

Mikva Challenge IL



State of Chicago Youth 2021

Mikva Challenge is a non-partisan, not for profit founded on the premise that youth voice and participation matter, and that our civic and political life will be stronger when youth participate and help shape their own destinies.

Mission

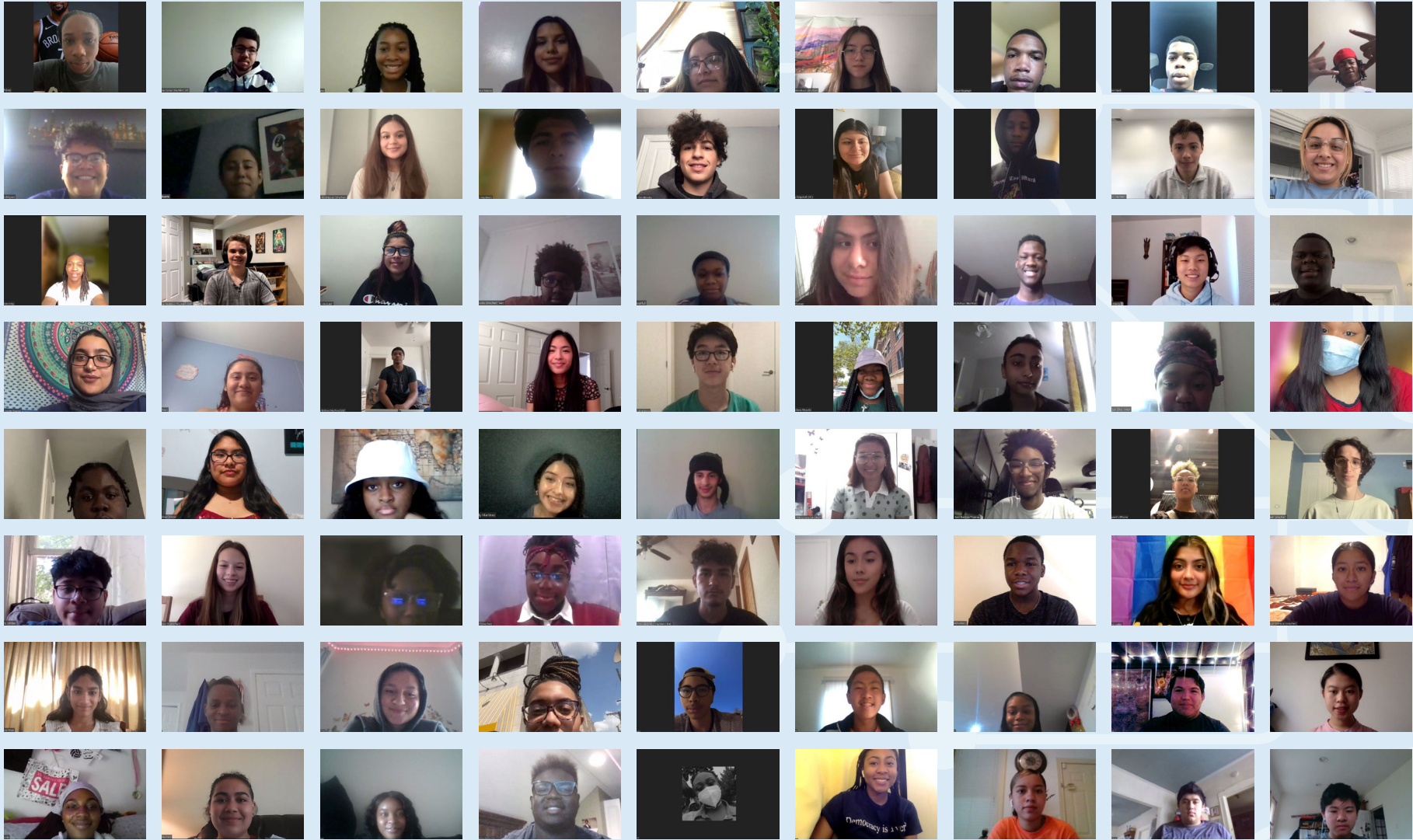
To develop youth to be empowered, informed, and active citizens who will promote a just and equitable society.

