

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Hearing
The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

Testimony of
Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor

Before the
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairman

April 22, 2026
Time: 9:00 a.m.
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 500
Washington, DC 20004

Good morning, Chairperson Pinto, members, and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I am Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, and I am testifying today on Mayor Muriel Bowser's proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Budget, Grow DC.

Mayor Bowser's proposed FY27 Budget, Grow DC, was formulated with three key considerations in mind: how to drive growth in our economy to fund the services and programs residents count on, how to keep families in DC and attract new residents, and how to create a business environment that draws new investment and creates new jobs. We are navigating a pivotal moment that demands a more deliberate approach to growth. The federal dollars that once expanded our programs in unprecedented ways have been exhausted, and federal workforce reductions have introduced new pressures on our economy and commercial corridors.

That being said, it's important to be clear: DC is still growing. Revenues have slowed, but the city maintains a strong financial foundation on which we can build by making the kinds of strategic and targeted decisions that will allow DC to continue growing while delivering the high-quality services our residents depend on.

And the work of the Public Safety and Justice cluster is critical to ensuring that our city continue to grow and thrive because nothing is more foundational than ensuring the safety of our residents and visitors.

Before discussing the investment that Mayor Bowser has prioritized across the PSJ cluster, I want to say thank you to the more than 10,000 hard working District employees of the PSJ cluster agencies and the PSJ front office who show up every day committed and determined to support our mission. I want them to know we deeply appreciate their hard work. Together, we have made significant progress in making our city safer and a place where residents and visitors across all eight wards can thrive.

To date in calendar year 2026, we reduced violent crime by five percent and total crime by 25 percent. I'm also pleased to report there has been a nearly 34 percent reduction in gun violence year to date.

Before I discuss our FY27 budget, I also want to reflect on the investments made in public safety and justice during Mayor Bowser's tenure which includes increased pay for police, firefighters, and 911 call takers; equipped all Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers with body-worn cameras; upgraded the District's emergency operation center which serves as our command center for no-notice and planned events coordinated by the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency; opened the District's Real Time Crime Center; launched reforms at the DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) to improve patient care including the Nurse Triage Line, Whole Blood, Hands on Heart, and third-party ambulances; expanded Safe Passage to help students get to and from school safely; and opened the READY Center which is operated by the Department of Corrections to support returning residents with job training, education, and social services. The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement turns ten this year; the Office of Human Rights continues its work to eradicate discrimination, advance equal opportunity, and protect human rights through enforcement, outreach, and proactive compliance; the Department of Forensic Sciences and Office of Chief Medical Examiner are staffed by high performing scientists who worked miraculously in the days after the plane crash in January 2025; and under the Mayor's leadership, we ended court oversight of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services.

These investments have yielded significant achievements and outcomes throughout our public safety and justice ecosystem including driving down crime to its lowest levels in decades, in calendar year 2025 MPD closed homicide cases at the highest rate in 13 years, the Mayor has funded the installation of more than 30,000 cameras as part of the popular private security camera program managed by the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants; she created investments which has FEMS doubling cardiac survival score to 44.3% which ties the District for #1 in the nation; and made investments in the Office of Unified Communications which has 97% of all 911 calls are answered in 20 seconds or less.

Under Mayor Bowser's leadership and with her investments in our first responder agencies, the District's incident management capabilities and contingency planning have repeatedly demonstrated to our residents, the country, and world our ability to surge services in an emergency. As the nature of threats, hazards, and incident response has changed during the past 12 years, the District has continuously evolved to meet the needs of our residents and visitors while maintaining critical relationships with our local, regional, and federal government partners, the private sector, and our community partners.

In FY27, the Mayor is making a number of key investments in public safety. These investments include:

- \$350M over six years to keep our fire trucks and ambulances modern and functional;
- \$46M to improve youth rehabilitation facilities, including new housing units to expand capacity;
- \$27M to build a new fire station as part of the RFK campus redevelopment; and
- \$75M to support a public-private partnership to build a new DC Jail.

