three-fold.

1
2 The first is to deploy the targeted areas to suppress
3 street violence through implementation of effective
4 crime control strategies and second, is to respond to
5 citywide mobilizations, civil disorders and major
6 events to maintain public order.

7 And lastly, the SRG seeks to support the
8 emergency service unit in responding to active
9 shooter and terrorist events. In recent years, SRG
10 has evolved and expanded and is now serving as one of
11 the departments primary response tactics, large
12 scale, political protests and incidents of civil
13 disobedience. More recently, the SRG has played a
14 central role in the NYPD's disorder control strategy
15 providing tactical support to the department's
16 efforts to clear homelessness entrapments throughout
17 the city and maintain order at protests around
18 reproductive clinics and other political gathering.

19 Soon after its inception, advocates began
20 criticizing SRG and characterizing the unit as
21 dangerous and unaccountable arm of the NYPD. More
22 specifically, their criticism highlighted the
23 misconduct of records of certain officers assigned to
24 the unit. Allegations of NYPD deployment of SRG to
25

1 peaceful protect and demonstrations and the use of
2 controversial crowd control tactics.

3
4 Most notably, SRG was deployed in response to the
5 2020 George Floyd protest where SRG officers were
6 heavily involved in the departments protest response.
7 Since these protests occurred in 2020, the CCRB has
8 received at least 18 complaints against SRG officers
9 while it continues to investigate more than 750
10 complaints of police misconduct related to George
11 Floyd protests.

12 These instances of CCRB reviews the complaints
13 against SRG officers is especially concerning
14 considered that in 2014, a year before the SRG's
15 inception, the city agreed to pay \$748,000 to settle
16 a lawsuit by Black Lives Matter protestors who said,
17 NYPD illegally demonstrators using similar tactics to
18 those used by today's SRG group.

19 It is essential therefore that NYPD's response to
20 protest and civil unrest strike a proper balance
21 between protecting free speech and public safety.
22 Today's hearing will provide the Public Safety
23 Committee an opportunity to seek the much-needed
24 transparency regarding the scope of the units work
25 and its tactics. This Committee looks forward to

1 hearing public testimony on this important subject.

2 The advocates, members of the public, others as they
3 voice their experiences with SRG.

4
5 For the record, again, the NYPD was invited to
6 testify and this Committee will submit written
7 questions to the Department and expects a prompt
8 response. Council Members are also invited to raise
9 specific questions that we will present to the
10 Administration and with that, I will hand it over.

11 And thank you to my staff, my Council Staff Josh
12 Kingsley.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you everyone. We're
14 going to begin with testimony from CCRB but before we
15 do, Public Advocate Williams was going to make a
16 statement and then we'll turn it over to the
17 Administration.

18 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you very much.
19 My name is Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate of New
20 York. I want to thank Chair Hanks and the members of
21 the Committee on Public Safety for holding this very
22 important hearing. I also want to allow myself to
23 some of the comments of the Chair. Particularly with
24 the Administration and NYPD not being here. I held
25 out hope that they would. I think it is shameful and

1
2 in a front to this Council and to New York City as a
3 whole. I understand that there are some legal
4 concerns. I do think just being present, even if it
5 was to read the statement you submitted, would have
6 shown some respect to the process and having this
7 conversation in a public forum.

8 In 2015, the NYPD formed the Strategic Response
9 Group or SRG to combat terrorism. This is voluntary
10 unit that has attracted officers who reportedly
11 wanted to see "more action." And stand with riot and
12 heavy weaponry including military grade, long range
13 acoustic devices, also called LRAD's and machine
14 guns. Originally, the unit was to consist of 350
15 officers with a budget of \$13 million. Quickly that
16 ballooned to more than 700 officers with nearly \$90
17 million in funds including \$10.2 million in overtime
18 last year alone. The SRG's involvement in policing
19 protests as we have seen unfortunately, seem to be
20 more about suppression of speech and assembly and
21 less about keeping everyone safe.

22 Following criticism of the SRG potentially
23 policing large protests, the NYPD claimed in 2015
24 that an SRG would not be involved in covering
25

1
2 protests. However, the NYPD began deploying the SRG
3 to protests later that year.

4 The results are the SRG's presence at protests
5 have been aggressive and chaotic and have invariably
6 escalated non-violent protest into dangerous and
7 violent environments. The SRG beat protestors with
8 batons, sprayed crowds with pepper spray and rammed
9 into protestors on their bikes and trapped protestors
10 using barriers such as shields, bikes and metal gates
11 with no way for people to escape, a tactic known as
12 kettling and blast the crowds with noise cannons. I
13 myself have had the brunt of all responsive protests,
14 several protests including SRG, including at Occupy
15 Wall Street and at the George Floyd protest of 2020.
16 I've also filmed and witnessed.

17 Many SRG unit members have multiple misconduct
18 complaints against them of the 62 SRG officers and
19 supervisors identified by the appeal and videos from
20 2020 protests. 46 SRG members and 292 misconduct
21 allegations filed against them with the Civilian
22 Complaint Review Board or CCRB.

23 These complaints included abusive authority,
24 excessive force, offensive language and discourtesy.
25 Considering this history, the SRG's abusive behavior

1 is unsurprising. Further, a report published last
2 month examining complaints of police misconduct
3 investigated by the CCRB revealed that the CCRB was
4 only able to substantiate 88 of 321 complaints
5 received.
6

7 The reason this number was so low is not because
8 misconduct did not occur, rather NYPD officers engage
9 with purposeful actions to conceal their identity to
10 avoid identification. The NYPD also and PDDCRB
11 investigations by delaying responses to requests for
12 body worn camera footage, claiming footage did not
13 exist, turning over the wrong footage and refusing to
14 be integrate remotely. I will say some the things
15 that have been stated by CCRB in past, some of the
16 worst ones are officers lying on record and nothing
17 happened.

18 The SRG does not police all protests equally.
19 The best example in 2018, when the SRG allowed the
20 Pride Boys to march without a permit and back when
21 they began to scream and shout homophobic and counter
22 protests. If my memory serves me correctly, they
23 were also ushered into the train without having to
24 pay their fare.
25

1
2 Most recently, the SRG was present at a rally
3 held by an anti-trans group at which a number of
4 transgender rights activists support this kind of
5 protests. The SRG which those present at the protest
6 reported outnumbered the counter protestors, engaged
7 in a physical altercation with the counter protestors
8 arresting nine.

9 Deploying the SRG to police protest has
10 demonstrably resulted in unnecessary abuse and
11 violence and their presence should no longer be
12 allowed at protests. It is unsurprising that the SRG
13 frequently uses excessive force as they are a
14 specialized unit trained to respond to terrorism and
15 violent crime.

16 Over time, the NYPD has conflated terrorism and
17 protests. Leading to the deployment of officers and
18 militarized gear to largely nonviolent
19 demonstrations. Even the NYPD referred to the
20 response of the 2020 protest as an inefficient
21 deployment of resources. The SRG's behavior has
22 resulted in numerous lawsuits and complaints against
23 the NYPD in New York City resulting in a significant
24 financial burden on the city still recovering from
25 the COVID-19 pandemic.

1
2 The city must at minimum require greater
3 transparency from the NYPD and the SRG on training,
4 records on allegations of abuse. I look forward to
5 working with the Committee on Public Safety, the City
6 Council and hopefully the Administration themselves
7 and NYPD to create a safe and equitable community for
8 all New Yorkers and I do want to say, it is very hard
9 to be shocked that a unit that was trained to address
10 and deal with terrorism, then sent to deal with
11 nonviolent protests would not have the kind of
12 response that we've seen. I understand the need to
13 have people trained to address and deal with
14 terrorism and violent crime. Sending that same unit
15 to deal with nonviolent protests would only lead to
16 the type of videos and things that we've seen.

17 So, hopefully, even without coming to this
18 hearing, there are changes on the way. I look
19 forward to seeing what that will be. Thank you so
20 much.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Public Advocate.

23 So, we'll now swear in the members of the
24 Administration. For CCRB, we're going to hear from
25 the Interim Chair Arva Rice and from the Executive

1
2 Director Jonathan Darche. Can you please just affirm
3 after me, you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
4 truth and nothing but the truth before this Committee
5 and to answer honestly to Council Member questions?

6 ARVA RICE: I will.

7 JONATHAN DARCHE: I will.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you so much.

9 Awesome, go ahead, thank you.

10 ARVA RICE: Good morning. My name is Arva Rice
11 and I use she/her pronouns. I am grateful for my
12 second opportunity to address this Council as the
13 Interim Chair of the Civilian Complaint Review Board.
14 I joined the CCRB as a member in 2021 and have
15 proudly led the Agency as Interim Chair for the last
16 year.

17 I have spent most of my career serving New
18 Yorkers. As current President and CEO of the New
19 York Urban League, I work to enable underserved
20 communities to secure a first-class education,
21 economic self-reliance and equal respect of their
22 civil rights to programs, services and advocacy.

23 Under the last administration, I served as a
24 commissioner for the NYC Equal Employment Practices
25 Commission and Mayor DeBlasio's Commission for Gender

1
2 Equity. Before joining the CCRB, I worked with
3 former Police Commissioner Shea and Mayor de Blasio
4 on a department wide initiative to reform the NYPD.
5 In March 2021, the City Council passed a Resolution
6 adopting our final Police Reform and Reinvention
7 Collaborative Plan. After decades working to make
8 New York City a fairer, more equitable, and safer
9 city, I am pleased to use my expertise to lead the
10 CCRB and improve police accountability.

11 The CCRB is the largest police oversight agency
12 in the country and will mark its 30th anniversary
13 this coming July. While the CCRB was established in
14 the 1950's, it did not take on its independent and
15 civilian form until 1993 under Mayor David Dinkins.
16 Following the Thompson Square Park demonstrations,
17 New Yorkers, outraged by the overt police misconduct
18 and lack of repercussions for officers, began
19 advocating for an all-civilian entity to oversee the
20 NYPD. Since then, the CCRB has steadily grown and
21 expanded its work. The Board is made up of 15
22 members: Five appointed by the Mayor, five appointed
23 by the City Council, one from each borough, three
24 designated by the Police Commissioner, one appointed
25 by the Public Advocate, and one, the Chair, jointly

1
2 appointed by the Mayor and the Speaker of the City
3 Council.

4 Today, the CCRB investigates, mediates, and
5 prosecutes complaints filed by victims and witnesses
6 of police misconduct. The CCRB's jurisdiction
7 includes Force, Abuse of Authority, Discourtesy,
8 Offensive Language, untruthful statements, and Bias
9 Based Policing. People may file complaints online, in
10 person, over the phone, on social media, or at a
11 police precinct. And thanks to this Council, the
12 CCRB now has the power to self-initiate complaints.

13 After a complaint is filed, our intake team
14 determines if the complaint is within the Agency's
15 jurisdiction and, if it is within our jurisdiction,
16 assigns the case to an investigative unit. The
17 assigned investigator then begins collecting and
18 uncovering all possible evidence in a case. They
19 often go to the scene of the incident, interview
20 witnesses and victims, request CCTV and cell phone
21 footage, as well as subpoena medical records.

22 Investigators request NYPD documents, BWC footage,
23 and other evidence in possession of the NYPD.

24 Investigators will use sophisticated software to
25 examine video footage, whether BWC or otherwise,

1 watching a video carefully and repeatedly to
2 determine what happened. Once all that evidence has
3 been collected, investigators conduct detailed
4 interviews with the officers who witnessed or were
5 involved in the case. The final step of the
6 investigation is when the investigators marshal that
7 evidence and write a comprehensive report detailing
8 the complaint with the collected evidence and examine
9 the incident through the lens of the patrol guide.
10

11 The board then gathers in panels to review the
12 underlying documents of each case and the
13 investigator's recommendation before voting on
14 whether misconduct occurred, and if misconduct
15 occurred, what level of discipline to recommend based
16 on the NYPD's own Discipline Matrix. There are four
17 levels of discipline that the CCRB can recommend the
18 NYPD impose on its members: Training or Instructions,
19 Schedule A Command Discipline, Schedule B Command
20 Discipline and the highest level, Charges and
21 Specifications.

22 Command Disciplines are shortcuts in the formal
23 disciplinary process that the Department negotiated
24 with the Police Unions, where members of service
25 accept discipline within certain parameters and give

1 up their rights to a formal disciplinary process.

2 The maximum penalty for a Schedule A Command

3 Discipline is forfeiture of up to five vacation days.

4 Schedule A Command Disciplines automatically leave a

5 member of service's disciplinary history after one

6 year. The maximum penalty for a Schedule B Command

7 Discipline is forfeiture of up to ten vacation days.

8 Schedule B Command Disciplines must stay on a member

9 of service's disciplinary history for at least three

10 years.

11 At that point, a member of service may request to

12 have the Schedule B Command Discipline taken off

13 their record, but that decision is at the discretion

14 of the Department. Charges and Specifications are

15 the Department's formal disciplinary process. Charges

16 and Specifications may result in lost vacation days,

17 suspension, or termination. When Charges and

18 Specifications are recommended, the case immediately

19 gets sent to the CCRB's Administrative Prosecution

20 Unit or the APU. The APU was set up in 2012 and

21 takes the most serious cases of misconduct to trial.

22 The trials are presided over by an NYPD trial

23 commissioner who writes their own recommendation to

24 the police commissioner. In every CCRB case, the

1
2 Police Commissioner has the final decision on
3 discipline.

4 When looking at all CCRB cases, the NYPD's
5 Strategic Response Group makes up less than one
6 percent of complaints since the group's inception in
7 2015. 472 SRG officers have received a complaint and
8 the CCRB has substantiated misconduct against 82 of
9 them. The substantiation rate against SRG officers
10 is approximately ten percent higher than all CCRB
11 complaints since 2015. Part of this can be explained
12 by the 2020 protest cases. The 2020 protests
13 resulted in the highest rate of complaints the Agency
14 has ever seen, with 300 complaints being filed in 48
15 hours. The CCRB received over 750 complaints that
16 were then narrowed down to 321 cases after
17 eliminating duplicates and incidents outside of our
18 jurisdiction.

19 Given the large deployment of SRGs to manage the
20 protests, this resulted in a higher rate of
21 complaints against SRGs. 15 percent of the protest
22 cases involved an SRG officer, while regular CCRB
23 cases involve an SRG officer less than one percent of
24 the time. Fully investigated protest cases had
25 resulted in 88 substantiated cases, 28 of which

1 involved an SRG officer. The low rate of
2 substantiation for regular officers is largely due to
3 the issue of identification. These were some of the
4 most complicated cases the Agency has ever
5 investigated and required senior investigators to
6 take on most of the work. 43 percent of the
7 allegations stemming from the 2020 protests had to be
8 closed because the officers involved could not be
9 identified, a jump from 11 percent in non-protest
10 cases. Investigators had to put in much more work to
11 identify officers and collect evidence from the wide
12 ranging, chaotic events. SRGs did not have the same
13 identification issue as they are better prepared for
14 these types of events.

16 Last month, the CCRB released a comprehensive
17 report analyzing the data from the 2020 protest
18 cases. The report identifies the departmental
19 failures, patterns of officer misconduct, the
20 obstacles the CCRB faced while investigating these
21 complaints, recommendations for the NYPD on how to
22 better respond to protests in the future, and how to
23 improve the disciplinary process. The full report
24 can be found on the CCRB website.

1
2 Since the 2020 protests, the CCRB has had an
3 ever-increasing amount of work. On top of the 321
4 protest cases, the CCRB has steadily been expanding
5 the types of cases it investigates. In 2019, the
6 city voted to change the Charter to give the Agency
7 jurisdiction over untruthful statements made by
8 members of the NYPD to the CCRB. In 2021, this
9 Council changed the Charter to give the CCRB
10 jurisdiction over Bias Based Policing and Racial
11 Profiling. That same year, the Council adopted a
12 Resolution calling upon the state legislature to pass
13 legislation that would give the CCRB final
14 disciplinary authority over its cases.

15 That Resolution has not been acted upon. The
16 Board itself responded to community concerns,
17 changing our rules to be able to investigate sexual
18 misconduct, body worn camera misuse, and untruthful
19 statements made by officers to other entities. These
20 changes increase the number of cases we investigate
21 each year, adding nearly 800 cases in the last two
22 years. Between 2014-2021, the NYPD received 3,480
23 allegations of bias-based policing. Four of these
24 allegations were substantiated.

1
2 As a result, the City Council changed the City
3 Charter in 2021, empowering the CCRB to investigate
4 cases of racial profiling and bias-based policing.
5 We are so grateful the City Council entrusted the
6 CCRB with this responsibility. In three months, the
7 agency has already received more than 100 complaints
8 involving bias based policing or profiling. When the
9 Council empowered the CCRB to undertake this
10 responsibility, 33 new positions were added to the
11 Agency to create a unit to handle these complicated
12 investigations. Unfortunately, the proposed budget
13 reduced the Agency headcount by 22 positions.

14 Since this reduction must come from vacant
15 positions, it is going to result in a racial
16 profiling unit that only has 13 people, around 1/3 of
17 the staffing level originally guaranteed. After
18 those cuts take place, the CCRB will have an
19 authorized headcount of 237 to oversee over 34,000
20 officers. While this is above the Charter mandated
21 level, this mandate was established before the
22 creation of the Racial Profiling and Bias Based
23 Policing unit.

24 2020 marked another milestone for police reform
25 with the repeal of Civil Rights Law Section 50-A.

1
2 50-A prohibited the CCRB from sharing most of its
3 work with the public. Since its repeal, the Agency
4 transformed how we share information with the public.
5 Not only can one look up the number of complaints we
6 receive and types of allegations within them, but we
7 have published a compressive database of officers'
8 CCRB histories. We fulfill hundreds of FOIL requests
9 each year and we began posting deviation letters and
10 closing reports to our website. This will be an
11 ongoing process.

12 In 2019, the Agency established the Civilian
13 Assistance Unit staffed by victims' advocates,
14 licensed social workers and trauma services
15 professionals, who provide free and confidential
16 assistance. This service has been a necessary
17 lifeline for victims who need further care and
18 assistance and helps connect them to other city
19 services. While no longer new, one of the most
20 significant changes in the CCRB was the creation of
21 the Administrative Prosecution Unit or APU. Created
22 in 2012 with the support of the City Council, the
23 APU's prosecutors handle the most severe cases of
24 police misconduct. The APU has been a key function

1
2 in evaluating police misconduct and opening our
3 process up to the public.

4 Yet, in the last year, the docket of APU cases
5 tripled. This is largely due to the protest cases
6 and other new investigative powers, but it is also
7 due to the NYPD's Disciplinary Matrix. The
8 Disciplinary Matrix was created by the NYPD and
9 specifies the appropriate discipline for each type of
10 misconduct. Since the implementation of the matrix,
11 the number of cases receiving the highest level of
12 discipline and being sent to the APU jumped from 8
13 percent in 2020 to 48 percent in 2021.

14 We thank OMB for the four additional prosecutors
15 they allowed us to hire, but in order to keep up with
16 six times the work, we will need additional
17 prosecutors to get through these cases in a timely
18 manner. The CCRB followed the NYPD's Disciplinary
19 Matrix in nearly every case in which it substantiated
20 misconduct against a member of the NYPD since the
21 2021 Memorandum of Understanding signed by the former
22 Police Commissioner and former CCRB Chair.

23 Unfortunately, the NYPD continues to deviate from
24 CCRB recommendations, even when we are following
25 NYPD's own disciplinary guidelines. CCRB

1
2 investigators painstakingly collect evidence that the
3 Board carefully reviews. Most cases that come
4 through the CCRB are not substantiated. The Board
5 only recommends discipline when there is a
6 preponderance of evidence that misconduct occurred.
7 There will only be true accountability when the CCRB
8 is given final authority over its disciplinary cases.

9 We hope for continued support from the City
10 Council in empowering this Agency, which includes
11 adequate budget and headcount to account for the new
12 investigative powers, along with proper access to
13 evidence of misconduct. To investigate cases as
14 efficiently as possible, the CCRB needs direct access
15 to body worn camera footage and all NYPD documents.
16 Without it, CCRB cases are unnecessarily delayed
17 which is unfair, both to the victims and the officers
18 involved. We also need to be exempt from sealing
19 statutes. Evidence of police misconduct is hidden
20 behind sealed records that we need access to if we
21 are going to hold all misconduct accountable.

22 We currently have had one case on hold for over a
23 year as we wait for a judge to determine whether the
24 CCRB should have access to the sealed evidence to a
25 case we are taking to trial. The family of Delrawn

1
2 Small deserves better than that. We hope the City
3 Council will advocate for our right to direct access
4 to NYPD evidence and sealed records.

5 In the meantime, we will continue working with
6 NYPD to improve the current process and we expect the
7 CCRB will be consulted as changes to the disciplinary
8 matrix and the reform process are discussed. The
9 CCRB is a uniquely important Agency because
10 independent civilian oversight of the NYPD is key to
11 fulfilling this city's mission to protect New
12 Yorkers. Thank you, Council Members, for your
13 continued support and for your time today.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much. I want to
15 acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member
16 Gutiérrez, Ariola and Holden. So, I have a few
17 questions that I'm going to ask and then I'm going to
18 pass it along to - oh, and Council Member Mealy.
19 Good morning. Then we'll pass it along to my
20 colleagues and first, will be Public Advocate if you
21 have questions but after my questions.

22 Okay, so my first question is what does CCRB
23 complaint data reflect given the rates of misconduct
24 by SRG officers compared to NYPD generally?

1
2 ARVA RICE: I spoke to that a little bit in our
3 comments but I will Jon Darche, who is our Executive
4 Director answer that question more fully.

5 JON DARCHE: So, if you look at Complaint data
6 overall since the creation of SRG, approximately one
7 percent of all the complaints that the CCRB has
8 received were about members of the SRG. If you focus
9 in on the protests from the summer of 2020, almost 21
10 percent of the officers against who the CCRB was able
11 to substantiate misconduct, were from an SRG. That
12 is 108 total members of service we were able to
13 identify as subjects and then of those members of
14 service, 28 were from the SRG.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. What is the
16 CCRB's assessment of NYPD's handling of protest
17 related misconduct and have appropriate penalties
18 have been applied to substantiated cases?

19 ARVA RICE: I will also let our Executive
20 Director handle that more completely but we do have a
21 number of cases that are still pending and so, we're
22 looking for NYPD to complete their process. And as I
23 stated in my testimony, we do not believe that the
24 concurrence rate is as high as it should be. And so,
25

1
2 we will be working with the NYPD in order to increase
3 that concurrence rate going forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: How long does it typically
5 take for NYPD to substantiate or get back to you?
6 How long does a case typically take?

7 JON DARCHE: That's a very good question Madam
8 Chair. It depends on the type of case. In cases
9 where the CCRB recommends a command discipline or
10 training, the Department can generally get back to us
11 I would say within six to nine months or maybe even a
12 year by the time we inform the department that we're
13 recommending discipline. Administrative prosecution
14 unit cases often are very lengthy and the discipline
15 process there can take some times several years once
16 the CCRB has made the recommendation that the officer
17 faced discipline.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. So, how many
19 substantiated misconduct allegations arise from
20 officer crowd control efforts and compared to the
21 allegation of rising from police initiating an
22 arrest? Does that make sense?

23 JON DARCHE: So, I think there were 108. We
24 substantiated 88 complaints of misconduct from the
25 protest regarding protest activity. I can't break it

1
2 down for you based on arrest activity. We can try
3 and figure that out and get back to you with that
4 later.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: I would appreciate that.
6 Thank you very much. Does the CCRB believe that
7 there are certain protests response tactics used by
8 the NYPD that contribute to high rates of civilian
9 complaints? Can we talk a little bit about that?

10 ARVA RICE: I'm sorry, can you repeat the
11 question?

12 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Does the CCRB believe that
13 there are certain protest response tactics used by
14 the NYPD that contribute to high rates of civilian
15 complaints?

16 ARVA RICE: Yeah, you can go ahead and answer
17 that. Thank you.

18 JON DARCHE: So, the NYPD does not refer to the
19 practice of kettling. They call it something else
20 but one of the things that we noted in our report is
21 that when civilians are not given an opportunity to
22 follow the instructions from members of service
23 before the members of service take arrest action.
24 That is an activity that leads to an increased number
25 of complaints.

1
2 Also, the practice, when I would say that's the
3 main answer to your question.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. In the interest
5 of time, I'm going to pass the questions along to the
6 Public Advocate Mr. Jumaane Williams and thank you.

7 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you very much.
8 Appreciate it. I just wanted to clarify something.
9 I think it's on page 3 of the testimony. Uhm, second
10 paragraph. The last line, SRG's do not have the same
11 identification issue as they are better prepared for
12 these type of events. Were you saying that they did
13 have the identification more clearly seen?

14 ARVA RICE: Their equipment is tracked and traced
15 at a higher level. And so, that allowed us to
16 identify officers. One of the main reasons why we
17 are not able to move forward with many of our cases,
18 was because of lack of officer identification. And
19 so, it was just a better tracking of the SRG
20 officers.

21 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: I see, so I want to
22 give credit where credit is due, so if they were easy
23 to be tracked, so that's at least one plus. But the
24 officers who were not members of the SRG, they were
25 harder to track. Some of that is because there's a

1 believe that they were hiding their identification.

2 Is that correct?

3
4 ARVA RICE: They were harder to identify for a
5 number of different reasons. There were individuals
6 whose badges couldn't identify their numbers from
7 their badges. Body Worn Camera Footage that we
8 received; it was difficult to make those
9 identifications. Also, there was a lack of tracking
10 of the officers rosters and equipment was checked out
11 but the equipment didn't match the officer and so,
12 all of those reasons contributed to the lack of
13 officer identification.

14 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Well, the one I
15 mentioned, one of those many reasons?

16 ARVA RICE: I'm not going to speculate on that
17 one.

18 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Okay, well I did see
19 some of that and we got a lot of folks who probably
20 did as well. But you also said that, if I'm clear,
21 the NYPD many times does not follow your
22 recommendation, even though your recommendation is
23 based in their own disciplinary matrix.

24 ARVA RICE: That is correct.

1
2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Have they give reasons
3 why they do that?

4 ARVA RICE: They do deliver letters to us and I
5 can have our Executive Director talk a little bit
6 more about that.

7 JON DARCHE: So, we post the Police Commissioners
8 letters on our website, so that people can see the
9 reasons why the Police Department deviated from our
10 recommendations.

11 One of the most common reasons why they would
12 deviate from our recommendations is they did not feel
13 misconduct occurred. And so, that is – while the
14 CCRB understands that the Police Commissioner is the
15 final arbiter of discipline, in every case that we
16 substantiate, we think the officer should have been
17 disciplined.

18 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: So, just to clarify,
19 they believe what you substantiate just didn't
20 happen?

21 JON DARCHE: Or they don't think it was
22 misconduct.

23 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: So, it could have
24 happened but it wasn't misconduct.

25 JON DARCHE: Correct.

1
2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Okay, how many times
3 is the second? That it happened but it wasn't
4 misconduct. Do you know how often?

5 JON DARCHE: I'd have to get back to you on that.

6 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you very
7 much. The only thing I want to say is, the CCRB is
8 being cut with the budget as well as most of the
9 agencies while the NYPD is not. And in fact, they
10 may be getting more money from the state government
11 for overtime. So, I just want to show the unbalance
12 there. And I did want to mention, I understand the
13 need to sometimes use law enforcement for large scale
14 protests. What I don't understand is that we would
15 use officers who are trained in terrorism and violent
16 crime. That makes no sense to me and by the way, I
17 would say from the protests that I've seen, I've seen
18 crowds police themselves, if they're given a chance
19 and do so quite effectively. Thank you so much.