Values

- By intentionally reaching out to under-resourced communities and schools, we create opportunities for youth to elevate the issues that are important to them and their community.
- Policymakers make better decisions when youth voice is included in decision-making.
- Community involvement is an essential experience for young people to have a voice in their future.
- By remaining non-partisan, we make space for young people to form their own opinions and choose the candidates and issues they want to support.

Visit us at mikvachallenge.org.

72 Council Members



Mikva Challenge Citywide and Neighborhood Councils

The councils strengthen youth participation in the formation, implementation and evaluation of public policy in city government and in local decision-making in their communities through the creation of issue-based and neighborhood-based youth councils.

Councils serve as a mechanism for a broader base of Chicago youth to have input on key city and community policy and public safety decisions that significantly impact youth.

Participation is open to all Chicago students in **9th-12th grade for Citywide Councils** and students in **7th-9th grade** in the respective neighborhoods for **Neighborhood Councils**.

**Also includes inter-council Chicago Youth Response Team (CYRT).*

Neighborhood Leadership Initiative Action Summer

This year, the Neighborhood Leadership Initiative completed its first ever six-week Action Summer focused on youth-led safety strategies to curb the violence within their communities. Youth across all three of our councils — Gage Park, New City/Back of the Yards, North Lawndale — came together this summer despite an ongoing pandemic and spikes in violence to take action, build community with one another, explore their identities within their communities, and engaged in different strategies for community change. Throughout the summer, youth from NLI's south and west side neighborhood councils unpacked the amplified violence that they saw going on in their communities and developed youth-led safety strategies for navigating within their respective communities. Youth were also equipped with Restorative Justice training and developed their own conflict resolution strategies in order to be able to navigate conflicts that they may experience. Council members then presented to local elected officials and District Coordinating Officers their Collective Vision of Safety and Top 10 Tips for Navigating your Community as anti-violence community resources.

City Wide Action Councils Think Tank Summer

The Citywide Youth Councils engaged in their annual six-week Think Tank summer that focuses on removing barriers to help youth participate in the formation, implementation, and evaluation of public policy in city government. Our youth councils serve as policy experts and advocates, helping the CEO of Chicago Public Schools, the Cook County Board President, City Commissioners, and other city leaders make public policy decisions that significantly impact youth citywide. Youth gather for six weeks with their individual councils to conduct research, interview experts in the field, build community with one another, and build up their advocacy skills throughout the process. Their policy recommendations are then presented to their respective Decision Makers and stakeholders in order to collaboratively include youth voice in future policy decisions.

