

# Mackinac Island Police Department Memorandum

#23-4

Date : December 26, 2023

To : Public Safety Committee and City Council

Via : Mayor Doud/Mayor's Assistant, Trista Horn

From : Chief Topolski

Subj : Recruiting and Retention for Police Officer Positions

Mayor Doud, Honorable Committee members and Councilpersons,

At the last Public Safety Committee meeting, I was asked to provide some insight into current recruiting/retention methods and issues as well as suggestions as to how we might go forward. Please consider the following, especially as it pertains to the retention of Officer Miedzianowski. I've also included a pair of articles that address the current nationwide hiring crises.

## **Current means of hiring and recruiting:**

- Letters/advertisements to all police academies in the state.
- Advertisements on the Michigan Commission On Law Enforcement Standards hiring bulletin board. This has been the most productive method so far, but not as productive as we need.
- Word of mouth: This has been as productive as the MCOLES ads.
- Social media presence: This has been fairly effective in generating interest.
- Linked-In and Indeed Ads: Not productive at all. Linked-in generated over 100 applications with not a single qualified candidate resulting. I understand that a prerequisite for certain unemployment benefits is to show that the applicant is actively seeking employment. This

results in applicants who are in no way qualified submitting applications that are not acceptable to us.

## **Considerations:**

- We are competing for an extremely-limited pool of applicants with agencies who are able to offer far more competitive pay and benefits packages, including defined benefit pensions, much higher pay and signing bonuses. References below. I listed MSP because they are currently accepting "lateral" hires, ie. candidates who are already employed with a police agency who will not have to attend MSP's academy. **In the history of MSP, this, as far as I can recall, is unprecedented. As Michigan's premier law-enforcement agency, MSP has never before had to accept laterals to fill positions.**
- **We need to find and target applicants who have the ability and desire to live and work in our island community at a time when even our current regional comparable agencies cannot compete with downstate pay and benefits. While these regional comparables cannot offer the benefits of living on the island, they also do not have to contend with the inconveniences that we must address with potential applicants, including but not limited to transportation, cost of living, housing for spouses, pets and children (children before pets?), etc..**
- **I routinely get phone calls from both other departments in our region and downstate departments looking for the resumes of candidates that we reject. In almost 40 years in law enforcement with over 15 of those years being involved in various ways with hiring and retention, I've never before experienced this.**
- As difficult as many of you know it is to attract qualified seasonal or year-round employees in local businesses, we must also face the reality that a police officer candidate must undergo a very comprehensive background investigation, drug test and psychological evaluation before they're even considered for employment, let alone hired. How many other positions on the island are subject to this type of stringent hiring process? Imagine the ramifications for the island if one or more of our current officers decided to seek employment elsewhere considering the current hiring climate. How would they be replaced and how long would it take to find an acceptable candidate?
- I've included a couple of articles that summarize the current state of police hiring across the nation. Given our relatively unique circumstances, we're operating under even more dire circumstances.

# Marshall PD

## Pay & Benefits:

- Starting wage \$26.12, current top out is \$34.26 after 4 years
- Eligible for Shift Command Pay (additional \$1.50/hr.) after successfully completing probationary period
- External vest carriers
- Updated appearance policy allows for facial hair and tattoos
- 8-hour shifts with 2% differential if assigned to 2nd or 3rd shift
- MERS defined benefit (full pension) with 3% multiplier and 8.79% employee contribution. Employees can retire and draw full pension at age 50 with 25 years of service. **This is HUGE, ie. 3% multiplier with a defined benefit pension.**
- BCBS Health + Vision & Dental
- Insurance opt-out option: If an employee elects to waive his/her enrollment in the City's group health insurance plan, said employee shall receive forty percent (40%) of the monthly premium level that applies to the employee. Currently, an employee would bring home an additional \$630+ per month on a family plan.

## Northville

PD

**2023 Pay Range:** \$61,872 – \$87,884

The City of Northville is currently offering a lateral transfer compensation program based on prior full-time experience. Any incoming employee who is currently certified as a police officer will be given service credit toward reaching top pay.