20 ARVA RICE: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much. I want
22 to acknowledge Council Member Stevens has joined us.
23 At this time, we will hear from Council Member Ossè.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: Thank you Chair Hanks. I
25 want to start by thanking you both for coming to work

1
2 today. It seems like something that the NYPD doesn't
3 take seriously unless they're brutalizing folks but I
4 want to start by acknowledging that the CCRB clearly
5 has no power. Last year in 2022, the CCRB has made
6 over 70 recommendations on wanting to see changes
7 within cases of police brutalizing folks within the
8 city and the Police Commissioner thwarted those
9 because she does not want to offend good faith
10 decisions made by police officers.

11 In addition to that, you know the Mayor has a
12 majority of appointments made to the CCRB, so the
13 entire CCRB and I'm sure everyone in this room or
14 listening at home, knows that it's a completely
15 failed board in terms of holding an agency like the
16 NYPD accountable.

17 So much so, uhm, you know the fact that the NYPD
18 has chosen to not show up to work today, proves that
19 they are given special privileges compared to many of
20 the other agencies that exist here in this city.
21 Which is unfortunate because our taxpayer dollars
22 give them a large sum of money year in and year out.

23 I do want to acknowledge that an article just
24 came out from the New York Times today and I'm sorry
25 that I don't think I have that many questions to ask

1
2 you because I'm not sure where we would move forward
3 in terms of asking you questions but the New York
4 Times came out with an article today saying that New
5 York City has agreed to pay \$25,500 to each of
6 hundreds of demonstrators who were pinned in by the
7 police in the Bronx during racial justice protest in
8 2020.

9 First, if anyone in the room was at those Bronx
10 protest, please get your coin, get your money from
11 the city but in addition to that, that proves that
12 the CCRB is approving, not the CCRB, the SRG should
13 be disbanded one. And two, there's clear litigation
14 that is paying those that have been brutalized by the
15 SRG.

16 In addition to that, you know the Mayor is
17 proposing cuts across the board within our public-
18 school systems, within our libraries, yet we are
19 continuing to pay first \$11 billion to an agency that
20 doesn't show up to a Committee Hearing and two, \$90
21 million to a unit within that agency that is
22 brutalizing protestors. Now the city has to pay an
23 additional \$21,000 per person that was brutalized by
24 that unit.

1
2 So, two calls to action to people that are
3 listening or you know in person as well as online or
4 at home. Council Member Charles Barron has a bill
5 that he introduced in the City Council. It is Intro.
6 0463 and it would make sure that the City Council
7 would create an elected civilian review board, rather
8 than one that is run on appointments, especially from
9 appointments made by a mayor that was formerly a cop.
10 So, I think we need to push this legislation so that
11 we are putting the power in the hands of the people
12 and every single person that's in this room, rather
13 than those that are appointed by individuals that
14 have their own agenda. In addition to that, the
15 Police Commissioner who is appointed by the Mayor,
16 should not have final say and the atrocities that her
17 agency is committing against the people of New York
18 City. Thank you. Thank you Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much Council
20 Member Ossè. So, I just have a question to piggyback
21 off of the Public Advocate. Explain the burden of
22 proof used by CCRB in substantiating allegations of
23 misconduct and recommending like disciplinary action.

24 JON DARCHE: The burden of proof is a
25 preponderance of the evidence, which just means more

1
2 likely than not and that is the same burden of proof
3 that must be used by the department when they're
4 evaluating whether an officer committed misconduct.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. So, you also
6 testified, you're were talking about bias-based
7 crimes. Does NYPD cooperate with racial profiling
8 investigations? What is your experience with those
9 interactions and those complaints and their response?

10 ARVA RICE: Hmm, hmm. As you know that's a
11 recently added power to the CCRB as a result of the
12 work of City Council, so we want to thank you for
13 that. And I'm going to ask our Executive Director to
14 talk a little bit about our interaction with NYPD
15 since it started.

16 JON DARCHE: The Department has been cooperating
17 with the agency in our investigations as far as
18 giving us the paperwork and body worn camera footage
19 from the incident that is complained about. We are
20 still working with the Department on getting the data
21 we need to fully evaluate the complaints to see
22 whether or not there was an aspect of in permissible
23 profiling in the incidence. We have over 100
24 complaints so far and so, we're still trying to work
25 out getting that data from the department.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Can you just be more specific
3 and clarify what kind of data?

4 JON DARCHE: So, it depends on the type of
5 profiling alleged but for example, if someone was
6 saying that their car was stopped because they were
7 Black, then we would want to see the data behind the
8 car stops, not just by that member of service but by
9 other members of service in that command at that time
10 over a period of time or in that location or in
11 similar locations so that we could see if there is a
12 pattern of the officer taking action based on
13 someone's race or whatever the category, the
14 impermissible category that is being complained.
15 That the civilian said they were targeted because of.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much. So, in
17 the interest of time, I'm going to just pass it along
18 to my colleagues but I just want to let my colleagues
19 know what this is the you know third time that this
20 hearing has been postponed and there's so many of you
21 that want to come and testify, so today is your day.
22 I know that you know we are all disappointed that
23 NYPD did not show up but this is your day so we could
24 get your voices heard. So, with that, I'm going to
25 pass it along to Josh Kingsley.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, thanks Chair. We're
3 going to have Council Member questions. There's a
4 timer for three minutes. We're going to hear first
5 from Council Member Avilès, followed by Council
6 Member Hanif, followed by Council Member Cabàn.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Good morning. First, I'd
8 like to thank the Chairs for having this hearing and
9 thank you to the CCRB for being present but I don't
10 have questions for you. I have more of a comment.
11 In particular, I'd like to implore that my colleagues
12 remember the level of respect that the NYPD has
13 demonstrated to this Council today. And in
14 particular, return the favor of not showing up during
15 our budget hearing when they're asking for more
16 money.

17 I'd also like to note that I think it's important
18 for the NYPD to pay out its own misconduct. That
19 should come out of its own operational budget. It
20 should not be borne by taxpayer dollars. Also, I'd
21 like to note that the unlimited overtime that NYPD is
22 offered, should be transferred to human service
23 workers. All the workers that save our communities,
24 that support our children and elders to live their
25 daily lives, they should be given unlimited overtime.

1
2 With that note, as we approach budget season, I
3 implore all New Yorkers to remember who has unlimited
4 overtime, who gets paid the misconduct, who feels
5 fine to not show up to hearings with impunity, who
6 gets to do what they want. Who is the Mayor, who
7 controls this city. It is clear that this city needs
8 to hold this agency to account in a real way. And it
9 is clear that they feel impunity to not show up
10 whenever they want to. This is an affront to this
11 Council, to New York City taxpayers. We know who
12 keep us safe and it most certainly not the NYPD.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member.
14 Next, we'll hear from - I see Council Member Hanif is
15 not here so we'll go to Council Member Cabàn. We'll
16 turn back to Council Member - yeah, we'll go to
17 Council Member Won. We're going to go to Council
18 Member Won and then to you, is that alright?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Okay.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Council Member
21 Won followed by Council Member Cabàn followed by
22 Hanif when she gets back.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Good morning everybody. I
24 just want to first thank the public for showing up.
25 I know that you're taking time out of a weekday

1
2 during the week where many of you could be working or
3 having child care, with so many other reasons and I
4 want to also recognize all the folks who have joined
5 online. Thank you so much for taking the time
6 because I know that you have been waiting for months
7 for this oversight hearing.

8 It is implorable that the agency has not shown
9 up. Every single city agency is accountable by law
10 to the City Council to be at oversight hearings and
11 it's part of the checks and balances process. And
12 for them not to show up, it is not okay and now for
13 going forward, we'll have to subpoena the NYPD to
14 make sure that they appear at these hearings.

15 Just for the record since the agency is not here
16 to answer my questions. My question is for the 114
17 and 108 precinct, the two precincts that overlap with
18 my Council district, we are expected to have a
19 deployment of the SRG in Woodside Queens. And my
20 question is, if we - the questions for deployment are
21 supposed to be for high crime areas, my two precincts
22 out of 70 precincts across the city, are actually in
23 the lowest tier of number of crime. We have the
24 lowest crime rates in the city. So, something is not
25 matching up in terms of deployment and I would like

1
2 those answers on the record and I know that our
3 Chair, Chair Hanks will be following up to get those
4 questions on record and once we get those answers, I
5 will share them publicly to really understand how the
6 deployment is happening and why it would be in my
7 district that we would be deploying SRG officers when
8 we have no history of violence protests or any sort
9 of high rise in crime etc., so we want to make sure
10 that we have the right, the civil liberties that our
11 constitution states that we are able to assemble and
12 protest in peace. Thank you so much.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member.
14 Next, we're going to – Council Member Hanif, are you
15 ready for questioning. Okay, Council Member Cabàn
16 followed by Council Member Hanif.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you. First of all
18 thank you CCRB for showing up and for trying to do
19 your work without a lot of the mechanisms you need or
20 the staffing that you need. I'm pissed. I'm looking
21 out on a packed room full of New Yorkers who
22 desperately need and undeniably deserve true public
23 safety and I can't take my eyes off of the empty
24 seats where NYPD should be sitting today.

1
2 Shame on them for not showing up. And it says
3 here in their written testimony that on advice of
4 Council, they are "not able to answer any questions
5 at this time." And as an attorney, as a trial
6 attorney, I call bull. They could have shown up with
7 Council. They could have taken our questions and
8 Council could have indicated on the record each and
9 every time their advice for them to remain silent or
10 answer some of the questions and expand on what they
11 did include in their testimony.

12 It's bull and best believe that I had questions.
13 That we had questions that will remain unanswered
14 because the NYPD brass the scare of accountability.
15 They're afraid that submitting to the bare minimum of
16 oversight of the City Council would expose the rot at
17 the core of the SRG.

18 They are terrified that they might have to tell
19 the truth and take steps to fix what they've broken.
20 So, instead, they run away when they should be
21 sitting in those seats. They ought to be, they ought
22 to hang their heads in shame over this act of utter
23 cowardness. If you can't face the peoples elected
24 Council, you have no business billing us for your
25 unlimited overtime and disgraceful misconduct

1 settlement fees. Even in the time since we all
2 entered this Chamber this morning, in the Times, we
3 saw news is broken. That the people of this city are
4 going to have to pay out millions upon millions of
5 dollars to compensate protestors, abused and
6 mistreated by police during the summer of 2020. And
7 those very same police, with the opportunity this
8 morning to take some responsibility for their
9 actions, are nowhere to be seen.
10

11 This should have been the final straw for the
12 SRG. The final proof that they are a robe
13 unaccountable squadron and it is particularly
14 offensive because at the inception of this unit, the
15 city played on New Yorkers still painful trauma from
16 the September 11th attacks and promised that the SRG
17 would keep us safe from terrorism. And instead, the
18 SRG has become a poster child for Mission Creek.
19 It's headcount ballooning to nearly three times its
20 intended size and its activities extending to
21 everything from violently cracking down on legitimate
22 protests to humiliating our homeless neighbors and
23 evicting them from their encampments and so how dare
24 they show such sustain for the people of New York
25 City this morning. How dare they show and hold such

1
2 contempt for the very people they are sworn to
3 protect. How dare they give the middle finger to
4 this body and go about their normal business like
5 nothing is wrong.

6 If you were undecided before, let this outrageous
7 display help you make up your mind. It is time to
8 disband the SRG and redeploy funds to evidence based
9 safety strategies. And so I know that there are many
10 of us that are certainly going to stay in this fight
11 with all of you all, so thank you for being here.

12 Thank you for showing up.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
14 Cabàn. I'd like to acknowledge Council Member Del La
15 Rosa, who is joining us via Zoom. Next, we'll turn
16 to Council Member Hanif. It looks like Council
17 Member Ariola, Holden and then Ossè.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much. Like
19 my colleagues have already expressed, this is deeply
20 embarrassing. In this Administration, city of yes,
21 the NYPD continues to say no and I don't know how
22 they get to get away with that and yet, our funds for
23 education, our funds for health care, our funds for
24 supportive housing, all of that gets slashed and
25 divested.

1
2 This is humiliating because this is not the first
3 attempt that we've had to host this oversight hearing
4 and I know NYCLU, many advocates, impacted
5 communities, New Yorkers have been calling to disband
6 the SRG for many, many years. So, from the NYPD this
7 is absolutely unacceptable. This Council is watching
8 and we are deeply embarrassed. Deeply embarrassed at
9 the NYPD, refuses to respond to our questions.
10 Unacceptable.

11 And of course, I want to be clear that I'm
12 against the headcount cuts that the CCRB is being
13 faced with and that is what I'd like to focus on
14 because we need the CCRB to be the unit of
15 accountability. And it's disgraceful that over and
16 over you've seen cuts. So, I'd like to know if you
17 could share again for the Council and the public, the
18 headcount of the CCRB's racial profiling and bias
19 based policing unit?

20 JON DARCHE: So, when we originally came to the
21 Council and discussed this, we thought we would need
22 50 people to man the unit.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: 15?

24 JON DARCHE: 50.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: 50.

1
2 JON DARCHE: When the unit was created, there
3 were 33 people assigned to it in theory. We have
4 been building the unit. We're up to 13 people. We
5 have a director of the unit, a deputy director, a
6 data scientist, and then two squads of investigators,
7 investigators and investigative attorneys. But with
8 the proposed cuts to the budget, we think that will
9 be the maximum size of the unit.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: 13 will be the maximum
11 size?

12 JON DARCHE: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And the goal is 50?

14 JON DARCHE: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And how much funding is
16 being cut from the CCRB?

17 JON DARCHE: \$950,000.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And how much is the amount
19 that you need to achieve the 50?

20 JON DARCHE: I'd have to get back to you on that.
21 I don't know off the top of my head.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And what does the CCRB
23 need from the PD that you're not currently getting,
24 in order to do your work effectively for New Yorkers?
25

1
2 JON DARCHE: So, from the – for the Racial
3 Profiling Unit, we need access to the data that we're
4 currently working with the New York City, the NYPD's
5 Department of Legal Affairs to arrange how we get
6 that data.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could you share what the
8 hurtles are from receiving that data? What is the PD
9 preventing here?

10 JON DARCHE: So, it is both the length of time,
11 the timeframes that we're requesting the data for.
12 The fields that we're requesting and then how many
13 officers we're requesting the data for.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And right now, are they
15 required to provide this data but what you're saying
16 is they're delaying and basically kind of giving
17 excuses for when that data gets to you?

18 JON DARCHE: So, I don't – so, we're working with
19 them to try and arrange a system so that they can
20 provide us the data that we need. We've gone back
21 and forth with them and we're working with them and
22 we have a good relationship with the leadership of
23 the New York City Police Departments Department of
24 Legal Affairs, Bureau of Legal Affairs.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: It doesn't seem like that
3 from what you're sharing.

4 JON DARCHE: Well, we are close to, I'd like to
5 think we're close to having an agreement. They know
6 we need the data and we're just trying to figure out
7 a way to make it an effective transfer of data.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: What I am hearing from you
9 and I know you're trying to be deeply respectful of
10 the work that you have to do with the PD and it's
11 unfortunate that they're so, they're not transparent
12 and they're moving with all sorts of funny
13 machinations to prevent New Yorkers from receiving
14 justice. But again, for this crowd, thank you for
15 being here and demanding the disbanding of the SRG.
16 This Council stands with New Yorkers and with a
17 stronger democracy and we will continue to speak up
18 in advocacy of filling the roles needed for the CCRB
19 to hold the PD accountable. Thank you so much.
20 Thank you Chair.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member.
22 Next, we're going to hear from Council Member Ariola
23 followed by Council Member Holden.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you. Thank you
25 Chair. Thank you for coming to testify today. So,

1
2 you were saying in your testimony that it was
3 difficult in 2020 to really identify SRG with regular
4 officers and kind of get that. Now, that was under
5 an old administration. Does the new administration
6 where the SRG has really been reimagined, retrained,
7 vetted and wearing different uniforms than most
8 police officers, is it more likely that you could
9 identify them if they were acting inappropriately in
10 a certain situation?

11 ARVA RICE: I'm going to let our Executive
12 Director take that but the officer identification
13 wasn't between SRG and others as much as it was
14 identifying the officers in general. Because the
15 officers were not clearly identified if they were not
16 SRG. But I will let Jon speak more to that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: But I do want to hear
18 what you have to say but you kind of broke it down in
19 2020 between SRG and NYPD. So, so, I'm going to stop
20 it there. I'm going to kind of change my question.
21 So, 2020 is 2020. Since there has been a
22 reimagination of the SRG and the revetting, the
23 vetting and the training. How many CCRB complaints
24 have there been since this Administration has
25 instituted the new policies for SRG?

1
2 JON DARCHE: You know Councilwoman, that's a very
3 good question and I will get back to you with an
4 answer. I should know that. I don't. I apologize.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: I mean, I think that's
6 very important because this is a new SRG. This is a
7 newly imagined, newly reimagined, newly trained,
8 newly vetted and when we are getting every day
9 notifications of gun violence in our precincts, in
10 our communities and our people are dying, we cannot
11 lessen the amount of officers we have deployed to
12 anyone precinct because they are seeing more crime.

13 The other thing is you talk about unlimited
14 overtime. If we had more officers on the job and
15 they were treated with more respect and equitably
16 compensated for the job that they do, then we would
17 not have to be deploying additional officers at any
18 given time.

19 These SRG officers are there to help precincts
20 that are in need. They are there to remove the legal
21 firearms and weapons from our streets and conduct
22 investigations thereafter for violent criminals. We
23 are a city under siege with illegal gun violence and
24 each one of the members in this body get a notice
25 every day, 10 notices, 15 notices of gun violence. I

1
2 really need to know and I would like for you to get
3 back to me on what with the new SRG, under this
4 Administration, what the complaints are. Because we
5 cannot take them to task for what happened in an
6 administration that did not have as much interaction
7 and community outreach. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll hear
9 from Council Member Holden followed by Council Member
10 Gutiérrez.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you and thank you
12 Chair Rice for your testimony. Questions on the
13 sealed records. A judge can seal the records of a
14 police officer. Who else can to that or why can't
15 you get access to some - I mean, I guess there's
16 different levels of sealing records. Am I correct?

17 JON DARCHE: So, the main problem isn't that the
18 record of the police officer is sealed. It's that
19 the record of a civilian who has had an interaction
20 with the police officer is sealed. And that prevents
21 us from getting the information that we need to talk
22 to that person to find out what happened in an
23 incident and when we're investigating profiling, it
24 often involves needing to look at incidents,
25 interactions that police officers have with members

1 of the public that we have never encountered at the
2 CCRB. So, we don't even have the ability to talk to
3 them to get them to consent to unsealing the record
4 because we don't know who they are. And so, if we're
5 effectively going to do the job that the Council is
6 giving us of conducting oversight into profiling and
7 bias based policing, we need to be exempt from the
8 sealing.

9
10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, the complaint didn't
11 come from the person, from that public then. Where
12 did the complaint come from?

13 JON DARCHE: So, the initial complaint - so if a
14 member of the public files a complaint with the CCRB
15 that says, I was profiled, my car was stopped because
16 I was African American. I was driving and that's why
17 I was stopped. We have to look at not only that
18 incident where the person who called us can say my -
19 can consent to us viewing their record. We have to
20 look at other people whose cars were stopped at
21 similar times and similar places who we might not
22 know. And that's why we need to be exempt from the
23 sealing statues.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: We had some hearings in
25 the last Council after the riots and I just remember

1
2 when the police did testify, I asked Commissioner
3 Shea at the time, how many police officers were hurt
4 during the riot. He said nearly 400.

5 Also, we had 350 police cars that were damaged.
6 15 were set afire and about \$1.1 million damage. Do
7 you take into consideration and I've been in a riot
8 before so I understand what it's like. Where people
9 are coming at you from different directions and
10 things are being thrown and it's just mayhem. And
11 how people react is very different when it's like a
12 free for all essentially. So, with 2,000 arrests, in
13 some of those riots. In some of the video that I've
14 seen and you have access to video, do you kind of
15 judge where the situation is out of control and human
16 beings act different on both sides. That there are
17 situations where self-preservation kicks in. Do you
18 take that into consideration in your agency?

19 ARVA RICE: Let me answer that first and I'll
20 have Jon respond. First of all, as members of the
21 CCRB, as I mentioned already before, there's 15
22 members, 5 that are appointed by the Mayor, 5 by this
23 body itself. The three that are designated by the
24 police commissioner, one appointed by the public
25 advocate and what that's jointly approved by the

1
2 Chair. We do not make judgements. We have a team of
3 investigators who are trained. Who look at body worn
4 camera footage. Who do interviews. Who do very
5 extensive work and it's presented to us and based on
6 the Police Patrol Guide, there's a recommendation
7 that's made to us about whether the case is
8 substantiated and then we vote as a panel on that.

9 It is something that is presented and vetted to
10 us. It is not based on our personal opinions. And
11 so, that's not what we're bringing into this case.
12 So, we look at it as based on how police officers are
13 interacting with the community and if there is abuse.
14 If there is excessive use of force. If there is
15 offensive language or there is other issues that are
16 at play. That is what we're making our
17 recommendation on. So, it's not based on a given
18 situation but by the evidence that's presented.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, it's not based on, if
20 I'm getting bricks thrown at me or fire bombs thrown
21 at me and there's no situation where self-
22 preservation kicks in, it's just sort of don't curse
23 at me or don't speak to me disrespectfully. I'm
24 trying to get the situation that you have to take in
25 everything that's going on. Not just an isolated

1
2 incident. So, like what was the situation at the
3 time? Were the police under attack or were cars
4 being burned? Was property being damaged? This all
5 has to be taken into consideration, that's all I'm
6 saying.

7 ARVA RICE: And I do want to restate.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Please.

9 ARVA RICE: It's the Civilian Complaint Review
10 Board. So, what we are looking at is when a civilian
11 interacts with the police department and they feel as
12 if their rights were -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

14 ARVA RICE: Our work is about the civilian. I
15 just want to underscore that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

17 JON DARCHE: So if I can just briefly respond.
18 The board looks at all the complaints on an
19 individual bases and takes into account the facts and
20 circumstances surrounding each event. And so, of the
21 complaints from the protest during the summer of
22 2020, there were 18 complaints where the board looked
23 at the conduct, determined that the conduct that was
24 alleged to have occurred, did occur but that that
25 conduct was within NYPD guidelines. And we looked at

1
2 11 complaints where the conduct alleged, we
3 determined by preponderance of the evidence did not
4 occur. So, the board does take all those things into
5 account. It takes all the facts and circumstances
6 into account from the incidents that we investigate
7 and the board applies the law into the Patrol Guide
8 and makes determinations. And there were 88
9 instances from the summer of 2020 in which members of
10 service committed misconduct by not acting
11 appropriately during the protests.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chair.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we're going
14 to go to Council Member Gutiérrez followed by Council
15 Member Ossè.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Chair. I
17 just want to start by saying that there's no such
18 thing as a new SRG. There is no such thing as a
19 reform to the SRG. The only thing new about them is
20 that they're even more emboldened by a cop for a
21 Mayor and a Department who reviews the responsibility
22 in public service as an option and not an obligation.

23 I do have a question for CCRB but I just want to
24 highlight the fact that the CCRB exists primarily by
25 admission that the PD abuses its power. That the PD

1 is incapable of being held accountable. So, the
2 entire agency, while I respect the work that you do,
3 exists because there is no incognizance of PD's
4 repeated abuses as inability to be held accountable.
5 Inability to provide service and public safety to our
6 city.
7

8 So, with that being said, my question to the CCRB
9 is, do you believe that police accountability would
10 improve if the PD instituted even a fraction of your
11 recommendations. And this is a legitimate question.

12 ARVA RICE: Yes. Yes, we believe that the, we
13 stand by the recommendations that we make at the
14 CCRB.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And do you believe
16 that it would transform public safety in this city?

17 ARVA RICE: We believe that the transformation of
18 police accountability would require also that the
19 CCRB has final authority in making recommendations.
20 And so, we believe that that's the next step.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. So, and
22 this is not for you and I also like my colleagues
23 just want to thank you for showing up to work today.
24 Knowing what you are saying and I appreciate your
25 responses. I believe you're being genuine in saying

1
2 hey, if the PD did a fraction of what we're
3 recommending, things would be different.

4 Knowing what we know, why would this Council
5 stand to continue to empower the SRG? Whose abuses
6 are even more egregious than standard PD officers who
7 are not even in the SRG. I'm talking from a place of
8 passion. From a place of hurt. Seeing my neighbors
9 and constituents. Seeing people who are exercising
10 their amendments get abused and then become
11 marginalized, be categorized as Villains when we
12 understand the role that PD plays in villainizing our
13 communities. We know that this responsibility falls
14 on them. It's disheartening that they're not here.
15 It's a slap in the face. I second what so many of my
16 colleagues have already said, which is it's
17 disrespectful and when they dare to come to Council
18 asking for more money, we're going to continue to
19 push on them and demand that they show up.

20 You do not get to even get to entertain the
21 conversation about increased funding if you do not
22 talk about public safety in a real way when you do
23 not acknowledge the disrespect, the abuse that you
24 have facilitated and with ease, executed in our city
25 and in our communities at large.

1
2 So, thank you all and thank everyone here for
3 testifying. I appreciate all of your advocacy.
4 Thank you. Thank you Chair.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member.
6 Next, we'll hear from Council Member Ossè. If any
7 other Council Members would like to ask questions
8 before we turn to the public testimony, please let me
9 know. Council Member Ossè.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you Committee Counsel
11 and thank you Chair. I want to start by
12 acknowledging a lot of the pain that may or may not
13 be in the room right now from folks that participated
14 in many of these protests, not only in 2020 but 2021,
15 2022 and were brutalized by the strategic response
16 group. I've witnessed it myself. I've seen
17 nonviolent protests erupt into violence because of
18 the NYPD. I'm going to take a wild guess that my two
19 colleagues from Queens have never been to a Black
20 Lives Matter Protest before so they can't really
21 judge that and are mainly making judgements based off
22 of what they see on Fox News. But I do have a couple
23 questions to ask from the CCRB. I finally have some
24 questions for you guys. You talked about some of the
25 recommendations that you made in regards to the SRG

1
2 and I wanted to ask you all, what were those
3 recommendations or policy recommendations
4 specifically? I just would love to know why the
5 police commissioner or the Admin decided to thwart
6 them.

7 JON DARCHE: So, the recommendations that we made
8 from our protest report really didn't center as much
9 around SRG as around how the NYPD responded to
10 protests generally. We recommended that they improve
11 how they assign protective equipment to police
12 officers. One of the problems that we noted, is that
13 in many cases officers were just grabbing shields and
14 other protective equipment and helmets that should
15 have their shield number on it. Which would make it
16 much easier for us to identify them and be able to
17 conduct our investigations but because equipment was
18 just being handed out in an at hawk basis, we would
19 conduct an investigation, identify what we thought
20 was the officer involved because we had their shield
21 number and then it would turn out, that is not the
22 correct office.

23 Officers were deployed outside of the regular
24 course of business. They were sent; instead of being
25 deployed on the radio with regular units, they were

1
2 deployed via cellphone and kind of at hawk groups.
3 So, they didn't really know who they were with and
4 they didn't know the identity of their supervisors.
5 Which made it very tough for us to figure out who
6 people were and you would say, well you were at this
7 location, who were you there with? I don't know.

8 One of the things that we normally rely on when
9 we are trying to identify officers are roll calls to
10 find out who was at a certain location at a certain
11 time and that paperwork was not accurately filled
12 out. We had situations where we're trying to
13 identify civilians because we think that there were
14 people who were arrested or given summonses at event
15 but the officer who actually processed the arrest or
16 processed the summons, did not - was not the person
17 who actually arrested the individual or stopped the
18 person to give them the summons and because that and
19 NYPD is their own guidelines that you shouldn't be
20 assigning arrests or summonses in those cases, you
21 should be conducting - you need to fill out that
22 paperwork on your own because we were then in a
23 situation where we are unable to determine which
24 officer interacted with the civilian.