Neighborhood Leadership Initiative

Gage Park Council

Jessica Ballesteros
John Hancock High School

Xitlali Colotl
Curie High School

Ana Djingarov
Nightingale Elementary School

Matthew Djingarov
Roosevelt High School

Hugo Garcia
Nightingale Elementary School

Alberto Hernandez
Tamayo Acero School

Jesus Martinez
Lane Tech College Prep

MaKhyla Marzette
Francis M. McKay Elementary

Alexis Ortega
Hernandez Middle School

Angel Rodriguez
Muchin College Prep

Lizette Solano
Nightingale Elementary School

Ricardo Tirado
Acero Garcia High School

Stephanie Tirado
Acero Tamayo Elementary

Kayla Torres
Acero Tamayo Elementary

Domitila Vargas
Acero Garcia High School

DeAngelo Zermeno
Noble Mansueto High School

Yelitza Zermeno
Acero Tamayo Elementary

North Lawndale

Ifeoma Chizea-Aninyei
Frazier Magnet Elementary School

Re'Yonna less
KIPP Academy

Layla NDiaye
Frazier International Magnet School

Taisja Luckey
Multicultural HS

Frederick Milner
Curie Metropolitan High School

Faezuan Milner
Crown Community Academy

Travis Washington
Legacy Charter School

Amya Anderson
Frazier International

Londyn Robison
A.N. Pritzker Elementary School

D'niya Fobbs
Chalmers Elementary

Hailey Wiley
Laura Ward STEM School

Krislyn Milner
Dwight D. Eisenhower High School

New City/Back of the Yards

Carlos Alanis
Hamline Elementary School

TiMarje Amos
Sherman School of Excellence

Saidrick Berry
Kenwood Academy

Robyn Burson
Daley Elementary

Layla Chacha
Phoenix Military Academy

Ta'Mela Collins
Richard J. Daley Elementary

Rosalinda Garcia
Whitney M. Young High School

Naivi Gomez
Augustin Lara Academy

Michelle Hernandez
Whitney M. Young High School

Johanna Ramirez
Agustin Lara academy

Sahirah Shields
Daley Elementary

William Stokes
Dewey School of Excellence

Martrell Wardell
Dewey School of Excellence

Citywide Youth Councils

CPS Student Advisory Council (SAC)

Meredith Joncha

Lindblom Math and Science Academy

Cillian Halbleib

The Chicago High School for the Arts

Ta'Jai Johnson

Fenger Academy High School

Destiny Vasquez

George Washington High School

Greatful Nwokocha

Hubbard High School

Ezzard Dennis

Chicago Military High School

Janet Gomez

Benito Juarez Community Academy

Favour Mamudu

Sullivan High School

Omolara Atoyebi

Wendell Phillips Academy

Sofia Fatima

Amundsen High School

Lucero Hernandez

Carver Military Academy

Isabella Kelly

Ogden International High School

Jonah McArthur

Jones College Prep

Justin Meng

Northside College Prep

Layan Nazzari

Taft High School

Aaron Hardman

South Shore International

Yacqueline Chimal

Schurz High School

Tommy Hawkins

Englewood STEM High School

Tajiuna Cooper

Michele Clark High School

Lynn Britton Jr.

Curie High School

Juviel St.Clair Jr.

Lincoln Park High School

Micah Kohng

Whitney M. Young Magnet High School

Teen Health Council (THC)

Sebastian Alvarado

George Washington High School

Trinity Colón

George Washington High School

Freddie Foster

Simeon Career Academy High School

Stephanie Granobles

Whitney M. Young High School

A'Niaya Hall

Walter H. Dyett High School for the Arts

Emanuel Hernandez

Whitney M. Young High School

Teniola Idriss

Stephen Tyng Mather High School

Luis Jimbo

Noble Street College Prep

Zara Khan

Whitney M. Young High School

Ely Martinez

Victoria Soto Acero High School

Maximilian Matthes

Albert G. Lane Technical High School

Gremarianne Mosquera

Northside College Prep

Neveah Murff

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Acero High School

Madeline Oktem

Lakeview High School

Olivia Sepich

St. Ignatius College Preparatory

Myesha Skipper

George School of Newtown, PA

Kazi Stanton-Thomas

Latin School of Chicago

Yotzin Tzintzun

Benito Juarez Community Academy

Leyoni Williamson

William J. Bogan Computer Technical High School

Juvenile Justice Council (JJC)

Ahmad Herron

Brooks College Prep

Analise Juju Duarte

Ogden High School

Christopher Carter

Morgan Park High School

Christyana Arrington

UIC

Cristina Solano

Kelly High School

Daniela Perez

Back of the Yards College Prep

Fatima Mendoza

Hancock High School

Ja'Shawn Rozman

Simeon High School

Jalen Hunt

North Lawndale College Prep

Janiya Lanier

Westinghouse High School

Jesus Bakr

Mendota

Josue Rodriguez

North Grand High School

Layla Rodriguez

Lake View High School

Leo Smolensky

Lake View High School

Leonardo Jimenez

De La Salle Institute

Melony Esquivel

Lindblom High School

Micah Johnson

YCCS - Innovations

Octavio Montesdeoca

UIC

Samantha Parra

Roosevelt High School

Shaniya Williams

North-Grand High School

Xavieon Anderson

Morton West High School

Youth Safety Advisory Council (YSAC)

