

DC Police Union

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Testimony of DC Police Union for Senate Judiciary Committee on “Addressing the Human Cost of Soft-on-Crime Policies”

Good morning Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee. My name is Gregory Pemberton, and I am Chairman of the D.C. Police Union, representing roughly 3,000 officers, detectives, and sergeants of the Metropolitan Police Department. I’ve served this city for more than twenty years.

Let me be direct: major cities across the United States are in crisis. Crime is out of control, and police departments are dangerously understaffed. This did not happen by accident. It is the result of radical anti-police laws and rhetoric that began in 2020.

In Washington, D.C., the City Council stripped away officer rights, restricted proven tools, and openly celebrated “defunding.” The results speak for themselves. In 2020, our union had 3,897 sworn members. Today, we are under 3,200, the lowest in half a century, leaving us with more than 800 vacancies for the position of sworn officer. Since 2020, more than 1,600 officers have left, nearly 40% through resignations. These aren’t retirements, these are cops walking away.

The impact on public safety has been devastating. Between 2020 and 2023, homicides surged, carjackings doubled, robberies spiked, and entire neighborhoods became unsafe. Those who remain are working unsustainable hours, 1.8 million hours of overtime in 2024 alone, costing taxpayers over \$130 million and burning out the force that remains.

And this is not unique to Washington, D.C. Across the country, city councils and legislatures followed the same path, passing laws that hamstringing police, erode morale, and expose officers to personal liability even when they do their jobs correctly. The message to police was clear: you will not be supported. The result is predictable. Cities from New York to Chicago to Seattle are seeing record attrition, recruitment collapse, and crime that has left entire neighborhoods living in fear. This is a national problem with national consequences.

This summer, the crisis reached such extremes that the President of the United States stepped in, federalizing the MPD. Alongside this action, hundreds of federal law enforcement agents were surged into the city, and the National Guard was deployed to reinforce local efforts. Their presence was immediately effective in deterring crime and stabilizing neighborhoods that had been plagued by violence. Within just one week of this deployment, carjackings were down

83%, robberies down 46%, violent crime down 22%, and there were zero homicides during those seven days, something nearly unheard of in the Nation's Capital.

The Union supports the recognition of the problem, but federal intervention cannot be permanent. The solution is not federalizing local police, it is restoring staffing, repealing failed laws, and giving officers the support they need to succeed. That is why we also support the **CLEAN DC Act**. It begins the process of undoing harmful legislation, restoring balance, and rebuilding the MPD's strength. This is not just a D.C. issue, other cities that embraced the same policies are now facing the same consequences.

The lesson is clear: when leaders attack police, communities suffer. When lawmakers strip away tools and protections, criminals thrive. If this is not corrected, the crisis will deepen, here and nationwide.

I urge Congress to act: support the CLEAN DC Act, roll back failed legislation, and work with law enforcement instead of against us. Officers want nothing more than to protect their communities, but they cannot do it alone.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify and I welcome any questions the Committee may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory Pemberton', is written over a horizontal line.

Greggory Pemberton
Chairman
D.C. Police Union