

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Executive Office of Mayor Muriel Bowser



Fiscal Year 2017
Performance Oversight Hearing on
The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

Testimony of
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Before the
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Charles Allen, Chairperson

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Good morning, Chairperson Allen, members, and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I am Kevin Donahue, Deputy City Administrator and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. I am here today to discuss the performance and accomplishments of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ) for Fiscal Year 2017 and Fiscal Year 2018, to date.

My office is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the work of public safety agencies in the District. To that end, DMPSJ has daily interaction with the agencies under its purview: the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, the Metropolitan Police Department, the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, the Office of Unified Communications, the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the Department of Forensic Sciences, and the Department of Corrections. My office also interacts and coordinates regularly with independent agencies, federal entities, the court system, and our partners in the region.

Each year, this Committee asks for my Office's top five priorities and how we expect to address those priorities during the fiscal year. Each year, my answer has consistently focused on a few meaningful goals that do not change with the passage of time. However, this year I have added a sixth priority, which reflects an evolving need in the District. My Office's priorities are:

1. Transforming Emergency Medical Services in the District into a premier system;
2. Reducing violence in the District;
3. Making the District a model city for police-community relations;
4. Improving outcomes for survivors of violence;
5. Ensuring the District is prepared for disasters and emergencies; and
6. Strengthening our justice system to be fair, effective, and rehabilitative.

With each year, I focus on a few initiatives, almost always implemented at the agency level, that improve public safety by pushing us forward in each of these areas. I would like to talk a bit about some of the high-impact initiatives that our agencies, both those within the public safety cluster and those outside my cluster, are focusing on in order to meet these priorities.

Transforming the District's EMS into a premier system

We have made great strides in improving EMS in the District. In 2007, during my first stint with the City Administrator's Office, the Rosenbaum Task Force identified the severity and depth of the challenges facing our EMS system. When I came into this role in 2015, EMS was still one of the most immediate crises facing the city. There were regular problems around ambulance availability, fleet maintenance, response times, employee morale, and training.

After finding a strong leader in Chief Gregory Dean, we are in the midst of alleviating many these longstanding issues. Beginning in 2016, the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) began using a third-party provider to supplement the number of ambulances available every day for each shift. This initiative has improved the availability of FEMS ambulances to respond to high-priority medical emergency calls, such as heart attack patients,

while the third-party ambulances respond to lower-priority medical issues, such as someone who fell on the sidewalk and sprained their ankle.

Since we launched this initiative, FEMS has made very significant progress, with improved unit availability for both Basic Life Support and Advanced Life Support ambulances. FEMS' goal is to have at least 25 percent of its ambulance units continuously available for dispatch at least 95 percent of the time. During FY 2017, FEMS averaged 97.1 percent and, thus far in FY 2018, FEMS has averaged 97.6 percent. Better stewardship of resources, appropriate fleet maintenance, and timely replacement of older vehicles have improved ambulance availability and response times over the past three years.

Because we want to empower our residents with knowledge that is critical in a medical emergency – particularly for heart attacks – Mayor Bowser and Chief Dean launched an ambitious program to train thousands of District residents, visitors, and workers on how to administer hands-free CPR. To date, the *Hands on Hearts* program has trained more than 35,000 people and we've seen bystander intervention in cardiac arrest cases increase from 10 percent in 2014 to nearly 26 percent in FY17. Each person we train on CPR is a potential life saver to someone having a heart attack. In fact, in October of 2016, an individual who had read a Washington Post article on our *Hands on Heart* program helped save the life of a woman who had a heart attack on the New York City subway because he'd read that the training teaches people to pump chests of heart attack victims to the beat of the song "Stayin' Alive."

The 911 system, another vital part of our EMS response, has also undergone a transformation over the past three years. With a long background as a 911 call taker, dispatcher, and trainer, Director Karima Holmes has brought an insider's eye to the Office of Unified Communications. Soon after she was hired by the Mayor, Director Holmes developed an agency-wide training and quality assurance program focused on improving the quality of service provided to 911 callers.

To keep the pace with the increase in 911 calls over 2015 and 2016, the Mayor funded – and OUC hired – a total of 60 additional 911 and 311 call takers. Thanks to more 911 operators and better training, we have reduced the dispatch times for Priority One EMS calls by 25 seconds. Our next major undertaking will be to transition to the "Next Generation 911" system, which will greatly enhance the ability of call takers to determine a caller's location – especially when the 911 call is being made on a cell phone.

