

Jenna Teague
940 Cherokee St, Fountain Hill, PA 18015

I am a lifelong resident of the Lehigh Valley, having been a resident of Allentown for several years prior to moving to Bethlehem. I am utterly disturbed to learn of Bill 49 that is up for introduction to tonight's council. Is this a deliberate slap in the face to those of us who have been out here in the streets fighting for human rights? How do you expect your citizens to trust and believe in our city officials when you are doing the exact opposite of what we have been demanding? A \$50,000 allocation to the police for safety equipment? WHAT IS THAT!? Based on the footage from Saturday night, it looks like our citizens need safety equipment to protect themselves from the police, NOT the other way around. It is clearly evident by the video footage of APD's encounter with Edward Borrero, Jr. that this man was assaulted by police officers, not assisted. I am sickened by the community response to this man's health crisis, by both the negligence of St Luke's Hospital staff and the unnecessary show of police brutality by the APD. This man was clearly sick and in need of medical attention. Instead of anyone offering him a wheelchair, stretcher, or even a tissue to wipe his mouth, he was left alone for over 4 minutes, vomiting, and staggering into oncoming traffic. Where else are our community members supposed to go for help if they are going to be assaulted by police on hospital property? As a former mental health professional who has cared for members of our community, I am well versed in body language and behaviors that indicate whether or not an individual poses a danger to themselves or others. Edward Borrero did not exhibit these types of behaviors and it is very clear to me that the officers on the scene were not properly trained to respond to this situation. Furthermore, Edward Borrero was Spanish speaking and may not have understood what the officers and hospital staff were saying to him before they threw him onto the ground. This speaks to yet another need of our community that the police continuously do not meet. Why would we allocate more money and more equipment to the police when they are not helping to address the real needs of our citizens in Allentown, needs such as health care, drug and alcohol treatment, education, housing, legal representation, etc. The list goes on. And after all of that, the city has the audacity to charge this citizen with multiple crimes? How abhorrent. Council, we need to do better. Remember that there are lives depending on your decisions tonight.

I urge you all to vote NO on bill 49 and please support our efforts of allocating funds back into the community, back into the City of Allentown and its residents, and NOT to its police department. Thank you.

Hello,

My name is Oliver Reilly, I live 2615 W Fairview Street in Allentown. I was outraged when I saw the video of the police officer putting his knee on the neck of a handcuffed civilian, especially since revisions were just made to the APD's use of force policy. Not only was this a violation of that policy and a violation of human rights, but it was a violation of trust with our community — trust that was, at best, already incredibly thin.

That trust can't be rebuilt with ice cream and a nice photo. It can't be rebuilt by continuing to do the same things Allentown has always done. It can't be rebuilt by perpetuating and then defending injustices against our community.

I am demanding that our local officials begin to rebuild that trust in the following ways:

1. Release body camera footage from the incident.
2. Release the names of the officers involved.
3. Ensure that there is a just and unbiased investigation.
4. Suspend the officers involved while the investigation is conducted.
5. Establish a criminal justice review board in Allentown.
6. Defund the Allentown Police Department and invest in community resources.

All of these demands are crucial to rebuilding trust, but those last two are the first steps to long-term change in Allentown. Our community has experienced the trauma of over-policing and abuse of power from police for too long. It's time to divert those funds to community resources that allow our community to be supported and to thrive. Isn't that what we all want? Don't we all want to show true care and concern for the people we are in community with?

If that isn't what you want, you're in the wrong seat and we will make sure it's occupied by someone who better represents us. It's time to stop putting knees on people's necks when they are in crisis. These are human beings, and it's time to recognize that through real policy change and accountability.

Ce-Ce, Joshua, and Cynthia are deep listeners that are leading the way to a more just future for Allentown. I urge the rest of Council to do what is right, what is transparent, and listen to what the people in your community are demanding. People's lives and well-being depend on it.

Thank you,
Oliver Reilly

Council Members,

We are asking that a true ward system be created to give the people of Allentown real representation. For far too long have we heard how the cries of our citizens fall on death ears in city council chambers.

We are asking that a resolution to amend the City Charter be entered to create a ward system with seven districts.

Where City Council members would be required to be elected from within the district they reside in.

Prohibit at-large seats for City Council. At-large seats would still give parts of our city greater representation than the rest.

This charter amendment should be placed on the ballot at the next election.

Giving city residents true representation should be the mission of every public servant.

Tim Ramos
Allentown Pa
Hello-

I, Connie Ticho, am a 22 year old white recent-college graduate who lives and grew up on 27th street in Allentown. I am emailing to demand the release of the body camera footage used during the arrest that took place on Saturday outside of St. Luke's. I also demand that all the officers be suspended pending an external investigation.

