

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Fiscal Year 2021 - 2022
Performance Oversight Hearing

**Testimony of
John J. Falcicchio
Chief of Staff to Mayor Muriel Bowser**

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

February 25, 2022
12:00PM



Introduction

Good morning, Chairperson Bonds, members of the DC Council, council staff and residents joining us from home.

My name is John Falcicchio and I am proud to serve as Chief of Staff to Mayor Muriel Bowser. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Mayor and her administration to discuss the operations and work of the Executive Office of the Mayor.

As we come up on the two year anniversary of the District's COVID-19 response, we are now focused on a strong recovery. And we are able to do so because of you—the residents of Washington, DC. Last year, you answered the call when Mayor Bowser launched the DC COVID-19 Community Corps, and together, we went to thousands of doors across DC in three Days of Action to share information about vaccination. Over 2,000 volunteer shifts were completed, including a guest appearance our very own Dr. Anthony Fauci. Following this model, Mayor Bowser launched the DC COVID-19 Community Corps Ambassador Corps. We partnered with seven community groups in Ward 7 and Ward 8 and knocked on over 250,000 doors with 250 Ambassadors. Today, we have a vaccination rate of 72.2% and continue to work to ensure every resident gets their booster doses through our COVID Centers in each ward. We will continue to prioritize an equitable recovery



to the pandemic, that ensures our residents can continue to get the fair shot they deserve.

So as we look to next few months, and near the end of Mayor Bowser's second term, we also celebrate the promises kept and progress made on key priorities.

In just the past few weeks, for example, we've:

- Opened a new grocery store in Ward 8.
- We broke ground on a new Lidl at Skyland and announced that we will use eminent domain to bring a second new grocery store to Ward 7, in our continued effort to expand healthy food access East of the River.
- We celebrated tech jobs at MLK Gateway in Historic Anacostia and announced that eight restaurants will open or expand in Wards 7 and 8.
- We also opened the new 801 East Men's Shelter at the St Elizabeths East campus, which is going to transform the way we deliver services to men who need help getting back into permanent housing.
- And just last week, Mayor Bowser broke ground on the new Cedar Hill Regional Medical Center, GW Health at the St Elizabeths East campus to make good on a promise to deliver a new hospital East of the River.



And this is just some of the work Mayor Bowser and the EOM team is moving forward. Team EOM is instrumental in ensuring our residents are engaged in their government and aware of the programs and services critical to their daily lives. To that end, our EOM agencies work tirelessly every day to communicate with the public and ensure Washingtonians in all eight wards are heard and seen.

I will now highlight the work done by our various EOM agencies in the past year. The **Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services (MOCRS)**, led by Director Julia Irving, works 24 hours a day, seven days a week to address neighborhood concerns and connect residents to government services. Recently, the team has been particularly focused on neighborhood sweeps to ensure critical issues, such as missed trash and leaf collections, illegal dumping, snow shoveling, and infrastructure requests were addressed by agencies. The MOCRS have also assisted with Building Blocks and ONSE initiatives to ensure place-based issues are resolved in the priority blocks. MOCRS has also worked closely with DC Health to assist at our walk up testing and vaccination sites and to get the word out about the COVID Centers.

The **Communications Office**, led by Director LaToya Foster, ensures that our many policy initiatives, agency services, and public safety messages are shared with



the public through broadcast, print, and digital media. The Communications Team has continued to work tirelessly through all the ups and downs of the past several years. For almost two years to the date, the team has been fully activated overseeing the Joint Information Center, and have conducted over 150 situational update press conferences. The **Mayor's Correspondence Unit**, led by Director Jim Slattery, helps to ensure constituent letters, emails, the ANC portal, and list serve messages are responded to in a timely manner.

The **Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments (MOTA)**, led by Director Steve Walker, has been charged with implementing strategies to increase transparency in the appointments process and filling vacant appointment positions. On MOTA.DC.GOV, all executive and excepted service positions are posted, and I encourage anyone watching who wants to join our team to please check out the different opportunities available. MOTA has appointed and reappointed 618 boards and commission members.

The **Mayor's Office of General Counsel (OGC)**, led by Betsy Cavendish, provides legal guidance and counsel as we implement the Mayor's policies and initiatives. OGC, working with MOTA and the Office of Government Ethics and the Office of Open Government, carries out the Mayor's vision of government



service as a public trust by providing trainings to hundreds of new employees and Board and Commission members. OGC also provides ethics advice and serves as the liason between the Mayor's Office, the Auditor, and the Inspector General.

The **Mayor's Office of Policy and Innovation (MOPi)**, leads on the Mayor's top policy initiatives, including supporting many of our affordable housing initiatives.

Last June, Mayor Bowser and Bloomberg Philanthropies announced a new partnership aimed at transforming the digital landscape within DC Government.

Along with five other cities from around the world, Washington, DC will receive a three-year grant to launch an innovation team (i-team) which will focus on leveraging data and digital technologies to further improve public services and provide a better digital experience for residents. EOM is in the process of hiring a Director and additional staff to create an expanded Mayor's Office of Policy and Innovation.

The **Mayor's Office of Scheduling and Advance**, led by Director Jason Fink, works diligently to ensure Mayor Bowser can engage residents in all 8 wards, including ensuring the Mayor can engage in virtual meetings and tapings as well as in-person events.



The **Mayor's Office of Community Affairs**, led by Director Jackie Reyes-Yanes, works with our constituency focused offices. The MOCA cluster includes many critical offices, many which have already testified. I would like to highlight that this year we will be adding two new offices, the Mayor's Office of Caribbean Community Affairs and the Mayor's Office of the Blind, Bindeaf, and Hard of Hearing; in adding these offices, we will be better able to serve these communities and ensure they are connected to District services.

CLOSING

EOM will continue to remain focused on the recovery efforts related to coronavirus, while overseeing and implementing critical initiatives and programs our residents depend on.

I am proud of our EOM agencies for all their hard work during the pandemic and how quickly they adapted their programs to continue engaging residents in all eight wards. I know our teams are eager to support residents and businesses in making DC the District of Comebacks in 2022 and we look forward to that work.

Thank you, Chairperson Bonds I am happy to address any questions you may have at this time.