- Current full-time sworn law enforcement officer lateral transfer pay for 2023:
  - 0 – 12 months experience – \$61,872
  - 12 – 24 months experience – \$63,161
  - 25 – 36 months experience – \$68,643
  - 37 – 48 months experience – \$74,059
  - 49+ months experience – \$79,890 (\$87,884 w/ a Bachelor's Degree incentive)

## Benefits:

- MERS Defined Contribution retirement plan
  - Employer contribution of 13% of all base salary and overtime.
  - Employee contribution of 5% of all base salary and overtime.
  - Graduating vesting schedule with 100% vested status after 7 years.
- Sick leave accumulated at 8 hours per month
- Vacation time earned annually, up to 248 hours per year
- 12 paid holidays – paid at time and a half if working on that day
- Medical (BCN), dental, vision and prescription insurance provided with a cost sharing of 80/20 between employer and employee
- Life Insurance provided by employer
- 12-hour shift schedule with set days off – including a three-day weekend off every other week
- Bereavement Leave
- Tuition reimbursement for college credits
- Overtime opportunities available
- Opportunity to work in a community that is supportive of law enforcement

## MSP

### Competitive Pay

**Trooper** – \$83,761.60\* **Sergeant** – \$96,740.80\*

**Lieutenant** – \$107,827.20\* **First Lieutenant** – \$128,334.00\*

**Inspector** – \$138,186.00\* **Captain** – \$157,789.00\*

\*Not including overtime or shift premiums

## Dearborn PD

### Benefits

- Salary: \$62,616.00 - \$78,662.00 Annually
- SALARY: Starting salary \$62,616 Maximum salary after 36 months \$78,662
- Corporal rank achieved after completion of 4 years \$81,679
- Vacation- 16 days/year as accrued
- Sick - 12 days/year as accrued
- Holidays - 80 hours/year
- Gun Allowance
- Clothing Allowance
- Participation in the MERS Defined Benefit Plan
- Life insurance at one times base pay
- Health Insurance (80% City / 20% Employee cost sharing, or cash waiver)

- Dental Insurance
- Vision Insurance
- Retirement Medical Savings Account - vesting after 5 years for City contributions
- Supplemental life insurance coverage and other benefits options as provided by the cafeteria flexible benefits plan

## **Ideas for retention/recruiting:**

- Signing bonus, paid Sept. 1, or after 8 weeks of service for seasonals.
- Establish a defined benefit pension.
- Reimburse up to \$700.00 for recognition of prior service training/testing. Paid Sept. 1 or after 8 weeks of service.
- **Hire full-time/year-round candidates ASAP when attrition is anticipated instead of waiting for retirement.**
- Hire and retain as “seasonals”, possibly with benefits, existing seasonal employees until an anticipated opening occurs. Lay-off as necessary or have a memorandum of understanding with the union if we want to avoid being compelled to hire full-time. This would not help to retain employees who are in need of health care insurance unless benefits are part of the offer.
- Waive rent for seasonals
- Eliminate Seasonal Positions and hire two more year-rounders.

## **Immediate Action Item:**

I believe it's imperative that we make an effort to keep Ofc. Duane Miedzianowski. Ofc. Miedzianowski has had several offers of employment at other agencies and is being recruited to run for Sheriff in Clare County. He has proven to be an excellent fit on the island, a fact to which many residents would attest. He is currently paying for COBRA health insurance which is cost-prohibitive. Although he has expressed a high degree of loyalty to the city for hiring and retaining him as a seasonal, and a great desire to remain on the island, it would be quite understandable if he took a job at another agency.

If he takes a full-time position at another agency where he can acquire benefits not available to seasonals here, it is unlikely that he will be back for another season. The single seasonal officer we were able to retain from the 2022 season took a year-round job with another department and will not be back for the 2024 season.

I believe that our hiring philosophy considering the current state of the police officer candidate pool across the country should not be to wait for attritional openings to hire qualified candidates but rather to do as much as we can to anticipate openings and hire to fill them as reasonably quickly as we can after identify a qualified candidate. This should not be seen as creating another position for a full-time officer, but rather doing what is necessary to retain qualified personnel.

The pool for seasonal officers is not nearly what it used to be. Many departments, for example Ludington, have eliminated seasonal positions because they can't be filled.

Officer Miedzianowski is not only qualified for a year-round position in this community, but highly qualified. As a result of his administrative background as a command-level officer with several departments, he is a valuable resource worth retaining by whatever reasonable means available.

When I interviewed for the Chief position, I said that one of my goals would be to start succession planning as soon as I started as Chief. If we can retain Miedzianowski, he would be another one of several officers currently employed who has the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience to potentially fill the role of Chief of Police.

I believe you should seriously consider eliminating the seasonal positions and hiring two more year-round officers. In the short term, I suggest offering Miedzianowski a full-time, year-round position with healthcare benefits, not with the intent of filling a new position, but with the intent of retaining a highly-qualified, proven employee in anticipation of the attrition of an existing position at some time in the reasonably near future.