I'll now turn to my office. The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, DMPSJ, provides oversight of 12 District agencies and DC National Guard to ensure they are efficiently and effectively meeting their core, critical agency mission and functions; working together across our government to advance public safety and justice priorities; and coordinating with our local, regional, and federal partners to enhance the safety of our city.

DMPSJ provides operational and strategic support to agencies within our cluster and across government to reduce crime and increase safety, Mayor Bowser's number one priority. We are currently offering strategic and operational support through the day-to-day management of the Safe Commercial Corridors Grant Program, Safe Passage/Safe Blocks, the Safe and Secure DC Nonprofit Fund, Youth Response Team, multiagency nightlife taskforce, multiagency public safety taskforce, resource pop-ups, Peace Walks, and more.

The Mayor's proposed FY27 budget for DMPSJ is \$12.5 million which includes 27 FTEs. significant portion of DMPSJ's proposed FY27 budget is funding for the Safe Passage/Safe Blocks

program. Safe Passage is designed to ensure that students travel to and from school safely – a lack of safety increases absenteeism and impacts a student’s overall learning.

Fiscal Year 2026 was DMPSJ’s third year of operational management of the Safe Passage/Safe Blocks program. My team coordinates and manages the program, including the evaluation of its effectiveness, measuring outcomes, and implementing the new training requirements in the Safe Passage Training and School Engagement Amendment Act of 2025. Through distribution of four community grants in FY26, more than 200 Safe Passage Ambassadors currently serve in 12 priority areas covering approximately 122 predetermined routes. DMPSJ utilizes daily calls with law enforcement to address incidents in real time, and unusual incidents are reported within 24 hours. This past year, we again deployed Safe Passage Ambassadors to key posts during summer school 2025, Winter Break, and Spring Break. As of April 20, Safe Passage Ambassadors reported 587 unusual incidents this school year, helping DMPSJ improve safety as our students commute to school. We also held monthly meetings with school leadership to provide updates on the program.

I also want to highlight during Spring Break 2026 two Safe Passage Community Based Organizations hosted student programming. Safe Passage Ambassadors from Collaborative Solutions for Communities offered a program that served approximately 30 youth across two sites, focused on digital storytelling, conflict resolution, and violence prevention. Youth participated in workshops and created anti-violence media content. Safe Passage Ambassadors from the Center for Nonprofit Advancement Programming served approximately 50 youth across two sites. They equipped youth with essential skills to manage conflicts, build resilience, and explore entrepreneurial opportunities that foster financial independence and personal growth. Safe Passage Ambassadors also staffed routes during the afternoons at select libraries, recreation centers, and Metro spots and around the Waterfront and Navy Yard neighborhoods in conjunction with the teen programming offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation at the Randall Recreation Center.

As Mayor Bowser shared during her presentation to Council, there were several tough programmatic choices made to balance the FY27 budget. For PSJ, the focus had to be on protecting and preserving core public safety and justice services in an extremely difficult budget. Our largest and most critical asset is our people and continued lower staffing complements meant the need to

prioritize additional funds for sustained elevated overtime costs. To support some of those costs with funds within the cluster, we were not able identify continued funding in the proposed FY27 budget for the Safe Commercial Corridors Grant Program or the Safe and Secure DC Nonprofit Fund. Both of these programs have been impactful in helping us to increase safety in our city and we deeply appreciate the partnership we have with our grantees.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge the Directors of the Public Safety and Justice cluster. The team Mayor Bowser assembled, and I have had the honor to lead – they are the best of the best in their respective fields. They are committed to collaboration inside our cluster and amongst their agency peers, which brought us to one of the strongest years in public safety and justice. I am deeply grateful to them for their leadership, commitment and deep care for their teams and for the residents and visitors of the District.

Thank you for your time. I will answer any questions you may have.