1
2 And so, it just made things extremely complicated
3 and the recommendations we made dealt with how NYPD
4 responds to these protests, so that – because the
5 Chair has said many times and I'm stealing your line,
6 I apologize. That New York City is a city of
7 protests and we can't just rely that the fact that
8 summer 2020 will not happen again. We need to be
9 ready for the next time there are protests so that we
10 can do our oversight in a responsible and effective
11 manner.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Chair, can I have a little
13 more time. Okay. Another question is and you may
14 not have this insight but I know one of my colleagues
15 talked about how this new SRG has gone through
16 reimagining. Do you know what that is? Do you have
17 any communication with the agency in terms of what
18 reimagination they've done to the unit such as the
19 SRG?

20 JON DARCHE: So, no, but we really focus on how
21 we do oversight of things after the fact. So, we
22 will, you know we collect training materials. We use
23 the Patrol Guide, and the Administrative Guide to
24 evaluate police conduct as well as what the law is
25 and the law says people can do. And so, I will get

1
2 the number that Council Member Ariola requested on
3 how many complaints we've received about SRG since
4 the new administration was elected.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you and thank you
6 Chair. The last thing I want to note is just to
7 hammer down on the points of you know this lawsuit
8 that you know the city is going to make these payouts
9 to those that have been brutalized by the NYPD. That
10 all comes from your taxpayer dollars. The same mace
11 and batons that they used to beat us, that comes from
12 our taxpayer dollars. All of this should come from
13 the NYPD's budget itself rather than the overall city
14 budget as a whole, especially since we are seeing
15 cuts across the board. And you know finally, the
16 NYPD's excuse that they couldn't come here today
17 because of litigation and lawsuits. They are always
18 dealing with lawsuits for very apparent reasons, so
19 thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Stevens.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, I just want to
22 start off by saying, thank you CCRB for showing up
23 today and also, thank you for the work that you do
24 because this is a thankless job. I can't imagine
25 spending hours and days of doing research and

1
2 investigations to make recommendations and then none
3 of them be taken into consideration or very few of
4 them to be taken into consideration. So, that's a
5 very thankless job and I don't think that you guys
6 get enough credit for doing the work. It is not your
7 fault that they're not implemented or listened to
8 often and I just, I felt the need to speak today
9 because I've been to a number of protests through my
10 entire life and so often the protestors aren't the
11 one who are their aggressors.

12 Often, the police are the aggressors who show up
13 and are yelling at people and telling them to move
14 and get off the sidewalk. And I've been at protests
15 where I've been tear gassed and all the things like,
16 I mean pepper sprayed and all the things. Never seen
17 a fire bomb. Never seen them damaging NYPD vehicles.
18 It just hasn't happened at any of the one's that I've
19 been at, you know.

20 So, I just want to make sure that that is clear.
21 And even thinking about 2020 in the South Bronx. I
22 missed that protest that happened on Lewis Avenue;
23 however, I had young people there who actually got
24 beat up by NYPD. And that's the reason why I co-
25 primed this legislation because young people who I

1
2 was teaching about civically involved and being
3 engaged in the community was there because I advised
4 them that it is there right to be there. But when
5 they got there, the people who was supposed to
6 protect and serve them beat them. So, I just want to
7 make sure that we're understanding why we're here
8 today and what the purpose is and yes, you know
9 things don't always necessarily work out but it is
10 unacceptable that NYPD not show up today and be held
11 accountable. Because this is what it looks like to
12 actually have public safety. To have dialogue and to
13 be held accountable and have checks and balances.

14 So, I just wanted to go on record for saying that
15 because like I said, I've been to a number of
16 protests and too often, the police are the
17 aggressors. Thank you.

18 JON DARCHE: I just wanted to thank you on behalf
19 of the investigators and other staff at the CCRB.
20 They do really incredible work and are often
21 frustrated as you said. Because it's very hard work
22 and they take it very seriously and do a very good
23 job. I'm proud that I get to work with them every
24 day.

25

1 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member.

2 Next, we'll hear from Council Member Joseph.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Again, good
4 morning. Thank you for being here. I'm not going to
5 reiterate what my colleague said. So, does the CCRB
6 currently have resources, staffing to investigate
7 complaints they've received? How is staffing?

8 JON DARCHE: So, especially in the racial
9 profiling unit, we need more staffing. Another area
10 in which the Office of Management and Budget and the
11 Administration has recently allowed us to expand, is
12 in the Administrative prosecution unit. We're up to
13 11 attorney's in that unit but there are over 700
14 cases in the APU's docket and we just need more staff
15 there to be able to really move forward with our
16 cases.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Looking at
18 your report that you had out in 2023. It reported
19 that you had 750 civilian complaints of officers
20 misconduct during the 2020 protest and you
21 recommended discipline 446 officers. What happened
22 to them?

23 JON DARCHE: So, of the 751 complaints, we
24 actually, a lot of them were either duplicates or
25

1 outside of our jurisdiction, so it was roughly 321
2 complaints. Of those complaints, we fully
3 investigated 226 of them. 88 of those complaints had
4 at least one substantiated allegation and 59
5 complaints we were not able to identify any of the
6 subject officers. In 50 complaints, we were unable
7 to determine by a preponderance of the evidence
8 whether misconduct occurred. And in 18 complaints,
9 we determined that the conduct that was alleged
10 occurred but was within NYPD guidelines and 11
11 complaints, we determined that the alleged misconduct
12 did not occur. I just want to point out that just
13 because something is within NYPD guidelines does not
14 mean it is good police work but it does mean that it
15 was not misconduct.
16

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: That was going to be my
18 next question. What is considered within the NYPD's
19 guideline? If I'm filing a complaint and you're like
20 oh, Council Member Joseph well, we cannot move
21 forward because that's in the guideline. Could you
22 give us a sample of what's in the guideline?

23 JON DARCHE: From the protests or?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Yeah, as a protestor,
25 correct.

1
2 JON DARCHE: So, one of the issues that was there
3 was the curfew. And so, the way the curfew is
4 implemented by the prior administration, it was often
5 unclear whether people actually were allowed out
6 after the curfew. And so, we had people who ended up
7 getting caught up by police action because the
8 officers had a tough time identifying who was allowed
9 to be out after curfew and who wasn't. That might of
10 for example led to something being within guidelines.
11 Also, officers have once there is enough information
12 for them to arrest someone, an arrest is an
13 inherently violent act. They have wide latitude to
14 use force when they are trying to arrest someone.
15 So, unless you know there are instances where you
16 might watch something and say that is an excessive
17 amount of force and based on all the facts that that
18 board is able to look at, it would still exonerate
19 the conduct.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Just like my State
21 Senator Zellnor Myrie was pepper sprayed. Even
22 though they said come prepared, he had his t-shirt
23 that said State Senator on it. He was taken into
24 custody and pepper sprayed and his case was
25 dismissed.

1
2 JON DARCHE: The CCRB substantiated the
3 misconduct against Senator Myrie and since the report
4 was issued, the police commissioner found the officer
5 not guilty of the misconduct that the CCRB
6 substantiated.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Correct. Your operating
8 budget right now is how much?

9 JON DARCHE: Our current budget is total is 23
10 million 548 thousand dollars. The PS budget is 18
11 million 952 thousand.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And you were one of the
13 agencies that had to put in a PEG as well?

14 JON DARCHE: So, we were asked for a PEG. We did
15 not submit a PEG.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member. Do
18 any other members have questions for CCRB before we
19 turn to public testimony? Seeing none, thank you all
20 and appreciate your conduct.

21 ARVA RICE: Thank you so much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. To begin for the public
23 testimony, we're going to ask Isabelle Leyva from
24 NYCLU to come and testify. We're going to generally
25 try and work through the list that we have of people

1
2 who are here and kind of general alphabetical order
3 based on that but like, we're going to kind of start
4 with NYCLU there. Thank you.

5 ISABELLE LEYVA: Whenever I'm ready? Uhm, NYCLU
6 thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide
7 testimony. With the history of violence, misconduct
8 and racial bias, the NYPD's SRG is a threat to the
9 safety and the first amendment rights of New Yorkers.
10 Combating this threat means putting an end to the SRG
11 itself by disbanding the unit. The SRG was founded
12 in 2015 with a budget of \$13 million. Within its
13 first year, that budget ballooned to \$90 million.
14 Total spending on this unit including centrally
15 allocated funds is now estimated at more than \$133
16 million as of the most recently passed budget.

17 The NYCLU's database of CCRB filing shows, that
18 SRG officers receive disproportionately high numbers
19 of misconduct complaints along with higher rates of
20 substantiation of those complaints. Along with the
21 SRG's propensity for violence and misconduct, this
22 unit is trained to target racial justice
23 demonstrators. In the units training manual,
24 examples of violent protest groups, our BLM movement,
25 Occupy Wall Street and Anti-Trump demonstrators.

1
2 This bias manifests in and out of protests. Of
3 complaints made against SRG officers that include
4 race between 2015 and 2020, complaint into a person
5 of color 91 percent of the time. This data is
6 particularly alarming if SRG officers have now been
7 deployed to supplement routine enforcement in 20 so-
8 called high crime precincts. City Council must at
9 minimum demand more transparency and data around
10 these deployments.

11 Deploying officers from a unit notorious for its
12 violent and biased approach toward our predominantly
13 communities of color, raises serious concerns about
14 the potential for increased violence.

15 From enforcing cruel sweeps of unhoused
16 encampment and violently clearing Washington Square
17 Park after curfew to consistently targeting prochoice
18 demonstrators for arrest at the Bleecker Street
19 Planned Parenthood. The NYPD can and does deploy the
20 SRG at will. With no accountability, this unit
21 operates as a rogue entity. The SRG must be
22 disbanded and its funds should be reinvested in ways
23 that support and uplift New Yorkers. The size of the
24 NYPD's headcount should be reduced by the number of
25 SRG officers that exist and city leaders must ensure

1
2 that its militarized tactics are not recreated under
3 another name. We are deeply disappointed that the
4 NYPD is not here today to answer the Committees
5 questions, especially as we enter the height of the
6 city's budget season and with so many New Yorkers
7 calling for the SRG to be disbanded. The NYPD has an
8 obligation to answer lawmakers questions and to
9 submit to the Council's oversight authority.

10 We look forward to the opportunity to work with
11 the Council to put an end to the SRG and to safeguard
12 the public's ability to exercise their core
13 constitutional rights. Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Cabàn.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Yes, I have a question for
16 you. Thank you for your testimony. So, I think you
17 made mention of the SRG Bike Squad Training Manual
18 where protest groups are divided into "nonviolent and
19 violent groups." Can you reiterate the examples that
20 the NYPD gives in their manual as what constitutes
21 "violent groups?"

22 ISABELLE LEYVA: Yes, the examples given are BLM,
23 Occupy Wall Street and Anti-Trump Demonstrators.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: So, they didn't include
25 the Proud Boys?

1
2 ISABELLE LEYVA: No and there are no examples
3 given for a nonviolent group.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Okay. For violent groups,
5 they didn't include the Proud Boys. Did they include
6 neo-Nazis as examples? Did they include White
7 Supremacist groups as examples? Okay, thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, does anyone else have
9 questions for NYCLU? Okay, thank you.

10 ISABELLE LEYVA: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We're now doing to do a panel
12 of Legal Service Providers before turning to the
13 general public. So, we're going to invite Rebecca
14 Phipps from New York Defender Services, Gina Mitchell
15 from the Queens Defenders, Andrew Case from Latino
16 Justice and Rigodis Appling.

17 Uhm, we also have Jackie Gosdigian from Brooklyn
18 Defender Services who are going to be joining us via
19 Zoom. So, Jackie, I see you're available and I will
20 kind of unmute you after the people in person kind of
21 testify and we can go to you after that, okay? Thank
22 you.

23 So, if anyone just wants to kind of take the lead
24 here, just feel free. Right to left.

1
2 REBECCA PHIPPS: Okay, my name is Rebecca Phipps
3 and I'm the Special Litigation Attorney at New York
4 County Defender Services and I'd like to speak to you
5 all today about the lasting harm that's done by
6 people who come into contact with the Strategic
7 Response Group during the protests back in 2020.
8 Because I'm sure that as we go through this
9 afternoon, you're all going to hear a lot of
10 testimony from survivors and other advocates about
11 the harm that was done and the abusive and violent
12 tactics on the ground in the moment with SRG.

13 But as a defense attorney who saw the fallout of
14 this interactions, I want to talk about the harm that
15 was done as the cases stemming from these SRG
16 interactions carried on. And you know, the
17 individuals who were impacted by this unit from what
18 we saw as these cases came through the courthouses,
19 these were overwhelmingly Black and Brown New Yorkers
20 despite the diverse demographics of these protests.

21 And the violence of this interaction that
22 individuals experience at protests at the hands of
23 SRG, the violence did not end once the interaction
24 with that officer ended. But rather the violence
25

1
2 continued for days, weeks, months. And in some
3 cases, even years.

4 The violence continued for days because in those
5 first couple of weeks of June as we saw people being
6 brought through the court houses on arrests stemming
7 from protest activities, the court houses saw a surge
8 in numbers that could not be accommodated. And so,
9 instead of 24 hours from arrest to arraignment, the
10 individuals who my office was meeting in the court
11 house had been sitting in central booking for 48
12 hours, 72 hours. That's three times the legal limit
13 in New York. That's three days of sitting in a
14 crowded courtroom in conditions completely
15 inconducive to multiday stays. Nowhere to lay down.
16 Nowhere to maintain personal hygiene. No way to
17 protect yourself from the rapidly spreading COVID.

18 The violence stemming from the SRG interactions
19 lasted for weeks and months because of all the cases
20 that my office arraigned, we tracked what happened to
21 them and of the protest related cases, while 72
22 percent of them ended up being dismissed. Whether
23 outright or through an adjournment and contemplation
24 of dismal.

1
2 Another 12.7 percent that were remaining,
3 resolved with a non-criminal resolution to the case.
4 But still, all of those cases lasted for an average
5 of 232 days. That's 232 days that these individuals
6 had with a criminal case hanging over them. That's
7 232 days of having to take time off of work and
8 school to make court appearances. That's 33 weeks of
9 having to live with the stress, anxiety and panic
10 that comes with having an open case hanging over you.

11 And in fact, the violence continued in some cases
12 for years. Because for some of our clients, that's
13 how long their case carried on. My colleague had a
14 22-year-old young woman whose case stemming from an
15 arrest at a protest in June 2020 lasted for 26
16 months. For two years, she had a pending felony
17 indictment hanging over her, which mind you,
18 resolved ultimately with a plea to a noncriminal
19 violation. But for 26 months, she had this felony
20 charge hanging over her.

21 So, when SRG utilizes its militaristic tactics to
22 police protestors and target Black and Brown
23 protestors specifically, I just want you all to
24 remember that the damage they're inflicting lasts
25

1 well beyond that one night and SRG must be disbanded.

2 Thank you.

3
4 GINA MITCHELL: Thank you Committee Members,
5 Council Members. My name is Gina Mitchell. I am
6 Staff Attorney at Queens Defenders. I'm here to echo
7 the sentiments of Council Member Won when she
8 indicated her concern about SRG being present in the
9 Queens communities. What we saw with most of these
10 actions, we saw disgusting and brutal police violence
11 from SRG occurred mostly outside of Queens but what
12 we are seeing as a staff attorneys and as public
13 defenders in the court house is that our clients need
14 specific services. Public safety is never going to
15 be created by putting more heavily militarized
16 violent police on the streets.

17 We as subject matter experts in our communities,
18 in our clients lives and what we are seeing on a
19 daily basis is that they need access to housing,
20 supportive housing services. They need universal and
21 affordable health care. They need protections for
22 noncitizen New Yorkers. Meaningful violence
23 interruption and diversion programs.

24 We had comment here about gun violence in our
25 communities. We need diversion programs so that we

1
2 can have equitable and just resolutions to these
3 kinds of problems in our communities.

4 Overwhelmingly, we see our clients are victims of
5 police brutality. We do not want to see more
6 militarized police coming into Queens. So, while we
7 did not see these actions happening necessarily in
8 Queens, we know that there were some officers present
9 in Queens Central Booking. We have seen the CCRB
10 records. We are reading them on a daily basis in our
11 discovery files. We know which officers are
12 problematic and the city also knows. We are calling
13 upon the city to do something about these to get rid
14 of these officers. To dismiss them, to sanction
15 them, to discipline them. This is not a situation
16 where they don't know who these people are.

17 We are asking that SRG be completely disbanded
18 and that their funds be divested and diversified to the
19 community resources that we so desperately need in
20 the Queens community. Thank you for your time.

21 RIGODIS APPLING: Good morning, my name's Rigodis
22 Applling. I am a Public Defender with the Cop
23 Accountability Project of Legal Aid Society. And we
24 thank this Committee for giving us this opportunity
25 to testify here today.

1
2 SRG is yet another unit of the NYPD that demands
3 massive resources without sufficient accountability.
4 Has no accountability for the harms that it afflicts
5 on New Yorkers, and with the Legal Aid Society, we
6 see our clients struggling with affordable housing,
7 reliable access to essential services, including
8 mental health and substance abuse programs. We have
9 limited access to essential public spaces like
10 libraries and diminished resources in public schools.

11 So, Legal Aid sees the kind of brutality that the
12 SRG inflicts on New Yorkers and we see that through
13 our battered clients in arraignments and in the
14 communities we live and serve. Specifically, we
15 collect data on Legal Aid's Law Enforcement Lookup
16 tool, LELU, which is New York's most comprehensive
17 set of records of the NYPD misconduct. And SRG
18 officers have been named in civil lawsuits alleging
19 horrific details, thousands of CCRB complaints have
20 been lodged against them. And despite touting a
21 specialized training and alleged capacity to handle
22 difficult situations, SRG officers in our database
23 have received a higher number of misconduct
24 complaints on average than compared to any other NYPD
25 members of service.

1
2 Some of the substantiated complaints, detail
3 narratives that reenforce and confirm their poor
4 training and persistent refusal to adequately
5 discipline SRG officers. Now, I'm going to give you
6 some examples of those but what's the point of having
7 substantiated discipline for officers through CCRB if
8 the Police Commissioner can just absolve everybody of
9 anything? We're asking them to hold themselves
10 accountable and that's no acceptable.

11 One example, Lieutenant Miquel Frez (SP?) was
12 found to have supervised and unlawful frisk and
13 retaliatory arrest of an activist that we lawfully
14 filming Lieutenant Frez in 2016. That activist and
15 cop watcher was arrested and he later sued over the
16 incident and won a settlement of \$900,000. Frez,
17 also had other substantiated charges from 2007 for
18 unlawful stop, retaliatory summons, improper strip
19 search and despite his record of misconduct,
20 Lieutenant Frez was rewarded with a transfer out of
21 PSA 7 and into SRG.

22 So, not only when police commit misconduct do
23 they not get disciplined in fact, they get rewarded
24 with special positions. One SRG supervisor
25 Lieutenant Ischaler Grant from SRG 4 in the Bronx, he

1
2 had 32 complaints involving ten separate incidents in
3 his file since joining the NYPD in 1990. Including
4 seven substantiated allegations.

5 On two percent of officers in the NYPD have more
6 incidents of alleged misconduct than Lieutenant
7 Grant. Troubling us are not just the misconduct but
8 how they behaved at the protests in 2020. The NYPD
9 investigative report from the Department of
10 Investigation showed that the SRG likely contributed
11 and exacerbated tensions during protests. And yet,
12 we still continue to give them the majority of our
13 funds.

14 The NYPD's empty promises in 2015 that SRG would
15 not be involved in handling protests and
16 demonstrations have long been forgotten and instead,
17 city leadership allows NYPD to unleash violent
18 militarized unit with a dismal history of
19 accountability on to civilians who are lawfully
20 exercising their first amendment rights.

21 While limiting the deployment of SRG to
22 demonstration is a good start, SRG should not exist
23 at all. NYPD is not only already the largest police
24 force in the U.S. but it continues with its bloated
25

1
2 budget to grow without accountability and further
3 perpetrating this culture of impunity.

4 We refuse to discipline them. They continue the
5 hundreds, the thousands of complaints with zero
6 discipline. In fact, they get more money. It's time
7 for City Council to stand up and to listen to their
8 constituents and to disband SRG.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

10 ANDREW CASE: Thank you. Dear Chair Hanks,
11 member of the Committee, my name is Andrew Case. I
12 am Supervising Attorney at Latino Justice PRLDEF. We
13 have submitted written testimony going over
14 significant innovations that have been made over the
15 past 15 to 18 years in the science of policing in
16 crowds and demonstrations, most of which come out of
17 the UK and all of which have not been incorporated by
18 the NYPD and any of the tactics it uses for crowd
19 control.

20 I want to talk about two examples that
21 demonstrate the SRG and the NYPD's unwillingness to
22 follow evidence in what works for providing safety to
23 crowds. The first is they use pepper spray on crowds
24 and the second is a lack of accountability. We've
25 known for decades that using OC spray on a crowd is

1 dangerous and ineffective. In 1997, the CCRB's first
2 report on OC spray emphasized that it should not be
3 used for crowd control. And in response, the NYPD
4 prohibited the use of OC spray on crowd control and
5 still does except for officers in the SRG.
6

7 And in the CCRB's Report on the 2020 protest
8 complaints, they site the SRG standards for using
9 pepper spray, which state that it may only be used
10 when an immediate life safety emergency exists. But
11 in May and June of 2020, we saw dozens of SRG
12 officers pepper spray crowds of demonstrators
13 indiscriminately including as Council Member Joseph
14 noticed, a State Senator. The CCRB substantiated 28
15 allegations of the improper use of pepper spray
16 during those protests.

17 Pepper spraying a crowd is not only violent and
18 dangerous, it has been rejected as a tactic by those
19 who know policing crowds best. The SRG also embodies
20 the NYPD's distain for accountability. In that same
21 CCRB report on the protest, you can read letter after
22 letter from the NYPD explaining a way obvious
23 misconduct by SRG officers and declining to introduce
24 any penalty, including in issues where the crowd was
25 pepper sprayed.

1
2 One captain even told the CCRB that he had not
3 ordered his officers to pepper spray, in an apparent
4 attempt to blame his officers for his misconduct.
5 They all testified he had ordered them to pepper
6 spray and it would have been a violation for them to
7 spray without his order. The CCRB substantiated
8 allegations against him and even this officer who had
9 lied about display about ordering pepper spray was
10 not disciplined by the NYPD.

11 The SRG embodies an aggressive and undisciplined
12 approach to crowd policing that is outdated,
13 ineffective and cruel. We urge you to investigate
14 it, disband it and keep the NYPD from using these
15 tactics again.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We're
17 going to turn to Zoom testifying. Bear with me.
18 Jackie Gosdigian, you can testify once you are
19 unmuted. Go ahead.

20 JACKIE GOSDIGIAN: Thank you. Good afternoon.
21 My name is Jackie Gosdigian. I am Senior Policy
22 Counsel at Brooklyn Defender Services and I am a
23 Public Defender for the past 13 years. We thank the
24 Committee on Public Safety and Chair Hanks for the
25

1
2 opportunity to address the Council about the NYPD's
3 Strategic Response Group.

4 Despite its intended purpose in recent years, the
5 SRG has been deployed to police protests, actions and
6 demonstrations across New York City and has gained a
7 reputation for being violent and operating without
8 oversight.

9 The SRG not only responds to reports of large
10 gatherings or civil disobedience but has now been
11 deployed to areas that were deemed as high crime. In
12 Brooklyn specifically, it was announced that SRG
13 would be deployed to the 67th, 73rd, and 75th
14 Precincts. These Brooklyn police precincts are
15 already infamous for their mistreatment of New
16 Yorkers and have some of the highest rates of CCRB
17 complaints and lawsuits citywide.

18 As public defenders, we represent people living
19 in communities with high rates of police presence and
20 government surveillance. We know how dangerous the
21 presence of these units can be for people. Instead
22 of investing in improved services, schools,
23 infrastructure and community, heavily armed officers
24 trained in paramilitary tactics are being moved into
25 Black and Brown low-income neighborhoods under the

1
2 pretense of public safety but in reality, they
3 contribute to over surveillance, escalating violence
4 and unlawful arrests.

5 The terror and risk of police encounters caused
6 by heightened law enforcement monitoring in certain
7 NYC neighborhoods, mirrors the tactics used by the
8 SRG during protest actions and gatherings. In the
9 case of the later, police presence discourages would
10 be protestors from assembling and exercising their
11 first amendment rights. And this is particularly
12 true for people of color and low-income communities.

13 Harassment of protest activities by law
14 enforcement, especially in these communities being
15 presented is a great deterrent impact on freedom of
16 expression and assembly. New York City has already
17 invested more than \$1 billion in a 20-year
18 surveillance infrastructure building program. This
19 city is blanketed in surveillance and no police
20 department in the country has more military grade
21 surveillance resources than the NYPD and SRG is part
22 of this surveillance network and exploits it by
23 identifying and prelabeling groups likely to attend
24 protests causing further unwarranted surveillance in
25 the communities we represent.

1
2 We know based on years data as well as stop and
3 frisk encounters that police including SRG officers
4 already detained and arrest Black and Brown New
5 Yorkers at disproportionate rates.

6 The last thing our city needs is to arrest Black
7 and Brown New Yorkers and other marginalized
8 community members who are speaking up against the
9 injustices in our communities. These arrests will
10 only continue to wrap up vulnerable New Yorkers in
11 the criminal legal system. Further perpetuating the
12 criminalization of Black and Brown New Yorkers. We
13 must disband SRG and other specialized law
14 enforcement groups that have a history of violence
15 and lack of oversight. And who in particular
16 suppressed the rights and the voice of marginalized
17 communities under the guides of law and order.

18 We urge the Council to redirect funding towards
19 community investments, housing, education, violence
20 interrupter programs and alternatives to
21 incarceration in an effort to drastically reduce
22 criminal system involvement in New York City. Thank
23 you so much.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you so much for
25 your testimony. We're now going to turn to other

1
2 members of the public here. As I mentioned, we're
3 going to try to go through folks who've signed up and
4 if you haven't signed up already, do so with the
5 Sergeant at Arms and we're going to roughly kind of
6 go in alphabetical order for the rest of the folks to
7 come and share. Predictability and when you're going
8 to kind of be going.

9 So, to start, we're going to go with Antoni
10 Albergotti (SP?) followed by Lori Kim Alexander
11 followed by Abraham A. followed by Margot Barrat.
12 So, if you all just kind of want to come up as your
13 name's called and I'll kind of give you a heads up
14 who are going to be the following folks after that as
15 well. Okay, you may begin and again, if I called
16 your name, you could come up to the dais and go after
17 this gentleman as well. So, and then we'll continue
18 from there. Go ahead.

19 ANTONI ALBERGOTTI: Hi, my name is Antoni
20 Albergotti and I am a Court Administrative Student
21 Certified by the State of New Jersey Judiciary. I
22 lived in an SRO Single Room Occupancy when the
23 protest against law enforcement began here in New
24 York City as a result of George Floyd's murder. So,
25 I was homeless. Impacting my psychological

1
2 circumstances with seeing NYPD officers march from
3 the midtown south precinct on 35th Street towards
4 protestors who were marching up 8th Avenue toward
5 Time Square. I was terrified at this picture of
6 military armament because I only expected to see
7 violence after that. Riot gear dressed officers and
8 the looks on their face, officers faces felt like
9 they were going to war.

