



CRIME

The city of Charlotte embraced the 'Defund the Police' movement, and the fall out is impacting our communities. The goal of 'equity' in criminal justice is to decrease arrests, convictions, and incarcerations of persons who commit crimes and increase prosecutions of police officers. The historical causes of disparate outcomes in the criminal justice system are well known, but the solution is not to defund the police.

The city of Charlotte has implemented untested approaches to remaking policing practices within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD), based on the false narrative that traditional policing is inherently racist. Charlotte leadership, largely Democratic and progressive, has:

- implemented plans to provide millions in grants to community organizations with questionable track records to replace traditional policing with civilian-led crime intervention programs;
- enhanced its diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) bureaucracy within CMPD that replaces veterans with inexperienced officers based on race and gender; and
- the Mecklenburg County Office of Violence Prevention, within the Department of Health Services, is implementing a five-year Community Violence Strategic Plan, focused on community services.

As a result of these policy initiatives, police morale is at an all-time low and retirements and attrition at an all-time high. Meanwhile, the department has increased its civilian population by a greater percentage than its officer population. This great experiment in Charlotte crime prevention and response is occurring at a time when crime in Charlotte and across the country is soaring, fueled by fentanyl sales, drug cartels, human trafficking, and cyber-crime.

Reductions in arrests, prosecutions and incarcerations encourage more criminal activity. Crime statistics show that for every repeat criminal offender left on the streets, there are 80 victims. Community safety, cleanliness, and quality of life for law-abiding citizens – particularly in low-income neighborhoods – is jeopardized.

Treatment of those with severe mental illness and drug addiction who have not committed, nor are in danger of committing, violent crimes require alternatives to prison. However, allowing the mentally ill and drug addicts to remain unattended or on the streets is not a compassionate or viable option. Mental illness and drug addiction require treatment, outside the criminal justice system.

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Addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by low-income communities must be part of the solution. I support the areas of focus and goals articulated in the Mecklenburg County Community Violence Strategic Plan adopted by the Department of Public Health. Support for youth programs and families, increased job opportunities, safer and healthier neighborhoods and better intergovernmental collaboration are all indispensable to solving our crime problem. The county should take account of social programs already in place and seek to combine existing programs with new initiatives to achieve efficiencies, while applying appropriate success metrics for each program.

We need to stop attacking the police and falsely attributing their actions to racism. Rather than cutting or reallocating the budget of CMPD, I support hiring more police officers, ensuring their benefits when injured in the line of duty, and visibly deploying them in high crime areas to deter crime. Benefit security, combined with hiring standards commensurate with the job requirements and continuing state-of-the-art training and support, will attract and retain professional officers. Concurrently, local leadership and our law enforcement community must work to prepare a pipeline of recruits who are not immediately qualified but who aspire to be police officers. Higher investments in training before and on the job will help avoid unprofessional conduct.

State, local, and municipal police forces should increase cooperation with federal agencies, including the FBI, Drug Enforcement Agency, and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Federal agency involvement improves the quality of investigations and increases the likelihood that federal charges will be brought in federal court. The unchecked flow of illegal immigrants into all cities of the U.S., including Charlotte, is feeding the surge in crime. All available resources should be used to identify and deport or prosecute those who have come across the border illegally to commit crime. Additionally, reviews of police conduct should remain within the department rather than being put in the hands of civilian appointees who may lack knowledge and experience of policing and could be subject to political bias and media interference. Policing, by nature, requires the use of force. Professional police officers, who put their lives on the line daily to protect the public, use their best judgment and training in highly charged incidents, and any subsequent review of their actions should apply qualified immunity.

Our system of justice, founded upon the rule of law, is being eroded by a political agenda destroying our system of laws, institutions, and norms. It is critical we elect conservative law enforcement policy makers and judges to ensure fair and impartial interpretation of laws, due process for those accused of committing a crime, and professional policing to provide safe communities.

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