

My name is Jonathan Michael Portela. I am a member of the public who came to City Hall today to attend this hearing. I arrived to find limited seating and was unable to get into the chamber. I'm submitting this written comment to participate in the way that's available to me, and I look forward to attending the next hearing in person.

I want to begin by saying something that might not be typical in these comments. I appreciate the work that the Los Angeles Police Department does every day. Officers are asked to handle an impossible range of situations—mental health crises, safety on transit, encampment outreach—often with limited tools and unclear goals. The budget's inclusion of unarmed crisis response teams and de-escalation training reflects a genuine desire to modernize public safety, and I want to acknowledge that. This letter comes from a place of wanting to help those efforts succeed, not to tear them down.

I've read the full 479-page proposed budget. It says it increases funding for "oversight, transparency, and accountability." I believe that's a sincere goal, and I'm writing to offer some concrete ways this committee can make that goal visible and measurable. When we fund transparency in a way the public can see, we build trust. And trust makes everyone's job easier—including the police.

With that in mind, I want to share some observations and requests, offered in the spirit of partnership.

Surveillance Technology Transparency

The budget does not name the surveillance systems that Angelenos encounter daily. I searched for *Fusus*, *Flock Safety*, *Palantir Gotham*, *LAHSA*, *Outreach Grid*, *TrackTik*, *Clearview AI*, and the word *surveillance* itself. None appear. I understand these tools may serve legitimate public safety goals. But when they're invisible to the public, it erodes trust. I ask the committee to direct the Information Technology Agency to publish a searchable, line-item list of all surveillance technology contracts and their annual costs. This isn't an attack; it's a way to show that the city is confident enough in its choices to let the public see them.

Supporting Data-Driven Policing with Public Audits

The LAPD uses platforms like Palantir Gotham to integrate data and deploy resources. I know the department ended its contract with PredPol after concerns about bias, and that was the right call. A public, independent algorithmic bias audit of current predictive tools would demonstrate that the lessons of PredPol were fully learned and that data-driven policing is both effective and fair. This protects officers from accusations of bias and protects the community from unintended harm. I ask the committee to request such an audit, with results made public.

Drone Program Privacy Framework

The budget sustains LAPD's drone program. Drones can keep officers safe by providing eyes on a situation before they arrive. I support that goal. However, there is no published, council-approved privacy policy for how drone footage is collected, stored, shared, or used to identify individuals. A clear privacy framework would protect everyone and allow the program to operate with full legitimacy. I ask the committee to condition further drone funding on the publication of that framework within 90 days.

Community Reporting Apps and LAPD Response

Many officers monitor community reporting apps like Nextdoor and Neighbors by Ring. These apps can help neighbors share information, but they can also become channels for bias and profiling, however unintentional. I ask the committee to request a simple report: how many LAPD calls-for-service are generated by these platforms each year, and what percentage result in an arrest or citation. Understanding the data would help the department use this tool responsibly while maintaining community trust.

Homelessness Spending and Long-Term Outcomes

I want to acknowledge the Mayor's efforts on homelessness, particularly the Inside Safe program. Clearing encampments and moving people indoors is a serious undertaking. The budget claims an 18% reduction in street homelessness, and I hope that number holds. To build on that success, I ask the committee to commission a public, third-party evaluation of long-term housing retention rates for Inside Safe participants at six and twelve months. Good data helps good programs get better.

Private Security and Acoustic Deterrents

The city funds private security firms like Allied Universal and Securitas, which use platforms like TrackTik to coordinate in real time. Ultrasonic deterrent devices are sometimes deployed on public property. Neither appears in the budget document. Inventorying these contracts and technologies would be a straightforward transparency win. I ask the committee to direct a public inventory of all acoustic deterrent devices on city property or used by city contractors.

Clarity on Any Proposed Transit Court

Finally, I've heard discussion of a possible Metro Court or transit infraction system. I could find no mention of it in the budget. If such a system is being contemplated, I ask the committee to ensure a full fiscal and legal analysis is published before any funding is allocated. Fare enforcement should not unintentionally create a pipeline into the criminal justice system for people who simply cannot pay.

I'm offering these suggestions not as an adversary, but as someone who lives in this city and sees the gap between the policy and the street every day. The Mayor's budget says it funds transparency. I believe this committee can make that transparency real, in ways that support the LAPD, protect civil liberties, and build the trust that makes everything else possible.

Thank you for your time and service. I hope to be in the room with you on Monday.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Michael Portela
Date: April 24, 2026

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