

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice



FY25 Budget Oversight Hearing

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

Testimony of
Lindsey Appiah
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

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

April 10, 2024
9 AM

Good morning, 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, and I am testifying today on Mayor Muriel Bowser's proposed Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Proposed Budget and Financial Plan, A Fair Shot: Strategic Investments and Shared Sacrifice.

In building the FY25 Fair Shot Budget, we were guided by our values: protecting core city services and preserving programs that protect the health and safety of our community; prioritizing programs that focus on equity and have a track record of success; and investing in the pillars of long-term growth so that we can change the trajectory of our outyear revenue estimates.

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, DMPSJ, provides oversight of 12 District agencies¹ and DC National Guard to ensure they are efficiently and effectively meeting their core, critical agency mission and functions; working together across our government to advance public safety and justice priorities; and coordinating with our local, regional, and federal partners to enhance the safety of our city. The missions of the agencies of the public safety and justice cluster are dynamic, complex, yet interconnected. Each plays a critical role in the overall health and functioning of our public safety and justice ecosystem which is centered around prevention, intervention/enforcement, accountability, and rehabilitation.

PSJ agencies remain intentional by focusing on their basics – they were asked to be engaged, efficient, and effective at their core functions because our residents and visitors rightfully expect us to be excellent in these areas. Under my leadership and with the Mayor's proposed FY25 budget, DMPSJ will continue to implement a framework focused on the necessary policies, partnerships, and policing to support crime reduction and the enhancement of the safety of our residents and visitors.

¹Department of Corrections, Department of Forensic Sciences, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, Mayor's Office on Returning Citizens Affairs, Metropolitan Police Department, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Office of Human Rights, Office of Unified Communications, Office of Victims Services and Justice Grants, Safer Stronger DC Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, and DC National Guard.

This work requires cross-cluster interventions and whole of government coordination and strategies. DMPSJ remains committed to prioritizing coordination, collaboration, and transparency necessary to meet our residents' reasonable expectations of excellence in the delivery of our agency missions.

DMPSJ provides operational and strategic support to agencies within our cluster and across government to reduce crime, Mayor Bowser's number one priority. We are currently offering strategic and operational support through the day-to-day management of the Safe Commercial Corridors Grant Program, Safe Passage/Safe Blocks, multiagency nightlife taskforce, multiagency public safety taskforce, Safety Go Team activations, resource pop-ups, Peace Walks, public safety walks, and more.

The Mayor's proposed FY25 budget for DMPSJ is \$15,548,000 which includes 26 FTEs. An overwhelming majority of DMPSJ's proposed FY25 budget is non-personnel services funding that includes \$9.7 million for the Safe Passage/Safe Blocks program and \$2.3 million for Safe Commercial Corridors Grant Program. Safe Passage is designed to ensure students travel to and from school safely – a lack of safety increases absenteeism and impacts a student's overall learning. The Safe Commercial Corridors Grant program is designed to promote public safety and public health through evidence-based activities for residents, workers, and visitors.

In FY24, DMPSJ assumed operational management of the Safe Passage/Safe Blocks program from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education. My team coordinates and manages the program, including the evaluation of its effectiveness, and measuring outcomes. Through distribution of community grants, providers currently serve eight priority areas that includes approximately 50 sites. In FY24, Safe Passage/Safe Blocks funding was a combination of one-time ARPA funding and local dollars. The FY25 budget reflects that the program will now be 100% funded from local dollars and adds roving teams to the Safe Passage portfolio. Roving teams will provide coverage in neighborhoods experiencing acute, short-term increases in crime that require targeted attention but do not warrant coverage for the entire school year. These teams can also support high profile school events such as football and basketball games and coverage when needed outside Metro stations.

As with the transition of Safe Passage to DMPSJ, the Executive continues to examine operations and programs to ensure a cohesive, coordinated continuum of prevention services and supports under the umbrella of PSJ. It's with that commitment to cohesive, coordinated services and supports that the FY25 budget transfers the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement's Leadership Academy to DMPSJ. I am confident in my team's ability to absorb this program and work with our education partners to assess the program outcomes and determine its best placement within the District's continuum of services. The transition of this school-based initiative to DMPSJ allows ONSE to focus on its core mission – reducing shootings in the District by becoming excellent at coordinating violence intervention, managing the Pathways Program, and providing critical family support services to those immediately impacted by gun violence.

In addition to the investments in DMPSJ, public safety and justice highlights in the Mayor's FY25 budget include:

- Maintaining a strong MPD by investing \$8.7 million to add 40 new Community Safety Officers and hire civilians to free up police officers for critical crime-fighting tasks;
- Supporting rehabilitation and entry by adding \$3.1 million staffing capacity at the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services;
- Creating public safety career pathways with \$841,000 to continue the development of DC's paramedic school and \$637,000 to support peer navigators for returning citizens;
- Preserving investments in prevention by maintaining \$12.5 million for the violence interrupters and Pathways program and \$11.7 million to continue SAVRAA and victim services supports; and
- Improving readiness, response, and resilience by investing \$3.2 million for latent fingerprinting, drug, and DNA sample testing; \$358,000 for staffing and retention incentives to cover crime scene response; and \$4.8 million for life-saving equipment for Fire and EMS personnel.

Finally, I want to thank the more than 10,000 public servants working in our cluster's agencies that are dedicated and committed to improving the quality of life in our District neighborhoods. We recognize the tremendous work being done across the ecosystem to make these reductions a

reality and thank all the selfless public servants who are working extremely hard to make our city safer and stronger. As of April 9, 2024, homicide is down by 28%, assaults with dangerous weapons are down 31%, and total violent crime is down 22%. We remain committed to making our city one in which residents and visitors across all eight wards can flourish and thrive and Mayor Bowser's FY25 budget makes the right investments to support our agencies in this collective effort.

Thank you for the time. I will answer any questions you may have.