Ali Ngabo

Sullivan High School

Aysia James

Westinghouse High School

Baraa Mohammad

Roosevelt High School

Chance Stegall

Kenwood High School

Cristian Moreno

Chicago Academy High School

Daniel Zhang

Whitney Young High School

Destiny Phillips

Holy Trinity High School

Eric Garcia

Lane Tech High School

Erica Yang

Kelly High School

Jaida Morris

Kenwood High School

Jalen Grimes

Jones College Prep

Jayla Knighten

Westinghouse College Prep

Joshua Larrieux

Urban Prep - Bronzeville

LaNya Rivers

Gage Park High School

Morgan New

Chicago High School for the Arts

Nina Pacheco

North-Grand High School

Rhomello Wellington

Noble - DRW

Ricardo Ramos

World Language High School

Shantell Knighten

Simeon Career Academy

Shelia Murphy

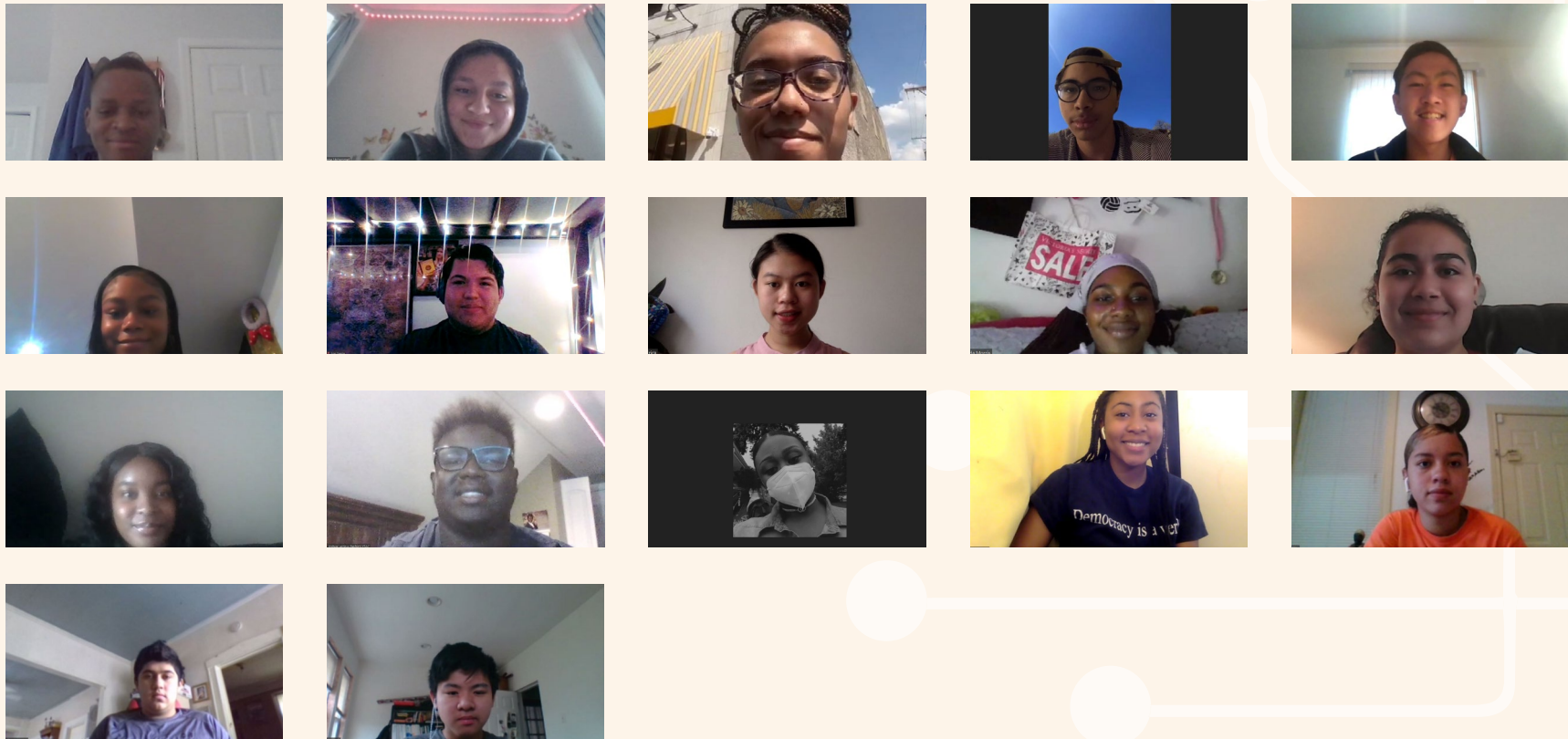
Holy Trinity High School

Vinh Huynh

Intrinsic High School

Youth Safety Advisory Council

The Youth Safety Advisory Council (YSAC) focuses on researching and discussing current policing behaviors and systems within Chicago in order to draft policy recommendations to optimize youth engagement with police by furthering accountability, transparency, and community voice. The following document is a culmination of our ideas to affect a better, more just, and progressive culture of policing and its relationship with the larger population. We hope that by publishing and proposing this white paper, we can incite legislative changes.



Civic Engagement

- Talk to city leaders
- Write policy recommendations
- Community building within the council

Mission/Vision

- Reimagine safety for young people
- Collaborate within the city on police reforms
- Get youth voices empowered + involved
- Community building + creating bonds with other youth
- Gain communication skills + team-building expertise


Summer Snapshot

This summer, YSAC reviewed a survey conducted at the end of the school year. The survey found that the youth respondents were not informed on key issues and topics relevant to their own lives. Because of this, youth engagement and education were at the forefront of our minds as we focused on the consent decree and Pretrial