Should you choose to retain Meidzianowski, the cost of salary and benefits would be mitigated somewhat with a reduction in on-call pay to officers who are mandated to be on-call in the Chief's absence when only one officer is assigned to a shift when no other officers are anticipated to be available for call-in.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Topolski, Chief of Police

U.S. NEWS

## The U.S. is experiencing a police hiring crisis

America is in a police officer shortage that many in law enforcement blame on both the coronavirus pandemic and criticism of police.



— Sheriff's deputies respond to a shooting in Trabuco Canyon, Calif., on Aug. 23.

Frederic J. Brown / AFP via Getty Images

Sept. 6, 2023, 8:49 AM EDT / Source: The Associated Press

**By The Associated Press**

GOODHUE, Minn. — As Goodhue Police Chief Josh Smith struggled this summer to fill

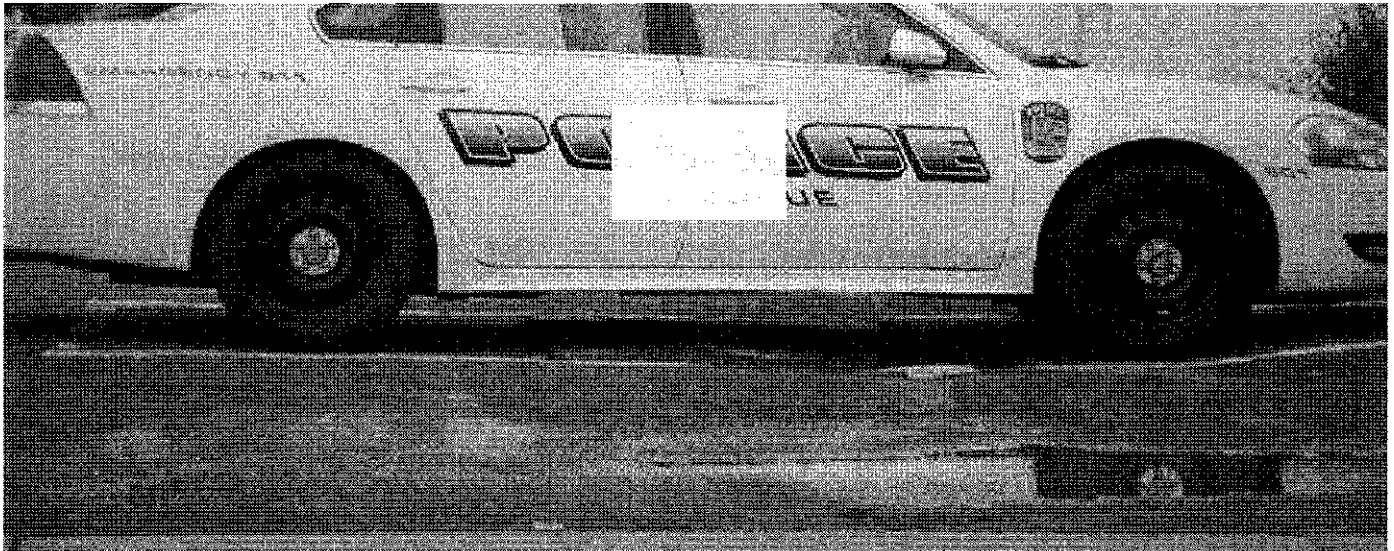
vacancies in his small department, he warned the town's City Council that unless pay and benefits improved, finding new officers would never happen.

When nothing changed, Smith quit. So did his few remaining officers, leading the Minnesota town of 1,300 residents to shutter its police force in late August.

America is in the midst of a police officer shortage that many in law enforcement blame on the twofold morale hit of 2020 – the coronavirus pandemic and criticism of police that boiled over with the murder of George Floyd by a police officer. From Minnesota to Maine, Ohio to Texas, small towns unable to fill jobs are eliminating their police departments and turning over police work to their county sheriff, a neighboring town or state police.

The trend isn't altogether new.

### **Minnesota mayor 'blindsided' by entire police force's resignation**



At least 521 U.S. towns and cities with populations of 1,000 to 200,000 disbanded policing between 1972 and 2017, according to a peer-reviewed 2022 paper by Rice University Professor of Economics Richard T. Boylan.

In the past two years, at least 12 small towns have dissolved their departments.



