



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

CHRISTINA HENDERSON
Councilmember, At-Large
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Hospital and Health Equity
Judiciary and Public Safety
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January 23, 2023

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

Congratulations on being sworn in for a historic third term. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your Administration on a variety of shared priorities that help to elevate opportunity in all of our zip codes. As in prior years, I wanted to share my priorities for consideration as you work to put together your proposed fiscal year 2024 budget.

Reducing Hunger

- Fully fund the Universal Free School Meals Act of 2023 which would institute universal free school breakfast, lunch, and snacks for all District public and public charter school and participating private school students. I just introduced this legislation, but funding it in the FY24 budget will allow this to be implemented in school year 2023-2024 (Approx. \$8 million).
- Make an investment in the Give SNAP A Raise Amendment Act of 2022 which passed the Council unanimously and provides a 10% local enhancement to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (Approx. \$52 million).
- Fund the No Senior Hungry Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022 which will improve nutrition and food access among seniors (Approx. \$1.6 million in FY23 and \$8 million in FY24).
- Continue funding for the Food Access Fund and Nourish DC Fund through the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development and expand priority locations to include the far east portion of Ward 5.

Improving Health Care Access and Growing Health Industry

- Continue investment in opioid overdose treatment prevention, provide additional funding to update the Live.Long.DC Strategic Plan 2.0, and launch a public information campaign on the effectiveness of opioid use treatment and overdose prevention.
- Increase funding for the Health Licensing and Regulation Administration (HLRA) at DC Health to greatly improve processing times for applications and renewals and to cover any funding gaps that may result from DC joining regional occupational licensing compacts.
- Increase our investment for the school nurse program which is facing severe staffing shortages as it competes with hospitals, nursing homes, and others for nurses.
- Maintain the additional \$2.4 million investment made in the FY23 budget for the school-based mental health program and include an enhancement for inflation while the Department of Behavioral Health undergoes comprehensive rate and program reviews.
- Fund the High Need Healthcare Career Scholarship and Health Professional Loan Repayment Program Amendment Act of 2022 which expanded eligibility for loan repayment, allows for payment of expenses to obtain credentials, and continues to help build our health professional pipeline (Approx. \$1.4 million).
- Fund the Expanding Access to Fertility Treatment Amendment Act of 2023 which would expand coverage provided through private insurers, Medicaid and the DC Healthcare Alliance to include diagnosis and treatment for infertility. Although private insurers would absorb the cost of the majority of the bill, we would need local funding to cover the expanded coverage for members of Medicaid and the DC Healthcare Alliance program.
- Provide the Office of Chief Medical Examiner with additional FTEs to assist with the work of the fatality review boards which inform changes in practice that may be necessary in our health care sector.
- Establish funding to jumpstart incentives for businesses in medical device and healthcare technology industries to locate in the District. This can also include tax credits for research and development, as included in your Comeback Plan.
- Provide \$6 million for the modernization of the only adult burn treatment center in the DC metropolitan area.

Educational Equity, Youth Affairs and Out of School Time

- Reinststate a retroactive gap funding payment to St. Coletta of Greater Washington for the costs accrued over the past three years and include St. Coletta in the adequacy study to ensure that the UPSFF will provide the necessary financing to permit St. Coletta to serve the District’s high-need learners (Approx. \$3 million).
- Provide funding through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to make training on literacy instruction available to educators citywide.
- Reinststate grant funding at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education for restorative justice programs and training at our public and public charter schools.
- Increase funding for the administrative premium available within DC Public Schools specifically for incentivizing school buildings to stay open longer and developing more afterschool clubs and activities.
- Increase funding for the DC SchoolConnect program to specifically provide on-demand access for rides beyond 3PM, which will enable students who stay after school for clubs and activities to participate.
- Fund the Educator Background Check Streamlining Amendment Act of 2022 within the Child and Family Services Agency to assist in its placement of the Comprehensive Child Welfare System (Approx. \$14,000 in capital).
- Consider an initial investment for the bill I introduced last Council Period, the DC Advancing College Hopes for Immigrants Education and Vocational Enrichment Scholarship (DC ACHIEVES) Establishment Act of 2022. This legislation would provide grants for tuition and non-tuition expenses for undocumented high school graduates of DC schools, who are not eligible for DCTAG or federal financial aid.
- Enhance funding for the DC Public Library to overhaul their online catalog system and improve building accessibility (Approx. \$1.2 million).
- Maintain funding for the Department of Employment Services to provide grants to work with 100 court-involved youth through the School Year Internship program.
- Increase out-of-school time grant funding to do the following:
 - Add provider capacity to lengthen hours in the summer;
 - Provide meaningful programming for students who have special needs and train staff on how to meet the needs of students with IEPs;
 - Cover security costs for sites at DC Public School facilities; and
 - Cover liability insurance requirements the Office of Risk Management has imposed for security and cyber liabilities, which significantly adds to the cost of providing services for many providers.

