

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



FY2015 Performance Oversight Hearing on
Office on African Affairs

Testimony of
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Before the
Committee on Housing & Community Development
Anita Bonds, Chairperson
Council of the District of Columbia

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John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
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Good morning, Chairwoman Bonds, members of the Committee on Housing and Community Development and members of the public. My name is Mamadou Samba and I'm honored to be testifying before your Committee today for the first time as the director of the Mayor's Office on African Affairs, having recently been appointed by Mayor Bowser to serve in her new administration.

I am originally from Dakar, Senegal – a sister city of Washington DC since 2006 – in West Africa. Having previously served as a Commissioner on the DC Commission on African Affairs and as a Capital City Fellow for the agency, among other roles, I continue to be a strong advocate for the diverse African diaspora communities in Washington DC. I'm honored to have been chosen by Mayor Bowser to lead the Office and look forward to working to advance the Mayor's vision of creating a more inclusive government so that all of our residents, including our immigrant communities, have a chance at joining our middle class. The Office will work to advance a number of the Mayor's priorities including helping more community members find better job opportunities, affordable housing, and safer neighborhoods.

As you know, in recent years, the District's population continues to grow, welcoming an average of 1,200 new residents each month. A recent Census [report](#), released in October of last year, reveals that the Washington DC metropolitan area is home to one of the largest African foreign-born populations in the country, estimated around 161,000 residents or more than 13 percent of our region's foreign-born population, second only to the New York City metropolitan area. . Washington continues to be a preferred destination for Ethiopians, who account for almost one of every five black African immigrants, followed by African-born residents from Nigeria, Sierra



Leone, Ghana, and Cameroon. These countries together with Liberia, Somalia, Guinea, Sudan, and Eritrea account for three-quarters of the African immigrant population in Washington, DC. The African immigrant population nationwide has grown steadily, from about 80,000 in 1970 to 1.6 million today nationwide, but the rate has accelerated and the highest growth has occurred in the past decade. Like me, many African-born residents have chosen our city as their second home, which makes it even more important that as a government we put in place the necessary resources and tools to allow them to succeed and fully integrate.

The mission of the Mayor's Office on African Affairs (OAA) is to ensure that the District's growing African immigrant community is aware of and has access to the wide range of services offered by the District of Columbia government. We do so by designing and implementing a multitude of programs and workshops targeting specific needs and sectors. These include health education outreach programs, capacity building and technical assistance workshops for African business entrepreneurs and nonprofits organizations, multicultural awareness, language access outreach, and youth development programs. In addition, the Office on African Affairs administers a community grant intended to fund non-profit organizations whose programs reflect the Mayor's priorities and provide culturally and linguistically targeted services and resources to the District's African community. In FY 15, consistent with previous years, eight community-based organizations received funding. For example, The African Women Cancer Awareness (AWCAA) Association, a recipient of an OAA community grant in FY14 & FY15, provides free cancer screening, education awareness, and resources to low income, and underserved African women in the District. Similarly, other recipients provide computer and job training services, language access support, and promote multicultural awareness.



Under the Bowser Administration, the Office will work to better collaborate and partner with community leaders, private and non-profit organizations to provide services and information aimed at augmenting access, raising awareness and improving the lives of the District's diverse African communities. We are particularly excited about furthering collaboration with other District agencies to help raise awareness of issues faced by Africans, increase cultural competency and help District government agencies and staff better understand and deal with the unique, rich, yet diverse community. But perhaps more importantly, the African community is even more excited about this partnership and is increasingly taking more active roles in helping the agency enhance customer service, better tailor our programs and workshops, and improve community and inter-community relations.

As we near the end of the seventh week of the Bowser Administration, we continue to evaluate program effectiveness, pull together plans for the rest of FY15 and prepare for FY16 – all the while continuing to engage with the community, other government agencies and stakeholders. As you may have heard, the Mayor has deemed “Fresh Start February” all about engagement. She is encouraging DC residents, including the African community, to join her to discuss priorities for the FY16 budget. The Mayor is hosting Budget Engagement Forums that are designed to be interactive discussions with DC residents to help shape budget priorities. The forums are scheduled for Thursday, February 19 at Wilson High School; Saturday, February 21 at Anacostia High School; and Monday, February 23 at Dunbar High School. Public input in government is an important priority of the Mayor's, which is why she is ensuring these forums happen before she puts together the FY16 budget. The Mayor also held an open house at the John A. Wilson



Building earlier in the month. And she met with residents during our Office's open house last week. Both were opportunities for the public to see where and how the government works and to meet and greet with the new administration.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before this Committee and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