10 I was not attacked by a taskforce or a police
11 officer and I know that brutality is not conducive to
12 peace, rights or justice. I have been afraid to
13 speak out at protests, show up at protests and appear
14 angry and rageful expecting a backlash that did
15 actually happen to other people in parts of the city
16 evidenced by videos of vicious attacks. That
17 brutality that happened was also recorded again, like
18 many instances that I have doubts about. Vulnerable
19 and targeted, the protestors were naturally
20 defenseless against arm and tactile groups of
21 officers. I can say that some of my personal
22 knowledge of these incidents are like horrible
23 nightmares up to and including murder.

24 I cannot watch anymore videos of police attacks.
25 Any group, any entity or system that promotes

1
2 brutality thereby justifying that violence as an
3 excuse to control that which they can truly not
4 control ultimately, it is not to be trusted and lacks
5 credibility. So, I'm here today speaking on behalf
6 of Vocal New York and SRG obviously must be
7 disbanded. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you so much for
9 your testimony. I'm still continuing down the list
10 alphabetically, Lori Kim Alexander, Ibrahim A.
11 followed by Margot Barrat. Are you folks, anyone
12 here?

13 LORI KIM ALEXANDER: Hello, my name is Lori Kim
14 Alexander. My pronouns are she, her and we, our and
15 I live and work here in New York City. I also want
16 to say that I came here for most of the length of the
17 Fortran to be here. And there's a lot of people here
18 who I wanted to talk to and they're not here. I
19 don't understand that.

20 So, and I mean the City Council as the as the
21 NYPD. So, I sit here today as a survivor of multiple
22 incidents of police violence. These range from
23 sexual harassment to most recently physical assault
24 by the SRG two years ago, which has left me with
25

1
2 permanent damage and limited mobility in my upper
3 body.

4 I was 21 years old when the Disorder Control Unit
5 brutalized me. It was on the night of October 19,
6 1998, when the DCU, which is the precursor to the SRG
7 forced scared and unwilling horses to trample my
8 siblings. I narrowly escaped broken bones because my
9 best friend pulled me up off the ground. We were on
10 the ground sitting peacefully when they attacked. I
11 watched bones break and I can still hear the screams.
12 It was a vigil for Matthew Shepard, and that has
13 stuck with me my whole life. I'm 47 now.

14 There was no threat which warranted that
15 response, no need for self-preservation. We called
16 for an end to the unit then and instead it was
17 rebranded and more funded. Why has it taken over 25
18 years to disband these racist overfunded and free
19 reining units?

20 In 2020, a Sergeant in the SRG tried to break my
21 arm, threw me on the asphalt so hard, I had an
22 imprint on my arm for days and painfully handcuffed
23 me in zip ties behind my back for over six hours.
24 This has caused the permanent damage. I had just
25 watched him hit a small presenting person in the face

1
2 with another officers shield. I can't identify him
3 because he, like every other officer there, had
4 removed his badge or anything that identified him.
5 So, it's not about whether we change and use other
6 people's gear. You're not changing and using other
7 people's shirt, you know.

8 I'm in pain every day. I'm in pain right now and
9 it took over a year of physical therapy for me to be
10 able to raise my hands to clap instead of clapping
11 them together, like I did today. There were cops on
12 my block almost every day after that, just rolling
13 through and I believe; thank you for this time. I
14 believe that was to intimidate me and others. I just
15 want to know how much more money and blood and
16 psychological warfare are we going to allow the NYPD
17 to take out on folks who live and work here.

18 So, look City Council members, disbanding the SRG
19 is possible. It is possible. Investing in our
20 communities has been proven to make sense. Don't
21 wait until it's too late. Don't let one more New
22 Yorker face down discriminatory, militarized, armored
23 police in this city. Or are some of you just waiting
24 until we aren't able to live to tell the tale? Thank
25 you for listening to me today.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much for your
3 testimony.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much everyone.
5 Ibrahim X. followed by Margot Barrat. Ibrahim, are
6 you present?

7 IBRAHIM X: That would be me.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh, I'm sorry.

9 IBRAHIM X: No worries.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Followed by Margot Barrat
11 when you have a chance. Go ahead.

12 IBRAHIM X: Greetings, this is my, I think my
13 first time actually testifying live before the City
14 Council, I thank you for the honor and privilege. My
15 name is Ibrahim IU. I prefer to refer to myself as
16 Ibrahim X. The purpose of this testimony before the
17 government.

18 Police have a long history of suppressing protest
19 and the NYPD has its own checkered history of
20 policing protests. The strategic; interesting name,
21 Strategic Response Group is the newest form of the
22 NYPD's aggressive and bias response to protest.
23 Quite simply, you know I'm somebody that you know
24 after 911 decided to join the military. I want to
25 fight for a country of laws. I wanted to fight for a

1
2 country where you know I felt disrespected by 911
3 because another country came here or another group
4 came here and tried to tell us how to live and one of
5 the best parts about accountability is that it brings
6 closure and it brings primality to conflict.

7 And it's interesting that I'm here and I haven't
8 missed any of my court dates. But NYPD, who if I
9 missed a court date, would come to my door and
10 physically commit violence and get me to get me to
11 come before the government. They don't have to come.

12 So, that's another way of the city telling me
13 that they're better than me. I'm inferior. Because
14 if I didn't come when I was called by or summons by
15 the government, I would be given a bench warrant.
16 It's happened many times in my personal life
17 unfortunately.

18 So, I just wanted to highlight that. Also, the
19 lack of some Council Members to stay as well because
20 now I know where to vote. Because now I've actually
21 come to this room and seen how it operates and the
22 gentleman and the lady from Queens talking about gun
23 violence, as they didn't know anything about it.
24 Bricks, I don't know when the last time a brick was
25 thrown at you sir. I doubt it's been very recently.

1
2 Because like people like yourself who escalate
3 conflicts, that's what the SRG does. So, the SRG is
4 really an agent of people like you because you
5 escalate on purpose to intimidate. Like the lady
6 said, you intimidate us but we're not going to be
7 intimidated anymore because we're here. People like
8 me don't usually come to City Council but we're
9 coming. We're on the way, so brace yourself.
10 Disband the SRG and we won't have to come. Keep it
11 going, we'll be outside.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Next,
13 we'll hear from Margot Barrat. We're going to turn
14 to two people on Zoom following that. First will be
15 Pong Wong Chan(SP?) followed by Toff
16 Biafongenberg(SP?). Apologies for all the
17 mispronunciations. Margot, you may go ahead.

18 MARGOT BARRAT: Hi, I just wanted to note for the
19 record that there are only three Council Members left
20 and one of them thinks that fire bombs are being
21 thrown around the city.

22 This is my testimony. On June 5, 2021, I was
23 violently arrested during the SRG's 10 p.m. raid on
24 Washington Square Park. That night, hundreds of SRG
25 officers rushed into the park and before I knew it,

1
2 one of them had slammed me to the ground. Had I not
3 been carrying a backpack that cushioned my fall, I
4 could have fractured my skull.

5 Despite being compliant and yelling that I wasn't
6 resisting, four officers insisted on carrying me by
7 each of my limbs, my two arms and my two legs. I
8 cannot express how distressing it was to have been
9 carried with my legs spread apart in the air by two
10 male officers and two more holding my arms. I left
11 the precinct with broken blood vessels and bruising
12 on my upper arms that I watched turn all different
13 shades of the rainbow for weeks. I wish I could say
14 I'm the only person that this has happened to but I'm
15 not and you'll hear many more people today.

16 This is just one of the many, many instances of
17 SRG brutality I've witnessed over the past three
18 years. I have personally seen the SRG officers beat,
19 shove, drag, pepper spray, tase, kettle, strip and
20 humiliate civilians, press, medics and legal
21 observers at protests.

22 I have witnessed the SRG thrust heavy bikes into
23 people's chests and use the L-rad, a military weapon
24 that can cause ear damage and migraines even when not
25 used at its full power. Removing the SRG from

1
2 policing protests isn't enough because the unit also
3 harms communities specifically Black and Brown
4 communities outside of protests.

5 In 2018, SRG officers were involved in the murder
6 of Saheed Vassell in Crown Heights. They have
7 participated in the city's violent sweeps, arrested
8 clinic defenders including myself, and threatened to
9 play the L-rad, which again is a military weapon in
10 front of young children at a drag story hour.

11 The SRG needs to be stopped. I appreciate
12 Council Member Ossè's bill to limit the deployment of
13 the SRG at protests but it is nowhere near enough. I
14 urge you to fully disband the Strategic Response
15 Group and prevent it from ever being recreated or
16 rebranded in any form. Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you for
18 your testimony. Again, we're going to turn to two
19 folks testifying online. First, will be Pong Wong
20 Chan followed by Toff Biaforenberg. Are either of
21 you available? So, can you turn on your – oh there
22 you are sir, go ahead.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 TOFF BIAFORGENBERG: Hi, my name is Toff, I am a
25 Southeast Asian Abolitionist, Community Organizer and

1
2 Educator in the Asian American nonprofit world. Born
3 and raised in Brooklyn. I previously worked at a
4 CUNY college and I'm currently unemployed due to
5 having long COVID.

6 I'm joining today's demand to disband the SRG.
7 There are thousands of hours of footage of evidence
8 of the repeated violence inherent in the NYPD
9 including in the SRG. They need to be disbanded.
10 Other units cannot continue to carry out SRG
11 functions and the NYPD cannot recreate SRG under a
12 different name. This is not a demand for more
13 transparency or any reform that keeps the SRG and its
14 functions intact. We are demanding for it to be
15 disbanded.

16 Money is being used to provide it with weapons,
17 bikes, riot gear, military paraphernalia and shields
18 to hurt, harm, maim and kill New Yorkers that others
19 have shared today. Against this back track of
20 organized violence, there are New Yorkers out there
21 starving who don't have housing and institutions like
22 public education and healthcare are continually
23 defunded in an ongoing pandemic. There is no
24 reimaging, revetting, retraining policing. There is
25 no creating equitable salaries for a job that

1
2 specializes in inflicting violence, coercion,
3 incapacitation and surveillance. I also want to
4 respond to an earlier comment from Jumaane Williams
5 on his claims that crowds police themselves. That's
6 incorrect. When people are at protests, doing forms
7 of crowd control, that is not policing. That is
8 community keeping each other safe and looking out for
9 each other to protect each other from agency state
10 violence, from White Supremacist and other right-wing
11 forces. The police do not have a novelty on safety.
12 They are not able to sell or provide safety. A fact
13 that many of the abolitionist and the progress
14 speakers on the Council and those in the Chamber
15 testifying today know. All policing is violent due
16 to by virtue of existing, depriving communities of
17 resources and punishing and killing people
18 disproportionately, Black and Brown people.

19 I want to commend those and the City Council
20 members in the Chamber right now who remained in
21 progressive caucus as you continue to support
22 defunding the NYPD. I also want to bring attention
23 that there's a cop on the Zoom call right now for
24 those in the Chamber. Thank you.

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

3 Next, we're going to hear from Toff Biaforenberg.

4 Toff, are you available? Yes, you are. Unmuted,
5 sorry, go ahead.

6 TOFF BIAFORGENBERG: That's okay. Thank you and
7 its Biaforenberg, thank you. Over the past three
8 years, I have witnessed the NYPD's Strategic Response
9 Group brutalize friends and loved ones who were
10 nonviolently exercising their first amendment right
11 to protest. Protesting, the very thing the police
12 violence and murder. I witnessed in the spring of
13 2021 the SRG brutalize an old Black man who was a
14 passerby. He got slammed to the ground. His walking
15 cane broken while the militarized bike unit with
16 their \$2,000 uniforms and brand-new Trek Bike
17 thrashed around into a militarized formation to
18 protect the atrocities that the SRG were doing. The
19 SRG is a voluntary unit of the most aggressive and
20 violent officers. They are choosing to be this
21 violent and aggressive. These are officers with
22 extraordinarily long misconduct record. One SRG
23 supervisor has 32 complaints, seven substantiated.
24 Everyone here knows how bad it has to be to be
25 substantiated.

1
2 Officers have caused concussion, humiliation,
3 seizures, broken limbs, long term trauma, stripped,
4 choked, slammed down and bludgeoned with these SRG
5 fights.

6 In 2018 it was shown that the Strategic Response
7 Group backed away from Proud Boys, assaulting
8 antifascists demonstrators. SRG is trained to use
9 weapons of war and it is clear who their war is
10 against.

11 The SRG must be disbanded with \$133 million
12 allocated, reallocated to the Black and Brown
13 communities who the SRG does the most harm. Thank
14 you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Next,
16 we'll hear in person from Kimberly Bernard followed
17 by Julie Bowen followed by Ariana B followed by
18 Delinah Serrato(SP?).

19 KIMBERLY BERNARD: Uhm, I'm Kimberly, I am an
20 activist and organizer. I remember the very first
21 day I went out to protest on June 2, 2020. I was
22 supposed to go out on June 1st but I turned on my TV
23 and I got a little scared I have to admit. I'm not
24 scared anymore though but on that day I was. I
25 remember seeing a police officer who I know now – who

1
2 I now know was a member of the SRG violently push a
3 woman who looked like she couldn't have been more
4 than 100 pounds to the floor, sent her body flying
5 and fractured her skull. I said to myself, if the
6 doing that to White women, I don't know what they're
7 going to do to me. And I took a breather and I
8 waited and I went out the second day.

9 And in that time of leading; I've led hundreds of
10 thousands of protestors through the streets of New
11 York City preaching abolition, preaching against
12 police violence and in those three years of doing
13 that, of leading those marches, of leading Black
14 Lives Matter marches, abolish ICE marches,
15 reproductive justice marches, I can't tell you how
16 much violence I've seen. And the violence I've seen
17 has not been at the hands of the people.

18 The violence I've seen has been state sanctioned
19 violence from member of the NYPD, from member of the
20 SRG to sit before the people and say that you can't
21 do anything about this is completely unacceptable.
22 We are not asking you to do something about this.
23 What we are doing is we are demanding; we are
24 commanding you to do something about this. You work
25 for us. You are public servants. You serve at our

1
2 pleasure. We buy your houses. We buy your cars. We
3 pay for you and your wife's vacations and the people
4 are serving notice on the government of the United
5 States. We are serving notice on the State of New
6 York. We are serving notice on the Mayor of this
7 city. We are serving notice on the City Council that
8 if you do not do your job, you will no longer have a
9 job. We are commanding and demanding that you
10 disband the SRG. We will no longer fund our own
11 oppression. We will not fund our own oppression. We
12 will not pay you to exact violence upon our
13 communities. Remove those hundreds of millions of
14 dollars from the SRG and put it into our schools.
15 Fund our schools. Fund our children.

16 I live in Harlem and I'm telling you, we are
17 living in the middle of a crack epidemic nightmare.
18 People need help. It is a violent circle of
19 oppression. When you create the situation and then
20 when we go out to protest the situation you in turn
21 exact more violence upon us. We are saying no more.
22 No more. It ends here. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
24 Next, we'll hear from Julie Bowen followed by Ariana
25 B. followed by Adelina Serrato(SP?).

1
2 JULIE BOWEN: Hello, my name is Julie and as a
3 resident of New York City, I want to testify about
4 why the City Council must hold the NYPD's notoriously
5 violent SRG unit accountable for its abuses and
6 disband the unit completely.

7 Since the NYPD doesn't think it needs to attend
8 these hearing regarding the SRG, then what does that
9 say. It tells us that the NYPD really runs this town
10 and can ignore you and any oversight with no
11 consequences. If you, democratically elected
12 representatives of the City Council have no control
13 over the NYPD, then how is this a democracy. If they
14 are not accountable to you, then to who. If the moto
15 of the NYPD is to protect and serve, then what is the
16 purpose of having a violent unit like the SRG? They
17 are highly militarized and weaponized unit who are
18 sicked on some protestors but not others.

19 This is a critical point because these actions
20 have political implications. I am a proabortion
21 activist in NYC and every month I know there's defend
22 to Planned Parenthood Health Care Clinic from rabidly
23 antiabortion zealots who harass the patients and
24 actively try to stop them from entering the clinic to
25 get healthcare that they need. We are there to

1
2 protect these patients and prevent the
3 antiabortionists from invading the clinics. The SRG
4 are always there in great numbers to escort and
5 protect these antiabortionists and yet, they only
6 arrest us.

7 I have personally witnessed the SRG chase members
8 of our group down the street and place them in
9 chokeholds and arrest those and others who film them
10 and just happen to be standing there. They are very
11 friendly with these antiabortion zealots, some of
12 whom are felons with restraining orders preventing
13 them from being anywhere near reproductive health
14 care centers. In fact, they act as though they are
15 their own armed personal security service for these
16 antiabortionists.

17 You wouldn't know it from the way they just laugh
18 and joke with each other, which shows clear bias on
19 their part. I urge you to rein in the out-of-control
20 NYPD and it's equally out of control budget. The
21 first step to having safer communities is to disband
22 the SRG instead of sending them into communities to
23 cherish them. That is not community safety and this
24 is not acceptable. And I applaud the previous
25

1
2 speaker because I can't surpass her but thank you
3 very much.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Ariana B.
5 followed by Adelina Serrato followed by Phil Campbell
6 followed by Maximilian Clark.

7 ARIANA B: Thank you. I want to take this space
8 before I start to say that I've been at marches that
9 have been organized by Black women because most of
10 these movements, if you want to know where they
11 start, and you want to know whose behind them, and
12 whose making them run and whose creating solidarity,
13 it is Black women. It is Black fem presenting
14 persons. I've been at marches that are organized by
15 Kimberly, by other people at Freedom March NYC, by
16 people who are organizing with warriors in the
17 garden. So, I don't understand where you have this
18 notion that we are the one's creating violence. All
19 of these protests that I have been to, the violence
20 that has been started has been by the officers that
21 are there. That are set there to harass us.

22 I'm talking to the gentleman down there. I don't
23 understand. I cannot fathom how you are talking
24 about property when we are being beat. I cannot
25 fathom why we are here today to disband a racist and

1
2 a terroristic organization that needs to be disbanded
3 and held accountable for their racism, for their
4 brutality, for their aggression, for their terrorism
5 and you want to talk about property. Be so for real,
6 be very for real. You want to talk about property
7 and before I was 20 years old, I would appreciate if
8 you could look at me when I'm speaking to you.
9 Before I was even 20 years old, I understand what
10 you're laughing at.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay, excuse me. Excuse me.

12 ARIANA B: Before I was even 20 years old, I had
13 a gun held to me. A nine-millimeter held to my chest
14 because a fellow protestor that I was trying to help,
15 who was pulled from the march without provocation and
16 randomly, and as he was pulled was then being beaten
17 with the bikes that they have with them. As I try to
18 help him and pull him up, the officer who was
19 apparently so scared of unarmed people who were
20 trying to help each other, pulled his gun on me
21 before I was 20 but we want to talk about property.

22 Before I was 20, I was trying to get off of the
23 Henry Hudson Parkway where we were kettled in.
24 Police officers in front of the march. Police
25 officers behind. SRG officers. We had nowhere to go

1 and they're screaming disburse, disburse. With the
2 water on one side and Riverside Park on the other.
3 We're hoping the fence to try to get into the park
4 and I can't get over the fence because someone is
5 pulling me. Someone, who? An SRG officer pulling me
6 from my backpack and punching me repeatedly in my
7 knees. I had bruises on the back of my knees for
8 weeks. We are asking you to disband them. We are
9 asking you to take away the \$133.7 million that you
10 give them. We are asking you to make a safe New York
11 for us.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

14 ARIANA B: For people who live here.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

16 ARIANA B: That is all we are asking for.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

19 Next, we'll hear from Adelina Serrato followed by
20 Phil Campbell, Maximilian Clark, and Sophia Costanzi.
21 You may go ahead, thank you.

22 ADELINA SERRATO: Hello Council Members and good
23 morning. I has been very painful to watch this
24 hearing be delayed again and again due to the
25 uncooperation of the NYPD. And I am so grateful that

1
2 my story finally has the opportunity to be heard by
3 people who can actually do something about it.

4 I'm disappointed that we've lost so many of our
5 Council Members but I'm glad that at least one member
6 who - I'm glad that you're still here Council Member
7 Holden.

8 On September 20, 2020, shortly after commencing a
9 peaceful march from Fully Square, I was targeted and
10 brutalized by SRG officers after I refused to stop
11 recording them on my phone. When I tried to run
12 away, I was grabbed, beaten and forced to my knees.
13 Five officers held me down, pushing my head into my
14 chest and completely blocking my airways. For about
15 ten seconds I could not breath at all. I remember
16 clearly realizing that I couldn't even make a sound
17 and thinking, is this how I'm going to die?

18 I was falsely imprisoned for five hours
19 afterwards. My entire adult life has been split into
20 a before and a after by the actions of the officers
21 who choked me. They cost me a piece of mind that I
22 have yet to get back and they also cost the city
23 thousands of dollars in settlement money. Although
24 nowhere near close to what I believe I could have won
25 had I taken my civil suit to trial.

1
2 The SRG is responsible for taking many things
3 from me. They broke my glasses and tore the straps
4 off my favorite backpack. I have permanent nerve
5 damage in both of my hands from the zip ties they
6 refuse to loosen. They took away my ability to move
7 through this city without feeling visceral fear
8 around every corner at the site of a blue uniform.
9 But maybe the biggest thing that the SRG took from me
10 was the believe that nonviolent descent is my right
11 as an American or that it is even capable of
12 effecting change.

13 When peaceful protest is consistently suppressed,
14 even here in New York City, how could I? Although
15 this was certainly my most traumatic and brutal
16 arrest, I was wrongfully arrested for protesting
17 three other times as well. All at completely
18 peaceful events that posed no conceivable threat of
19 imminent violence. All with charges that the DA
20 declined to prosecute.

21 Since 2020, I have watched the SRG escalate to
22 violence in the face of peaceful protest over and
23 over and over again. With the exception of one White
24 supremacist group from Long Island, who I personally
25 witnessed them escort very nicely. I have seen the

1
2 victims of this unconstitutional violence fall into
3 devastating hopelessness and political radicalization.
4 The kind that these guys are actually afraid of or a
5 potential for that I would say.

6 More training will not fix this. Replacing the
7 SRG with another unit of riot cops will not fix this.
8 On the day that I was choked, before I left, my
9 partner, a Venezuelan immigrant seeking asylum told
10 me not to go. He was afraid that what happened to
11 people in his country would happen to me. I told
12 him, don't worry, I'm not going to disappear. We
13 have a constitutional right to peaceful assembly.
14 That's not how it turned out and I don't believe in
15 that right anymore. It's just been proven to me that
16 at least in New York City, that constitutional right
17 is not granted to peaceful descent.

18 You have the power to finally make my trauma mean
19 something. Please hear the cries of your people here
20 today and do the right thing. Disband the SRG and
21 invest in our communities. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

24 Next, we'll hear from Phil Campbell followed by
25 Maximilian Clark, Sophia Costanzi and Albin Dan.

1
2 PHIL CAMPBELL: Good morning everybody or
3 afternoon now. I'd like to say, my name is Phil
4 Campbell and I am a Photography Teacher, I am a
5 Journalist and I'm a student at Hunter College
6 currently missing my Audrey Lorde class right now.

7 So, as someone who protest before, I get into it.
8 I'd like say or request a formal letter to any of my
9 students when their teacher misses their photography
10 class because he will keep protesting and he will
11 keep going to take pictures, as I tell them to do.

12 So, as I am a poet and as I often explain things to
13 children, let me put this in a good metaphor.

14 Imagine leaving your home one morning to realize the
15 crossing guard now wears a NASA insignia. Once you
16 arrive at the train station, you are surprised to see
17 two astronauts with helmets and suit just like the
18 old movies.

19 As you pass a popular station, you see five more
20 astronauts and hear an announcement. Attention, if
21 you have any questions or need to report an issue,
22 NASA is located at the nearest station. You spend
23 your ride wondering how a space engineer could help
24 answer MTA questions. You then hear, hello everyone,
25 the NASA would like to remind you that backpacks and

1
2 other large containers are subject to random search
3 by these astronauts. You wish you had driven but
4 something tells you that their space crews will pull
5 you over without reason. You imagine the hate in
6 space telescope surveilling your neighborhood and the
7 many instances of astronaut abuse caught on camera.
8 You arrive in your destination, a protest.

9 To no surprise you see astronauts planking the
10 protest. They have the state-of-the-art space
11 technology, some of which you have never seen. What
12 are they prepared for? Why are they here? Why are
13 they so heavily equipped? It gives you the
14 impression that NASA has nothing to do with space.
15 You wonder who paid for their suits and why. You
16 can't figure out the point of astronauts on the
17 street. You are thankful that they are not police.

18 Though they are both over equipped for a protest,
19 the policeman carries a loaded weapon. Though they
20 both use new technologies, the astronaut surveys the
21 sky, not Black communities. Astronauts do not have a
22 history of strike breaking, infiltration and
23 suppression of protests, police do. They are both in
24 equipped. In fact, over equipped for a different
25 situation.

1
2 If you have to choose NYPD or NASA, I'd choose
3 NASA because at least they look for a scientific
4 solution to my concerns instead of terrorizing and
5 brutalizing my community. Fund the next generation
6 of astronauts and maybe you won't have so much crime.

7 So, with that last 20 seconds, I'd like to reach
8 out to my students who going forward I will encourage
9 to keep doing a journalist thing covering these
10 protests, so some people will not think people are
11 throwing firebombs and bricks at the protestors as
12 good civilians do. That's the first amendment. Keep
13 protesting everybody. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
16 Next, we'll here from Maximilian Clark followed by
17 Sophia Costanzi. Maximilian, you may go ahead.

18 MAXIMILIAN CLARK: Hey, hey everyone. Hey
19 patriots. You know I just want to bring some balance
20 to these proceedings. You know, 1791 when this
21 country was first founded, our founding fathers gave
22 us the Bill of Rights, ensuing that citizens would
23 have the first amendment right to peacefully assemble
24 and speak their mind. Now, it's worth noting that
25 back then, women and minorities were legally

1
2 considered objects like a throw rug or an end table,
3 a lamp. And so, you know citizens meant White guys
4 like me.

5 And I am proud to say that 232 years later, the
6 NYPD upholds the originalist interpretation, ensuring
7 that I, above all others have the right to gather and
8 speak my mind. Everyone else can have first
9 amendment. You can have all the first amendment you
10 want when I'm done with it, so says the NYPD.

11 Now, I've heard it said that neutrality favors
12 the oppressor and I can't even imagine neutrality.
13 It would be terrible. When I go to these protests,
14 NYPD, they come up, they ask about my kids, my
15 vacation plans. They let me into the subway for
16 free. If they talk to me the way they talk some of
17 these guys, I mean I've seen them you know push
18 pregnant women to the ground, tackle photographers.
19 I've seen them like hit people with bikes. You know,
20 move or I will move you is the first thing they say
21 to people standing peacefully. If they did that to
22 me, uh, or even just if they didn't do violence, none
23 of this would work, none of it.

24 Look, am I supposed to bring my own unprovoked
25 violence to these protests? I mean, why am I even

1
2 paying tax dollars for? I'll give you a visual. You
3 know, people are visual thinkers. I'm a graduate of
4 Andrew Tate's Hustler University, so I understand
5 body language okay. When cops are out there, they
6 face the danger, they face the threat. So, I want
7 you to imagine me and 30 of my guys, many of whom are
8 unarmed are facing off like the gay, straight
9 alliance who want like basic human rights. Which
10 direction are the cops facing? Which way? That's
11 right, towards the threat. Protecting me because if
12 they weren't there, some underweight nonbinary
13 librarian might say something mean to me. So, thank
14 God the SRG is there to power bomb them into the
15 pavement preemptively.

16 Oh, my God I mean without them. So, I just want
17 to thank God, thank Jesus for these men and I want to
18 thank all of our allies in the City Council and in
19 the Mayor's Office because I know that you know
20 exactly what I'm saying and afterwards we can go, we
21 can take some pictures together and we can talk about
22 how we're going to finally win the race wars. I
23 mean, sorry, we could talk about how we care about
24 public safety, public safety and property value,
25 right. And you know, we'll know what we're talking

1 about and they'll know what we're talking about.

