



**TO:** Interested Parties

**FROM:** The Justice Lab at Columbia University and JustLeadershipUSA

**DATE:** May 26, 2021 [Updated May 29, 2021]

**RE:** NYC Mayoral Race Criminal Justice Questionnaire Results

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Criminal justice issues are at the forefront in New York City and nationally. The justice policies NYC's next mayor pursues and prioritizes will determine the future of safety for our city as well as justice for all of our residents.

To help inform voters, JustLeadershipUSA and the Justice Lab at Columbia University distributed the NYC Mayoral Race Criminal Justice Questionnaire to all 2021 New York City mayoral candidates with available contact information.<sup>1</sup> Each candidate was provided until May 7, 2021 to complete and return the questionnaire. The questionnaire asks about where the candidates stand on a number of issues from police accountability and funding to facial recognition and predictive policing.

Candidates Art Chang, Ävatar Daví, Shaun Donovan, Dianne Morales, Ira Seidman, and Maya Wiley submitted responses to the questionnaire detailing how justice issues are central to their campaigns and how they will lead on criminal justice if they win. The other mayoral candidates opted not to participate in the survey. The full answers are available [HERE](#) and highlights are provided below.

## Defunding the police

- **Dianne Morales, Maya Wiley, and Art Chang** all vowed to redirect large sums of funds away from the New York Police Department (NYPD):
  - **Dianne Morales** promised to make the largest cuts, stating she will work with OMB to ensure that the next budget sees the NYPD defunded by at least \$3 billion.
  - **Maya Wiley** also vowed to take immediate steps towards investing in communities by cutting at least \$1 billion from the NYPD budget. She committed to conducting “a full audit of the NYPD’s budget to assess

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<sup>1</sup> Columbia University and JustLeadershipUSA are 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations and do not support or oppose candidates for political office.

how funding is currently distributed and make additional necessary cuts, including to the number of uniformed Officers.”

- **Art Chang** promised to immediately re-allocate \$1.3 billion from the NYPD budget.
- **Shaun Donovan** stated that he supports shifting funding from NYPD and incarceration to building communities, but did not specify to what extent. Instead, he promised to “invest \$500 million annually in community-focused public safety and racial justice initiatives, funded in large part by redirecting monies currently allocated to law enforcement.”
- **Ira Seidman** did not propose NYPD budget cuts, proposing instead that “we should be paying these officers more to actually get the best people in uniform that we can.”

## Shrinking the Police

- All of the candidates agreed that New York City should narrow the activities of the NYPD.
- *Removing police officers from mental health response*
  - **Shaun Donovan, Dianne Morales, and Maya Wiley** all support moving mental health response away from the police.
  - **Shaun Donovan and Maya Wiley** both expressed support for hotline alternatives to 911 that specialize in mental health emergencies.
  - **Dianne Morales** supports the creation of a Community First Response Department.
- *Removing police officers from schools*
  - **Shaun Donovan, Dianne Morales, and Maya Wiley** all support removing police officers from schools.
  - **Dianne Morales** supports replacing police in schools with counselors, nurses, and psychologists.
  - **Art Chang** is in favor of removing armed officers from schools, but keeping “unarmed School Safety Officers, whose exclusive duty is to ensure physical safety for students and teachers, and ensure unauthorized individuals do not enter our schools,” while also doubling the number of guidance counselors.
- *Collaboration with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)*
  - All of the candidates who responded oppose collaboration between New York City agencies and ICE, except for **Ira Seidman** — who supports more collaboration.
- *Other NYPD Cuts*

- **Dianne Morales** vowed to decrease the NYPD's power by also removing them from homelessness outreach, and other responses that are not related to serious crime, such as traffic enforcement, licensing and regulation.
- **Maya Wiley** proposed freezing incoming cadet classes for the next two years.
- **Maya Wiley** and **Shaun Donovan** both stated support for eliminating the [vice squad](#).
- **Shaun Donovan** committed to establishing a task force to determine other areas better served by non-police responses.