Goodhue County is now under contract for law enforcement duties in the town of Goodhue, even as Sheriff Marty Kelly tries to fill four vacancies in his own department. He said he has around 10 applicants for those jobs. By comparison, one open position in 2019 drew 35 applicants, he said.

Kelly knows that to get to full staffing, he'll have to hire new deputies away from other towns or counties – creating vacancies in other places that will struggle to fill them.

“It’s scary,” Kelly said. “We are robbing Peter to pay Paul. And we’re not alone.”

At the heart of the problem is the exodus from law enforcement. Officer resignations were up 47% last year compared to 2019 – the year before the pandemic and Floyd’s killing – and retirements are up 19%. That’s all according to a survey of nearly 200 police agencies by the Police Executive Research Forum, a Washington, DC.-based think tank. Though the survey represents only agencies affiliated with PERF, a fraction of the more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies nationwide and is not representative of all departments, it’s one of the few efforts to examine police hiring and retention and compare it with the time before Floyd’s killing.

Compounding the exodus of veteran officers, young people are increasingly unwilling to go through the months of training necessary to become a police officer, said Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum.

“Fewer people are applying to be police officers, and more officers are retiring or resigning at a tremendous rate,” Wexler said. “There’s a shortage of police officers across the country.”

Agencies of all sizes are struggling to fill open positions. But the problem is especially dire in smaller communities that can’t match the pay and incentives offered by bigger places.

Another Minnesota town, Morris, dissolved its police department last year after continued departures of officers. The town of 5,100 residents was down to two officers at the time. In Maine, the town of Limestone disbanded its police department in March. Neighboring Van Buren did the same two years earlier.

Generally, crime rates were unchanged in towns that dropped their departments, the Rice University study found. Leaders of several towns said they’ve been happy with the change.

Town leaders in Washburn, Illinois, dissolved their department in 2021 and let the county take over law enforcement duties for its 1,100 residents.

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“You really can’t tell much of any difference,” Mayor Steve Forney said. “The sheriff’s department is very responsive. I like it. I was always one who was very hesitant to go this direction, but I feel it’s working for us.”

Lott, Texas, a town of about 700 residents, disbanded its department last year. Mayor Sue Tacker said the town was going broke and couldn’t afford to pay two officers and two other employees.

With county deputies now patrolling Lott, the crime rate remains low and response times have been good, Tacker said. She believes residents are OK with the change.

“I haven’t had any griping or fussing,” Tacker said.

Goodhue occupies about one square mile of land 65 miles (105 kilometers) south of Minneapolis. It’s made up of tidy homes with a few small businesses – a bakery, a florist, a café, a supermarket, a taxidermist – most of them in brick storefronts in the small downtown area.

The town struggled for years to recruit and retain officers. The City Council had boosted pay by 5% earlier this year and gave Smith a \$13,000 raise.

It wasn’t enough. Smith told the City Council at a meeting on July 26 that it was virtually impossible to attract applicants for a job starting at \$22 an hour. That’s about \$10 per hour less than Goodhue County deputies earn.

“There’s zero incentive to come out here to a small town,” Smith said at the meeting.

Two weeks later, Smith gave notice of his resignation. Within days, the remaining full-time

officer and five part-time employees also called it quits. The town agreed to pay the county about \$44,000 for law enforcement services through the end of this year. Goodhue leaders will decide later whether to extend the contract through 2024.

Goodhue resident Ron Goebel, a retired accountant, said he believes the sheriff's department will do a good job, and he expects townspeople to help out, too.

"People can kind of watch out for each other a little bit," Goebel said, noting that he himself watches for strange vehicles in his neighborhood. "We pretty much know our neighbors."

Goebel fears the loss of the police department is another challenge for Goodhue and towns like it across the nation.

"As you lose your schools, you lose your businesses and you lose your police force, how much longer can the town actually be viable as a town?" Goebel asked.

The Associated Press

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# Police agencies are desperate to hire. But they say few want the job.

As law enforcement leaders ring alarm bells, reform advocates see a chance to reimagine policing



By [Robert Klemko](#)

May 27, 2023 at 7:00 a.m. EDT

The San Francisco Police Department is down more than 600 officers, almost 30 percent of its allotment. Phoenix needs about 500 more officers to be fully staffed. The D.C. police force is smaller than it has been in 50 years, despite troubling gun violence and carjackings, as officers leave faster than they can be replaced.

Police departments across the country are struggling to fill their ranks, creating what many current and former officials say is a staffing emergency that threatens public safety.