Fairness Act. Throughout the summer, YSAC had the opportunity to speak with many leaders such as Maggie Hickey, Senator Robert Peters, Alderman Hadden, and Freddie Martinez. During the conversations with these leaders we were able to discuss the consent decree, transparency within the police department, the elimination of cash bail reform

in the Pre-Trial Fairness Act, and learning about surveillance technology the city is aggressively using including the ShotSpotter, hidden cameras around the city, and home monitoring devices. We have reviewed the discussions and research from the think tank summer in order to prepare and finalize actionable policy recommendations.

Framing Question

How can young people be a part of community engagement regarding Chicago Police Department policies and influence the consent decree?



“I was extraordinarily impressed with the presentation that I saw and the recommendations. And I’m so excited to be continuing the work with all of you. I was really encouraged and inspired because the Youth Safety Advisory Council brought really bright and fresh ideas on how to engage youth [with the Consent Decree]. You guys are right on target. You presented to me ideas that the PhDs I work with are presenting... Best party of my day.”

— Maggie Hickey, Independent Monitor

Recommendation #1:

YSAC will create a youth engagement strategy to implement multiple political education measures to engage young people in safety and Chicago Police Department policy.

Why It's Important

After our conversation with Independent Monitor Maggie Hickey, we learned that the Independent Monitoring Team (IMT) for the Consent Decree needs to improve its community engagement measures. The youth engagement strategy that YSAC created will give IMT more community engagement opportunities with young people. The political education measures will also prepare youth to be active in the political field. With knowledge about Chicago Police Department (CPD) policies, youth can better understand their communities. Through the engagement strategy, youth can help hold CPD accountable and inform others on these matters.

