



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

MATTHEW FRUMIN
Councilmember, Ward 3

COMMITTEE CHAIR
Human Services

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Executive Administration and Labor
Facilities
Housing

March 5, 2025

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

Dear Mayor Bowser,

As the Chief Financial Officer's February Revenue Estimate powerfully drives home, this is a period of significant uncertainty with difficult budget choices ahead. Under the circumstances, my budget requests this year focus on targeted investments to preserve and strengthen key programs on which our residents rely. At the core, we must sustain our safety net, support education from Pre-K through university, invest in our seniors and small businesses, and make targeted investments to improve public safety, while we prepare to capitalize on key development opportunities. I describe below some of the key investments included in my longer enclosed list to illustrate this approach.

Support for education is essential because of what it means for our families, equity, public safety, and the long-term economic prospects for our city. That is why I ask that we **preserve the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP) and fully fund the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund**. Our investments in education should extend **to fully supporting the University of District of Columbia**, as it strives under President Edington's leadership to prepare and connect Washingtonians to the jobs in demand today and the careers of the future.

Targeted investments in the senior services space can make a huge difference for our seniors and families. Please **fully fund our Lead Agencies and our Senior Villages**. Last year, we moved to tax income on out-of-state municipal bonds. That tax increase falls heavily on seniors at all income levels. In fairness to our seniors, at a minimum, we should **grandfather the tax-free status of out-of-state municipal bonds** owned on December 31, 2024.

Our neighborhood business corridors and small businesses are the backbone of our economy and communities, and we must maintain and strengthen them. Our 29 Main Street programs are key players in that effort. Please **increase the modest funding provided to our Main Street programs**.

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The Connecticut Avenue corridor has experienced significant increases in MPD calls and a series of tragedies related to mental health in recent years. The Safe Commercial Corridor Hub in Chinatown you launched last year is an innovative idea that is having an impact. **Please fund a new Safe Commercial Corridor Hub along the Connecticut Avenue corridor in Van Ness** to connect residents to behavioral and mental health, housing, public safety, and other supportive services to meet the important needs in this area and lessen the burden on MPD.

Two areas in Ward 3 offer dramatic long-term opportunities to achieve many of our shared goals for the city, including adding housing and affordable housing. With modest investments now we can hasten the day when we can capitalize on these opportunities. I urge you to **fund a Small Area Plan for the Homeland Security site** at Nebraska and Massachusetts avenues, which the federal government has indicated an interest in disposing. Please also provide **funding to DMPED for a consultant to bring together work already completed by various stakeholders and consider how to realize the exciting possibilities in Friendship Heights.**

This will be a challenging budget for both you and the Council. We do need to be circumspect in this environment, but we can also leverage modest investments to significantly protect and improve our residents' quality of life. I look forward to working with you to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Matthew Frumin, Ward 3
Chair, Committee on Human Services

