

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



FY25 Performance Oversight Hearing

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

Testimony of
Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor

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

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Good morning, Chair Pinto, members, and staff of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety. I am Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony on the performance of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ) during Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026, to date.

Before I discuss our performance in FY25 and FY26, I must take a few minutes to acknowledge how truly proud I am to lead the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. For more than three years, the more than 10,000 hardworking employees of our cluster agencies and PSJ front office team have showed up on the good days, the hard days, and the extremely challenging days which are etched in our memories forever. Their continued dedication and commitment to the residents and visitors of the District is evident and I want them to know we see and deeply appreciate their constant hard work. Thank you.

The year 2025 was truly like no other in the District and will be remembered as one of the most historic and challenging years in the city's history. The year started with the District hosting three National Special Security Events, known as NSSEs, in January. Many urban jurisdictions may host an NSSE occasionally or annually, but three in one month is notable – it started with the State Funeral for Former President Jimmy Carter designated from January 4-9, 2025; the 2025 Electoral College Vote Count on January 6, 2025; and then the 2025 Inauguration from January 19-21, 2025. Also in January, in fact the day before the Counting and Certification of Electoral Votes, we activated a Snow Emergency; and then, the District's Snow Team responded to multiple snow events throughout January and February.

Tragically, less than a week after the 2025 Inauguration, the unimaginable and unthinkable occurred - a regional jet and a helicopter collided over the Potomac River resulting in one of the worst plane crashes in the country's recent history. Under incident commander, Chief John Donnelly, an extraordinary team of approximately 2,500 local, state, and federal first responders, public safety officials, and scientists supported the District's recovery efforts. This team heroically worked together and that collaboration was critical in the moments and days after the crash which led to the recovery of all 67 victims. This was only possible due to the level of commitment and compassion of everyone working on this response, especially the Fire and Emergency Medical

Services Department (FEMS), the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS), the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), and the Office of Unified Communications (OUC). We acknowledge the extraordinary heroism of first responders – police, firefighters, paramedics, public servants, scientists, and others whose courage shaped the response, and we remember the 67 victims and continue to hold their loved ones in our hearts.

Our year continued with several planned high-profile events such as the WorldPride DC 2025 and the United States Army 250th Anniversary Parade and, tragically, the District experienced two domestic terrorism incidents – with the shootings at the Capital Jewish Museum in May and the National Guard shooting in November. We hold these victims, and all those victimized in our city last year, and their loved ones in our prayers and continue to send our well wishes to National Guard Sergeant Wolfe during his recovery.

DMPSJ provides oversight of the 12 District agencies and the DC National Guard that comprise the Public Safety and Justice cluster 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.

I want to publicly acknowledge the Directors of the Public Safety and Justice cluster, national experts in their respective fields, for their skilled leadership, partnership with each other and their respective stakeholders and commitment to the public safety and justice ecosystem and safety and well-being of the residents and visitors of the District. The collaboration inside our cluster and amongst their agency peers, brought us to one of the strongest years in public safety and justice. This is despite adjusting to Congress taking a billion dollars from the DC budget and working together to protect home rule. I cannot thank them enough for their leadership and service.

The Mayor continues to charge the entirety of our government with driving down crime and working to enhance the safety of those we serve. This means DMPSJ's priority in FY25 was and remains in FY26 to ensure all residents and visitors are safe, victims of crime experience justice, those that harm our community are held accountable, and that we invest in rehabilitation and prevention programs and initiatives aimed at stopping crime before it is committed.

First, I would like to highlight the District's reductions in crime. In FY25, DMPSJ continued to support the public safety and justice ecosystem by ensuring the cluster agencies had resources and technology necessary to reduce violent crime. In 2025, we continued to build on the reductions we achieved in 2024. We decreased violent crime by 28%, including a 32% reduction in homicides. This was the lowest number of homicides in eight years. We increased our homicide closure rate to 85%, the highest closure rate in 13 years; carjackings were down 50%, and traffic fatalities were down 52%. In 2026 year to date, the District has recorded four homicides, violent crime is down 35% over this time in 2025, and total crime for 2026 is down 31% compared to last year. These critical safety and crime reduction gains are the result of a combination of legislative, programmatic, and budget investment during the past three years – from the passage of Secure DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2024, opening of MPD's Real Time Crime Center, reimagining the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE), launching the District's whole blood program which is on track to record 500 patients served in the field, the passage of the Juvenile Curfew Amendment Act of 2025, and our focus on returning citizen programming at the READY Center. There is not one factor that led to our 2025 crime reduction rather I believe it demonstrates symbiosis in the public safety and justice ecosystem and the convergence of our collective hard work and whole-of-government approach over the past few years.

One example of our whole-of-government work that I would like to highlight is the strategic deployment of our Multiagency Public Safety Task Force to support MPD's Operation THRIVE (Targeted Homicide Reduction through Intervention and Violence Elimination) launched in January 2024. In 2025, we continued to see the benefits of this focused effort which ensures a collective approach to preventing homicides through the focused deployment of MPD and cross-cluster personnel and resources partnered in neighborhoods affected most by homicides. In 2025, THRIVE served the Anacostia, Buena Vista, Rosedale, and Washington Highlands neighborhoods.

More than a dozen District agencies, along with federal partners, joined together on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons to address a host of concerns from illegal dumping to abandoned vehicles and more. Overall, in these four neighborhoods, violent crime dropped 37% percent over 2024.