- Increase funding to the Department of Parks and Recreation to enable them to design and build a new online sign-up system that is more equitable and allows families to begin planning summer camps well before May.
- Provide additional funding for hiring and retention incentives for OSSE DOT bus drivers and bus attendants.

Thriving Neighborhoods and Access to Housing

- Invest in the Rediscover Equitable Central Occupancy Vitality and Encourage Resilient Yield (RECOVERY) Amendment Act of 2021 which includes important strategies for re-envisioning our central business district (CBD), such as operational grants for businesses that relocate or expand to the CBD and temporary tax relief for innovative businesses that locate in the CBD and meet hiring and economic inclusion requirements.
- Provide funding that gives the human services cluster the flexibility to quickly provide the housing and wrap around services to all individuals at encampment sites, regardless of when they may have arrived.
- Meaningfully invest in publicly accessible bathrooms around the District, including at playgrounds and parks.
- Make available funding to help homeowners who may have inherited their property through family but cannot afford to perform needed renovations and repairs (Approx. \$5 million).
- Maintain investments to DC Housing Authority to help accelerate necessary maintenance, repairs, and renovations of vacant units.

Quality Infrastructure, Transportation, and Environmental Justice

- Fund the Safer Streets Amendment Act of 2022 which requires the formulation of a Safer Streets for Students Master Plan in addition to significant infrastructure upgrades to reduce vehicular speed around school buildings (Approx. \$1.5 million in FY23 and \$708,000 in FY24).
- Invest in three program initiatives at the Department of Public Works:
 - Install a uniform recycling system in public spaces and at public housing complexes;
 - Develop a program that enables small condo buildings to opt into the trash and recycling program that we currently offer to residents who reside in homes and increase the reimbursement rate provided to small condos who choose to continue with private solid waste operators; and
 - Implement zero waste initiatives such as food composting in commercial settings.

- Pursue the recommendation of the Build Back Better Infrastructure Taskforce to use federal infrastructure funds to underground or deck over DC 295. Provide funding for the necessary community engagement to restore connectivity to the neighborhoods divided by this highway.
- Provide Internet for All program participants with an internet speed of at least 100 Mbps, which is higher than that currently offered through Internet Essentials (Comcast) or Internet First (RCN). Further, expand access to the program to all low-income households, not just those with students in PK3-12th grade.
- Utilize federal infrastructure funds to accelerate the removal and replacement of lead pipes throughout the District.
- Allocate federal infrastructure funds to jumpstart the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations with a diverse collection of Level 2 and direct-current fast chargers in public spaces, including recreation center and school parking lots.

Strengthening Our Public Safety and Victim Service Programs

- Provide meaningful investments for recruitment incentives and staff retention & training to increase staffing levels at the Office of Unified Communications.
- Continue the Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program within the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (FY23 funded at \$1 million).
- Expand the ONSE Leadership Academy to provide opportunities for more high-risk students to receive appropriate supports and interventions.
- Provide additional funding for programs like Kingman Rangers (DOEE) and Roving Leaders (DPR) designed to help steer youth into productive activities.

Further Capital Investments

- Modernize the Washington Senior Wellness Center in Ward 7, the oldest center in our portfolio.
- Complete the planned additions to the Model Cities Senior Wellness Center in Ward 5.
- Establish a Senior Wellness Center in Ward 3.
- Invest in wi-fi and HVAC upgrades for the complete senior wellness center portfolio, especially the Bernice Fontenau Center in Ward 1 and the Hattie Holmes Center in Ward 4.

- Fund the replacement of the field turf at Eastern Senior High School in Ward 7.
- Provide additional funding to the Department of Parks and Recreation specifically for playground renovations and upgrades to gym flooring and hoops.

I hope you give thoughtful consideration to the priorities I outlined in this letter. I look forward to again working collaboratively to invest in the needs of District residents.

Best,



Christina Henderson
At-Large Councilmember
Chairperson, Committee on Health