## Community reinvestment

- Nearly all of the candidates emphasized a commitment to not only shifting funding from NYPD and incarceration, but also to making sure more dollars are reinvested in building communities.
  - **Maya Wiley** proposed the creation of an \$18 million participatory justice fund, which she described as the “centerpiece of the gun violence prevention plan.” According to Wiley’s plan, “communities suffering from high levels of gun violence will be owners of this fund, and they will be able to spend money on programs that their specific communities need.” Wiley also proposed reallocating \$450 million of the NYPD budget for school policing to funding student support teams and expanded mental health services through community schools. In addition, Wiley plans on redirecting “\$300 million in diverted resources from incoming NYPD and DOCCS cadet classes for 2 years to give 100,000 primary caregivers an annual \$5,000 stipend to compensate them for their labor.”
  - **Shaun Donovan** vowed to invest at least \$500 million annually in community-based solutions, “including community- and health-based anti-violence efforts, reentry and supportive housing programs, and other initiatives aimed at providing communities with the resources to build safe neighborhoods.”
  - **Dianne Morales** proposed the creation of The Community First Response Department, which would “serve as first responders to community public safety issues related to non-criminal public safety issues.”

## Police & Corrections Accountability

- **Maya Wiley** and **Ira Seidman** expressed support for ending qualified immunity for members of law enforcement.
- **Dianne Morales** believes the Civilian Complaint Review Board “should become an elected body, and be given powers to investigate and discipline police officers.”
- **Art Chang** proposed removing “the NYPD Chief’s sole discretion on disciplinary actions with Mayoral and community input” and creating an “Office of Police Discipline, which would replace the Commissioner as the final authority and enforcer of disciplinary action in substantiated cases of Misconduct.”
- Both **Shaun Donovan** and **Art Chang** support the recommendations set forth in the New York State Attorney General’s report on the NYPD’s response to the protests that emerged in the wake of George Floyd’s and Breonna Taylor’s murders. Donovan and Chang would both consent to the appointment of a federal monitor to oversee the police department’s practices with respect to future protests.
- **Maya Wiley** stated that a “centerpiece of my police accountability plan is the collection and distribution of robust data in order to promote public transparency and ground accountability in accurate measurements and information.”
- Similarly, **Art Chang** expressed a commitment to “open and transparent distribution of data so that all of our City agencies are held accountable, especially the NYPD.”

## Rikers, Mass Incarceration, and The War on Drugs

- **All of the candidates** who responded expressed a commitment to closing the Rikers Island jail complex.
  - **Dianne Morales** supports the No New Jails movement and further proposed halting the plans for the four new borough based jails that were proposed through the City Council’s proposal to close Rikers Island. She stated she will “fight tooth and nail to divest from prisons” and will “pressure the District Attorneys to end cash bail.”
- **All of the candidates** who responded expressed broad support for New York State’s recent legalization of recreational marijuana.
  - **Dianne Morales** further vowed to “move to decriminalize all drug use within the city and decriminalize the possession of limited amounts of drugs by instructing the NYPD to cease all arrests for this behavior and

violation-level enforcement for drugs (e.g., cease issuing summonses for drug use).” She is also committed to advocating “to expunge the records of those who have been convicted of drug possession under racist criminalization laws.”

- **Maya Wiley** said she plans to “support and enforce the new law, which promises to expunge past convictions and release anyone for low-level marijuana possession offenses.”
- **Shaun Donovan** stated that he will work with DAs, courts, and other system players to get past marijuana convictions expunged “as soon as possible” and he “will not seek to incarcerate people for low-level drug offenses.”
- **Dianne Morales** is also in favor of decriminalizing sex work.
- **Art Chang** and **Ira Seidman** support expunging convictions of *all* low level drug offenses, with Chang promising to release people who have solely been convicted of low-level drug offenses.

## Facial Recognition and Predictive Policing Technology

- **Dianne Morales** said that she supports “a complete ban on facial recognition and predictive policing programs in New York City,” noting that “[g]overnment-sanctioned predictive policing technology, like the NYPD’s extensive use of facial recognition programs, are a breeding ground for racial profiling.”
- **Maya Wiley** did not say whether she supports an outright ban on facial recognition and predictive policing technologies, but she did state that she opposes them citing “[s]tudies [that] demonstrate that facial recognition and predictive policing technology are racist and disproportionately biased against people of color, and specifically Black Americans.”
- **Shaun Donovan** believes that “advanced surveillance technologies can help deter and prevent the real threats from organized crime and terrorists that we face in New York City.” However, Donovan also recognized the “serious risks” these technologies can also pose — pointing to recent cases in which facial recognition technology has led to false accusations against Black men. Rather than proposing a ban, he said his administration “will be transparent about the use of surveillance technologies, ensure there is real civilian and judicial oversight so that these technologies are used properly, and disclose instances when they are misused.”