If I were to have had hurt someone at my university, by accident or not, legal or not— I would have been suspended. I would have been suspended until an external investigation was completed. It is only fair that these police officers are held to the standard that the rest of us are. We are all equal, police officers are not above the law— they are no better than I am.

Thank you,
Connie

ARTICLE XI GENERAL PROVISIONS SECTION 1101 CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND
CODE OF ETHICS

Act in a private capacity on matters dealt with as a public official or employee;

Yolanda Colbert
125 N 3rd St

This is a request for courtesy of the floor. Council members and Mayor O'Connell, I urge all of you to commit to an ethical and equitable reallocation of the Allentown City expense budget, away from the Allentown Police Department and towards social services. The people of the city you govern have been showing up in the streets expressing their anger, grief and discontent because the measures already in place are not working.

As you know, our city and our police department have settled lawsuits for 1.7 million dollars over claims of excessive force since 2015. These settlements are paid for by Allentown taxpayers. In addition, the lack of transparency and accountability from the police department has made it impossible to quantify any other misconduct that takes place.

In May of this year Mayor O'Connell pledged to a group of protestors on 7th & Hamilton Street, to never allow an incident that took the life of George Floyd happen under this administration. On July 11, 2020 an excessive force incident happened outside of St. Luke's Sacred Heart Hospital under your administration and city council's watch.

The City of Allentown is now under the national spotlight and Mayor O'Connell and all City Council members have an opportunity to be on the right side of history and make the real changes necessary so that our community can begin the process of healing. I am requesting the name of the officers involved and full transparency in the investigation with the community. I am requesting that they are held accountable. It is time for Allentown, its leaders, and residents to create a more equitable city for all of us.

I leave you with a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.

"It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words of the bad people and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, "Wait on time."

The time is NOW! I look forward to seeing what side of history you choose.

April Moore

35 Spruce St.

Allentown PA 18101

Black Lives Matter. This is true without question. We live in a diverse city, and we are talking about our family, friends, and neighbors. Defunding the police is a new idea, that is not associated with previous civil rights struggles. Fred Hampton, a prominent Black Panther leader wanted to INCREASE police officers pay, even when the Black Panthers office was constantly shot up by the police. He believed professional pride was the key to reducing police violence. I believe Fred Hampton would have been impressed by our police force. I think it should also be noted that historic discrimination against black people by the police is not just violence, but refusing to show up to help. This systematic problem was voiced by the group Public Enemy, in their 1990 song, "911 is a Joke".

This idea that we should defund the police certainly wasn't around in December, when people were getting stabbed. What about when the Money Rules Everything gang stabbed and set Tyrell Holmes on fire in September of 2019? Or when Deja Vu had a shootout between the Bloods and Latin Kings in July 2019? There is going to be some police officers that act out of conscious or unconscious racism, but there is also going to be social workers, doctors, lawyers, and judges that do the same. That's why it's called institutional.

I agree that the viral video made our police department look hypocritical. However, the viral video did not show how much the man was vomiting, and giving the current health crisis, treating that man as a potential mass infector for COVID 19 was fairly reasonable. I understand that was not the case, but it was a possible outcome that the people initially handling the situation had to act upon. Unfortunately, since we are dealing with a pandemic, this does mean by any means necessary. Optics aside, outcomes are important, and we can't defund an essential public service because of harm that could have happened, but didn't.

In summary, while I would support racial bias training for the Allentown police, I do not support defunding them. Additionally training requires money, so I would encourage you to vote for the increase.

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Mayor, Solicitor, and Members of Council,

This weekend we saw several protests and in attendance were members of council marching, shouting, and appearing to be joining in the chanting:

- "F... the Police"
- "F... the who? The Police!"
- "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now! If we don't get it, shut it down."

The City Charter in Article XI Section 1101 states that it's a conflict of interest when a member should "Act in a private capacity on matters dealt with as a public official or employee;"

It is a conflict of interest to act in a private capacity when dealing with a public matter: Police Oversight and Police Reform are public matters. These council members should not have enlisted themselves in the protest as if they were just members of the public.

It is incumbent on council members to obey the law and to not encourage others to disobey it. Council members Gerlach and Siegel participated in blocking the roads and ending freedom of travel for other Allentownians. Protestors were forcing drivers to make u-turns on one way roads, endangering drivers and risking head on collisions. Other protestors were threatening drivers with physical violence if they did not turn around.

There is also a violation of trust that occurred on Saturday night. Rodney Be was telling protestors to jam the police department phone number. When that seemed to not be working, he then asked for Mayor O'Connell's number to share with the crowd and the hundreds of viewers they had online in order to call and harass the Mayor's family. At that request, Councilman Siegel immediately went to Rodney and it appears he gave him Mayor O'Connell's personal number which Rodney immediately began to shout out for the crowd.

