

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs



Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
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Director

Before the

Committee on Housing and Community Development

Council of the District of Columbia

Thursday, April 23, 2015

Room 120
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004



Good morning Chairperson Bonds, members and staff of the Committee. I am Rev. Donald Isaac Sr., the Director of the Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs in the Executive Office of the Mayor. I am pleased to testify before you today on Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget, entitled "Pathways to the Middle Class". As Mayor Bowser recently testified before the Council, each agency plays a critical part in working to make sure our investments in education, economic opportunities, public safety, neighborhoods, environment, and infrastructure help District residents in all eight wards have reach pathways towards the middle class. Mayor Bower's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget submission will ensure that our agency and the entire government have the necessary staff and resources to help meet these ambitious goals.

This budget is the product of an unprecedented amount of outreach. The Mayor held three budget engagement forums that were attended by hundreds of residents who described how they would allocate an imaginary \$100 towards key issues facing the District. The Mayor's budget staff also met with Councilmembers and their staff to incorporate their priorities in the budget. Finally, the Mayor and her senior leadership met with numerous community groups as part of the development of this budget. All of this work on the front end gave us a much better budget as a result and we will continue that kind of outreach, transparency, and accountability—including these hearings led by the Council—to fine tune and implement the Fiscal Year 2016 budget.

Let me now briefly describe my plans for the office in the coming fiscal year. Under the Bowser Administration, the Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs provides constituent services and information to the District's faith community through programmatic activities and outreach.



The Office serves as a liaison between the Mayor, the religious community, and District government agencies.

The Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs is tasked with cultivating policies that engage community and faith-based organizations in the creation of citywide programs and initiatives across multiple disciplines. In addition, we will seek to establish and coordinate effective partnerships between DC government agencies and the faith community in addressing citywide issues such as:

- Preserving and producing more affordable housing units,
- Finding ways to better serve our homeless population,
- Supporting the Mayor Bowser's Boys and Men of Color Initiative, and,
- Building models of cooperation and collaboration around issues of public safety.

The Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs will continue collaborate with the Mayor's Interfaith Council to engage the city's faith-based community in an on-going dialogue around critical issues. Mayor Bowser plans to expand the reach into the faith community by injecting new life into the Mayor's Interfaith Council (MIC) and making sure that the group is diversified and represents all eight wards.

I would now like to discuss some of the efforts related to support of the homelessness population with performance data you requested at the agency's performance oversight hearing for which follow-up was requested.

Currently, the Office's work with families has generated the following outcomes:



- 325 Volunteers have expressed interest in the program from over 100 congregations/organizations,
- 100 Congregations have completed training,
- 8 Congregations have been matched with families,
- 9 New Matches will occur within the upcoming weeks, and
- 2 Congregations are in the process of forming their second Faith Mentor Team.

I will continue to keep you and your staff informed of the progress of this very promising program.

The resources allocated to the agency in the Mayor's proposed Fiscal Year 2016 budget will be critical in achieving our mission and helping to grow and preserve the middle class. The Council and this Committee, led by you Chairperson Bonds, have been key allies in this effort and I appreciate your continued efforts to ensure we operate efficiently and effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.