They cite an exodus of veteran officers amid new police accountability measures that followed the 2020 murder of George Floyd, increased hostility from the communities they police, and criminal justice laws that seek to reduce the number of people in jail.

Advocates for police reform see the moment as an opportunity to hire a new generation of officers and reimagine policing. But as agencies seek fresh recruits, they are getting fewer qualified applicants than in past years — leading some to make the risky move of lowering the bar for hiring to fill their ranks.

“We’re having to really, really work hard to fill what we have,” said Sheriff Tom Dart of Cook County, Ill., whose department is short more than 300 sworn officers. “And we’re still not filling at the rate that we would want.”

Cook County's 5,000-inmate jail can't afford to cut corners for safety reasons, so the patrol division runs understaffed, Dart said in an interview. Complicating matters, smaller police departments in the county's villages and towns are shorthanded also. and have asked Dart's agency to step in.

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That doesn't bode well for the future of policing, said Christy E. Lopez, a Georgetown Law professor who worked in the civil rights division at the Justice Department from 2010 to 2017, helping negotiate court-approved improvement plans for departments marred by misconduct.

Lopez said the Justice Department rarely emphasized hiring while advising departments. Lofty staffing goals can lead to lowered academy standards, she said, and promote a culture that values retaining officers over accountability.

"You really want to avoid putting the department under pressure to get people on the street," Lopez said. "Leadership becomes so worried about people leaving and 'officer morale' that you don't want to do anything that upsets them, things like disciplining people. And that has disastrous consequences."

When the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police asked departments across the state to quantify their personnel struggles last year, 60 percent of 239 responding agencies said they were not fully staffed, and 19 percent said they were short more than 10 percent of what was budgeted. Almost half of all new hires in 2020 and 2021 were transfers from other agencies — a dramatic and unprecedented spike.

Illinois department chiefs, surveyed anonymously, admitted they were lowering standards for educational and criminal records so they could achieve bare minimum staffing.

That kind of staffing crunch led Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland to announce a recruiting push for his police department amid rising crime in 2017. The city dramatically reduced training standards in response to the pressure to graduate more officers, The Washington Post reported in March. Among those recruited: five officers now fired and charged with murder in the beating earlier this year of Tyre Nichols.

For many departments, the full consequences of lowering hiring standards are not felt for years, Lopez said. She advocates reducing the number of officers needed by using unarmed mental health professionals to respond to some calls, ending hot-spot or saturation policing, and narrowing the criteria for which service calls require a police response.

"This is a very difficult job that not very many people can do well," Lopez said. "And if you're just trying to hire, hire, hire more and more people, it becomes less and less likely that those ranks are going to be filled — or even half-filled — with the people who have that unique set of skills."

In April, the Justice Department assembled more than two dozen policing minds — from department chiefs to labor bosses to nonprofit leaders — at a meeting to brainstorm how the federal government can help remedy what Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta described as a “crisis.” Recommendations are

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enforcement when they see this as an aspirational, professional choice.”

## A race to recruit

To fill their police academies, cities have expanded the geographic area from which they draw recruits, offered hiring bonuses and multiyear contracts, beefed up recruiting efforts, decreased onboarding obstacles and adjusted admission requirements.

Many have poured city resources into advertising, a strategy police reform advocates warn will backfire unless the ads convey a new message about the purpose of the job.

“I don’t think it’s simply that less people want to become police officers,” said Craig B. Futterman, a clinical professor of law at the University of Chicago Law School and founder of the Civil Rights and Police Accountability Project of the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic. “It’s that less people want to participate in an outdated type of policing that has been especially harmful to Black and Brown communities and largely ineffective at reducing violence.”

At the Justice Department meeting, Georgetown, Tex., Police Chief Cory Tchida, whose department in a suburb of Austin is 10 percent short of its budgeted roster, stressed the need for a law enforcement rebranding.

“We need to start selling the sense of purpose over the sense of adventure,” he said, quoting a recent webinar presentation by former Seattle police chief Carmen Best.

When Tchida first heard the webinar, he realized that Georgetown’s recruiting video features an officer performing a “J-turn,” in which a car is driven backward then jerked 180 degrees and driven forward without losing momentum.

The maneuver, Tchida said, is against department policy. He also thinks including it in the video sends the wrong message at a time when he is seeking recruits who thrive on community engagement and conflict resolution.

“You hear old-school cops say, ‘It’s not my job to be a social worker,’” Tchida said. “Bro, that is the vast majority of your job. You’re definitely a social worker.”