A censure of Councilman Siegel should be submitted for this violation of trust and, I would suggest, each member should change their numbers and not share it with him. Councilman Siegel should resign for his violation of trust and the harassment he facilitated. We cannot have someone on council who is willing to place officials and their families at risk and in fear.

Each of these members should be censured and need to choose: are you a protestor or an elected official? They took an oath to uphold the constitution and the charter. If they cannot fulfill their oaths, they should resign and join the mob.

Steven Ramos
Lehighton, PA

The Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern, LEPOCO, a valley-wide membership organization, works for peace, nonviolence, and justice in our community, the nation, and the world. We are deeply disturbed by the videos that show an Allentown police officer restraining a distressed person who appears to be in need of medical attention. Allentown's own guidelines for police officers state that "Use of neck restraints or similar weaponless control techniques (choke holds) is prohibited."

A thorough investigation of this event is in order and we look forward to learning the results of the inquiry. If warranted, disciplinary action should be administered; that may include dismissal of the officer and/or criminal charges as appropriate.

LEPOCO has a long history of protesting through vigils, marches, and civic action. We applaud the people and groups who are leading the way in protesting the use of unnecessary and dangerous force by the police.

We support all efforts to restrain the use of force by police officers that may include mandating the use of body cams and banning, without excuse, abusive behaviors such as chokeholds, neck restraints, stop and frisk, and no knock warrants. At the same time, we support the exploration of alternative methods for solving problems in the community. A police officer with a gun may not be the appropriate response to many situations.

We support restorative justice that seeks to prevent crime and violence by addressing inequity and injustice for at-risk individuals. And, we call for greater outreach to the community of caring citizens who will work for a more peaceful society free of violence and injustice. Citizens' Review Boards are assisting many cities around the country.

Consistent with LEPOCO's disavowal of war, we oppose funding for militarization at the national level. Militarization of the police force that provides weapons and vehicles designed for war must be rejected.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this critical concern.

Submitted by Janet L. Ney, 823 N. 25th Street, Allentown, PA 18104, for the Steering Committee of the Lehigh Pocono Committee of Concern.

Dear Allentown City Council Board Members:

Thank you for ensuring that the residents of this wonderful City have a chance at positive reform.

Both my father, as well as I, were born here, and I'm proud to be a native of this historic place. Although now living only a few thousand yards north of your border with Whitehall Township, I am impressed by your collective action to keep improving every aspect of what you hold dear: the perception that Allentown is responsive to the needs of its people.

Please humbly accept my support of Resolution 86.

Thank you.

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Borrero did not exhibit these types of behaviors and it is very clear to me that the officers on the scene were not properly trained to respond to this situation. Furthermore, Edward Borrero was Spanish speaking and may not have understood what the officers and hospital staff were saying to him before they threw him onto the ground. This speaks to yet another need of our community that the police continuously do not meet. Why would we allocate more money and more equipment to the police when they are not helping to address the real needs of our citizens in Allentown, needs such as health care, drug and alcohol treatment, education, housing, legal representation, etc. The list goes on. And after all of that, the city has the audacity to charge this citizen with multiple crimes? How abhorrent. Council, we need to do better. Remember that there are lives depending on your decisions tonight.

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Good afternoon!

Please accept this communication as a sign of my support for establishing a citizens review board to increase transparency in use of force actions within the City of Allentown. As an elected official, I often hesitate to offer my thoughts to other elected officials. The issues we face are often challenging and require careful study and reflection. However, on this issue, I am very comfortable stating my position because I feel it will help to increase transparency and confidence in policing efforts in our community. Frankly, I think this is a course of action which should be implemented in any jurisdiction with a police force. If the County of Lehigh had a police force, it would be a policy I would work to enact.

The hard work and dedication of community officials is strengthened when the public is heard and the many concerns are integrated into policy making decisions. That process can be messy but our community is strengthened when more voices are heard. A citizens review board would act as an appropriate venue for concerns that arise surrounding use of force in Allentown. While not acting in a policy-setting capacity, the opportunity to hear concerns from the public on this subject would be very important to council and the mayor in ensuring sound community policing strategies.

We all have a lot of work to do on this subject. We need more resources for mental health services. We need to end the cradle-to-prison to grave pipeline. The students attending the Allentown School District deserve the same community schools as students in the Parkland School District. On these subjects, and others, the City of Allentown and its municipal officials are left at the whims of other people, many of whom have no direct interest in the success of our community and our neighbors. However, on the subject of a citizens review board, city council and the mayor set course.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter. As a citizen of Allentown, thank you for your hard-work and careful deliberation.

Sincerely,

Geoff Brace
227 N 9th St
Allentown, PA 18102