2 Everyone knows, but it will be fun to pretend.

3 So, in closing, I just want to thank the City of
4 New York for taking some of the most violent
5 offenders off the street, domestic abusers,
6 murderers. They're off the street and they have jobs
7 and guns and badges. And they're not just the
8 bodyguards of White Supremacists, they're my best
9 friends, allies and sometimes board members. Hmm,
10 thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
12 Sophie, followed by Alvin Dan, Walter Ditman.

13 SOPHIA COSTANZI: Good afternoon Council Members.
14 I am a Bronx Native, theatre artist and musician. I
15 have participated as a percussionist in at least 150
16 protest actions presided over by the SRG in the last
17 three years. In that time, I have personally
18 witnessed SRG commit countless harmful acts against
19 protestors, as well as civilians in the wrong place
20 at the wrong time.

21 For those who would liken us to rioters, I urge
22 you to put your phone away, step down from your ivory
23 tower and educate yourself. As you have heard, SRG
24 routinely pins people to the ground with multiple
25

1
2 officers. I can't keep count of the number of times
3 I feared I was about to witness the next Eric Garner.
4 And they killed Shaheed Vassell. They would wait for
5 even the slightest chance to tackle someone. When
6 none came, they would push people into the street and
7 then arrest them for being in the street. They
8 plowed their bikes directly into crowds. They tased
9 people. They broke bones, musical instruments, our
10 safety teams' bikes. They broke photography
11 equipment to destroy the evidence. They left a
12 pregnant woman handcuffed on her stomach for over an
13 hour. They shot legal observers with rubber bullets,
14 stalked leaders and safety team members,
15 systematically trying to manufacture their arrests,
16 in order to disempower the movement as much as
17 possible.

18 All this while our tax dollars pay their salaries
19 and their civil suits. My last experience with SRG
20 was at a clinic defense in Soho. As more members of
21 the BLM movement have started to show up at that
22 action, SRG's presence has ballooned to a point where
23 I no longer feel safe there defending my rights as a
24 woman. Somehow, we are the enemy, and Christian
25 extremists are not. Most recently, SRG happily

1
2 escorted a group of proud boys into the subway
3 without paying the fare. These Proud Boys had just
4 finished attacking a drag story hour in Queens. Our
5 city cannot stand for this. Our city is a place
6 where people with every kind of difference can exist
7 without persecution. SRG protects those who would
8 seek to divide and disenfranchise what makes our city
9 the best one in the world. I do not feel served or
10 protected. I feel under attack. This anti-terror
11 group serves only to terrorize your constituents.
12 Please, disband them. This money could be better
13 spent literally anywhere else. Thank you for your
14 time and consideration.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Next,
16 we'll hear from Alvin Dan followed by Walter Ditman,
17 Miriam Fischer and then we're going to turn to
18 Chanelle Gandhari who is on Zoom.

19 ALVIN DAN: Hello, my name is Alvin Dan. I'm
20 getting my master's degree in social work at Hunter
21 College. I'm missing class right now to be here.
22 This is like three years in the making. I wrote
23 something, I don't know if I'm going to be able to
24 finish it but here we go.

25

1
2 In the summer of 2020 during the George Floyd and
3 Breanna Taylor protest, I was brutalized and
4 violently arrested five times in a span of three
5 months between June and September of that year. I
6 first witnessed the battalion of over hundreds of SRG
7 officers kettle myself, and roughly 300 nonviolent
8 protesters in Mott Haven, the Bronx at 7:42 p.m.
9 before the 8:00 p.m. curfew where I witnessed
10 firsthand police lieutenants and other high-ranking
11 officers lead the charge by jumping on cars to bash
12 the heads of legal aid who were monitoring police
13 activity and volunteer medics who were there to
14 administer aid to protestors who were hurt by police
15 violence. The SRG used batons, fists, bikes, mase,
16 and other suppressive tactics to escalate protests to
17 a state and panic and chaos that continue to haunt
18 myself and friends and other protestors to this day.

19 I was able to avoid arrest when I pulled an
20 elderly Black woman out of police kettle after she
21 passed out from SRG's pushing us from the front and
22 the back of the march. I was first arrested by SRG
23 on the Brooklyn Bridge in July 2020 during the month
24 long occupy City Hall demonstration demanding the
25 defunding of the NYPD where officer Peter Quigley

1
2 smashed my face with his baton and proceeded to put
3 me in a chokehold with the same baton after throwing
4 my friend to the ground while we were backing away.
5 That same officer murdered a man, an unarmed Black
6 man in 2008 by the way and was still allowed to be
7 deployed in the same space with our nonviolent
8 protestors, protesting against the very thing we were
9 there for. You feel me.

10 I was then thrown into the ground. My hair was
11 grabbed and my face was rubbed into the concrete. I
12 don't know if you and I have been to the same riot
13 Councilman but if you were there, you would be on
14 this side I believe. I was arrested a second time
15 right on Black Lives Matter Boulevard freshly
16 painted. Right in front of City Hall at 3:22 in the
17 morning where activists were sleeping in tents and
18 Occupy City Hall were violently wakened by hundreds
19 of SRG officers reeling shields and batons, storming
20 in their tents, screaming and chanting "move back"
21 during the last week of July 2020.

22 They destroyed our food bank, our water supply,
23 threw couches and trash cans at us as they marched us
24 off from our camp onto Foley Square. Sergeant
25 Spalding, the officer leading the SRG raid smiled as

1
2 he smashed his baton and shield in mine and my
3 friends faces as we were disbursing away from City
4 Hall, after we were listening to their instructions.
5 They began to then chase us down Black Lives Matter
6 Boulevard, where I was tackled to the ground and had
7 a knee lodged in the back of my neck before being
8 arrested again.

9 I was arrested two more times after the raid but
10 it was my fifth arrest by the SRG that changed my
11 life. The fifth arrest by the SRG happened in
12 September 2020 during a protest advocating for the
13 protection of migrant women who were being forced to
14 have hysterectomies in Georgia. It involved five
15 officers including one captain tackling me into the
16 ground, punching me, rubbing my face into the
17 concrete and then threatening to beat me up after
18 taking my handcuffs off inside the van.

19 I just want to skip ahead to the last statement I
20 have. Uhm, the Strategic Response Group has only
21 existed to violently suppress anyone with a cardboard
22 sign with something to say about state violence and
23 oppression towards Black and Brown and Queer and
24 immigrant and instable and homeless New Yorkers. The
25 SRG operate like a bunch of hired goons who find joy

1
2 in the abuse they dish out to nonviolent protestors
3 and we're footing the bill.

4 Now, you want them to storm into our
5 neighborhoods and do what? Murder more Black and
6 Brown people. New Yorkers like the SRG murders to
7 the Vessel in Crown Heights Brooklyn an unarmed Black
8 in 2018. The SRG operates more like state regulated
9 gangsters than a state Strategic Response Group and
10 must be demanded all powers to the people.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Albin. Anyone that
13 has written testimony that wants to submit it to the
14 record, you could email it to
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Excuse me, you can sign up at
17 the table there.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, please, speak to the
19 Sergeant please. Walter Ditman, go ahead.

20 WALTER DITMAN: Okay, hi, my name is Walter
21 Ditman. I'm a resident of New York City and a
22 retired public-school teacher. I came today to
23 recommend that the City Council look into the abuses
24 by the Strategic Response Group against nonviolent
25 protestors. I've witnessed three times SRG members

1
2 brutally assaulting and arresting a number of
3 individuals who were trying to assist female patients
4 entering a Planned Parenthood Clinic on Bleeker
5 Street.

6 At the same time, the SRG actually escorted a
7 group of religious forced birth advocates right up to
8 the clinic entrance. Why does the SRG held Catholic
9 Church members try to prevent patients from obtaining
10 reproductive health services? Why do we need a
11 police unit that targets nonviolent protestors?
12 That's why I urge the City Council to hold the SRG
13 accountable and disband the unit.

14 On Saturday, December 3, 2022, I arrived at Old
15 St. Patrick's Church on Mott and Prince Streets
16 around 8:30 a.m. to join a nonviolent protest against
17 Catholic members who try to prevent abortion access.
18 This is two blocks from the Planned Parenthood
19 clinic. I joined about 15 to 20 individuals led by
20 New York City for abortion rights who were beginning
21 to march in a picket line on the sidewalk in front of
22 the church. About 50 NYPD officers who I learned
23 were part of the SRG were standing guard outside the
24 church. Soon, about five men dressed in gray robes
25 like Franciscan Monks, exited a church attempting to

1 head down Mott Street toward the clinic, led by a man
2 who has been under a court order to stay at least 500
3 feet from abortion clinics. As the religious figures
4 walked toward the clinic, some protestors stood their
5 ground on the sidewalk slowing the passage of the
6 figures. Then at least ten cops roughly shoved the
7 protestors aside and formed a protective cordon
8 around the monks. Actually escorting them to the
9 clinic.
10

11 As some protestors attempted to move ahead of the
12 monks, the police grabbed at least five of them,
13 threw them to the ground, slapped handcuffs on them
14 and hauled them away to awaiting police van.
15 Meanwhile the police permitted the monks to proceed
16 to the clinic entrance where they tried to discourage
17 women from entering. A short while later, the police
18 aggressively arrested and hauled away a few more
19 protestors who were simply voicing their outrage at
20 the unfair treatment their fellow protestors were
21 receiving.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Again,
23 you could submit your testimony if you'd like to
24 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

1
2 Go ahead and then afterwards, we're going to turn
3 to Zoom to Chanelle Gandhari followed by Melody
4 Garcia in person.

5 MIRIAM FISCHER: Hello, my name is Miriam Fischer
6 and I was coming here mostly to speak with my Council
7 person Erik Bottcher, who is not here now, which is
8 so fun. A local activist from our district and
9 myself, I wouldn't call myself an activist, I'm more
10 of a stay in my apartment and seize kind of person
11 but I get out to a few things. But anyway, we spent
12 90 minutes with a fellow in Bottcher's Office and it
13 gave me some insight. One of the things that we were
14 saying we want the SRG to be disbanded but Shaun, who
15 works in Bottcher's office said, "wow, a lot of our
16 constituents like the police."

17 And then, he explained how he was framing this
18 SRG moving into local districts and being part of
19 community policing. This is a good thing for public
20 safety and it's just more community support for your
21 safety, which I guess is going to fly with older
22 people. I'm an older people. It's not going to fly
23 with me but it's going to fly with a bunch of older
24 people and we're like that is like calling you know a
25 militarized war unit friendly boy scouts who are

1 going to help you across the street. This is
2 malarkey. I actually curse a lot and I'm going to
3 try not to here.
4

5 It isn't just the SRG, the NYPD in general has
6 full impunity. They can do whatever they want, have
7 as much overtime as they want. They can murder,
8 rape, pillage and they don't have to even pay when
9 they lose, you know when New York City loses millions
10 of dollars because of that brutality. That doesn't
11 even come out of the police budget, why not?

12 So, what do we expect to get? The whole
13 structure of the way policing is organized in the
14 city is apparent and the SRG is just the you know,
15 it's the head of the pimple or whatever, like boil or
16 something disgusting. Uhm, I'm annoyed that
17 Bottcher's not here. So, people have brought up how
18 the SRG is used to disband homeless and unhoused
19 peoples places where they can stay. As if the people
20 who are unhoused are making the disorder. No,
21 they're not. What's making the disorder is the
22 government being New York State and New York City,
23 allows real estate development to be strictly
24 commercial, luxury residential and ultra luxury
25 residential for the past 40 years, 50 years. I mean,

1
2 when was the last time housing was made for people
3 and any housing that used to be so much of it that
4 used to be SRO's like a long time ago. West 86th
5 Street, when people are falling through the cracks,
6 there were somewhere for them to stay. Now, that's
7 all luxury. It's all luxury. Where are people
8 supposed to stay. You destroy peoples abilities to
9 get education, to live, to get health and then you
10 punish them for not having it because we're spending
11 all our money on a militarized violent pathological
12 force and it's just too damn bad the mayor thinks
13 that fun and it's too damn bad that people aren't
14 here dealing with it but thank you for being here.
15 Thanks.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
17 Next, we're going to hear from Chanelle Gandhari on
18 Zoom followed by Melody Garcia and Michael Genese.
19 So, Chanelle, I'm going to unmute you in a second.
20 Just bear with me. You may go ahead.

21 CHANELLE GANDHARI: Hi, good day to you all. I
22 came here to share my experience. I've been an
23 activist for quite some time but never encountered
24 SRG and their violence until June 2020. Since then,
25 I've encountered SRG way more times than I can count,

1 causing trauma and PTSD that I needed therapy for.
2 It including being pushed with bikes, having pepper
3 bombs thrown at us, robber bullets being fired at us.
4 I had insomnia and lived in a fight or flight mode
5 for a while. I watched them beat up protestors with
6 their batons, charge us with their bikes, set
7 themselves up to strategically kettle us. In the
8 height of the pandemic, when so many were suffering
9 and in need of assistance, the city spent more money
10 on SRG. They started coming in with new body armor
11 looking like Robo Cop, new bikes, new cameras.
12 People in this city were starving and it was
13 activists who came out and gave free food and
14 supplies. Something the city should have been doing.
15 Whereas NYPD spent more taxpayer money on building up
16 this unnecessary unit that was meant for
17 antiterrorism.

18 An antiterrorism unit being used on us, unarmed
19 civilians. I was arrested for trying to leave a
20 protest. The protest they asked us to leave. They
21 asked us to leave while placing officers with guns at
22 each end of the block. Do you get what I'm saying
23 here? They said they would arrest us if we didn't
24 leave and then made it impossible to leave. This
25

1
2 kettling tactic is unacceptable and I demand it be
3 addressed by the city.

4 One protest I was literally one step off of the
5 sidewalk as a result of the crowd when an officer
6 tried to grab me. I raised my hands showing that I
7 was trying to do no harm and explain that I was
8 trying to leave. Another SRG officer by the last
9 name of King decided that that officer wasn't being
10 rough enough, so he joined in, threw me to the
11 ground, dug his knee into my back with all of his
12 weight on me, screaming in my ear. I felt every part
13 of my spine crack, had the wind knocked out of me and
14 as they walked me to the arrest wagon, an NYCLU
15 protest volunteer tried to get my name and info,
16 which they are supposed to be legally allowed to do
17 and they pushed him back to not allow him to do that.

18 The same officer insisted on tightly holding my
19 arm in a way that was touching my breast and as
20 someone with sexual trauma, I requested that a female
21 officer hold me if I had to held. He refused, kept
22 his hands on me for so long and hard that I had
23 bruises in the shape of his fingers for days.

24 He ripped my claw mask off without my consent for
25 a photo. In another instance, an officer pulled me

1
2 by my hair for standing next to a 15-year-old that
3 was punched in the face by another officer and given
4 a black eye.

5 My wrists were cut and bleeding from zip ties. I
6 was arrested and given no water, food, working toilet
7 or phone call for about 16 hours. When I had to be
8 escorted -

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

10 CHANELLE GANDHARI: I was told no. I'm asking
11 the Council to just think about the millions that are
12 wasted in the name of protecting New Yorkers. And I
13 want to ask what you consider what you have to gain
14 by keeping SRG around. I am terrified of having them
15 on our streets and I think they should be abolished
16 completely. Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you for your
18 testimony. Next, we'll hear from Melody Garcia
19 followed by Michael Genese followed by Jeremy Burton
20 followed by Alfredo Gil. Melody, you may go ahead.

21 MELODY GARCIA: Hello, I'm Melody. Okay, well
22 I've never like done any testimony like this before,
23 so I'm very scared to come up here and I've never
24 been to any protest, so I've never had any encounter
25 with SRG and I thought I was a coward for this and

1
2 the fact that the SRG and NYPD are not here, means
3 they're more coward because they didn't even show up
4 to even hear the trial. And I'm the one who's afraid
5 of like speaking. It's just so wild.

6 And like, the fact that like, they can just like
7 do this type of thing and like, they're able to
8 straight up deny their own misconduct. Then like,
9 like, what is this? This doesn't make sense in a
10 democracy. And I wrote something down but now I'm
11 kind of just like talking but like, if they can just
12 - if they do this how can they? Would they like us
13 to do the same thing. I mean, like we have this
14 bureaucracy to like hold them accountable and they
15 don't even show up. That is, that is like something
16 unfathomable. Like, I don't get that. How can they
17 just do that?

18 And if they can just like box people in and then
19 like, do the kettling thing, like they're not held
20 accountable. Would they like it if we did the same
21 to them? Like, if they show up and just disrespect
22 us by not coming. They didn't come here and they
23 disrespect us that way, then maybe we're allowed to
24 do the same thing to them.

1
2 Like, do onto others like how you expect them to
3 do, right. So, I mean like that keeps coming up here
4 and like, they don't like and they're not doing it.
5 I don't know, I'm sorry, this really uh, thank you.

6 Yeah, like as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, a
7 riot is the language of the [INAUDIBLE 2:48:03] and
8 what is it that as America has failed here. What is
9 the status quo that the SRG is holding. Why does it
10 pick which protests are allowed to hear and what does
11 not? Why does it let certain people descent and like
12 why does it not? Like, the fact that they pick and
13 choose which protest, that's not a democracy. That's
14 new change is going to get done. Why do we keep
15 pushing back against the change that we know we
16 should have? A police force that prevents innovation
17 is the very entthesis of democracy and freedom of
18 speech.

19 How can we count our beliefs if we do not
20 practice what we preach? And I just don't get how we
21 can do this. Like, the SRG is basically like they -
22 I don't know, how can we solve this if we can't even
23 understand the roots of the problem. If the SRG and
24 the NYPD don't come here, then how can we hold them
25 accountable?

1
2 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

3 MELODY GARCIA: Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your
5 testimony. Next, we'll here from Michael Genese
6 followed by Jeremy Burton, Alfredo Gil and Terrell
7 Harper.

8 MICHAEL GENESE: Good afternoon to those who are
9 still brave enough to listen to us all speak. I have
10 seen the SRG break bones, they have murdered my
11 neighbor and weekly they line their pockets with
12 overtime pay, pretending they're in a militant video
13 game.

14 At the height of SRG's brutality in 2020, Carmen
15 Simmons said, doctors were in trash bags and police
16 are outfitted for World War III and I will absolutely
17 never forget that. The SRG has given White women who
18 run their vehicles through protests, police escort
19 from actions and as a voluntary unit, the seemingly
20 innocent cops that were paid to scroll through
21 Twitter on Subway platforms are many of the ones
22 signing up to beat teenagers in the street with the
23 SRG.

24 I am also the composer of an interactive sound
25 walk about the SRG, which contains sound pieces that

1
2 are tied to many I would say your districts but many
3 of the districts of folks who aren't here. We're the
4 SRG Brutalized Protestors. If you haven't heard it
5 yet, you can just google SRG Soundwalk. It uses
6 music, testimony and protest footage to teach the
7 public about the SRG and it has done so. It has been
8 recognized by the New York State Council and the
9 Arts. The new school nominated for the Marin Alsop
10 award. And I mention all of these affiliations
11 because in doing so, those arts and cultural
12 institutions have aligned themselves with what we're
13 demanding today.

14 Take that \$133 million that currently does
15 nothing but enable the wildest dreams of some
16 emotionally repressed White men who do not live where
17 they work and direct that money towards our children,
18 their education, our manufactured housing crisis,
19 lack of social services, especially for those most
20 effected by the SRG's violence. Policing is not a
21 question of bad apples; it is not a task for
22 reimagining. Policing is in fact the least
23 imaginative anti-Black reaction to descent and harm
24 in our society. A society that desperately needs
25 proactive, comprehensive and life affirming

1 solutions. Not the stale and predictable
2 manifestations of White Supremacy that are endemic to
3 the overall structure of policing in America.

4
5 The SRG must be disbanded and their budget must
6 be completely removed. We will not rest until that
7 happens. Thank you for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Michael. Next,
10 we'd like to invite Jeremy Burton followed by Alfredo
11 Gil followed by Terrell Harper and Braden Holliday.

12 JEREMY BURTON: Good morning everyone. Good
13 morning to everyone. Yeah, lovely. I'm going to
14 speak like this but the mic is, thank you. Is my
15 time going? Thanks. My name is Jeremy Burton. I am
16 a Birth for Justice Fellow at the Center for
17 Constitutional Rights. I'm also an alum of NYU Law
18 as well as an alum of Princeton University. My
19 father was also an alum of Princeton University from
20 the Class of 1974. My mother is an alum of North
21 Western Law. These are all just facts.

22 The fact that I am a fourth generation Chicagoan
23 and the fact that I've lived in New York since 2018,
24 just one might say I no longer have any kind of bill
25 but I simply have burned the bill that WB boys once

1
2 described. So, I'm here to talk about SRG and the
3 disbandment of SRG, really the abolition of both, all
4 of the carceral system but I'll do it very quickly
5 and concisely as I only have two minutes left.

6 My name again Jeremy Burton. I am an African
7 American. I identify as Black as well. I also
8 identify as Queer and I use African American
9 vernacular English, which one could say is a dialect
10 of English but another could say is a completely
11 different language from that which was handed down to
12 descendants of slavery by those who do not believe
13 someone like me could ever speak English as I do.
14 I'm actually, my native tongue is African American
15 vernacular English as is put in the dictionary but
16 really, my Native tongue I don't know because I'm
17 African American.

18 I moved to New York as I said in 2018. New York
19 was one of the 13 original colonies I believe and I
20 think everyone would agree. So, by nature of the
21 fact that we're here talking about the SRG, a unit of
22 the New York Police Department, and they're not here,
23 is clear to me that they aren't actually interested
24 in listening, as many people aren't actually
25 interested in listening to anybody that they pass on

1
2 the street who might look like me. In fact,
3 yesterday, I did get someone who lived on the street
4 as one might say. Or another could say someone who
5 has been disenfranchised by the United States and I
6 gave them my goat.

7 The day before I attempted to do the same, as
8 someone who actually does not look like me and looks
9 more similar to you. Who was shaking on the ground
10 and two police officers stood right next to him as I
11 attempted to give him the coat off of my back, the
12 police officers, one who looks more like me, one who
13 looks more like you, told me to move. They told me
14 he was okay. They actually saw him shivering,
15 shaking on a gate. So, I'm here to talk about
16 abolition. I'm here to talk about the fact that we
17 are only using two of our senses to look and see one
18 another but the people who use African American
19 vernacular, we use all five. As Beyonce does, as
20 Kindra Lamar, actually Colter Price and Kindra Lamar
21 and number one grammy winner Beyonce does.

22 I'm really happy I'm fluent in African American
23 vernacular English and English, as I'm really happy
24 everyone can hear me today. So, thank you so much
25 for your time. I'm so grateful for your ability and

1
2 willingness to let us in this room. I'm so grateful
3 for all the decoration, a Government of the People,
4 by the people, for the people. I love Lincoln, he's
5 from Illinois.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

7 JEREMY BURTON: Oh, they can't clap, they can do
8 this.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Alfredo
10 Gil followed by Terrell Harper, Branden Holliday and
11 David Jenkins. Alfredo Gil followed by Terrell
12 Harper followed by Branden Holliday.

13 ALFREDO GIL: Hello, my name is Alfredo. Thank
14 you. Hello everyone, my name is Alfredo I am a proud
15 New Yorker from Queens. I admit this is not easy for
16 me. I am here uhm, I'm also an immigrant and I'm
17 here to use my privileges of citizenship to speak on
18 behalf of the migrants who were recently terrorized
19 by the SRG. There were migrants bused from Texas and
20 Florida or 1,000 miles that theoretically received
21 asylum here in our city and they were organizing for
22 housing outside of Watson Hotel. And it was the
23 people, it was us that were there for them. We gave
24 them hot food. We gave them clothes. We provided
25 translation services for them for jobs, for Legal Aid

1
2 and the NYPD was surveilling them from across the
3 street. And after a few days of this at 8:00 p.m.,
4 like a military operation, the SRG came and scrambled
5 them and made them abandon their belongings. Made
6 them abandon the supplies that they were gifted from
7 the people of New York.

8 So, it broke my heart because this is New York
9 City. This is the place where people can come and be
10 embraced and the SRG took that away from them. And
11 so, we see this pattern of the SRG terrorizing
12 peaceful protestors, terrorizing Black and Brown
13 people, terrorizing drag queens, terrorizing
14 migrants. And let me clear about this, this is
15 fascism. Our country has seen a steady increase in
16 fascism and the targeted violence of the SRG is a
17 clear representation of this. We don't have to be in
18 rural Texas. We don't have to be in deep red space
19 to recognize this. To recognize this violence and
20 it's beyond the shame. It's rotten, it's evil. I
21 have no other words to describe it. Disband the SRG.
22 This is not the New York we want. This is not the
23 New York I want. We all know this and the only
24 reason why anyone would be against this is that
25 they're cowards and they're afraid and they're

1 seeking some political power and it's disgusting.

2 And history is not on their side, it's on our side

3 and you all know this. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Alfredo. Next,

6 we'll hear from Terrell Harper, Branden Holliday,

7 David Jenkins.

8 TERRELL HARPER: Alright, what's up? My name is

9 Terrell Harper. A lot of you all know me as Rally

10 Rebel. I just want to say, I think this is crazy

11 that you all came out here to hear us and the people

12 that we wanted to hear us, you all done cleared out.

13 I don't know what's going on and I hope everybody's

14 paying attention to those Council officials up there

15 because you already know what they do. We don't vote

16 for them anyway but you already know what they do

17 when they come out. That's bull that you all came

18 out here and I think you all need to reverse it.

19 Next time you all need to hear the public first.

20 Next time you all need to hear the public. Them

21 cameras out there, they should have got our message,

22 not your all's. We don't want to hear you all. You

23 feel me? You all should have done that meeting by

24
25

1
2 your all selves if you all wanted to hear your selves
3 speak

4 Uhm, my march, I have had deal with them so much
5 for the last three years I've been out here and I'm
6 here from Jersey. Now, I came out here and I'm an
7 organizer, I'm a Community Organizer. I do my mutual
8 aid in Bed Stuy every week. I march every week. I
9 have been marching every week for three years. In
10 2021, they were beating us up every week. Every
11 week, every week, the bikes, pepper spray, you name
12 it, sticks you all name it, you name it, you name it.

13 Uhm, I don't march against SRG three or four
14 time, the Nicholas march that was on Friday, January
15 22, that was mine and we went to the SRG building,
16 because those were the ones that was out here beating
17 us up for the three years I've been out here. When
18 they show up, they're only coming to pull up to beat
19 us up. There's no de-escalation. They don't know
20 nothing. When they get out, they get out with their
21 sticks and their helmets and they can't wait to do
22 dirty to us and I don't - the cops in New York are
23 already dirty and if you start running these cops
24 names, these SRG's, they're super dirty. You know
25 what I mean? And then they're not only to us,

1
2 they're dirty against each other. There's a dude
3 named Kendu Worlly(SP?) where they had to strip him
4 of his gun because he slept with another cop wife.
5 And they had to strip both of the cops from their
6 guns because they thought he was going to have a
7 shootout in the police station.

8 But he's on the SRG right now. That's the one
9 who pulls up and beats us up and he likes to crack
10 jokes and all that. Yeah, please don't do that to
11 me, alright. The last time they got me, it was last
12 the last march. I threw a march against the Mayor.
13 We went there. When we there; we didn't - my marches
14 like are turned up with like high energy. When we
15 went there that time, we didn't have high energy
16 because it was raining outside. We clearly just used
17 our voices. We didn't rattle the cages. We didn't
18 do anything. We stood there. We used our voice but
19 the march got so much likes and views that they
20 thought it was going to be a big march that they had
21 SRG when we pulled up. We only had about like 25
22 people. There was about 60 or 70 of them out there.
23 We didn't do anything. We left. When we left, I
24 guess just point of fact of them being out there and
25

1
2 the Mayor wanted to send a message to us. I'm going
3 to finish what I was saying.

