

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE**



Public Hearing
on
B25-0345, “Accountability and Victim Protection Amendment Act of 2023”

Testimony of
Lindsey Appiah
Deputy Mayor of Public Safety and Justice

Before the
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairperson

September 18, 2023
10 a.m.
Room 500
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairperson Pinto, members, and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, I am Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. I am here to present the Executive testimony, in support of B25-0345, the “Accountability and Victim Protection Amendment Act of 2023.”

I’d like to thank Chairperson Pinto for her leadership of the Committee over the past 9.5 months and willingness to work together to find solutions. We stand with you to partner on advancing policies that increase and enhance safety across the District. We cannot not lose sight of our responsibility in reducing crime, and must prioritize the protection of victims of crimes, especially our most vulnerable citizens including our children and seniors. We also acknowledge your eleven Council colleagues who voted in support of the Prioritizing Public Safety Emergency Amendment Act, which is helping us to fulfill our responsibility of creating safe communities across our city.

On May 16, 2023, Mayor Bowser introduced the Safer Stronger Amendment Act of 2023. This commonsense legislation provides more tools to ensure that those who commit harm to community are held appropriately accountable, more access to critical data that will allow us to understand and adjust our interventions across the public safety and justice ecosystem, and more flexibility for successful programs that allow our residents to partner with us in reducing crime by solving and closing cases.

As I shared in my testimony in June on the Safer Stronger Amendment Act of 2023, while we are a city that often leads the nation in instituting forward thinking reforms, we must never lose sight that we are first and foremost a local city. Our solutions must be tailored to the specific realities that we face and that we are mindful of victims in our criminal justice considerations.

Specifically regarding today’s hearing, the Safer Stronger Amendment Act proposed several provisions that we believe the Accountability and Victim Protection Amendment Act of 2023 builds upon. Both bills would:

- Clarify the definition of “significant relationship” in sexual abuse cases, ensuring that the definition, and corresponding penalties, include and are applied to a “contractor” of a

school, church, synagogue, or similar institution for sexual abuse just as an “employee” or “volunteer” of the same.

- Clarify that GPS records from the Pretrial Services Agency are admissible in court as evidence of guilt in a criminal case or other judicial proceeding; and
- Create felony liability for strangulation, which is widely recognized as one of the deadliest forms of domestic violence.

While I did not cover all the provisions of B25-345 in my testimony, I wanted to express the Executive’s support for the bill. We firmly support ensuring that our criminal justice system has the necessary tools to protect victims and potential victims of crime in the District, and to hold perpetrators of serious crime appropriately accountable.

The Council has significant decisions to make in the upcoming months as it relates to the public safety and justice in our city. We must work together as those tasked with leading at this time to thoughtfully and expeditiously advance policy proposals, like this bill, the Safer Stronger Amendment Act and others to come. We must demonstrate our responsibility to urgently address crime, to ensure an appropriate balance of consideration of both victim and offender, and to advance the stability and functionality of our public safety and justice ecosystem in a way that leads to enhanced safety across all eight wards. I look forward to doing just that.