Sam Blonder, co-founder of Epic Productions, a Phoenix-based producer of media including digital marketing videos, said the police recruiting wing of his business has exploded in the years since Floyd was killed in the custody of Minneapolis police.

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up, and they just had their pick of the litter.”

Police agencies are also increasingly recruiting laterally, offering bonuses and competitive salaries for officers to leave their departments, a strategy once unheard of in policing.

Tchida said he was told that the Austin Police Department had sent a recruiter to another small suburban agency’s headquarters, hoping to pitch a job in the state capital to officers preparing to begin their shifts. An Austin police spokesman said agency personnel brought brochures about the department to a suburban headquarters in 2021 but didn’t speak to any officers and hadn’t been back since.

“You never had to compete with or try to steal from other agencies before,” Tchida said, declining to name the smaller agency because he did not have that chief’s permission to do so. “Now we’re desperate to hire. The challenge is to avoid hiring desperately.”

Kenny Winslow, a former Springfield, Ill., police chief who now heads the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, said the changing political environment around policing in liberal areas has left many veteran officers disillusioned.

His traditionally blue state is bleeding officers who are transferring to more conservative states like Wisconsin, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri and Iowa. Especially in Illinois border towns, Winslow said, the allure of more conservative communities, legislatures and prosecutors has been enticing to law enforcement veterans.

Near the end of Winslow’s tenure in Springfield, the department lost three officers in six months to Indiana departments, he said. Each cited the SAFE-T Act, a 2021 Illinois law that includes use-of-force changes and accountability measures.

“They thought the red state would be more police-friendly,” Winslow said, adding that the new law “scared a lot of people and affected recruiting all over Illinois.”

Jason C. Johnson, president of the Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund and deputy commissioner of the Baltimore Police Department from 2016 to 2018, said he’s heard the same complaints from officers in liberal jurisdictions across the country. While left-leaning officials and prosecutors are scrutinizing law enforcement actions more closely, he said, Democratic-majority state legislatures are working to limit incarceration for nonviolent offenses.

“When you have what looks like a wholesale abandonment of law and order, it makes [officers] feel less relevant professionally,” Johnson said. “When I talk to police officers who are policing in left-leaning or liberal cities, they are much more likely to be disenchanted with policing. I think it’s entirely about a sense

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face blowback from friends or relatives — if they pursued a law enforcement career.

Andy Saunders, a former police officer in Wilson, N.C., raised money in 2020 to launch a nonprofit that would offer police agency signing bonuses to undergraduate criminal justice majors from historically Black colleges and universities.

Saunders said he quit his own policing job because of racism he encountered within the department. He thought bringing in more Black police recruits could help heal the profession from within.

But after 100 interviews with HBCU students, only four signed up for his initiative. Saunders scrapped the idea. His current nonprofit, New Blue, focuses on mentoring reform-minded officers who are already on the job.

“We asked, ‘If there’s an organization that would support you becoming police officers, what would it take?’” Saunders said of the recruiting conversations. “And for most of them, there was nothing that we could do. The number one barrier was, ‘What would my friends and family think of me?’”

Criminal justice professors across the country say they have heard similar concerns from their students.

At a March job fair for students interested in law enforcement and social justice on the campus of Temple University in Philadelphia, swarms of students approached recruiters for the public defender’s office, which provides free attorneys to criminal defendants who can’t afford to pay. But the police recruiters spent much of the session chatting among themselves.

Criminal justice expert Cheryl Irons of Temple University said two camps emerge in her classroom after each high-profile police killing: students who believe policing need only remove the “bad apples” to build public trust, and those who believe the institution itself is rotten. With each police brutality incident caught on video, she said, the latter camp is swelling.

“When you have video, and it’s right there for everybody to see, it’s hard to process,” said Irons, an assistant professor in Temple’s College of Liberal Arts. “And then, it’s hard to then want to become a part of that.”

Justice Henry, a senior from the Bronx who hopes to become a criminal defense attorney, said the classroom divide often falls along socioeconomic lines. Students from wealthier backgrounds, she said, tend to side with the police.

“I think the institution of policing is so toxic that there’s enough bad going on that the whole system needs to be revamped,” said Henry, who is Black.

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“Nobody wants to be a cop because of how much social media has impacted and changed the perspective of what it’s like to be a cop,” said McMonagle, who is White and from Montgomery County, Pa., outside Philadelphia. “People think you’re a bad person if you want to be a cop.”