



CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Testimony before the City Council Committee on Oversight and Investigations
The Department of Investigation's Office of the Inspector General for the NYPD
Intro. 1020-2024 (Brewer)
City Hall – January 29, 2025**

Good morning, members of the New York City Council Committee on Oversight and Investigations. My name is Ben Weinberg, and I am the Director of Public Policy at Citizens Union. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

Citizens Union is a nonpartisan good government organization dedicated to reforming New York City and State government by fostering accountability, honesty, and the highest ethical standards. We believe that public safety relies on New Yorkers' trust in law enforcement, which can only be achieved by strengthening and streamlining oversight and accountability systems within the NYPD and the independent entities that monitor police misconduct.

The Office of the Inspector General for the NYPD (OIG-NYPD), housed within the Department of Investigation (DOI), plays a critical role in ensuring police accountability. Through its investigative reports, the OIG identifies systemic issues within the NYPD, exposing how flawed or absent policies enable misconduct. These reports often guide council members and advocates in driving meaningful reforms.

We saw an example of that yesterday, with the OIG's report on the NYPD's use of social media, which highlighted troubling patterns of unprofessional conduct and revealed how noncompliance with City law contributed to misconduct.¹

Support for Intro. 1020-2024

Citizens Union supports Introduction 1020-2024 (Brewer), which would strengthen the OIG's ability to fulfill its mission by ensuring stable leadership and enhancing transparency. Specifically:

- The bill requires the OIG to provide a detailed description of each incident where the police department did not give full, direct, or timely access to all information relevant to an

¹ An Assessment of NYPD's Use of Social Media: New York City Department of Investigation, Office of the Inspector General for the NYPD. January 2025.

https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2025/04SocialMediaRpt_Release_01.28.2025.pdf

investigation, and incidents of attempts by the NYPD to “interfere with the performance” of the OIG. The NYPD has long withheld significant, relevant information from oversight agencies, causing significant setbacks in investigations. Highlighting these instances can foster improved collaboration between the NYPD and the OIG.

- The bill requires the OIG to publish the subject matter of investigations that have been open for more than three years, and the number of investigations that were closed in a preceding year without issuing a report (the OIG would not need to publish the subject matter of closed investigations). This balanced approach increases transparency about the OIG’s efficiency without compromising sensitive investigations or disclosing unsubstantiated inquiries.
- The bill requires the Commissioner of Investigation to replace the Inspector General of the NYPD within 90 days of a vacancy in that office due to a removal or resignation. This provision seeks to prevent leadership gaps, such as the three-year period when the OIG operated under interim leadership.

Merging Oversight Agencies

A significant challenge in managing police misconduct in New York City is the fragmented system of oversight. By one count, a dozen offices and agencies both inside and outside the NYPD oversee police actions, yet a lack of coordination and limited access to NYPD information undermines their effectiveness². Citizens Union believes a more effective system should be utilized.

We support consolidating the Inspector General for the Police Department, the Mayor’s Commission to Combat Police Corruption (CCPC), and the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) into one unified Police Oversight Board. Combining these agencies would strengthen their collective capacity and allow for easy access to NYPD information.

The OIG-NYPD and the CCPC perform similar and somewhat overlapping functions. The CCRB serves a somewhat different purpose, but we believe its ability to investigate complaints, obtain relevant information, and prosecute wrongdoing could be strengthened as part of a larger and more comprehensive police oversight agency.

The agency consolidation proposal was included in the 2021 NYC Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan³ and was endorsed by then-Mayor de Blasio. The Department of Investigation recommended that idea in its December 2020 report into NYPD Response to George Floyd Protests⁴. However, the proposal was not included in the 2021 Council Resolution implementing the reform plan.

We urge council members to revisit this idea to create a stronger oversight system.

² James Yates, Report To The Court on Police Misconduct and Discipline, September 19, 2024 nypdmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Discipline-Report.pdf

³ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/policereform/reform-plan/reform-plan.page>

⁴ Investigation into NYPD Response to George Floyd Protests, New York City Department of Investigations. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2020/DOIRpt.NYPD%20Reponse.%20GeorgeFloyd%20Protests.12.18.2020.pdf>

Protecting the OIG Budget

In recent years, the budgets of the OIG-NYPD and DOI have faced potential cuts, with some reductions already implemented. The agency has also suffered from severe understaffing.

To ensure the OIG-NYPD can continue its vital work, we ask the Council to prioritize adequate funding and staffing in the next fiscal year.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to address you today.

For further information, please contact Ben Weinberg, Director of Public Policy, at bweinberg@citizensunion.org.