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Statement Supporting Calls to Increase WPD Transparency and Officer Accountability

Defund WPD supports Worcester resident Doug Arbetter's motion on tonight's council agenda asking for a public report on how the city documents the criminal history of Worcester police officers. Ending systemic racism in our law enforcement community starts by increasing transparency.

The city has spent two years holding up in court a records request from the Worcester Telegram & Gazette seeking the complaint histories of 17 local police officers. Worcester has a long history of shrouding on-duty and off-duty police misconduct in secrecy, violating both state open records laws and public trust. While this problem predates City Manager Augustus, it is a problem he and the City Council can solve by embracing transparency and police accountability.

According to a 2016 [study funded by the United States Department of Justice](#), an average of 1,000 American police officers are arrested each year for crimes involving abuse, assault, drugs and inappropriate sexual conduct. Forty percent of these crimes are committed while the officer is on duty. Of course, many instances of police criminal activity or misconduct are never reported, as officers are protected by their superiors, peers and union leadership.

Many of these crimes lead to lawsuits that cost taxpayers millions of dollars each year, taking budget money away from needy and underfunded programs. The Worcester City Council is naive at best and enabling at worst if it chooses to believe that this behavior does not happen here, as several city councilors have suggested. In fact, it has the receipts from the settlements and court rulings proving that it does.

Worcester's residents deserve to know if the city employs police officers with lengthy disciplinary histories, criminal convictions, patterns of racist policing or ties to white supremacy organizations, and where the city stands on terminating their employment.

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