4 When the Mayor was trying to send a message to
5 us, he sent them on us. They chased us up the street
6 while we were disbursing, on our way to the train
7 station. They play dirty tactics when they're
8 locking you up. They'll beat you up or do whatever
9 but then they'll pass you off to another officer.
10 And that officer will pass you off to another
11 officer. By the time you get to the station, you
12 don't even know who the hell beat you up. Don't know
13 his name, so you can't even hold him accountable and
14 you all don't hold him accountable anyways. And that
15 whole thing with the CCRB is trash. I don't march on
16 CCRB. I went inside there and there - and for the
17 people that don't know every Wednesday, no, every
18 first Wednesday of the month, CCRB has a meeting
19 where you all can go in there actually see those
20 people. They sit up at a board like this. It is all
21 nothing but senior citizens. All Black people that
22 think they're doing something for us and that's why I
23 feel bad because they think they're doing something
24 for us but guess who's sitting in charge of them? Is

1
2 a cop. There's a cop sitting right there and he gets
3 all the things. So, CCRB is trash.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Sir?

5 TERRELL HARPER: It's false hope. Yeah, go ahead
6 man, you all got it.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

8 BRANDEN HOLLIDAY: Hi, my name is Branden
9 Holliday and I'm here — Hi, my name is Branden
10 Holliday, I'm here to say NYPD SRG needs to be
11 disbanded. NYPD SRG is a redundant unit that
12 shouldn't be created, because they are the marines at
13 NYPD, not in terms of training but in terms that
14 they're SWAT, riot control and patrol. Whenever
15 they're not doing SWAT or riot control duties, these
16 are high crime areas, which are Black and Brown
17 neighborhoods, teardown homeless encampments, and
18 among under redundant duties, that patrol officer
19 can't do just to stay relevant, which bloat the
20 budget every year.

21 After the 2020 protest against the murder of
22 George Floyd, we see how violent SRG can be and I'm
23 afraid that's not the worse of their brutality. NYPD
24 crash was created in the late 1980's to combat gang
25 violence that targets Black communities and result in

1
2 numerous misconducts in murders, robberies, police
3 brutality, evidence planting and participating gang
4 activity. Memphis Police Department, Scorpion was
5 created in 2021 to combat high crime, the gang
6 activity, Black communities that murdered Tyre
7 Nichols by beating him to death. Louisville Police
8 Department Anti-Drug Unit had misconduct of stealing
9 money, planting and stealing drugs. The Anti-Drug
10 Unit murdered Breonna Taylor because they had
11 received a tip from an unreliable source that there
12 were drugs in the house.

13 In other words, no matter how you look at it in
14 front of the past specific police units are there to
15 put down Black and Brown people. In one NYPD Anti-
16 Crime Unit that wears plain clothes was created to
17 combat gun crimes and resulted in misconducts,
18 including shooting unarmed civilians, excessive
19 force, unlawful Stop and Frisk. Brutality in NYPD
20 officers is one day which I learned now, will result
21 in murder just like LAPD Crash. NYPD SRG needs to be
22 disbanded now, not tomorrow, not next week, not next
23 month, not next year, now.

24 And what I learned, since I have more time, I
25 want to say under the court case of Warren versus

1
2 District of Columbia in 1981, police officers at law
3 are not obligated to protect individuals. In other
4 words, in this case if you look up, basically in the
5 case, three women called for police help in home
6 evasion. They were there five minutes. Three women
7 raped for 14 hours and they can't sue the DC police
8 because they're not obligated to protect anyone, any
9 individual except if you're under arrest or be
10 frankly if you're a politician. Because they are
11 only there to protect the government. They're not
12 there to protect us. So, in other words, SRG is more
13 like [INAUDIBLE 3:06:05] is more like a rank if
14 anything else. Because we had to pay taxpayer money
15 but they don't protect us.

16 I mean, you could live if you beat down Time
17 Square and they don't do anything and you can't sue
18 them. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from David
21 Jenkins followed by Christopher Leon Johnson. We're
22 then going to turn to someone on Zoom, Grace Johnson
23 followed by Griffin Jones in person. So, David
24 Jenkins and then Christopher Leon Johnson.

25

1
2 DAVID JENKINS: Hi, my name is David Jenkins.
3 It's really hard to prepare this testimony with
4 personal counts of abuse by the SRG because as many
5 people have spoken to today, these are really
6 traumatic memories and so many of us have so many of
7 them from countless escalations in the summer of 2020
8 to the monthly provocations at clinic defenses to
9 completely cruel sweeps of accountments. It's hard
10 to come here. And it's especially hard to come here
11 and watch Council Members just leave over the course
12 of this. I agree with Rally that the public
13 testimony should be first and should be the priority
14 and it's really rich to hear almost every single
15 Council Person excoriate the NYPD for not showing up
16 and doing their job and then promptly leave the
17 Chamber. So, it's really wild.

18 So, it's hard to come here and bear our souls and
19 be vulnerable but it's not hard, in fact it's very
20 easy to actually identify a pattern here. That this
21 unit is the city's Strategic Response to the housing
22 crisis, to poverty, to civil unrest and racial
23 inequality, namely White Supremacy and the fight to
24 control our own bodies. Suppressing protest is
25 literally in their manual. We've all seen it. It's

1
2 been reported on. That has been the strategy and
3 it's been the strategy since they were created, even
4 though the city explicitly said that it wasn't.

5 And when the city created it in 2015, right, the
6 NYPD's budget had already exploded by half since 911
7 and we're spending \$300 million a year on counter
8 terrorism and has the completely duplicate force of
9 the Critical Response Command. So, why do we have
10 the SRG? It's clear that the real strategy even back
11 then was in response to the uprisings in Ferguson and
12 Baltimore and the growing realization everywhere that
13 not only do police not keep us safe, they make us
14 less safe. And now the strategy seems to be to
15 deploy them to neighborhoods while we cut libraries
16 and schools and social services. And we've been
17 making this case for years.

18 If Council Member Joseph were still here, she
19 might remember conversations I had with her and her
20 campaign about the public safety pledge, which she
21 and many other people who are no longer here signed.
22 And a lot of them signed it because we're making a
23 really good case about how to address public safety
24 and it's never been honestly tried. Instead, like
25 last Friday, we're lectured on public safety by a

1
2 Deputy Mayor best known for resigning in disgrace
3 from the police force and being named a coconspirator
4 in a corruption scandal. That's who you've let run
5 the show. That's whose running public safety. While
6 letting activists be maligned for demanding something
7 different.

8 And so, the city must disband the SRG, ensure
9 it's not recreated under some new name and directly
10 reinvest its \$100 million into communities impacted
11 by over policing and chronic disinvestment. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

14 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Wait, this thing is
15 on.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: It is, go ahead.

17 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Good afternoon. On
18 the record, this is my personal capacity. I'm using
19 Press, you see right here press blah, blah, blah
20 whatever. Alright, so uhm, this is coming from a
21 press point. What I've seen with the NYPD and the
22 SRG, I think these people here have a valid reason
23 why it should be disbanded. I record these guys
24 events. I record the Tyre Nichols rallies and
25 marches going from Time Square and then we march down

1
2 to what is it, the Foley Library and then I saw the
3 Rally Rebel crew. They was going up Time Square and
4 what went down with that, we'll discuss on how to
5 handle the situation.

6 Now, I understand what went down with the car.
7 Okay, fine, alright they were fine with the car.
8 Now, after the fact, it was recorded on my camera.
9 It was likely recorded at the park. One of the cops,
10 he was part SRG, picked somebody out of the crowd and
11 purposely like did some WWE tackle on the guy. I'm
12 like, what was that? You know to be honest with you,
13 you know if you want a reason to disband the SRG's
14 because of crap like that, a number of these cops are
15 corrupt. And I think they purposely put these guys
16 in that unit for a reason. I'm not to say all cops
17 are bad. We all know that. Not all cops are bad but
18 they put like the messed up view in certain units for
19 a reason and uhm, to be honest with you, like you got
20 to get rid of it. It's just no point. It's a waste
21 of money. What are they really doing other than just
22 okay, let's find a nonviolent protest and just want
23 to be bullies. Trying to find some little dirty way
24 to get arrest and try to say, oh, we're being
25 effective. But it's really ineffective. You got to

1
2 get rid of it. You got to get something different in
3 there. Let the people do what they do. If they want
4 to protest, let them protest. But they being
5 nonviolent, they be nonviolent. If they're being
6 violent, then you have to okay, then bring in the
7 reinforcements. You can bring deploy extra force but
8 you'll need to bring in this like militarized
9 organization to like, sector to NYPD to mitigate like
10 a measly, little crappy protest. People protest
11 every day; people rally every day. Why do you need
12 SRG for like a queasy rally.

13 So, that's my opinion. That's how I feel and I
14 get off with 30 seconds left, the fact that NYPD
15 didn't want to show up to this thing today is
16 disgusting. I'm like, wow, you should have showed
17 up. I understand the majority are like against you
18 guys but be a man. Like, be a man, be an adult and
19 show up and meet the people that you've been hurting
20 for the past three years. I mean, since 2020.

21 So, I think that's it. Thank you for coming.
22 Thanks for having me. Chair Hanks and the rest of
23 the City Council and the people here and let's get
24 out of here. We got things to do. Take care
25 alright.

1 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much.

2 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hey, you're welcome.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: It's good to see you Chris.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you. Grace
5 Johnson on Zoom, are you available?

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Grace, you could go once
8 you're ready. Okay, I will come back to you Grace.
9 Uhm, in person we're going to hear from Griffin Jones
10 followed by Eden King. Griffin Jones.

11 GRIFFIN JONES: Yeah.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll turn back to the Zoom
13 participant shortly.

14 GRIFFIN JONES: Hello, I'm Griffin Jones.

15 [INAUDIBLE 3:13:34], a graduate of Columbia
16 University, an activist and a veteran of the Stone
17 Wall Protests of 2020 and '21. And I'm here to talk
18 about the violence and horror I experienced at the
19 hands of the SRG two years ago, on Martin Luther King
20 Junior Day here at City Hall.

21 What I saw was so horrible that I remain
22 traumatized to this day. I saw a child brutally
23 thrown to the ground. I saw a trans woman shoved
24 into the pavement. I saw her wig torn from her scalp
25

1
2 and when she cried out, saying that as a woman, she
3 needed her wig, she was laughed at.

4 "Dude, no you're not. Come on brow, get up."
5 That's all New York's finest had to say to her as
6 they dragged her along the ground, asphalt tearing
7 her flesh. I saw batons sinking deep into skin.
8 Even now, I can remember the sickening sound that
9 they make. I feared for my life. I was afraid for
10 the lives of my friends. And above all, I saw and
11 remembered the faces of the officers.

12 The pure hatred and the joy in finding an excuse
13 to let that hatred out. We did not even know why we
14 were being targeted. It wouldn't be until the next
15 day that we would hear the justification. Some
16 member of the group had supposedly tagged a wall on
17 the Brooklyn Bridge.

18 For this and this alone, we were made victim to
19 subjects to cruelty. Two people were hospitalized by
20 the brutality of the NYPD that night. Though I
21 escaped that day with no physical injuries, the
22 damage to my sole has been deep and permanent. For
23 months, I was numb. The specter of that day hung
24 over my graduation months later on what should have
25 been the happiest day of my life. Every time I see

1
2 an officer of the NYPD, I flash back to the bodies in
3 the street and my chest tightens in an iron crip.
4 Walking here today, I suffered a panic attack and
5 this is just one of the many examples of the
6 monstrous brutality I have experienced at the hands
7 of the SRG.

8 I was raised to believe in forgiveness, that
9 there are few who cannot be redeemed. That is why I
10 do not say these words lightly. The SRG is
11 completely beyond reformation. I saw their thirst
12 for violence, their giddy cruelty and their unbridled
13 aggression. The right thing is never easy. It is
14 often hard.

15 I know disbanding the SRG is not a simple task
16 but I urge the City Council now to do the right thing
17 and be known forever as having been on the right side
18 of history. Thank you so much for your time.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Eden
21 King followed by Deven Krishnaswamy(SP?), yeah thank
22 you. Followed by Jose Lasalle and Dwayne Lee.

23 EDEN KING: Good afternoon. This is my
24 testimony. I've learned a lot of things as an
25 activist in New York City but perhaps the quickest

1
2 lesson I learned was simply this. When the NYPD's
3 Strategic Response Group shows up, the potential for
4 violence has just increased exponentially. I have
5 witnessed this violence and acted upon the body of my
6 friends and community members time after time and
7 I've also experienced it first-hand.

8 On the night of June 5, 2021, I was in Washington
9 Square Park with others to hold faith and response to
10 what we believe to be an unjust curfew. The curfew
11 was set for 10:00 p.m.. At 10:01, the SRG rolled in
12 like an occupying military force. They surrounded
13 the park and everyone in it. So, not just activists
14 but people passing by evening park goers enjoying
15 what had been just moments earlier, a public space.
16 The SRG blocked off the exits and then demanded that
17 everyone leave. I witnessed members of the Strategic
18 Response Group pushing and hitting and grabbing
19 people. Others, they singled out individually for
20 targeted arrest.

21 I was attempting to leave the parks west exit as
22 instructed when I was arrested. Four members of the
23 NYPD, all of them men, much larger than me,
24 participated in my arrest, holding my arms and legs,
25 hitting me face down on the ground. While this was

1
2 happening, one of the SRG's bikers ran up from my
3 right. He shouted, stop resisting, stop resisting.
4 He was holding his bicycle horizontally across his
5 body and he used it to strike me several times in the
6 head and face while I was lying on the ground unable
7 to move. The bike peddled and geared, left cuts and
8 bruises on my scalp and forehead and I feel really
9 lucky I wasn't permanently injured.

10 What I experienced was a fraction, a fraction of
11 the violence that the SRG commits. And like many
12 others here, I am also unable to identify any of
13 those who participated in my arrest, in part because
14 some of them were NYPD legal and who often do not
15 wear badges and also in part because they grabbed me
16 from behind and beat me in the head while I was
17 laying face down on the ground.

18 The Strategic Response Group is a highly
19 militarized overfunded branch of the NYPD. They are
20 violent, volatile and dangerous and they have no
21 place in our communities or on our streets. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.
24
25

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Deven
3 Krishnaswamy followed by Jose Lasalle, Dwayne Lee and
4 Brenna Lipset.

5 DEVEN KRISHNASWAMY: Thank you. I want to note
6 that I am here today not just to reflect on my
7 experiences as a whole protestor but as a person who
8 has seen full extent of what the Strategic Response
9 has done. I had the misfortune of experiencing this
10 unit a good amount of times. One of these
11 experiences occurred at a prochoice protest. That
12 was also a defense of a Planned Parenthood that was
13 nearby. And I'll say that public safety has changed
14 little to none as soon as SRG units arrived. The
15 tone changed especially, quickly and dangerously
16 after they immediately arrested a photographer who
17 was using his freedom to take photos of the event and
18 began pushing those in the crowd.

19 By the end of this, they had arrested five
20 people, one of them whom was me. This event was also
21 matched by a similar one that I faced, which was also
22 pro choice. Only this time, nine protestors were
23 brutally arrested by the SRG, one of which I remember
24 being put under a choke hold by one of the officers.

1
2 And on top of all this, this was all taking place
3 near the Planned Parenthood where every day citizens,
4 people coming to get health care had unfortunately
5 had to witness this brutal act. As my final words, I
6 should mention, I acknowledge my experience is one of
7 many and there are others in this city and this room
8 with experiences relating to the treatment the SRG
9 has given, and every day citizens who have
10 experienced it. I however stand as an individual who
11 has experienced this nonetheless and as a result, I
12 say that these groups like these are not the voice of
13 reason and do more harm than good.

14 And that the SRG should be disbanded so that
15 future activists and citizens should not have the
16 possible misfortune of running into the violence and
17 mayhem they cause. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
19 Next, we'll hear from Jose Lasalle followed by Dwayne
20 Lee, Brenna Lipset, and then we're going to go to
21 Zoom for Jon McCarry. So, Jose Lasalle, you may go
22 ahead.

23 JOSE LASALLE: Yeah, how you doing? Once again,
24 my name is Jose Lasalle, I'm the Founder and Leader
25 of a group called Copwatch Patrol , which I created

1
2 in 2011. Since 2011, we've been monitoring and
3 documenting police in civil instance into actions.
4 And we have collected thousands and thousands of
5 videos, which we have posted up and that's our way of
6 getting accountability. Making sure that people see
7 exactly what happens to Black and Brown people in
8 communities of color and we try to give them an
9 insight of what's happening through our videos. SRG
10 was deployed in 2015 but in 2016, I'll say around
11 September 2016, SRG was also deployed into
12 communities of color. Many people probably don't
13 know that. In the Bronx, they had SRG to and the
14 first documentation of SRG inside communities of
15 color that we have is from 2016.

16 And they are still in communities of color. The
17 main thing what they do in communities of color is
18 stop and frisk. We have a lot of documentation in
19 SRG conducting stop and frisk and they're not filling
20 out a stop and frisk report, so it shows that we are
21 the only ones that have the documentation of these
22 cops doing these stops and frisks. Also, doing
23 traffic stops has become a big thing with SRG,
24 especially in the past, in the past six months,
25 they've been doing a lot of check points in the

1
2 community of color and their main targets are around
3 projects and where a lot of people of color live.

4 So, we have a lot of documentation of that as
5 well, that we know for a fact that it has not been
6 documented by them and it's only been documented by
7 us. And what we are doing is we're working on
8 putting this documentary together dealing with the
9 SRG and all the videos that we have collected since
10 2015, since SRG was deployed out into New York City
11 and we will be putting a documentary together with
12 all the facts that we have and we will be presenting
13 it to Council Members and other people.

14 Also, I want to finish up as Legal Aid rejects us
15 applying for staff attorney. She was speaking about
16 my case that took place in 2015, where I was
17 recording a stop and frisk in the Patterson Houses
18 and it was Officer Elvis Duran, Phillip Bias, and a
19 few other officers there ended up arresting me for
20 documenting the stop and frisk. And I recorded
21 almost two hours of them trying to - I'm just going
22 to take a few minutes, of them trying to plan,
23 talking about planting guns on me. Talking about
24 finding felonies to charge me with. When I was taken
25 to the precinct, there was laughing and clapping,

1
2 saying oh Jose Lasalle. You know and celebrating my
3 arrest or when the Sergeant said, oh, he has a - we
4 had a two-way radio that we carry to communicate.
5 When they seen the two-way radio they said, "oh,
6 there's a transmit and it said yeah, transmit. He
7 was like oh, yeah and they started clapping again and
8 celebrating and they did not want - you know I was
9 ready to take it to trial but they did not want to
10 take it to trial, so they settled for almost \$1
11 million just for that case.

12 Now, this same officer, Office Duran who was the
13 main officer who lied under oath in the Bronx to the
14 ADA who lie under oath to the CCRB, who lie under
15 oath to IEB and I have all the documents. This same
16 officer now back then was just a regular police
17 officer and now he's a Lieutenant and the SRG Group.
18 And this is the type of police officers that are
19 being put into the SRG unit because it covers them.
20 It takes them away from the community where they were
21 committing all these crazy acts and it covers them
22 and that's why they're saying the SRG unit.

23 And that is one of many reason why the SRG unit
24 should not even be in existence. And when we're
25 filling out our documentary, we're going to make sure

1
2 that we let the boss see what we have collected since
3 2011. And right now, anybody could go through Cop
4 Watch Patrol Unit or just google Jose Lasalle and see
5 what we have collected. Thousands and thousands of
6 videos. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you for your
9 testimony. Next, we'll hear from Dwayne Lee followed
10 by Brenna Lipset followed by Jon McCarry on Zoom and
11 Eileen Maher who is in person I believe. So, Dwayne
12 Lee here? Come up if you are here. You may go
13 ahead.

14 BRENNA LIPSET: Hi, my name is Brenna Lipset.
15 It's really upsetting that everyone's left. I don't
16 know what else to say with that and the NYPD aren't
17 here. So, let's begin. I've been arrested three
18 times in the SRG kettle. The first time I saw the
19 bikes being used as weapons within May of 2020 but
20 the most horrific was of June 4, 2020 in the Bronx.
21 Which got a lot of coverage and backlash.

22 So, the SRG gotten strategic during those days
23 when thousands of people were outside, and for
24 example, they come in the middle of night for City
25 Hall or undercover cops to push stickers a protestor

1
2 into the van. After summer 2020, when many people
3 went home, many protestors stayed out and that's when
4 the SRG came out to have its true fun and vengeance
5 with a clear goal to end Black Lives Matter protests
6 by any means necessary.

7 In September 2020, right outside the NY Library,
8 the SRG used byer cops as weapons, you know taking
9 you know, sorry, pushing protestors, walker byers
10 students, ripping students off the sidewalk into the
11 streets. I had not even arrived to this protest and
12 I was on the sidewalk when the SRG went into my leg
13 and I still have that scar, which I was hoping to
14 show people but there's no one fucking here.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: We're going to watch our
16 language. We understand. Thank you.

17 BRENNA LIPSET: Sorry, there's no one here,
18 that's still shaped like the spokes of the bike.
19 Uhm, you know being here today is something that I'm
20 okay with because there's so many people who cannot
21 be here today. Protestors in New York City who are
22 trying to heal from the SRG attacks without
23 retraumatizing themselves are not here today because
24 one does not move on from experiencing an SRG attack.
25 It's something that survivors of these attacks will

1
2 remember for the rest of their lives. It
3 successfully breaks people in going out to
4 participate in the first amendment rights and it
5 successfully infiltrated the Black Lives Matter
6 movement in New York City.

7 In November 2020, after the election results, the
8 SRG came back out doing the same stuff kettling and
9 it's important to note that the SRG will charge
10 anyone with a felony who they fall by. The only
11 comparable violence that I've ever seen to the SRG
12 was what happened at January 6th Storming of the
13 Capital and I'm sure that there is a few officers who
14 might have been there as well. I remember returning
15 to New York City and the SRG had arrested Black Lives
16 Matter protestors outside Trumps Towers, meaning that
17 yes, more New Yorkers who were arrested by the SRG on
18 January 6, 2021, then people who stormed the capital.

19 I want to ask the people who are not here today
20 but I want to ask you, will you commit to disbanding
21 the SRG? And what we all need to do here today is we
22 need to go to these politicians and make them commit
23 because no one's here and they have the power to make
24 the change but nothings happening. And I'm upset.
25 Why am I told, "go talk to your politicians." No

1
2 one's here. So, I want to know, will you commit to
3 disbanding the SRG?

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

5 BRENNALIPSET: I'm asking you.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

7 BRENNALIPSET: You won't, that's the thing. She
8 won't and we need to ask these people who are hearing
9 all of us, are you going to commit to it? You won't
10 commit to it. I know Eric Adams is your friend but
11 you should commit to it because -

12 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

13 BRENNALIPSET: What's the point of us being here
14 if you're not going to commit to it?

15 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: I appreciate your testimony.
16 Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, moving on next, we're
18 going to turn to Zoom for Jon McCarry followed by
19 Eileen Maher in person. Emily Mamell in person and
20 Walter Masterson in person. Jon, I will unmute you
21 in just a second sir. You may go ahead.

22 JON MCCARRY: How is everybody doing. My name is
23 Jon McCarry, I'm a retired NYPD Lieutenant, New York
24 City kid. I grew up in New York City. I was
25 arrested two times in my youth. I came here just to

1
2 bring a voice from the outside. I just feel a lot of
3 what I'm hearing here today is not fact based. I do
4 respect everybody's opinion in the room and I respect
5 your view point and I am under the same impression
6 that it's very cowardly of the NYPD to not be here to
7 represent themselves to speak to the public, as well
8 as the members of the City Council who left.

9 I appreciate the members of City Council who
10 stayed but I will say, to sit here and say to disband
11 the SRG without fact based presentation, I have a
12 problem with. You know, there's three sides to the
13 story. There's people that were inside a violent
14 protest. They were not peaceful protests. SRG is
15 out on the street today as we speak. There's a dozen
16 protests today out on the street in New York City
17 where SRG is not arresting anyone.

18 There is no one being assaulted and those are
19 peaceful protests but what we saw particularly in the
20 Bronx June 4, 2020, and in the summer of 2020, a lot
21 were violent riots where urine was being thrown at
22 officers, bricks were being thrown at officers,
23 wheelbarrows. Officers were being assaulted. Yes, I
24 do agree, in the mix of that chaos, there were people
25 who potentially were harmed and put under arrest

1 situations while they put themselves there in a
2 violent riot and there were peaceful protestors who
3 were saved by the NYPD during that time. I don't
4 believe the message of sitting here and stating that
5 the NYPD is a racist organization and the NYPD is out
6 here to go after civilians to beat them up is an
7 honest conversation. It's just not. During violent
8 situations, violence will be deployed by officers and
9 it's an unfortunate situation and I do agree, I'm
10 here today to say, we need to start having
11 conversations like this and I applaud the Committee
12 for putting this together. However, they should be
13 fact based and the CCRB was unable, unable to show
14 any difference between the SRG and the NYPD as far as
15 complaints. And I would like to remind everyone that
16 complaints happen largely at these large-scale mass
17 arrest situations where there's violence.

19 Obviously, there are legal aid people in this
20 room today that are there, that know they are there
21 to file complaints against officers. And many of
22 those complaints are frivolous and unfounded. And
23 there are issues with the CCRB in their
24 investigations. I was also the commanding officer of
25 CCRB liaison unit at one time in my 18 year career.

1
2 And there are and as much as they have done some good
3 work, there is a lot of those investigations that
4 turn out that the officer gets unpunished by the NYPD
5 because the investigation was not proper. Based on a
6 preponderance, the evidence is not enough and based
7 on the preponderance of what has been presented in
8 this room today, I believe this is just another
9 systematic approach to -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

11 JON MCCARRY: And I thank you all for your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll hear
14 from Eileen Maher followed by Emily Mamell followed
15 by Emily Mamell followed by Walter Masterson.

16 EILEEN MAHER: Good afternoon. Wow, my name is
17 Eileen Maher, I'm a Civil Rights Union Leader from
18 Vocal New York. I'm also a Social Worker and a
19 survivor of domestic violence, which I was
20 criminalized and incarcerated for. I'm urging the
21 NYPD and New York City to disband the SRG. I was
22 present for their abusive antagonistic behavior
23 during the George Floyd protest of 2020 as well as
24 many other peaceful protests. They were the
25 catalysts for and created all of the violence and

1 aggression. They were purposely antagonistic and in
2 many instances when the verbal abuse, racist and
3 homophobic cat calling did not illicit a violent
4 outburst from the protestors, the police would then
5 resort to brutalizing and physically attacking myself
6 and all of the other nonviolent protestors, which
7 included the kettling that they claim not to use.

9 Had they not been there and behaved in such a
10 deplorable manner, the actions and protests would
11 have continued in the peaceful manner to which they
12 began. There is absolutely no reason for the SRG, an
13 over militarized, racist and abusive unit, which is a
14 waste of our monies as New Yorkers. The funds used
15 for the SRG and the excessively bloated budget must
16 be redirected to medically proven intervention and
17 human services including violence interrupters,
18 education, mental health and domestic violence
19 services.

20 When someone is having a mental health episode,
21 rather than criminalizing the person via an NYPD
22 intervention situations such as these must be handled
23 by qualified mental health professionals. In fact,
24 until the NYPD presents itself to the City Council,
25 their entire budget should be suspended.

