

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**



Fiscal Year 2024
Performance Oversight Hearing
On
The Mayor's Office on Caribbean Community Affairs

Testimony of
Natalee S. Snider
Executive Director

Before
Committee on Facilities
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Janeese Lewis George, Chairperson

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 123
February 11, 2025 at 9:30am

Good morning Chairperson Lewis George, members of the Committee, staff of the Committee on Facilities, and members of the public. I am Natalee S. Snider, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office on Caribbean Community Affairs, also known as MOCCA.

Today, I am pleased to testify before the Committee about MOCCA's accomplishments during FY24 and FY25 to date.

First, I want to thank Mayor Muriel Bowser for her leadership and honor her commitment to establishing the District's historic Office on Caribbean Affairs. It is truly an honor for me and my team at MOCCA to serve the Caribbean community. The Office on Caribbean Affairs celebrated our two year anniversary on June 1, 2024. Our mission remains the same: to connect with members of the Caribbean Diaspora in Washington, DC from all 8 wards and link members of the community to the many services offered by the District government. Our office promotes and uplifts Caribbean culture in the District by highlighting the culinary, artistic, professional, historical and business contributions of our community.

During FY24, we were able to double our outreach and engagement efforts through our office's social media accounts, to include Facebook, Instagram, X, formerly known as Twitter, and LinkedIn, using a multi-pronged approach to help leverage the flow of information to as many Caribbean constituents as possible. Across all social media platforms, we grew followers daily, with an average of 700 to 1,100 impressions each day and as many as 2,000 to 6,000 impressions looking at a single post.

We continue to share "the Caribbean Connection" newsletter monthly and weekly emails to reach as many Caribbean Washingtonians as possible.

We've updated MOCCA's website platform to allow all District residents to learn more about the Director, the office, and how to stay connected to our programs, policies, and calendar for the upcoming year.

We continue to be excited by the number of residents interested in working with the Advisory Committee to the Office on Caribbean Community Affairs. We currently have 11 community focused Caribbean Washingtonians leading subcommittees in Housing, Health, Education, Employment, Social Services, Public Safety, Economic Development/Business/Non-Profit, & Cultural issues.

With over 1,151 Caribbean connections made, we continue to build strong relationships and strategic partnerships with several associations, embassies, places of worship, student organizations and cultural non-profits such as the Bahamian American Association Washington Mid-Atlantic Region, the Grenada Cultural and Social Association, and the University of the District of Columbia Caribbean Students Association. These partnerships were all made in an effort to connect with as many stakeholders from the Caribbean Diaspora as possible and learn about the pressing issues and challenges they face and how to connect them with the resources provided by Mayor Muriel Bowser, the District government, and MOCCA.

Our current community outreach and engagement efforts continue to build a strong foundation that in turn builds trust and visibility within the Caribbean community. MOCCA is committed to supporting Mayor Muriel Bowser's priorities especially as they relate to public safety, and economic development. We want to make sure that District residents and business owners are aware of resources and opportunities to stay and build a future in the District.

MOCCA has promoted and connected over 500 Caribbean residents and business owners to resources including:

- Mayor Muriel Bowser's 2025 Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program "Banking on the Future", to connect Caribbean young people with careers in finance and equip them with financial literacy skills.
- Mayor Muriel Bowser and the National League of Cities National Housing Summit, to connect Caribbean constituents with information dedicated to housing challenges and solutions.
- The Metropolitan Police Department's CameraConnect DC program, to help Caribbean business owners and residents help investigators to easily locate cameras nearest to an incident in the course of an investigation, emergency event, or emergency response.
- SERVE DC's Safeway Feast of Sharing, to share resources such as free food and clothing during the winter holiday season with Caribbean residents.
- DMPED's Special Events Relief Fund, to help plan outdoor events that celebrate DC Caribbean Culture.

Connecting the Caribbean community to resources helps the community to not only live but thrive in DC.

The District is home to members of the Caribbean Diaspora hailing from at least 33 Caribbean Island Nations. To celebrate our diversity and culture, MOCCA attended and promoted several Caribbean Island Nation independence celebrations, highlighted entrepreneurship, and artists, in the following ways:

- To promote the culinary industry, we hosted a Flavors of the Caribbean night in Ward 8 with Bammy's A Modern Caribbean Restaurant. The event highlighted a fusion of Caribbean spices and flavors in Washington, DC and, to promote our artistic abilities, we hosted the event with several small local business owners including the popular Caribbean musical group Image Band and members of the D.C. Caribbean Carnival the Second Annual Caribbean Cultural Concert at Freedom Plaza.
- To promote our artistic achievements, we partnered with EventsDC and several cultural small businesses and non-profits such as Pine and Ginja, CariBeat, and Caribbean photographers to put on the first Caribbean Art All Night event at Carnegie Library with over 5,000 attendees.

In FY25, MOCCA will continue our outreach and engagement efforts to hear directly from Caribbean constituents and will continue the process of working with Caribbean stakeholders such as the Institute of Caribbean Studies to conduct research on best practices engaging the vast culturally diverse Caribbean Diaspora in the District.

In closing, I continue to be honored to have the opportunity to lead MOCCA and am grateful to Mayor Muriel Bowser, the Council, and advocates that have placed their trust in this office.

Chairperson Lewis George and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering any questions.