Reducing violence in the District

In 2015, we saw homicides in the District spike as they did in a number of other cities across the country. This increase launched a citywide conversation on how to refocus and reposition our approach to reducing violence in the District. It became resoundingly clear that while law enforcement would continue to play a critical role, we would not be able to simply police our way out of the problem. Instead, we needed a comprehensive approach that improved policing, reformed the criminal justice system, and addressed the root causes of violence.

At the end of 2017, the District saw a 22 percent decrease in violent crime, and an 11 percent decrease in all reported crimes. These are significant reductions and we should take note of

progress. However, we know that not every neighborhood in our city has seen the same level of reductions and not every resident feels safer. As a city, we recognize the hard work we must do to ensure residents across all eight wards feel safe in their communities.

In October, we launched the newest addition to the public safety team: the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE). To lead this new agency, the Mayor selected Del McFadden, an outstanding leader with a long history of violence prevention and gang intervention work in the District. ONSE will interact directly with those affected by violence. The office will run a violence prevention program, working with a cohort of our residents who are most vulnerable to being involved with violence. We have very high expectations for ONSE and we are committed to supporting the agency as it launches programs focusing on mentoring, training, and breaking the cycle of retaliatory violence.

At MPD, we've stabilized and reversed a three-and-a-half year decline in force levels. New recruitment and retention programs have resulted in the first net increase in officer hiring since FY 2013. To build a career pipeline for our residents who want to serve in law enforcement, we doubled the size of the police cadet program for District high school graduates and launched the Public Safety Academy at Anacostia High School. Our goal is to continue to have a police department that reflects our community and there's no better way of achieving that goal than by hiring our residents as officers.

Finally, over the past two years, we have invested more than \$12 million on court diversion programs such as Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE) and Parent and Adolescent Support Services (PASS). We have significantly expanded truancy prevention funding through increases in the Show Up, Stand Out program.

Making the District a model city for police-community relations

In December 2016, MPD completed the deployment of 2,800 body-worn cameras (BWCs) to its officers across the District – the largest deployment of body-worn cameras in the country at the time. The District's laws on public access to the BWC footage are some of the most progressive in the country and serve as a model to other jurisdictions seeking to launch their own BWC programs.

To better understand the effects of BWCs, MPD partnered with The Lab @ DC, an applied science team housed in the Office of the City Administrator, to analyze the impact of BWCs on policing through a randomized controlled trial of the District's BWC program. Last year, we were able to examine the effects of BWCs on police use of force, civilian complaints, policing activity, and judicial outcomes. The study was the first of its kind to use a large sample size to study BWC impact and demonstrated the District's commitment to open data and transparency in public safety.

There are other initiatives I want to highlight, though briefly in the interests of time. One of MPD's newest innovations is allowing volunteers to ride along with patrol officers to provide victims of domestic violence with resources and information provided by DC SAFE. Additionally, the Police for Tomorrow Fellowship is comprised of MPD officers, recruits, and

civilian employees who participate in two-year long series of workshops and community activities facilitated by the Georgetown University Law Center's Program on Innovative Policing. The program currently has 18 fellows.

Improving outcomes for survivors of violence

When a violent action occurs in the District it impacts our residents – short-term and long-term – and for some, it forever changes their lives. That's why I view improving outcomes for survivors of violence to also be part of the goal of preventing violence. Working toward this goal since 2016, we have developed and expanded the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants' Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program. The program works with victims of violence and their families to connect them with government- and community-based services to promote healing, reduce victimization, and prevent further violence.

The program is operational at three area hospitals – Howard University Hospital, MedStar Washington Hospital Center, and Prince George's County Hospital – and we plan to expand to United Medical Center this year and George Washington University Hospital next year. By partnering with local hospitals, the program reaches victims as they are receiving care and it seeks to reduce the risk of further victimization for the victim, as well as retaliatory violence for the family and their community.

Last year, Mayor Bowser introduced legislation that provides increased support for sexual assault survivors. The Sexual Assault Victims' Rights Amendment Act of 2017 significantly expands the rights, protections, and access to services for survivors. It expands the right of survivors to have an advocate present with them, makes it illegal to remove a person's clothing without their consent, and clarifies survivors' rights to compensation under existing insurance policies. In response to survivors' experiences of not being kept informed by prosecutors, it requires prosecutors to explain why they're not taking a case to trial. We are proud of this bill and appreciate the support that has been given by this Committee to move it closer to becoming law. I look forward to it being passed by Council so that we can ensure that every survivor of sexual assault is treated with fairness and dignity.