1
2 The NYPD does not provide us citizens with any
3 safety or security. When I sought their assistance
4 years ago as the victim of domestic violence, I was
5 told by the NYPD on more than one occasion that there
6 was nothing they could. On one specific occasion, I
7 was told by an officer who later joined the SRG that
8 that's what you get for being in an interracial
9 relationship, only he wasn't as quite as eloquent.
10 The lack of accountability on behalf of the NYPD as a
11 whole is shameful. Retraining does not work. Body
12 cams are useless if the officer can switch it on and
13 off and a CCRB is useless if the NYPD does not follow
14 through with holding its officers accountable
15 following one of their investigations. The SRG and
16 other similar units breed and violence and racism.
17 They don't keep us safe at all. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Emily
20 Mamell followed by Walter Masterson and Julian
21 Maranda. Emily, you here? We will come back to you
22 if you're here. Next, we'll hear from Walter
23 Masterson. Walter, sorry, go ahead. You may go
24 ahead, thank you.

1
2 WALTER MASTERSON: It's on? Okay, great. Since
3 the NYPD didn't show up today, I think I'm going to
4 speak for them. You know, I'd just like to thank all
5 the City Council members for showing up and for this
6 public comment. It let's us all know how important
7 you think this is. Alright, so, yeah, I'm glad that
8 all of you are in attendance, thank you.

9 I just got to say, I am appalled that people are
10 meeting today to discuss disbanding the Strategic
11 Response Group in the NYPD. I mean has anyone seen
12 the crime statistics? Alright, look at this. The
13 top ten most dangerous states in American.
14 Louisiana, Missouri, South Carolina, Arkansas,
15 Tennessee, Alaska, Maryland, wait, where's New York?
16 Okay, oh, 36, yeah, 36. Oh, here, this is what I
17 want. The 50 most dangerous cities in America,
18 right. Detroit, Memphis, Bessemer, Mobile, Monroe,
19 Birmingham, Pine Bluff, Little Rock, St. Louis, wait,
20 where's New York? Where's New York? Okay, wait.
21 Oh, fifth safest city. Oh, shit, you know what? I
22 don't need these stupid crime statistics because I
23 saw a video on libs of Tik Tok where some guys were
24 jumping the turn style. So, that's the only
25 statistics I need, right.

1
2 Now, people like to complain about the SRG, but I
3 mean, look at what they've done for the homeless.
4 Last year, there were homeless people in tents all
5 over the city and then this year, they're in let me
6 see, in card board boxes on the subway. So, you
7 know if we get rid of the SRG, what's next?

8 Community policing based on de-escalation, investing
9 in communities and tackling income inequality,
10 offering long term solutions for housing. I mean,
11 where does it end?

12 You know by disbanding the SRG, we're sending the
13 wrong message. We're telling anti-abortion
14 protestors that they can't physically harass patients
15 outside of Planned Parenthood. We're telling the
16 Proud Boys that there will be nobody to protect when
17 they want to harass the LGBTQ outside of a library.
18 We're telling Black Lives Matter protestors that they
19 can peacefully protest without being kettled, pepper
20 sprayed or beaten with batons.

21 You know what I'm saying today might not sound
22 very PC, that there are lots of liberals in New York
23 City that agree with me. Why else do you think New
24 Yorkers passed over the many progressive candidates
25 and instead nominated a police officer in the

1
2 democratic primary and then elected him in the
3 general election. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much for your
5 testimony. Does anybody want to take a break?
6 Bathroom break? We can take a five-minute recess,
7 get some water. Yeah, it's been a long day. No,
8 then let's go to the next one.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll here from Julian
12 Maranda followed by Jon MacFarlane and Luis Mejia.
13 Julian Maranda, go ahead, take your time.

14 JULIAN MARANDA: Hi, Julian Maranda. Uhm, I live
15 in Central Harlem currently, which obviously is a
16 high crime area for most of time in the city. I've
17 lived in Washington Heights. I had a beautifully
18 well written edited and timed out thing to say and
19 honestly, I'm just too tired to say it now and I
20 don't really see the point.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: You're giving your testimony
22 for the record.

23 JULIAN MARANDA: Yeah, I know.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Then you should give your
25 testimony.

1
2 JULIAN MARANDA: Yeah, I'd just like to point out
3 for the record and for my testimony, that what's
4 happening here today is the reason that so many
5 people in my generation have lost faith in the
6 electoral process and really are bamboozled when we
7 here the word that has repeatedly been used today,
8 democracy to describe what we're experiencing.

9 As a clear, disabled, White woman, I still have a
10 enough privilege that I thank God I'm not probably
11 going to be killed on the street today but there are
12 so many people that are. And I want to just honestly
13 take the time to thank everybody that spoke before
14 me. Brave enough to relive your trauma, like that's
15 incredibly impressive as hell and that is the only
16 thing that gives me hope that like, one day, maybe
17 just maybe we can create something better than what
18 we have.

19 And I'll be quick. I just, I'd like to just say
20 to everyone that's still left here, it's really nice
21 that all of the politicians gave their speeches while
22 the press was here but the people that are still in
23 this room, were the people that are going to protect
24 us. The cops were not here to protect us. The
25 government was never here to protect us. We have to

1
2 protect each other and so, I just want to say in
3 solidarity with all the people here that have gone
4 through incredible abuse, I hear you. I love you. I
5 am your community. I am your partner. And like,
6 it's good that we're here but let's not miss the
7 point and have hope in institutions that have never
8 served the people and thank you for still being here
9 to the three people that are still here. That's it.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you for your testimony.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll hear
12 from Jon McFarlane, followed by Luis Mejia followed
13 by Lauren Molina.

14 JON MCFARLANE: Is this on?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah.

16 JON MCFARLANE: How is every one doing? Well,
17 how are you doing? You're the only Council Members
18 left. I was going to say a little something about
19 the absence of the NYPD and most of the City Council
20 members but the young lady to my left said enough,
21 so.

22 The U.S. has a violent history of using law
23 enforcement officers to nonviolent civil disobedience
24 by the people. The oppressive tactics used to
25 violate first amendment rights, are some of the worst

1
2 war time humanitarian abuses. NYC is complicit in
3 inflicting that level of violence and torture against
4 its own residents. We have seen this most recently
5 with the Strategic Response Group or SRG as it is
6 commonly known. Originally created as an internal
7 force by the NYPD breath to simply monitor peaceful
8 protest, this particular NYPD unit has caused so much
9 emotional and physical injury to protestors and as
10 more often to a band of gang land bullies, so callus
11 in the pain that they inflict, that the City Council
12 must take immediate steps to disband them.

13 They are a lawless group and have no place in the
14 city. From kettling to beatings to assaults. The
15 SRG at the direction of white shirts executes these
16 dangerous tactics against peaceful protestors with
17 little to no warning. The SRG moves as an autonomous
18 unit of NYPD soldiers who don't have to give a second
19 thought to violently suppressing the rights of
20 protestors. They have detained hundreds of law-
21 abiding folks with zip ties, corralling them into
22 vans that were already full to capacity. They've sat
23 on site; these vans have sat on site for hours
24 forcing those inside these hot boxes to suffer even
25 more.

1
2 I call on the Speaker of the Council, the Public
3 Safety Committee of the City Council and all Council
4 Members to disband this violent and abusive unit.
5 Please disband the SRG. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you for your testimony.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Luis
8 Mejia followed by Lauren Molina followed by Ravena
9 Moody(SP?) and Trulie Nix.

10 LUIS MEJIA: Hi, uhm, it is ridiculous how many
11 people are not here today and I think if they are
12 part of this Committee, then you can clear your
13 schedule to hear the people out. It's the least they
14 can do.

15 I live in one of the areas in which SRG is being
16 deployed, high crime areas. This is an area where
17 not so long ago, I saw somebody getting arrested as I
18 was going to the train for committing the heinous
19 crime of falling asleep on the train being woke up by
20 cops and what I can only imagine was tremendous
21 response of being woken up by people with guns. And
22 was being arrested and was crying in pain as his
23 hands were being pulled up behind him with handcuffs
24 already on. I know what this feels like, it hurts.
25

1
2 I also cannot fall asleep on a train anymore
3 because I have been woken up by SRG with a gun to my
4 face because they wanted to take up that part of the
5 train and wanted everybody to just move to the side.
6 So, that's where they are.

7 I've also lived in a neighborhood where a nine
8 year old boy was arrested for throwing a tantrum and
9 ten police officers were called to arrest him. I
10 don't know how they find handcuffs that small to
11 begin with. He was this big. In my current
12 neighborhood, I also saw cops, what they might call
13 deescalate. They fight between maybe 10, 12 year
14 olds by running after one of them and tackling them
15 in front of his friends, traumatizing everyone. I
16 cannot imagine what that kid was going through. All
17 I have to say that these are the cops we already
18 have. These are the regular cops. SRG is composed
19 of cops who that kind of violence is still too boring
20 for them. They want more action and that is what we
21 see at protests. That is what we see at what we see
22 when they kick us around and fully take away our
23 rights to put us against them.

24 We don't need them in our neighborhood. We don't
25 need the cops that break the line because they're so

1
2 jittery to arrest people that arrest people too soon
3 and they cause an incident. We don't need the cops
4 that drag me behind other cops and I couldn't decide
5 how to get onto the floor so they started just
6 kicking me. The fact that Strategic is part of the
7 name is laughable and we don't need the cops that
8 took six of them to bring me down and put their knee
9 on my back and one of them even tried an extra move
10 while I was already on the ground to try to break my
11 arm. So, if this is a counter terrorism group, the
12 only terrorist I see walking around the streets is
13 with the NYPD.

14 So, unless they're there to stop them and
15 confront them, de-escalate them, they have no
16 business in our neighborhoods.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Lauren
20 Molina followed by Irvinia Moody, Trulie Nix.

21 LAUREN MOLINA: My name is Lauren Molina and I am
22 here to hold the SRG accountable for its abuse and to
23 demand the unit be disbanded. The SRG's brutality
24 has no place in our community and before I give my
25 testimony, I just want to reiterate the fact that the

1
2 NYPD pathetically did not show up today. But I'd
3 like to point out the irony of the fact that we do
4 have one cop in the back of the room who has been
5 asleep on and off.

6 You know, we are all tired but we are here and
7 have been sitting here for over four hours to speak
8 on this urgent and despicable group of the NYPD.
9 Thank you Chair Hanks for being here.

10 The fact that a cop just previously testified
11 that the statements today were not fact based is
12 apparent and insulting. Do you want this woman to
13 show her scars? Do you want that person to show here
14 nerve MRI? Show x-rays of broken bones? I've lived
15 in New York for 20 years. I've lived in Harlem for
16 the last five years.

17 In the summer of 2020, I participated in George
18 Floyd protest marches, where I witnessed the violent
19 policing and attacking nature of the SRG. With
20 bicycles, they cornered and shoved protestors,
21 escalated tension, even using the bikes as weapons to
22 hit protestors. I had a friend get trapped by the
23 SRG using the kettling method on the bridge right
24 outside this court house. They were pepper sprayed
25 by cops for no reason. They were beat with batons,

1
2 some experienced broken bones and a fractured skull.
3 They were arrested and held in a packed cell without
4 PPE during COVID. These were peaceful protests in
5 which the SRG instigated violence. In some
6 instances, people were simply walking by the protests
7 or observing and they were brutalized by the SRG.
8 I've had friends tell me just today who had to leave,
9 because again, we've been here for over four hours,
10 that they've had family members, a minor at 17 years
11 old who was following orders from the SRG at a
12 protest and still aggressive arrested and was not
13 given an opportunity to contact her parents.

14 The units training overwhelming focuses on use of
15 force and members of the unit are trained to treat
16 racial justice protestors as enemy combatants. In
17 the SRG's bike squad's manual, protest groups are
18 divided into two categories, peaceful and violent and
19 as we heard earlier today, examples of violent
20 protestors are the BLM Movement, Occupy Wall Street
21 and anti-Trump Demonstrators. To think that \$133
22 million of taxpayers money goes to this militarized
23 unit, which terrorizes protestors is reprehensible.
24 To call the SRG's policing a form of public safety is
25 truly ironic. They do not make us safer.

1
2 The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical
3 trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. The City
4 Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by
5 disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the
6 hands of the NYPD and reinvesting those funds into
7 our community. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from - yeah,
11 go ahead. You just got to turn the mic on.

12 DR. IRVINIA MOODY: There it is. I'm Dr. Irvinia
13 Moody, MD PHD JD and MBA and that is protected. I
14 actually did 30 years at NASA and I'm still on NASA's
15 payroll. Also, I'm also connected to the military.
16 NASA Langley Air Force, as well as Segar Military
17 Train, as well as WestPoint and I have a numerous
18 background with MIT Harvard and all those other great
19 things. So, I deserve that respect after all these
20 years.

21 I also am the lineage of GW Carver. That is my
22 uncle. Tomorrow, I will be speaking at my schools,
23 GW Carver abbreviated and I open up the schools in
24 different locations. So, I have put money into
25 funding. I started my actually nonprofit, but I also

1 started my businesses years ago and with that, that
2 money, some of that NASA money has help build some of
3 the buildings, some of the educational programs, some
4 of the Charter schools. Long Island City, Queens,
5 New York and different areas. However, because of my
6 interest, I went into Brooklyn, I actually was there
7 temporarily and I was actually speaking out on some
8 of the things that were going on. There were gang
9 violence in the building.
10

11 So, as a result, I was retaliated for speaking
12 out on my behalf but also on these women's behalf.
13 Also, speaking out in reference to Breanna Taylor.
14 So, I was targeted based on that. Where I was such
15 targeted that they went into my places, where I could
16 not go back into my living circumstance and basically
17 went into my accounts and stole my money. Stole my
18 identity and also sold my information. My social
19 and all of that and I got that on the news media.

20 So, when I went to the police, I started my
21 businesses years ago, but continued my businesses
22 within the New York area and went to the 17th
23 Precinct to tell them what was going on basically.
24 And then from there, once I reported the incidents
25 because I have a background, not only in municipal

1
2 court but also in the police, I actually had to do my
3 own investigation. When I submitted the information
4 to them to let them know what was going on, they came
5 back to me and told me that this was a theft. And as
6 a result of that, now my point was, when can I get my
7 complaint or when I get my report. They did not give
8 me that report yet and they found out that this
9 person is connected, his father is in the - well,
10 he's now retired, a police officer.

11 So, I'm saying, all the work that I have done,
12 all the successes I have done, he has now been in my
13 buildings. He has now utilized my name. He's done
14 all these things and here I am 30 years NASA and have
15 helped kids that went on to do great things. So, I
16 believe that the NYPD and the SRG should be held
17 accountable.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Next,
20 we'll hear from Trulie Nix followed by Alexandra N.,
21 Charles N. and then Joanna Smith.

22 TRULIE NIX: Hi, I'm Trulie Nix. I was born and
23 live in Harlem. My Precinct is Number 28 and the SRG
24 is being deployed into my community. So, I went to
25 the NYPD website and I read in the Department of

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2 Investigations report on the website, they identified
3 several deficiencies in the NYPD's response to the
4 Floyd's protest that undermine public confidence in
5 the police departments discharge of its
6 responsibilities to protect the rights and citizens
7 to engage in lawful protest.

8 The report made numerous recommendations with
9 changes within the department. One of many said, the
10 NYPD should reevaluate the central role of the SRG
11 and disorder control unit and response to large
12 protests given their orientations are handled counter
13 terrorism, riots and other serious threats and better
14 collaborate there use to circumstances that require
15 such specialized force.

16 So, there was a response to that, the
17 recommendation that was made from the DOI report.
18 The response, according to what's on the NYPD's
19 website was, the NYPD has reevaluated the role of the
20 SRG and the Disorder Control Unit in response to
21 large protests and it has recalibrated their use to
22 circumstances that requires supplemental resources
23 and specialized training or equipment. I don't know
24 what any of that meant. It sounds like gibberish but
25 I do know, a militarized unit in combat gear has no

1
2 place in the environment where citizens are
3 practicing their first amendment rights.

4 The NYPD is the largest police department, not
5 just in America but in the world. It's only second
6 to the Army, the U.S. Army. We aren't even the
7 mostly dense, populated city in America. That would
8 California; we're half the size. Yet, we have an
9 army to protect us, supposedly. So, we have enough
10 police in this city. The money that fund the SRG
11 need to be reallocated in areas like mental health,
12 not just for the public but for the police as well.
13 Education, addiction, homelessness but as a side note
14 though I just want to say, in June of last year, the
15 Supreme Court struck down a New York law that place
16 strict restriction, strict limitations on carrying
17 guns outside of the home. What's going to happen
18 with the SRG or the police come across a person who
19 had to open carry gun? Especially a person of color.
20 I promise that's going to be the incitement of our
21 next big protest. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you so much
23 Trulie. Alexandra N. or Charles N. Yeah, and we've
24 got registrations for both of them, so. And then
25 Joanna Smith followed by Elissa Paskin.

1
2 ALEXANDRA N: Hello, I'm here, missing one class
3 and late at this point to another because I'm
4 demanding that the Strategic Response Group be
5 disbanded. The SRG brutalizes Black Lives Matter
6 protestors. Evicted asylum seekers at Watson Hotel
7 and threw their belongings in dumpsters. It stands
8 by while Nazi's frighten families at drag story
9 times.

10 I personally witnessed them escorting
11 antiabortion groups to harass patients trying to
12 access healthcare at Planned Parenthood. Ramming
13 into and threatening to arrest and sometimes
14 arresting clinic defenders. This is what an elite
15 police force looks like. This is the best of
16 policing. A violent agency of White Supremacy, just
17 like the now disbanded scorpion unit that murdered
18 Tyre Nichols in Memphis.

19 Cops don't make New York safer. This hearing, as
20 we've all heard has been postponed three times
21 because the NYPD refused to testify. These clowns
22 aren't even here. They're spineless cowards who
23 think they are above the law. By disbanding the SRG,
24 the tens of millions of dollars or how ever much they
25 get now, we don't even know. We don't even know what

1
2 their full budget is. But that budget that they
3 parasitized from our city budget and from our own tax
4 dollars, can be redistributed through communities
5 they've terrorized. That money can go to things that
6 actually do make us safer, like housing or health
7 care or education. Things we desperately need. New
8 Yorkers deserve that brighter future and we know how
9 to fight together to win it. You can help us or you
10 can stand your way but nobody on earth has the power
11 to stop us. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Go ahead.

13 JOANNA OLTMAN SMITH: Good afternoon. My name is
14 Joanna Oltman Smith and I wanted to start my
15 testimony by thanking my fellow New Yorkers from the
16 bottom of my heart. I have heard such amazing
17 testimony today and I would also like to say, shame
18 on the NYPD, shame on the New York City Council,
19 shame on Mayor Adams Administration.

20 I am a member of my local community board, a past
21 officer of my local NYPD Precinct Community Council
22 and a graduate of NYPD's Citizen's Police Academy. I
23 am speaking today as an individual.

24 I have been a Community Advisor to numerous NYPD
25 commanding officers and deputy commissioners on

1
2 matters of street safety, open data and privacy and
3 community outreach including one who has since been
4 promoted to be the head of the SRG. Hi Frank. I'm
5 wondering where you are today.

6 I'm here today to confirm what the Council has
7 learned at this hearing, that the Strategic Response
8 Group is a group of self-selected, poorly trained,
9 over equipped, outrageously violent cops that
10 repeatedly misuse their power to physically assault
11 and infringe on the rights of New Yorkers. I have
12 witnessed SRG abuse at numerous peaceful assemblies
13 and acts of nonviolent disobedience around New York
14 City.

15 This stands in stark contrast to my first
16 experience with bike cops. I spent years advocating
17 my local CO to create a bike patrol in my
18 neighborhood in Prospect Park. One summer afternoon
19 in 2014, two friendly officers in bike shorts
20 Abatie(SP?) and Biagini(SP?) showed up at my house to
21 proudly display their mountain bikes and share with
22 me how happy they were to finally be able to easily
23 connect with citizens with no barriers as bike
24 officers and get out and enjoy our beautiful shared
25 public spaces.

1
2 Fast forward to many peaceful gatherings hence,
3 when SRG's bicycle division has been deployed to hem
4 in and block the free movement of New Yorkers
5 exercising their first amendment rights.

6 Seeing bike patrols in full body armor, using
7 their bikes as weapons to brutalize innocent
8 protestors and bystander's destroyed our very
9 carefully crafted public trust. And their mere
10 presence at events hence has had a chilling effect on
11 people exercising their first amendment rights, as
12 we've heard today.

13 It should not take an act of bravery to gather
14 and speak out in America, but when we know the police
15 can turn on a dime and become violent against us, it
16 does. I have a lot more to say.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Go ahead.

18 JOANNA OLTMAN SMITH: I'm going to try and sum it
19 up. I want everyone to know that I have personally
20 witnessed much misuse and terrorism on the part of
21 the SRG. Terrorism, I use that word not lightly. I
22 use it to describe when the SRG arrived in my
23 neighborhood, Park Slope on a lovely October evening
24 as families were out enjoying a musical concert in
25 the street during the height of the pandemic. SRG

1
2 was deployed because they had received poor
3 information from NYPD helicopters above that had been
4 tormenting our neighborhood for hours looking for a
5 small group of protestors that they deemed to be a
6 violent threat to the neighborhood. In fact, surge
7 was deployed against families and lawn chairs.
8 Children on scooters, babies in strollers. When I
9 challenged the supervisors on the site, I was told
10 repeatedly that these people are endangering public
11 safety. Human lives are at risk.

12 I ask you, who was endangering public lives? Was
13 it the families out enjoying a concert or was it the
14 SRG operating on poor intel and bringing the brut
15 force of a heavily militarized paramilitary
16 organization down to bear on a peaceful community
17 gathering?

18 I'm going to end quickly by saying that we all
19 see what a combustible and absurd situation that was.
20 I've run into SRG. I've been arrested by SRG at
21 numerous acts of civil disobedience over the years
22 and I just wanted to remind everyone of an old adage,
23 which is, when all you have is a hammer, everything
24 looks like a nail. The hammer that is SRG, must be
25

1
2 disbanded to protect New Yorkers from their
3 unrelenting excess.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much for your
5 testimony.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may go ahead.
7 Following which, we're going to turn to some folks on
8 Zoom. We're going to go to Milton Perez followed by
9 Hannah Carlin, then Kelly Grace Price and Micah
10 Phillips in person. So, you may go ahead.

11 ELISSA PASKIN: I've lived in Greenwich Village
12 for the last 45 years. I have borne witness to a lot
13 of progress in the gay rights movement, and in 2019,
14 I was sitting in my spot on gay pride day in
15 Washington Square Park and people were having an
16 amazing time celebrating the progress and partying
17 and performance art and it was an most amazing joyous
18 time. All of a sudden, now mind you it's still
19 daylight. It's not even dark out yet. SRG shows up,
20 using their bicycles as weapons. How ironic again,
21 bicycles that were reintroduced to New York to make
22 it a healthier place, are now weapons.

23 I had a conversation with one of the officers and
24 every response he gave to me was an out and out lie.
25 I'm involved in my community. I know what's going on

1
2 and he was just making stuff up. Every time I called
3 him out on it, always being polite, in no way
4 threatening, there was nothing threatening going on
5 whatsoever and all he did was act rudely,
6 aggressively and dishonestly. Plain and simple.
7 There was no protest going on. There was nothing
8 that in a cops, a policeman's mentality was threatening
9 whatsoever. There was dancing and music and
10 celebration of joy. That's all that was going on,
11 number one.

12 Number two, last autumn, I'm sitting, it's a
13 lovely evening. I'm sitting with a friend of mine at
14 the chess tables, again in Washington Square Park.
15 Again, no protest, nothing like that and SRG comes
16 through and they're closing down the park. Now, all
17 he could he have said, "we're closing down the park.
18 I have to ask you to leave." That was not the tone.
19 The tone again was utterly aggressive, nasty, rude,
20 and I started talking about the culture of the
21 neighborhood and made a reference to the 6th Precinct
22 and he said, F the precinct. I was in shock. They
23 don't belong in our neighborhoods. They're not part
24 of serving and protecting. They aggravate, they
25 cause harm and they need to go. We don't need

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2 anymore fascism in this country. We don't need
3 anymore lies in this country. What we need is
4 honesty. We need true justice and we don't need
5 peoples lives being bullied and threatened constantly
6 for no reason and no excuse and no perception of
7 reality whatsoever that lend itself to a policeman
8 acting in that manner. That's all I got to say.
9 Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much for your
11 testimony.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: There's some water around if
14 you guys want to have a glass of water.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we're going to turn to
16 Zoom. Milton Perez followed by Hannah Carlin and
17 Kelly Grace Price. Milton, I will unmute you and you
18 could go ahead in just a second. Go ahead.

19 MILTON PEREZ: I'd like some that water Chair
20 Hanks. My name is Milton Perez. I'm from the Bronx
21 Puerto Rico. I'm someone who spent over five years
22 in the shelter system and around this time, four
23 years ago, one of the organizers at Vocal New York
24 Selena visited the shelter and have been in these
25 fights ever since.

1
2 So, I want to thank her, other organizations that
3 are allies. Just organizations who are organizers,
4 advocates, activists. I'm actually a local AU. I'm
5 a member, supporter and Alli and over the unions and
6 Vocal New York, the users union. The Civil Rights
7 Union, the Positive Leaders Union but I'm a leader in
8 the Homelessness Union. It's been a long three
9 years. I've very thankful of these people who spoke
10 on my behalf. When I did not know that they did.
11 What they were going through being harassed. Being
12 my line. Even sometimes by your people and these
13 administrations you know, which is the harassment
14 that they face, the violence, arrest. And so, I
15 thank them for fighting for us. So, I'm here you
16 know to return that favor.

17 The Strategic Response Group needs to be
18 disbanded. It will be and I suggest that that money
19 is put aside to be reimbursed for the homeless people
20 whose property they threw in the garbage. Maybe put
21 some funding into some more vouchers so people get
22 housing and do something positive. Invest in the
23 community that needs the funding, you know what I'm
24 saying? I was at 125th Street last year around this
25 time and I heard something that's been on my mind

1
2 ever since. Refund the community, defund the police.
3 Disband the SRG too. I'll include that in there.

4 I'd like to read the - if you look up SRG on the
5 - if you have some Wi-Fi, you're going to go, you're
6 going to find the NYPD Special Operations and the
7 last sentence I'd like to read. It says, SRG also
8 mobilizes for shootings, bank robberies, missing
9 persons, demonstrations, or other significant
10 incidents. The Administration should not be included
11 with shootings and bank robberies. The things that I
12 have done in the world now, you have the U.S.
13 Military policing the world and you have the police
14 in the U.S. at war with the citizens. That needs to
15 stop.

16 So, I thank the City Council for any oversight
17 that they do with the NYPD, HRA, VHS. It's much
18 appreciated. You know the last time I spoke at the
19 City Council, the general just saw me and contacted
20 me through Vocal and I managed to get some help in my
21 situation. So, to the people that spoke before me,
22 do not be deterred. All this counts. So, I want to
23 thank everybody. We're going to continue this fight
24 and thank you. Thank you for having me here. Thank
25 you. I yield my time to the Chair.

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2 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you. Thank you
4 for your testimony Milton. Next, we'll hear from
5 Hannah Carlin on Zoom. Hannah are you there?

6 HANNAH CARLIN: Yes, I am. I'm of course pulling
7 into a station at this exact moment, so if there's
8 background noise, I really apologize, but I will get
9 started. I am Hannah. I'm a born and raised New
10 Yorker, an activist and now I am a mother.