Another continued collaborative success is the Multiagency Nightlife Taskforce bringing a whole-of-government approach to address identified violent crime, quality of life, nuisance activities, and regulatory concerns that were occurring in three identified nightlife areas: U Street NW, H Street NE, and the Connecticut Avenue NW corridors. During calendar year 2025, H Street had an approximately 14% reduction in violent crime, U Street experienced an approximately 38% reduction in violent crime, and Connecticut Avenue experienced an approximately 18% reduction in violent crime during the nightlife hours over the prior year.

In addition to the above-described efforts, DMPSJ continues to work closely with our agencies to strengthen operations. In June 2025, the Executive and Chair Pinto signed an agreement for the success of ONSE. The agreement addressed program requirements, reporting requirements, implementation and oversight, government coordination, and benchmarks to develop the District's comprehensive violence intervention program – merging the Office of the Attorney General's (OAG) Cure the Streets into the existing ONSE program. As part of the agreement, ONSE is implementing an evidence-informed violence prevention model that focuses on detection and interruption of conflicts, changing community norms, providing support to the highest risk individuals, applying long-term mediation strategies, and adopting a robust training curriculum and training model. In late FY25, and FY26, DMPSJ worked with ONSE in adopting and implementing one nationally recognized, evidence-based violence interruption model. In FY26 and year to date, ONSE worked to issue violence intervention agreements for 2026 with eight contractors to serve Wards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The ONSE grant agreements will supplement the CURE agreements issued by OAG for FY26.

During my time as Deputy Mayor, DMPSJ received grant making authority and currently manages three grants focused on improving public safety across the District – Safe Passage, Safe Commercial Corridors, and the Safe and Secure DC Nonprofit Fund.

In FY25, DMPSJ embarked on its second school year of the day-to-day oversight and management of the Safe Passage, Safe Blocks Program. At the start of school year 2024-25, DMPSJ adjusted our approach to Safe Passage coverage after feedback from parents, schools, and the community. Safe Passage, Safe Blocks transitioned from school focused to pre-determined routes in 12 priority areas, expanding their reach in neighborhoods with more than 200 Safe Passage Ambassadors employed by four community-based organizations. Key efforts for Safe Passage included the identification school points of contact to strengthen school communication and escalation pathways; hosted monthly school leadership meetings to address dismissal trends and incidents impacting student travel and surrounding communities; enhanced the Safe Passage interactive map to include updated routes informed by coordination with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), WMATA, MPD, and Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV); strengthened coordination with DC Public Schools, public charter LEAs, Metro Transit Police, and MPD to support coverage at dismissal; expanded school-level engagement through principal coordination and ongoing site visits; continued oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance to grantees to support program consistency; and our grantee partners offered Ambassadors and Supervisors a combined total of 46 trainings in FY25. To date in FY26, the program is on track to meet the new training requirements in the Safe Passage Training and School Engagement Amendment Act of 2025.

In FY25, the Safe Commercial Corridors Grant Program expanded to commercial corridors in all eight wards. In FY25, DMPSJ awarded 12 grantees across the District with grants to fund safety initiatives. Grantees are using funds to hire Safety Ambassadors; purchase and install cameras to register or connect to MPD's CameraConnectDC; and install lighting. In FY25, this grant supported Safety Ambassadors working a total of 34,053 hours, the installation of 85 new cameras, and 165 cameras were connected to the Real Time Center. In FY26, 14 grants were issued across the District. The Safe Commercial Corridors Grant supplements public safety in our community at a time when MPD sworn staffing numbers do not provide the same coverage in the community as it once did – the grant positions Ambassadors in the key commercial corridors and connects the corridors with the Real Time Crime Center. In January 2025, DMPSJ issued the RFA for the new Safe and Secure DC Nonprofit Fund. In FY25, this fund of \$500,000 was used to improve and increase the physical/cyber security and facility/target hardening of nonprofit organizations'

facilities at risk of a terrorist or other extremist attack, safeguarding the lives and property of District residents and visitors. The grant was awarded to 11 organizations across the District to support security staff, cameras, and equipment installation. In the FY26 budget, \$750,000 was allocated to this grant resulting in 13 awards from DMPSJ.

And lastly, in August, the President declared a crime emergency in the District invoking Section 740 of the Home Rule Act. While we know that we had driven crime down to its lowest level in decades prior to the emergency being declared, this action by the President stands as a stark reminder of our unique vulnerability because we are not a state, and the gravity of the moment in which we find ourselves in the District. As I shared previously, we must be laser focused on preserving home rule and our autonomy and a vital component of that work is continuing to drive down crime and increase safety in our city. We cannot fail to act with the urgency and speed necessary to meet the ever-present challenges to our autonomy and self-determination. Failure to act leaves a vacuum that the federal government has made clear that it will fill.

For the remainder of the year, we must continue to work together to ensure we are best positioned to govern our city and implement policies that benefit our residents and visitors. DMPSJ will continue to work to support our agencies in meeting their critical missions, that we are good stewards of District resources and resident trust, that we defend and protect our autonomy and self-determination and that we do everything we can to ensure that all our residents and visitors are safe, victims of crime experience justice, those that harm our community are held accountable, and that we invest in rehabilitation and prevention programs and initiatives aimed at stopping crime before it is committed.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my team at the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. Thank you for your work to support me, our office, the PSJ cluster agencies, and District of Columbia Government.

Thank you for your time and this opportunity to discuss our work in DMPSJ in FY25 and FY26 to date. I'm now available for any questions you may have.