



Press Release

Opportunities for Police Reform

ANDREW EVANS | OCTOBER 13, 2020

Previous research at the American Action Forum detailed the risks involved in cutting police budgets: fewer officers on the beat, understaffed cities, and less diverse police forces. But these challenges do not mean that there are no places for reform. In new research, AAF's Director of Human Welfare Policy Tara O'Neill Hayes highlights several opportunities for targeted changes in policing practices and the criminal justice system that could have an outsized impact.

Her central points:

- Those calling to “defund the police” are seeking to transfer funding from police departments to other social services, and while directly cutting police budgets could have negative consequences, there are opportunities to transfer some targeted responsibilities of police to others who are better suited;
- Over the last few decades, several cities have implemented alternative methods for responding to certain emergency situations—such as drug addiction and mental crises—as well as low-grade offenses, and these reforms have both decreased the likelihood of interacting with police and improved the wellbeing of the individuals at risk; and
- Drastic reforms carry the greatest risk, but while targeted reforms are promising, policymakers should proceed with caution and with the understanding that it is best to transfer some targeted responsibilities of police without simply cutting police budgets or personnel.

[Read the Research](#)