Enclosure



Fully Fund Our Education Ecosystem

- **Preserve funding for the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP)** at \$21.8 million in FY26 and \$91.2 million over the financial plan, reflecting modest annual inflationary adjustments. PKEEP currently provides funding to 27 community-based organizations across the city to offer approximately 1,050 free PK3 and PK4 seats, approximately 300 of which are located in Ward 3. Within Ward 3, DC Public Schools do not provide any PK3 seats and there is insufficient PK4 capacity to meet demand, much less absorb any reductions in PKEEP seats. Any cuts to PKEEP would create significant economic turmoil for the District's working families, and return to office mandates will only make demand for this program more acute. Further, the loss of PKEEP funding could jeopardize the childcare ecosystem more broadly, increasing the financial strain on childcare centers that also serve infants and toddlers.
- **Maintain investments in the Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund and deliver on the District's promises to early childhood educators and working families.** Toward the goal of the District being an employer of choice for highly qualified early childhood educators, funding in the FY26 budget and across the financial plan for this initiative should align with the recommendations of the Early Childhood Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force and the pay scales adopted by the DC Council in October 2024.
- **Fund the University of the District of Columbia's (UDC) operating budget enhancement requests** in support of increased graduation rates, workforce development programs, and teacher, faculty, and staff development. UDC has embarked on an ambitious five-year plan to become an educational institution of choice for District residents and to develop the District's workforce through high-quality, affordable higher education focused on in-demand fields.
- **Sustain funding for FRESHFARM FoodPrints at \$2.6m in FY26**, supporting 65% of the cost of delivering hands-on nutrition, culinary, and garden education in 21 DC public schools, reaching 8,000 students across the city in neighborhoods with limited options for fresh nutritious food. FoodPrints students cook and enjoy close to 100 pounds of local produce per school each month.
- **Continue the District's progress toward universal out-of-school-time access for all public school students by 2036.** Out-of-school time (OST) programing is proven to improve attendance, academic, and economic outcomes for youth and significantly reduce juvenile-involved crime, but too many students still do not have access to OST programs. The FY26 budget should support a 10% increase in available programming seats for before- and after-school, school break, and summer programs for students.
- **Increase funding for the Bridge the Gap Micro-Grant** through Live It, Learn It by \$200,000 in FY26 (\$500,000 total) to **expand experiential learning opportunities in schools with the highest percentage of at-risk students.** Requests for the micro-grants, funded by the Council last fiscal year, demonstrate significant demand for this targeted program, which is expected to become self-sustaining in FY27.
- Allocate \$2 million in FY26 (\$8 million over the financial plan), through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, for **eight new community schools annually**, focused on schools



with the greatest number of at-risk youth. Community schools are an evidence-backed program that focus on the whole child and their family, improving educational outcomes.

- **Establish an Educator Retention Fund**, focused on schools experiencing the highest rates of turnover, that could be used for flexible scheduling, permanent substitutes to cover staffing needs, educator wellness, or professional development, among other initiatives to retain faculty and staff. Allocate \$200,000 per school, with a target of funding up to 20 schools annually (\$4 million in FY26; \$16 million over the financial plan).

Support our Seniors

- **Allocate \$16.3 million for Lead Agencies**, through the Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL). Our Lead Agencies are key to serving our seniors, providing health, education, social services, meals programs, care-giver support programs, and adult daycare. Iona Senior Services now serves Wards 2, 3, and 4. Seabury Senior Services serves Ward 5 and 6, and East River Family Strengthening Collaborative serves Wards 1, 7 and 8. Through consolidation, we have achieved efficiencies while keeping programs close to the communities they serve. Each dollar we invest in these programs pays multiple dividends for seniors and their families.
- **Allocate \$1.07 million for Senior Villages**, through DACL. Senior Villages deliver cost effective supports to seniors, including volunteer provided rides to medical appointments and errands, community building events, fitness and wellness classes, lectures, neighbor-to-neighbor assistance with minor household tasks, and help navigating city services. In the process Villages help enable older adults to age-in-place in their homes and fully engage in their communities.
- **Complete the overdue Senior Wellness Center Feasibility Study Taskforce report and fully fund the design and construction of a brick-and-mortar senior wellness center in Ward 3.** Despite having one of the largest populations of seniors in the city, Ward 3 remains one of only two wards without a senior wellness center.

Invest in Small Businesses and Commercial Corridors

- **Enhance funding citywide for Commercial Clean Teams**, through the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD), to provide critical clean and safe services along commercial corridors and life skills and job training for returning citizens. **Fund the creation of a Friendship Heights Clean Team** within the Friendship Heights Business Improvement District (BID) with an allocation of \$100,000 in FY26 and \$400,000 over the financial plan.
- **Enhance funding for DC Main Streets**, through DSLBD, by increasing per program funding by \$50,000 in FY26 (\$1.45 million in total), with annual inflationary increases over the financial plan. This investment is vital to sustaining and expanding the District's small business ecosystem across all eight wards.
- **Fund the Office of Planning to complete a Small Area Plan for the Nebraska Avenue Complex (NAC)**, 3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW. The General Services Administration has announced its



intention to dispose of the property, and planning for the future of the 30+ acre property must begin in the near-term to ensure the District is well positioned to shape the future of a potentially transformative development that could advance significant housing, education, and economic development goals.

