

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Mayor's Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives



Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
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Before the

Committee on Housing and Community Development

Council of the District of Columbia

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John A. Wilson Building
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Good Afternoon Chairwoman Bonds, council members and Committee staff. I am Kimberly Bassett the Director of the Mayor's Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives (MOWPI). 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.

To achieve this, this budget was the product of an unprecedented amount of outreach. The direct feedback resulted in a more comprehensive budget 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 agency in the coming fiscal year.

MOWPI works in conjunction with the DC Commission for Women, other DC government agencies and an array of local and national partners to address the unique challenges faced by the women of Washington DC.. We use our resources and grassroots initiatives to both connect and assist women across a range of issues, and to offer strategic policy recommendations to the Mayor and other agencies when



appropriate. Every MOWPI initiative is structured to preserve and expand the middle class and to create more opportunities for the women of DC to thrive. Our top priorities are to Engage, Educate, and Empower.

The last time I testified before this Committee, we discussed our future initiatives to celebrate the many outstanding women in the District. You will be happy to know, these efforts have begun. Last month, The Mayor's Office on Women's Policy honored eight Washingtonian women at Washington Women of Excellence Awards ceremony. Nearly 200 people joined us, including Mayor Bowser, agency directors, community stakeholders, Council staff and our own Police Chief, Cathy Lanier.

We also hosted a State of the District social last month. This event brought together 75 Washingtonians prior to attending the Mayor's first State of the District Address. Attendees met other civic-minded Washingtonians to discuss their views on the state of the District for women and what they hoped to hear in Mayor's speech

Madam Chair, I am excited to say that these events are only a beginning to a promising year for the MOWPI. We will continue to empower the DC's women towards a path of sustainable socioeconomic prosperity. The following are just a few of the initiatives made possible by our funding:

- MOWPI is establishing a network of 150 socially engaged women from all 8 wards called SHE DC (She Helps Engage DC). This group will harness the collective



power of our many exceptional women of Washington to create greater visibility for the opportunities to serve and celebrate each other.

- MOWPI continues to meet with the Commission for Women every month. This commission consists of 21 movers and shakers from diverse professional backgrounds that provide a prominent voice in ensuring we are enacting effective policies and legislation that substantially impact DC women. Our new Commissioners will be sworn in tomorrow, April 24th.

- We are creating a Women on the Rise series—a quarterly engagement forum of speakers, leaders, and service organizations to provide training, inspiration and exposure to our many city services. This effort will place a spotlight on the private and public partnerships that are working to address critical women's issues. Our inaugural event will be held at the RISE Center in Ward 8.

- MOWPI is planning a DC Girls for Girls Conference for later in the year. This event will bring together 14-18 year old high school girls from all eight wards. They will engage in a leadership speaker series covering contemporary issues impacting today's DC youth: social media, conflict resolution and self-esteem. These speakers will use positive themes to reinforce celebrating our differences, striving for personal achievement and working collectively to support each other.



- Lastly, MOWPI will organize a Women's Policy Conference to engage our national thought leaders and elected officials. This conference will feature inspirational women leaders sharing the best practices for turning social and personal problems into opportunities.

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

Most importantly, the Mayor's proposed budget presents a strong vision for MOWPI and the women of Washington, DC. It builds on our achievements of our women leaders and challenges us to be a pathway to economic and personal success. On behalf of MOWPI and the Commission on Women, we will do just that. We will continue to reach out to women in need, operate as a resource for the services in our city, and provide solution-oriented policies that address a range of issues impacting local women. We will not rest until every woman in the District has the access and ability to reach her full potential! Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.

