



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams  
New York City Council Committee on Public Safety  
June 29, 2015**

Good morning, Chair Gibson and members of the New York City Council's Committee on Public Safety. My name is Eric L. Adams, and I am the Brooklyn Borough President, representing the 2.6 million residents that call Brooklyn home. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testify on the important issues of police accountability and community relations.

While my office is still reviewing the details of the bills being debated, I would like to take this opportunity to proffer ideas about how to proactively make police officers more positively visible in communities as well as identify recommendations on how to ensure that not only does the NYPD reflect the cultural mosaic of New York City but that its members also spend more time in the communities they serve.

Keeping the public safe and ensuring the safety of police officers is of paramount importance in New York City. The nature of policing has been transformed over the past two decades. From 1994 to 2014, murders in New York City have dropped by 605 percent, rapes have dropped by almost 244 percent and robberies have dropped by 524 percent.

While more must be done to drive crime down even further, New York City remains the safest big city in the United States, in large part due to the best trained police force in the world.

The role of the police officer in today's New York City is less about chasing bad guys and more about ensuring that the civilian population is safe, that members of the NYPD are safe, and that the person the police officer is trying to "correct" is done as safely as possible. The reforms outlined in the "One City: Safe and Fair Everywhere" and the addition of nearly 1,300 are key steps towards making certain that policing achieves these three goals.

However, we need to think even further out of the box to rethink to address 21<sup>st</sup> century policing challenges in New York City.

Today, too many beat officers remain underutilized in neighborhoods, standing on street corners waiting for something to happen. Instead, we must rethink the training of our beat officers to operate more like Community Affairs Officers. We must empower our officers to engage with community members before an arrest, a traffic ticket or a citation.

We need more proactive policing. For example, training officers to engage local businesses or community members before a crisis will help foster a better response during a crisis. Incorporating

community outreach efforts to encourage people to sign-up for UPK or IDNYC can help build relationships that protect community members and police alike. In addition, we can also pair local police officers with community leaders, like clergy members, to ensure a better understanding between cops and residents.

I urge the NYPD to create a pilot program that trains an entire precinct in Brooklyn with the skill-sets that Community Affairs Officers receive as well. Doing so can help change how the community and police interact with one another and will generate even greater safety dividends for both public and the NYPD.

In addition, we must look again to our AAA policing leagues: the School Safety Agents, the Health and Human Services Officers and the Traffic Enforcement Agents, as future talent for the “Big Leagues” of NYPD officers.

Unfortunately, we don’t allow these safety agents to take the NYPD exam if they lack two-years of college, even if they have served honorably for more than two years on their respective forces.

Expanding access to exams for SSA, TEA and HHC officers with two year’s experience will help improve diversity because overwhelmingly these agencies are more diverse than the city they serve. For example, of HHC Peace Officers, 72 percent are males and 28 percent are females. Fifty seven percent are African American, 31 percent are Hispanic, 8 percent are White and 4 percent are Asian.

And perhaps most importantly, overwhelmingly, these officers live in New York City while nearly 50 percent of the current make-up of the NYPD lives outside of the five boroughs.

I truly believe that policing is one of the few jobs where you are on call 24 hours a day. Currently, New York City taxpayers are paying half of our police force to make communities outside of New York City safe during their “off” hours. If we expand opportunities for officers from the minor leagues of policing to make it in the NYPD we will not only diversify our police force, but also make our communities safer 24 hours a day.

While my comments do not speak to the specific bills being heard today, I believe that these two actions: Proactive, community affairs-style policing and expanding NYPD opportunities to School Safety Agents and others, will have a positive impact on neighborhood-police relations that these bills are seeking to address.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to working with the New York City Council, the de Blasio Administration and the NYPD to further improve accountability and community relations across the five boroughs.