11 I went to high school at Stuyvesant, just on
12 Chamber Street and I have seen up close and for
13 decades now, before and after of 911 the wasteful and
14 completely unnecessary militarization of the NYPD and
15 now the SRG. Throughout the Civil Justice Uprising
16 of 2020 and until I became pregnant, I worked as a
17 civilian in protest safety. I was blocking streets.
18 I was de-escalating conflict and I was supporting
19 demonstrations. When I became pregnant, I stopped my
20 work on the ground for fear of violence by the NYPD
21 and in particular the SRG.

22 I had witnessed so much harassment, violence,
23 abuse and brutalization, most consistently and most
24 notably by the SRG. I had already been subject to
25 strategic escalation, I had been kettled, I had been

1
2 jostled at the mercifully and luckily not knocked
3 down or arrested yet. But I have lost count of how
4 many friends were victims of targeted harassment,
5 caught and released, jailed, intimidated, punched,
6 kicked, and spit on in the prevaccine period of a
7 global pandemic. It was everyone, it was all of us.

8 I join others giving testimony today in complete
9 awe of people who showed up to testify in the face of
10 mere trauma. Who showed up in person to a government
11 building and a governing body debating whether the
12 abuse they endured is reason enough to consider
13 reallocating one, one thousandth of the city budget.
14 I want to be clear about that. This is approximately
15 one, one thousandth of the city budget.

16 Look at all these people who showed up to make
17 their case to reallocate this tiny, tiny slice of the
18 pie. Look at the total absence of the NYPD and SRG
19 here today. Alongside the abundant reasons to
20 disband this unit, consider that they're not here.
21 That maybe it's just not that important to them.

22 I want to join the voices in shame on the City
23 Council for not listening to New Yorkers.
24 Chairwoman, Councilwoman Hanks you are here but you
25 should be embarrassed at this Council as a body. Mr.

1
2 McCarry who spoke earlier who also talked about
3 people living but then he spoke and left, said the
4 testimony here today was not fact based.

5 Demonstrators are saying over and over and over
6 again, what they lived and what they saw. Do you
7 need to hear it from a nice White mother. Hi, I'm a
8 nice White mother. I'm a fellow New York City kid
9 and I am telling you these are the facts. These are
10 what happened. It is great to have stats and facts
11 and figures supporting the dissolution of the SRG and
12 reinvestment in communities but there's a little bit
13 of you don't need the weather man to know which way
14 the wind blows happening here to right? Like the
15 early data testimony. The difference between 27, 35
16 cases. The breakdown between the crowd control and
17 arrest activity. It might be important to policy
18 making but it has nothing to do with sorting out the
19 truth of what happened and what needs to happen.

20 So, I want to use my remaining time to reiterate
21 the simplest possible terms of what we all know. The
22 SRG, Strategic Response is to antagonize, harass and
23 brutalize demonstrators. The SRG's presence does
24 more harm than good. The SRG demonstrably did not
25 and does not work to protect the community and the

1
2 NYPD recognized this division against protesting
3 demonstrators. Any bystander, any personal attack –

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 HANNAH CARLIN: Demonstrator. The police are
6 saying nothing and the sad few saying otherwise, are
7 climate change deniers.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. Thank you so much
9 for your testimony.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we're going
11 to hear from Kelly Grace Price. Kelly, are you
12 available on Zoom?

13 KELLY GRACE PRICE: Hi, here I am. Thanks so
14 much. It's Kelly Grace Price from Close Rosie's. I
15 want to thank everyone for being here. I want to
16 thank, is that Council Member Holden really still
17 here. Council Member Holden. Really kudos to you
18 for hearing all of us. I want to specifically
19 discuss the data behind whose on the SRG and Officer
20 McCarry respectfully, even though what you're saying
21 about CCRB complaints against SRG members may hold
22 true, the number of litigations and law suits filed
23 against SRG members and settled against SRG members
24 are almost one to one.

1
2 So, I respectfully ask you to look at that data
3 and then try and justify your statements defending
4 the SRG. Specifically, if you look at the data
5 behind whose on the SRG and the kind of lawsuits
6 settled against them, you see some of the worst
7 violators that have been protected by the Blue line
8 of silence over the past decade pop up on the SRG.
9 And that reinforces what my friend Christopher Leon
10 Johnson said and what I think I heard a film maker
11 say. That the people being thrown on the SRG are
12 really kind of the problem children of the NYPD.

13 I want to concentrate on the story of just a
14 couple, two stories of two SRG members with some of
15 the highest litigation dispositions against them.
16 The first is Officer Sabrina Alicea, A-L-I-C-E-A. I
17 you google Officer Alicea's name, you'll find that
18 she's been involved in a number of famous NYPD
19 tragedies over the last decade.

20 Most notably, that involving Roberto Hararah(SP?)
21 who in 2012 was riding his motorbike with his friend
22 in the Bronx, and was rammed in the back by Officer
23 Sabrina Alicea. He subsequently died from that
24 incident and the record is quite clear that Officer
25 Alicea lied repeatedly on the formal record about the

1
2 incident and this was not the first time that she has
3 lied. And this is not the first time that she has
4 lied, apparently there are other lawsuits that she
5 had lied on and been disciplined for but she was
6 rewarded, not by demerit but she was rewarded instead
7 by a promotion to the SRG Squad in Manhattan.

8 Now, Ms. Alicea has approximately \$4.1 million in
9 lawsuits accrued towards her name. The lion share of
10 that money is from the particular incident involving
11 Mr. Harara and his friends, Mr. Swavis (SP?) who
12 survived but was permanently maimed from the
13 incident.

14 Another officer on the SRG Hector Torres, has
15 over \$10 million in litigation settlements to his
16 name. I'm not sure if this is the same Hector
17 Torres, it's unclear but famously, Hector Torres was
18 involved in an incident back in 2013, involving
19 Natalie Ferber. Natalie Ferber was the daughter of
20 two NYPD employees, I believe a Sergeant at a
21 Lieutenant and her car was rammed by a car being
22 pursued by Mr. Torres in a high speed police
23 incident. And she was permanently paralyzed.

24

25

1
2 Now, if you google Natalie Ferber, you'll see
3 that the record is quite long and tragic what
4 happened to her but we don't know -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 KELLY GRACE PRICE: What finally happened that
7 case because the record is sealed in Manhattan
8 Supreme Court. We can't even go down to the
9 courthouse and pull the file. That's the kind of
10 person that is being thrown on the SRG. Thank you.
11 I exceeded my time but as always, I'll put my data
12 and my comments in my written testimony. Thank you
13 so much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you Kelly.
15 Next, we're going to hear from Micah Phillips, who I
16 believe is in person. Ashwin Rastogi, Garon Scott
17 and then Natasha Severin. Is Micah Phillips here?
18 If I've called your name, you could start kind of
19 making your way up and go ahead. So, Micah Phillips,
20 Ashwin Garon Scott and Natasha Severin.

21 RICK: Hello, I'm reading on behalf of my friend
22 Ashwin who can't be here today. My name is Ashwin
23 Rastogi.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Excuse me, could you state
25 your name for the record.

1
2 RICK: Oh, my name is Rick.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay.

4 RICK: But I'm reading for Ashwin.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, that's cool. Thanks.

6 RICK: My name is Ashwin Rastogi, I am a resident
7 of the lower east side of Manhattan. I have been
8 present at countless protest rallies and grassroots
9 actions as a bike marshal and safety organizer since
10 2020. I've seen innumerable acts of police violence
11 and abuse. As most of here know, NYPD's record of
12 human rights abuses at protests is utterly
13 horrifying. The epicenter of this abject and
14 disgusting spectacle of police brutality is the
15 Strategic Response Group.

16 The SRG show up in vans by the dozens loaded with
17 body armor and tactical military gear. I have seen
18 them mock and blow kisses at protestors as they gear
19 up and smoke cigars in between waves of mass arrests.
20 Their bike team stalks – the stalk marches in
21 formations that deliberately orchestrate kettles and
22 traps, endangering both protestors and bystanders
23 alike.

24 Their primary crowd control maneuver is to create
25 an impenetrable wall with their bodies, bikes and

1 batons and force their way into a crowd trampling or
2 crushing anyone in their path. They seek out the
3 slightest pretext for arrest, which always proceed
4 with immense violence and brutal force. Multiple
5 large adult men piling upon isolated individuals
6 ripping clothes, twisting limbs, crushing faces.
7 While other officers rush in to push back legal
8 observers and journalists and obstruct any evidence.
9

10 They ignore the law with impunity and treat every
11 protest with the aggression, hostility and violence
12 of a military operation. The SRG is regularly a part
13 of the NYPD's coordinated sweeps of unhoused people.
14 I've seen SRG officers dragging unhoused people from
15 their tents as they attempt to silently and
16 peacefully resist inside their encampments. Every
17 month, the SRG provides an armed escort to
18 antiabortion fanatics and clinic invaders who harass
19 patients at abortion clinics. Despite escalations
20 from the right-wing groups, SRG exclusively targets
21 abortion defenders for arrests and violence.

22 We see the same dynamic at drag story hours.
23 Bigots, neo-Nazi's and Proud Boys are showing up to
24 public library events to intimidate children,
25 families and LGBTQ performers. Their hate is egged

1
2 on my conspiracy fueled, internet trolls and media
3 outlets. Queer, trans and fem led groups have
4 organized defense actions in response. Again, the
5 terrorist thugs of the SRG are there to brutalize any
6 marginalized folks who dare stand up to protect each
7 other. Even as the right-wing groups threaten
8 violence and criminal trespass. The SRG's aggression
9 falls exclusively on the clear activists protecting
10 these spaces.

11 Meanwhile the facetious enjoy a taxpayer funded
12 escort to their cars and free public transportation.
13 One more paragraph. The Strategic Response Group has
14 absolutely no place in any civil society. It is
15 deeply antithetical to the spirit of New York City
16 which thrives off of the diversity of queer and
17 immigrant communities and communities of color.

18 Their continued existence is an absolute disgrace
19 and threatens our vibrant legacy of free expression
20 and descent. We will not rest until this
21 organization is defunded, disbanded and completely
22 dismantled, and every instance of their violence and
23 brutality is brought to justice.

24 And on a personal note, just for myself, you know
25 the cops aren't here today. Most of your Council

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2 Members left. It's really disrespectful and
3 disgusting. Shame.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much for your
5 testimony.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Micah
7 Phillips, Garon Scott, Natasha Severin.

8 GARON SCOTT: Hi, my name is Garon and like
9 others before me, I am also upset to be testifying to
10 empty chairs for the sake of the record. And it's
11 more than just a personal insult because the SRG
12 exists to keep descent off of the streets where it
13 could have a real impact and in places like this
14 room, the NYPD is okay with us testifying because
15 look, why should they be scared.

16 I was arrested by the SRG the night of May 30,
17 2020. It was the second night of protest after the
18 killing of George Floyd when I came upon a group of
19 protestors and cops in the [INAUDIBLE 4:26:29].
20 Within minutes an SRG unit drove up, the cops
21 immediately went on the attack and in the chaos I saw
22 a cop from the SRG grab a random Black man, no reason
23 and start arresting him.

24 So, I was pleading, had my hands up for the cop
25 to release him when I tackled from behind and

1
2 arrested as well. And so, you know you get put on
3 the transport van and I got a chance to actually
4 speak to that man who was arrested. He happened to
5 be an immigrant. It turns out he wasn't even a
6 protestor. He lived nearby and had come outside to
7 see what was happening. His wife and kids were still
8 up in the apartment. No idea what happened to them
9 and he was wearing flipflops.

10 Also, in the van was a young Black man who was
11 bleeding from the head. The SRG had slammed him onto
12 the concrete when they arrested him. After our van
13 had been waiting outside One Police Plaza for an hour
14 or more, his symptoms began to dramatically worsen.
15 He lost consciousness and fell forward onto his own
16 lap. We spent ten minutes pleading for medical
17 attention and were ignored. Then the young man began
18 seizing up. I can't over state how unconcerned the
19 cops were. How slow they moved. How they seemed to
20 resent our request for help.

21 For those cops, our being violently arrested by
22 the SRG had marked us as scum. Deserving of whatever
23 happened to us. So, even our seizures would be dealt
24 with at the NYPD's pace. Now, of course, all desk
25 appearances were dropped, so none of us on the

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2 transport van faced any legal consequences but the
3 SRG isn't there to uphold laws. Like I said, the SRG
4 is there to inflict violence and instill fear on
5 those protesting injustice and most of all, on those
6 protesting to violence, the impunity and the
7 arrogance of the NYPD themselves.

8 The SRG exists to keep the NYPD's critics, their
9 bravest and most vulnerable critics some of whom are
10 in the audience today, off of the streets. Where
11 again, their voices have a real impact. Now, the
12 Mayor wants to send his SRG goons into the city's
13 poorest Blackest neighborhoods. Why? Because he's
14 draining these very neighborhoods of resources in
15 order to advance gentrification and privatization and
16 he's betting he can control the inevitable fallout
17 with overwhelming force.

18 Now, before it becomes entrenched even further,
19 City Council must disband SRG, ensure it can't be
20 reconstituted under another name and redirect that
21 budget and much more into resources and programs for
22 real community care and alternatives to policing.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we're going to hear
3 from Natasha Severin followed by Sarah Sitzler and
4 Jessie Spellman. After which, we're going to turn to
5 a final person on Zoom, who is Jeff Strabone. So,
6 Natasha followed by Sarah and Jessie.

7 SARAH SITZLER: Uhm, I'm not Natasha, I'm Sarah
8 by the way.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Is Natasha here? No, okay,
10 so Sarah, you could go ahead and when Natasha's here
11 you could come up. Go ahead.

12 SARAH SITZLER: So, I am using my voice to join
13 the many other voices calling for the SRG to be
14 disbanded. I personally do have extensive experience
15 with the SRG of being kettled, of witnessing my
16 friends and community members brutalized, punched,
17 kicked thrown to the ground, all ages, sizes genders,
18 it doesn't matter. The SRG are extremely violent in
19 the way they interact with people. But I want to add
20 this caveat. They're extremely violent with the way
21 they interact with people depending upon what they
22 are protesting or saying or standing for because if
23 you are against ICE, if you are standing up for Black
24 Lives, if you are supporting a person attempting to
25 access reproductive health services or supporting a

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2 children's program at the public library, then you
3 are at risk of being brutalized by the SRG.

4 But if you are a White nationalist, if you are a
5 Trump supporter, if you are a Proud Boy, then you
6 will be handled in the most delicate manner. So, the
7 idea of this unit being deployed into communities
8 where there is no specific threat but is place
9 labeled as high crime, is absolutely horrifying. I
10 found out today, I actually live in one of those
11 neighborhoods and unfortunately, my Council Member
12 left, so I can't even address her to her face.

13 It is wildly illogical to strip communities of
14 funding and resources funneling billions of dollars
15 into the NYPD and then blaming those same communities
16 for their ills while sending out a highly militarized
17 violent element such as the SRG to police the very
18 conditions that they are responsible for creating.
19 There is no set of circumstances that justifies the
20 SRG's tactics, their budget or their existence. The
21 SRG needs to be disbanded, defunded, that money needs
22 to go back into the schools, libraries, actual
23 infrastructure for mental health services because
24 there really is none right now. Immigration services
25 and real affordable housing and I don't know how you

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2 can sit here and listen to these testimonies today
3 and not be convinced that the SRG needs to be
4 disbanded as soon as possible.

5 If you all on the Committee of public safety, if
6 you are a public servant and you squander this
7 opportunity to prevent more violence, more harm, the
8 physical, mental and emotional trauma, then you - to
9 prevent this unit from continuing to exist, then I
10 want you to understand that you are culpable and I
11 want you to really understand the gravity of the
12 situation and that's it for me.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you. Thank you
14 for your testimony. Next, we'll hear from Jessie
15 Spellman followed by Jeff Strabone, who is online and
16 then Stu Waldman and Jay Walker.

17 JESSIE SPELLMAN: Hi, my name is Jessie. My
18 pronouns are she, her. Thank you to my neighbors, to
19 my community for being here, for showing up and thank
20 you to the 62,000 New Yorkers who took a survey
21 commissioned by Mayor Adams where they said that the
22 three things they want are affordable housing,
23 reduced homelessness, trained mental health first
24 responders instead of police. Mayor Adams
25 commissioned that survey. He asked the people what

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2 they need and they spoke and they've spoken all
3 today. And we the people are saying, disband the
4 SRG.

5 I'm a fourth generation New Yorker. I have an
6 MBA from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton
7 School of Business. I have managed multimillion
8 dollar budgets and I understand how things work. I
9 am appalled that there is no transparency or any
10 accountability for how this money is spent. I've
11 seen my friends thrown to the ground. I've seen my
12 friends arms break because they've been twisted
13 behind their back. I've watched people be brutalized
14 and we've already relived our communities trauma
15 enough today. Instead, I'm going to take a note out
16 of Mariam Cobbe's book I'm going to choose to believe
17 in hope. Hope is a discipline. And so, I would like
18 to talk through a few things that we can do with \$133
19 million.

20 With \$133 million, we can provide 3,000 New York
21 families housing for an entire year. We can provide
22 2,000 additional social workers to respond to
23 community crisis. We can provide 20,000 New York
24 families with groceries that they need. We can
25 provide 30,000 New Yorkers with drug treatment and

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2 harm reduction. The SRG has continued to demonstrate
3 how it terrorizes, intimates and horrors New Yorkers
4 since it was founded in 2015. And by the way, I want
5 to acknowledge, I know this is just one unit. I also
6 am an abolitionist and believe that we need to
7 disband and defund the entire New York Police
8 Department for the harm that they have caused but
9 until then, the SRG has got to go. We have a
10 preponderance of evidence from the people in this
11 room, from the survey that the Mayor himself
12 commissioned, from the New York Times, from
13 Gothamist, from the New York Civil Liberties Union,
14 enough is enough. By disbanding and defunding the
15 SRG, we can provide thousands of New Yorkers the
16 critical housing, health care and community that they
17 deserve. Let's create a better world together. Now
18 is the time.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much for your
20 testimony.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Jeff
22 Strabone on Zoom followed by Stu Waldman, Jay Walker,
23 Kelly Young. Jeff, you may go ahead.

24 JEFF STRABONE: Thank you. Good afternoon Chair
25 Hanks and absent members of the Committee. My name

1
2 is Jeff Strabone, I'm a lifelong New Yorker and
3 former Vice Chair of Community Board 6 in Brooklyn.
4 I live in the 39th District. I thank the Committee
5 for its time and for holding this very important
6 hearing.

7 The subject of my testimony is the deployment and
8 use of the Strategic Response Group, which I have
9 personally witnessed as a peaceful protestor many
10 times since the murder of George Floyd in 2020. I'm
11 speaking today to share my experience witnessing
12 three things. One, unprovoked aggression of violence
13 and improper conduct by the SRG. Two, a profound
14 difference between how the SRG treats protestors as
15 opposed to how regular precinct cops treat us. And
16 three, a pattern that shows political bias whereby
17 the SRG is deployed against certain types of
18 protestors based on the content of their protests.

19 As a peaceful citizen and activist, I've attended
20 all kinds of protests. Regardless of the size of a
21 protest, I've chiefly encountered SRG forces at BLM,
22 reproductive freedom and anti-ICE protests and other
23 types of protest on the political. This appears to
24 be a political choice on the part of whichever
25 authority decides when to deploy the SRG and as such

1
2 is unconstitutional. It is a violation of the first
3 amendment to prohibit certain types of speech and
4 protest this way.

5 I invite the Council to quantify by content type
6 the protest actions where the SRG has been deployed.
7 I'm confident you will find a pattern. An
8 unconstitutional pattern. When the SRG is deployed,
9 they have a much higher likelihood to use violence
10 and improper arrests against protestors. One such
11 incident I witnessed which hasn't been mentioned yet,
12 was an anti-ICE protest on September 19, 2020, which
13 I reported to the CCRB. No one was disciplined. The
14 site of the rally was Duffy Square and Time Square.
15 As soon as protestors stepped off Duffy Square and
16 onto 7th Avenue or west 46th Street, the SRG swooped
17 in, gave no chance to retreat, used their bicycles as
18 weapons, brutally threw people to the ground, struck
19 seven of them with fists and arrested them, including
20 people standing next to me. I understand the desire
21 to have a squad for civil arrest and terrorist
22 attacks. Please hear me loud and clear, Black Lives
23 Matter is not Al Qaeda. Abortion protestors are not
24 terrorists. Antiterror cops should never be used
25 against peaceful protestors. Some of the funding for

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2 SRG comes from federal grants from the Department of
3 Homeland Security. Federal dollars are attractive, I
4 understand that but they should be turned down if
5 their use would distort our public safety priorities
6 by militarizing the police.

7 The SRG has shown that it cannot conduct itself
8 properly. It should be disbanded and the federal
9 monies that fund it should be resisted.

10 Finally, I hope the state legislature will remove
11 the power of the NYPD Commissioner to be disciplined.
12 The Police Commissioner, an unelected official should
13 not have hardened power. And I would remind everyone
14 listening that all 51 City Council members are up for
15 reelection in 2023. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Jeff. Next, we'll
18 hear from Stu Waldman, Jay Walker, Kelly Young. Is
19 Stu Waldman present? Jay Walker present? Kelly
20 Young? Go ahead.

21 KELLY YOUNG: Hello, my name is Kelly Young.
22 Pronouns she, her, hers. I am a New York Native from
23 Brownsville Brooklyn. I am the Civil Rights Campaign
24 Coordinator at Vocal New York. We are a grassroots,
25 member led organization building the political power

1
2 of people impacted by mass incarceration, the war on
3 drugs, homelessness and the HIV AIDs epidemic. Our
4 members and leaders are formerly incarcerated. They
5 are drug users. They are homeless. They are people
6 living with HIV and AIDs. They know all too well the
7 violence the NYPD enacts. Violence that is
8 disproportionately on Black, Brown and poor New
9 Yorkers.

10 Critical to our advocacy is our right to protest.
11 To name the ways the government is failing to meet
12 the needs of New Yorkers. To speak truth to power.
13 Thank you Antoni, Ibrahim, Eileen, Jon and Milton,
14 Vocal leaders who came here today to speak truth to
15 power. Thank you to the Council Members who have
16 sounded the alarm and call for the SRG to be
17 disbanded. The SRG is trained to consider any racial
18 justice protest inherently violent. There is no
19 chance for a safety and security for those standing
20 up against violence, against police violence in the
21 communities where they are taking action.

22 Disbanding SRG means ensuring that militarized
23 police and their tactics are removed from protest
24 spaces and communities where demonstrations occur.
25 We are in the midst of unprecedented intersecting

1
2 homeless, overdose and mental health crisis. Instead
3 of pouring \$100 million of funding into this violent
4 unit, funding should be poured into permanent
5 guaranteed housing, drug user health and education.
6 SRG is an insidious example of how NYPD uses its
7 bloated budget to inflict militarized violence with
8 impunity. Combating SRG brutality means putting an
9 end to SRG itself by disbanding the unit. Ensuring
10 SRG and its tactics are not recreated under another
11 name and returning funding to community supports and
12 services. We are not disappointed that the NYPD did
13 not show. We don't expect good things from the NYPD.
14 We are disappointed with Council Members who insist
15 on standing in defense of police who refuse to be
16 held accountable. We are disappointed with Council
17 Members who deny the lived experience of New Yorkers
18 in order to protect police units who brutalize us.
19 We are disappointed in Council Members who propret to
20 legislate and allocate funding on behalf of people
21 but cannot see past their racist ideologies.

22 I am personally disappointed with how
23 inconsistently testimonies were interrupted for over
24 time, and that the only person whose testimony was
25 repeatedly interrupted today was a Black woman who

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2 demanded the basic dignity of being looked at when
3 she spoke. 99 percent of testimonies today have been
4 a call to end the SRG. The people have spoken and
5 democracy demands you listen. The SRG cannot keep us
6 safe because they are the harm, the terror and the
7 danger and they have no place in our city. Thank
8 you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony
10 Kelly. We have two more individuals who are signed
11 up to testify in person. Again, if you're here and
12 your name has not been called and you want to
13 testify, please sign up with the Sergeant at Arms.
14 The final two people who are registered who signed
15 up, Christopher Morris Perry and Lovelle Shaw.

16 And again if you're here and you'd like to
17 testify just please sign up. Otherwise, these are
18 the last two public testimonies we're going to hear.
19 You may begin when ready.

20 CHRISTOPHER MORRIS PERRY: I just don't know
21 where to begin. My name is Christopher Morris Perry
22 and I'm running for City Council in District 7. Ms.
23 Kamillah and Mr. Holden over there that's been acting
24 nonchalant. See now you ignore me but that's okay.
25 Look up above your heads. It says, a government of

1 the people, by the people, for the people. When are
2 you guys going to live up to that quote? When?
3 Answer me. You don't even have the dignity to answer
4 me. When? Young people, thank you guys for coming
5 because the future belongs to young people. In order
6 for us to secure a better future for our children and
7 our children children, we must continue to act as
8 such.

9 I'm just lost for words. Look, everybody is
10 gone. The NYPD didn't show up. This is disgusting.
11 This is sickening and if I get in, that unit, is gone
12 and I'm going to — I'm going to make sure that we do
13 defund the police because if they're not doing their
14 job, they don't deserve funding. Now, I happen to be
15 one of the good politicians. I'm going to take it
16 there, since you won't answer my question. I don't
17 like the fact; and I live in Harlem and I don't like
18 the fact that you guys have Al Taylor and Arnes
19 Dinkins(SP?), they are sitting members of the State
20 Assembly. Why you guys got them running against
21 Christian Jordan Richardson? She is working night
22 and day for the people. Don't look up, please. Why?
23 He left his seat. She left her seat to run against
24 her. She got to be doing something good right. We
25

1
2 got to speak up. We got to be bold because that's
3 the only way we're going to get change. I'm done.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may go as
5 well.

6 LOVELLE SHAW: That was interesting because we
7 talk about the police doing their job but from what
8 I'm witnessing, they all are doing their job and I
9 think they're doing a phenomenal job at it. We know
10 the history of the police but they still wear their
11 badges proudly by the slave patrol that was created
12 in the 1700's. Their gender was never to take care
13 of the people, it was to make sure we remain divided
14 but we never stay divided. Every generation, it
15 doesn't matter your ethnicity, the color of your
16 skin, what does that matter? We come together each
17 time and we're going to keep coming together.

18 So, it's up to you all to actually do something
19 about changing it for our future because we
20 definitely will change it for our future ourselves
21 because we have to. We live here and we're going to
22 continue to live here, so we're asking you all to
23 stand up now because it's just like my brother just
24 said, we're coming in the City Council and we're here
25 and we're going to stay here because we have no -

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2 this is our earth, this is where we live. We live
3 here with you all. We're not looking for conflict,
4 we're looking for harmony. My whole thing is what's
5 the problem? It's baffling. I'm over here, I'm lost
6 for words honestly speaking. I'm a 26-year-old man.
7 I just spoke twice on the fact that I've been
8 homeless since I was 16 and one of your Council
9 Members said meet me afterwards and gave me a card
10 that somebody that has nothing to do with the
11 situation. It's sad. I don't know what to say about
12 it and uhm, even when it comes to these protests, a
13 protest is our right. They shouldn't be beating
14 people down for protesting and we wouldn't be
15 protesting if there wasn't negative effects happening
16 to citizens that are just trying to live peacefully
17 on this planet. It doesn't make sense.

18 I'm going to just leave it at that. I don't even
19 need all that time.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Again, if anyone
21 else in the room would like to testify, please come
22 up. Otherwise we're going to adjourn the hearing.
23 Council Member.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you all for coming here
25 today. Taking the time to come out and so we can

1
2 hear your voices and we do hear you and that's why
3 I'm here. So, I appreciate you coming out and
4 testifying. I want to thank the Committee Counsel
5 for all their hard work and I will adjourn this
6 meeting. Thank you so much. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date March 20, 2023