- **Advance planning for Friendship Heights.** Several entities have done work to create a platform for planning for Friendship Heights, including ULI, the Friendship Heights Alliance, HR&A, WMATA, and the Office of Planning. Please fund a consultant through the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development (DMPED) to build on these analyses and work with stakeholders to hasten the day when we can unleash major investment in this area, which could be key to advancing many of our shared goals, including affordable housing, in Ward 3.

Continue our Commitments to Public Safety

- **Allocate sufficient resources to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) budget to recruit and retain more sworn officers, support MPD's civilianization goals, and expand community policing.** Investments should also continue to support Chief Smith's strategic plan goals related to officer wellness, professional development and advancement, and improving management practices that impact morale and job performance.
- **Fund the renovation of the MPD 2nd District station on Idaho Avenue, NW** to address long-standing issues with roof, ceiling, and window leaks, plumbing, and other deferred maintenance that impact officers' ability to execute their jobs effectively and overall morale.
- **Enhance the Private Security Camera Rebate Program** through the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants to include monitored alarm system installation, hardware, and monitoring services as items eligible for small business rebates.

Parks, Recreation and Libraries

- Allocate sufficient funding to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to **extend the outdoor pool season** for at least four pools across the city to the end of September and to **offer outdoor swimming early morning hours** at least four pools across the city. **Expand lifeguard training and add lifeguard positions** at both indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities.
- **Expand pickleball options** throughout the city, including in Ward 3, while also pressing forward to **resurface tennis courts**.
- Our park system is consistently rated the best in the country. The District does, however, face maintenance challenges that diminish residents' ability to fully benefit from the centers for community and respite during these difficult times. **Increase funding for parks and recreation maintenance** to allow the Department of General Services (DGS) to keep our parks up to the level of excellence residents deserve.
- **Allocate at least \$6 million for circulation for DC Public Library.** E-circulation figures are rising quickly and the cost of providing that service increases each year.



Expand Supportive Services in Tandem with Affordable Housing

- **Sustain funding for programs that preserve and expand the affordable housing stock and increase access to rental housing and home ownership for those most in need**, including the Housing Production Trust Fund, the Home Purchase Assistance Program, and Permanent Supportive Housing.
- **Sustain critical programs that help vulnerable residents maintain their housing as they work toward economic independence**, including:
 - Fund the **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)** to provide targeted assistance to residents experiencing unforeseen emergency circumstances that would otherwise result in the loss of their home.
 - Maintain the current pilot **Flexible Rent Subsidy Program (DC Flex)**, in support of residents facing chronically precarious economic circumstances as they seek long-term employment and financial stability, and provide sufficient resources to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to evaluate the pilot's efficacy.
 - Preserve funding for the **Career Mobility Action Plan (Career MAP)**, in support of those who have transitioned out of homelessness and face a potential benefits cliff as they pursue employment capable of supporting their households, and provide sufficient resources to DHS to evaluate the program's efficacy.
- **Invest in robust supportive services to help vulnerable residents thrive in their homes and communities**, including:
 - Sustain the **local SNAP subsidy** and fund the **Give SNAP a Raise Amendment Act of 2022** to address food insecurity amid rising food costs.
 - Enhance funding for **community-based behavioral health services** and **adjust reimbursement rates** that have not kept pace with inflation for several years.
 - Fully fund the **School-Based Behavioral Health Program**, which removes barriers to children and youth accessing services, especially for underserved communities, improves classroom environments, reduces absenteeism, and improves response times to mental health crises.
 - Fund a new **Safe Commercial Corridor Hub along the Connecticut Avenue corridor in Van Ness** to connect residents to behavioral and mental health, housing, public safety, and other supportive services in an area where there is a high concentration of need for those services.
 - **Sustain funding for Access to Justice Grants** to ensure that tenants facing eviction have the necessary legal counsel to protect their rights, as well as receive complementary assistance related to family, health, financial and credit management, housing conditions, and other matters that could impact their ability to successfully maintain housing.

