

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Senior Advisor**



**Fiscal Year 2021-2022
Performance Oversight Hearing**

**Testimony of
Beverly Perry
Senior Advisor**

**Before the
Council of the District of Columbia
Committee on Housing and Executive Administration
The Honorable Anita Bonds, Chairperson**

February 25, 2022
Virtual Hearing
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good morning, Chairperson Bonds, members of the Committee on Housing and Executive Administration, staff, and District residents. For the record, I am Beverly Perry, Senior Advisor to Mayor Muriel Bowser.

The Office of the Senior Advisor includes a cluster of three offices: the Office of Federal and Regional Affairs (OFRA), the Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs (OPLA), and the Office of the Secretary (OS). Today, my testimony will focus primarily on OFRA and OPLA, as the Secretary provided direct testimony before this committee earlier this month. Together, we interface with local, regional, federal, and international partners to benefit Washington, DC.

I am happy to appear before you today to discuss the role of the Office of the Senior Advisor in executing the vision of the Bowser Administration for Fiscal year 2021 and to date in 2022.

Before I discuss the work of the agencies, I have great pleasure to share the fulfillment of one of Mayor Bowser's visions executed by my Chief of Staff, Garrett Lee. Medallions for each class of the DC Hall of Fame were inlaid on stars in the walkway from the street to the Carnegie Library.

OFFICE OF FEDERAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS

OFRA, directed by Eugene Kinlow, is Washington's primary conduit to Congress, the White House, federal agencies, neighboring states, and local jurisdictions.

OFRA is comprised of a team of seven full-time employees, including the director. The most of OFRA's work is with the Federal sector to educate and monitor issues especially with Congress and the White House pertaining to budget and grant funding. For example, when Congress enacted the CARES ACT, classifying Washington, DC as a territory, in effect, shortchanging us \$755 Million, OFRA was instrumental in making sure that the city was made whole. Subsequently, when Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), to provide additional aide to counter the continued impact of COVID-19, OFRA worked diligently to assure that Washington, DC received the designation as a state in every title of the Bill, which also required defensive tactics to prevent the inclusion of language that would have limited our local budget spending to FY21 levels for all programs, and would have prevented the District from spending any of its COVID relief funding in FY22, as if we were a federal agency subject to the continuous resolution restrictions.

In addition to overcoming the hurdles brought about by our lack of statehood on the federal funding front, OFRA celebrated the opening of Franklin Park in FY21. This premier urban park has the most significant Green Space in downtown Washington, DC, and is a historic destination with a new face for the District, as well as for the National Park Service (NPS). This landmark resulted from five years of negotiations with NPS, including statutory approved by Congress. The newly renovated Franklin Park reflects the history, culture, and grandeur of our nation's capital and makes an excellent DC location for film, television, and commercial productions and offers a beautiful downtown playground for children.

On the local level, OFRA works with regional partners, at the county and state level and manages the City's relationships with national associations, including the US Conference of Mayors and the National Association of Counties.

Statehood

The Washington, DC Statehood Office is housed within the OFRA group, and as noted in our last oversight hearing, this office has made great

strides in moving the ball down the field towards full democracy for the residents of Washington DC. We have had many firsts including the first-time passage of “Washington, D.C. Admission Act” in the United States House of Representatives, as well as having secured the unprecedented number of cosponsors of S. 51 in the Senate following a second time ever Senate hearing in June 2021.

Although our in-person interactions have been restricted during the 2 years of the pandemic, the vigorous efforts of our office have not ceased. In fact, the awareness of DC Statehood remarkably increased nationwide; in March 2021, during our statehood educational campaign. Twitter was flooded with #DCstatehood hashtags and trended third nationwide. This new awareness added fuel to the movement and generated global headlines.

In FY21, using the data from research conducted in FY20, and working with veteran groups from DC and our target states, we created and published several videos and other digital ads. We launched a six-week digital ad campaign which reached over 22 million people through a program that ran across print, and digital outlets, including web and video ads across Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Our message educated people across America, especially targeted markets in Arizona and Maine, about the lack of

voting representation for the predominantly African America, population residing in DC.

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

The Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs (OPLA), directed by Ronan Gulstone, serves as the Mayor's primary liaison to the Council of the District of Columbia; facilitating the exchange of information and offering intermediary advice on issues with the Council. With a team of 10 full-time employees, including the director, OPLA manages the Mayor's legislative agenda, including contracts, legislation, nominations, and land dispositions. The OPLA team works diligently with agencies to refine issues, develop hearing testimony, and prepare witnesses for public hearings and roundtables. Further, OPLA works closely with agencies to finalize and publish statutorily required reports and rulemakings.

FY21 continued to be an unprecedented year of challenges related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As such, OPLA led efforts to collaborate with the Council on both instituting and phasing out legislative safeguards that were associated with the District's public health emergency and public emergency

declarations; as well as, ensured that measures remained in place to protect the health, safety, and well-being of our residents.

Moving forward, OPLA is committed to continuing to work with the Council and Executive agencies to provide detailed feedback on legislative proposals and initiatives put forward by the Council and advocates; ensuring that the Council has all the information it needs to enact robust, sound, and workable legislation.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

The Office of the Secretary (OS), led by Secretary Kimberly Bassett, who acts, in effect, as the Secretary of State for the District of Columbia, is also in my portfolio. This team of 28 full-time employees serves as the official resource for protocol, legal records, the repository of the District of Columbia's history, and the ceremonial recognition agency for the public, governments, and the international community.

As noted earlier, Secretary Bassett shared the details of the performance of her office earlier this month, so I will not repeat the details, but for the record, I applaud the success of the Office of the Secretary.

CONCLUSION

Chairperson Bonds, the Office of the Senior Advisor is working meticulously to achieve the maximum benefit from our federal relationships, to make Statehood a reality, to marshal legislation and regulations through the Council that reflect the Mayor's vision and increase the quality of life for DC residents, while continuing to provide the best possible assistance to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your leadership and support. We appreciate the opportunity to share our accomplishments and plans and look forward to continuing to work with this Committee. This concludes my prepared statement, and I would be happy to answer questions.