Action Steps

Social Media Awareness Campaign

YSAC plans to publicize the results from both of the Youth Input Surveys on Safety and Accountability. These results will be posted on Mikva Challenge's social media (ie. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn). This will be part of a social media awareness campaign that YSAC will lead. This campaign will include information about various topics regarding CPD policies, the Consent Decree, the IMT, and other policies and systems dealing with the safety of youth. We ask our stakeholders who have social media platforms and ties with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) or youth organizations across the city to help boost our campaign so that the information can reach a broader audience.

Infographics

YSAC proposes that the IMT posts infographics on their website to display information about the Consent Decree and updates regarding deadlines for the

Chicago Police Department. These infographics would be an addition to the IMT's community engagement efforts. This will allow youth to access relevant information to hold CPD accountable. YSAC will assist in the making and implementation of the infographics to allow for smooth transitions.

Political Education Program

YSAC will partner with CPS to create digital tools to be displayed on the CPS website. These tools will show information and resources relating to school and community safety. Possible subjects include SROs, the Consent Decree, other systems that affect the safety of youth, and an explanation of the rights of youth. Digital tools will be engaging and easy to access for youth. Information about the tools will be publicized through different social media platforms. The publicization would be part of YSAC's social media awareness campaign. We ask that stakeholders at CPS create and implement these digital tools to help engage youth in politics.

Live Stream Event

YSAC proposes that in collaboration with the IMT, we host a youth-led forum to be live-streamed on Mikva's Facebook. This event would be part of YSAC's youth engagement strategy as it will help spread awareness of different systems and policies regarding youth safety. Publicization of the event will be part of the social media awareness campaign. Topics discussed at the forum will be about youth safety and resources available to youth. We ask for the IMT's help with coordinating the event and acting as a guest speaker. We also ask for permission from Vernee Green to use Mikva Challenge's Facebook account to hold the event.

Recommendation #2:

Creating a mini-curriculum similar to Mikva Challenge's Issues To Action curriculum that reflects lessons related to the Consent Decree and Pre-Trial Fairness Act.

Why It's Important

While meeting with Independent Monitor Maggie Hickey and through our research, we found that many young people were not aware of the Consent Decree and the current community engagement practices of the IMT team were not reaching the wider demographic of Black and Brown youth.

Action Steps

Public Pressure

Public pressure is the biggest factor in enforcing the Consent Decree. Maggie Hickey suggested that if the media is mad, something will get done and thus we should focus on raising awareness therefore forcing Mayor Lori Lightfoot to address the situations at hand.

Transparency and TIF Funds

Both Freddie Martinez and Alderwoman Maria Hadden stated that CPD is being paid to be transparent; however, we do not know how CPD allocates their money. Considering that Chicago is the only place that has major issues with TIF funds due to corrupt politicians who use the money to benefit better areas that do not necessarily need it, educating people about why this is an issue will encourage them to vote for politicians who care about all communities and not just the wealthier ones. The police department budget decreased about 5% last year and that was because of vacant positions. The 2021 city budget allocates nearly 1.7 billion dollars to the police department (around 40% of the

city's budget). The corporate fund is the largest of several funds comprising the city's spending plan. We should shift the money from vacant positions into city workers such as social workers, mental health clinics, the education system, and communities that will take care of the citizens' needs.

Potential Partnerships

We hope to partner with Chicago Public Schools to make political education a priority, remove the stigma associated with youth contributions to CPD policies, and empower the Black & Brown communities on the south/west side of the city to have access to a mini curriculum similar to Issues To Action.

Recommendation #3:

Before the contract is extended or discontinued for ShotSpotter, we need to have an independent audit or group outside of CPD or ShotSpotter look into the technology behind ShotSpotter and also test its effectiveness or accuracy.

In addition to its effectiveness, the independent auditor or group should investigate the possibility of manual evidence tampering, such as changing the location of an incident per police request, as it would delegitimize ShotSpotter's use in investigations and forensics.