Ensuring the District is prepared for disasters and emergencies

Because the District is the center of activities involving local, federal, and foreign governments, coordination with our federal partners is critical to our ability to manage large-scale events. The Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency plays a critical role in this coordination. Our ability to respond quickly and appropriately to events is the result of rigorous planning and collaboration between HSEMA and our federal and regional partners.

I saw firsthand the essential need for inter-agency coordination on my tenth day on the job when heavy smoke in a tunnel near the L'Enfant Plaza Metro station resulted in the tragic death of Carol Glover. The NTSB investigated the incident and recommended that we provide more training, improve incident command and coordination, and develop better response protocols. We quickly expanded FEMS specialized training for responding to emergencies underground,

began daily testing of all radio reception strength at every Metro station and tunnel in the District, and revised our inter-agency protocols for handling emergency calls for Metro incidents.

This past January, we had another Metro emergency response, this time for a train derailment outside Metro Center. As a result of our improved protocols and training, our first responders were on the scene within minutes of being dispatched, they successfully coordinated the evacuation of passengers with WMATA staff, and all passengers were safely off-boarded.

Our responsibility is to be able to respond to every type of emergency, whether it's a natural disaster like a blizzard, hurricane, or heat wave, or a man-made incident like terrorism. Our emergency response teams constantly plan, prepare, and train to ensure we are safe no matter the emergency event.

Strengthening the justice system to be fair, effective, and rehabilitative

In FY 2017, we pursued this goal by strengthening diversion programs and proposing legislation to radically reform our criminal record sealing laws and procedures. This time last year, the District, in partnership with the courts, prosecutors, and the defense bar, had just launched a new diversion program for unemployed non-violent offenders that used placements in the Department of Employment Services' workforce development programs as an alternative to prosecution. We have spent the past year working closely with each of these partners to strengthen this program and create tangible rehabilitation opportunities for our residents that are outside the traditional criminal justice system.

Over the past year, my office carefully evaluated our laws on criminal record sealing and found our rules to be outdated and inconsistent with our DC values. The current record sealing laws are based on an outdated perception of an ongoing risk to public safety posed by those who have had any interaction with the criminal justice system – even if that contact didn't result in either a conviction or even a trial. After working with legal advocacy groups such as the Public Defender Service, the Mayor proposed legislation to create much needed reforms to the record sealing protocols and offer relief to tens of thousands of individuals living with the burden of a criminal record. We look forward to working with this Committee to ensure its passage.

Looking forward in FY 2018

Although this hearing looks back on our performance over the past fiscal year, I would like to preview three new initiatives our agencies will be launching in 2018.

Nurse Triage: Later this spring, we will be launching the Nurse Triage program as collaborative effort between FEMS, OUC, the Department of Health, the Department of Health Care Finance, and our hospitals and urgent care providers. This initiative seeks to provide the most appropriate and responsible medical care to patients calling 911. When a 911 operator receives a call deemed to be a medical low acuity, instead of dispatching an ambulance, they will transfer the call to a nurse to assess the caller's medical condition and schedule same-day transportation to and from one of 17 pre-identified clinics across the city. The program will be carefully studied by The Lab @ DC to review its impact on patient outcomes.

Pre-Arrest Mental Health Diversion Pilot Program: Also later this spring, we will launch a collaborative pilot program between MPD, the Department of Behavioral Health, and the Department of Human Services. This pilot program will focus on homeless residents with mental illnesses or addictions who come into contact with MPD because of minor criminal offenses. By providing a service-based diversion program as an alternative to filing criminal charges, we seek to help to break the cycle of incarceration, release, and re-arrest. We believe these individuals will be better served by a social worker than by a jail cell.

Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement: Although we launched ONSE last October, its inaugural year will be one of its most important. Mayor Bowser is fully committed to supporting OSNE so that it can be successful in its mission of violence prevention and intervention. My Office's support for ONSE will come in many forms: coordinating with other agencies whose services ONSE will need to serve our residents; giving ONSE leadership, guidance, and advice from my background in public administration; and holding ONSE accountable for following through on its promises and meeting its performance goals. I will also support Director McFadden and ONSE by giving them the space they need to make smart choices. This includes allowing the ONSE team's expertise guide the agency's operational choices and giving them the latitude to plan their programs.

Councilmember Allen, I'd like to thank you for your leadership and support. We appreciate the opportunity to share our accomplishments and plans for continuous improvement and look forward to continuing to work with the Committee. My staff and I are happy to address your questions at this time.