If the data shown from the independent auditor shows that ShotSpotter is ineffective, CPD should avoid using the system until it can be proven that it is effective. The funds used from the contract instead can be used to fund social services around the city.

Why It's Important

ShotSpotter is a technology that is designed to alert police officers of gunfire within an area. It claims to precisely direct police officers to specific locations of incidents. ShotSpotter was implemented in Chicago in 2018, and its cost has expanded from 23 million dollars to 33 million dollars. But over its 3-year history in the city, has it had a positive impact?

We believe that ShotSpotter creates dangerous situations between civilians and police officers. These alerts send officers who are on-edge and aggressive into neighborhoods with potentially innocent people. The case of Adam Toledo is a clear example of the consequences of the use of ShotSpotter; although he did not fire a gun, the aggressive deployment of police from the ShotSpotter alert resulted in his death. In addition, a large amount of information surrounding ShotSpotter seems to conflict thus leaving its effectiveness in upholding public safety in question.

Action Steps

We ask ShotSpotter to give an independent team of engineers the right to examine their technology, as well as be more transparent on the alerts it receives.

We ask our DMs to find unbiased acoustic and machine learning engineers willing to form a group to examine and test ShotSpotter technology, in order to find any flaws or biases that may exist under various outdoor conditions or circumstances. Upon testing the technology, they should report their findings publicly.

Whether it is through the Freedom of Information Act or not, we request that updated information on the number of ShotSpotter alerts and the number of crimes reported by police as a result of these alerts be made public. The May 3rd report by ABC's I-Team showed that 86% of ShotSpotter alerts were not crimes. According to the MacArthur Justice Center, ShotSpotter led to over 40,000 dead-end police deployments.

Finally, we ask our DMs or City Council to use both sets of findings to conduct a final discussion to decide whether or not to renew the ShotSpotter contract.

Potential Partnerships

Lucy Parsons Lab

Office of Inspector General

References

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Thank you!

We are especially grateful to the generous champions and donors of Mikva Challenge. Thanks to the investment of individual donors, foundations, companies, non-profits, government, and other organizations, we are able to uplift the visions, voices and leadership of young people — reaching thousands of youth across Chicago. Our transformational impact is only possible through this support.

Mikva Challenge is grateful to institutions for giving youth a seat at the decision-making table. Our youth have advised various government agencies across Chicago including the Office of the Cook County Board President, Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Police Department's Independent Monitoring Team, the Chicago Department of Public Health, the Chicago Police Department's 9th District Coordinating Officers, 16th Ward Alderman Stephanie Coleman, and 24th Ward Alderman Michael Scott, Jr..

Our programs are also made robust by our relationships with many other leading agencies across Chicago. A special thank you to the Mayor's Office One Summer Chicago (OSC) program and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) for providing employment and internship opportunities to our youth.

We are grateful to organizations including Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission (IJJC), Firebird Community Arts, Lurie Children's Hospital, the office of Senator Robert Peters, Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and ICAN! Illinois Contraceptive Access Now, to name a few. Mikva Challenge youth often work closely with these and other organizations to support youth-led projects. These partnerships not only give Mikva Challenge participants access to resources but also access to a network of influential decision-makers throughout the city. Thank you for championing our work while opening many avenues of opportunity for the young people in our programs.

To all of our State of Chicago Youth Town Hall attendees, thank you for partnering with Mikva Challenge to make Chicago one of the nation's preeminent cities to empower, elevate, and strengthen youth voice!

The State of Chicago Youth Town Hall is the sum of collective knowledge, insight and perspectives shared. We would like to express our gratitude to all the people and groups that made this critical work possible, including: Mikva Challenge Staff: Verneé Green, Juleny Santa Cruz, James Fields, Carla Ruvalcaba, Riyan Jones, Larry Dean, Jazmin Ocampo, Crystal Ortiz, Barbara Cruz, Meghan Goldenstein, Mia Salamone, veronica bohanan, Jamie Dillon, Zafiro Aguilar, and all other interns and support staff.

