

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining



Public Oversight Hearing on the Performance of the
Office of Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining
Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026 to Date

Testimony of
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Before the

Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
The Honorable Anita Bonds, Chairperson

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9:30 AM
In-Person Hearing
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Good morning, Chairperson Bonds, members of the Committee on Executive Administration and Labor, and staff. My name is E. Lindsey Maxwell II, and I am honored to serve the residents of the District of Columbia as the Director of the Office of Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining, also referred to as OLRCB. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on OLRCB's performance and activities during fiscal year 2025 and the first quarter of fiscal year 2026.

Agency Structure

OLRCB is organized into three units: (1) Negotiations and Contract Administration, (2) Litigation, and (3) Administrative Support.

The **Negotiations and Contract Administration** unit is responsible for negotiating collective bargaining agreements (CBAs), the process by which wages, benefits and other terms and conditions of employment for unionized employees are established; training management representatives on labor law and policy and the provisions of each working conditions CBA as applicable to their respective agencies; and conducting "impact and effects" bargaining over subjects that are statutorily deemed management rights.

OLRCB's **Litigation** unit is focused on initiating, prosecuting, defending and monitoring a wide range of litigation activity, for and on behalf of agencies under the personnel authority of the Mayor. This litigation activity consists primarily of grievance arbitrations, unfair labor practice complaints, enforcement actions, and arbitration review requests before the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB). Litigation activity also flows from Interest Arbitrations, Negotiability

Appeals and similar actions that directly arise from the negotiation activities carried out by OLRCB.

The **Administrative** unit is responsible for providing general agency support and conducting research and analysis necessary to support management's position during negotiations and litigation. This unit also supports training to agencies regarding the labor relations program and the legal obligations which emanate from D.C. law, policy and the CBAs. It is also responsible for supporting the Negotiations and Litigation units, providing human resources, contracting and procurement, and other related customer and operational services for the Agency. Finally, this unit supports the Negotiated Employee Assistance Home Purchase Program (NEAHP), which assists unionized District employees seeking to buy homes within the District with closing costs and down payments. OLRCB partners with the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Greater Washington Urban League to assist with administering the program to eligible unionized District employees.

In FY 2025 and FY 2026 to date, OLRCB staff includes 20 Full Time Equivalent positions (FTEs) and of those positions, 11 are designated for attorneys, eight are for administrative support, and one position is designated for the Director. Attorneys are directly involved in carrying out the primary mission of the Office by providing advice, counsel, and representation to agencies on all matters concerning labor relations. In addition, attorneys actively negotiate CBAs with representatives of the various labor organizations representing District government employees, and they litigate matters across from the unions and on behalf of the Executive.

The administrative staff supports the Director and attorneys and assists in carrying out the Office's customer service and other District mandates. Their role is critical in the Office's efforts

to administer an efficient labor relations program, as they are often the first point of contact with the employees, management, and labor representatives with whom we interact daily.

Agency Mission

The District of Columbia Government's unionized workforce represents approximately 27,000 people, or 75 percent of its employees. In that regard, OLRCB serves as the Executive's principal management advocate in administering the District government's labor relations program for agencies under the Mayor's personnel authority by negotiating CBAs and representing management in related labor litigation. It is my sincere belief that positive employee and labor relations is essential to creating a healthy and productive work environment. This is why OLRCB's approach to administering the labor relations program is to do so in a manner that enhances efficiency of government operations while also recognizing and respecting employee rights. In FY25, we continued our tradition of regularly meeting and engaging with labor leaders to discuss and develop consensus on a broad range of topics.

OLRCB maintains an open-door policy with direct lines of communication between local labor presidents and me to facilitate a collective approach when addressing labor relations matters in the District of Columbia. For example, I have continued to host individual meetings with our labor leaders, which we call "Coffee with the Director." These informal meetings are held in my office and are designed to address Labor's concerns, communicate the Mayor's and/or the City Administrator's initiatives and sentiments, and jointly collaborate on problem-solving as necessary. OLRCB has also partnered with the D.C. Department of Human Resources to engage Management and Labor through site visits at different agencies under the Mayor's personnel authority. We use these site visits to educate the executive teams and upper management and the

local union leaders with members at that agency on labor and employee relations. We also carve out time to meet separately—OLRCB with the union leaders—to discuss agency-specific concerns and areas for conciliation. I believe these opportunities to roll up our sleeves and sit side-by-side with our Labor partners advance productive relationships with them.

FY 2025 and FY 2026 to date Activities

Contract negotiations

Because collective bargaining compensation agreements are, by law, effective for a minimum of three years, the work of the Negotiations section is cyclical in nature, assuming contracts are reopened, negotiated, completed and implemented as expected. This often results in either a period of numerous completed contracts or a period where the majority of our contracts are simultaneously being re-negotiated, approved and implemented on schedule.

OLRCB administers and negotiates 25 separate compensation agreements. I am pleased to announce that during FY25 OLRCB negotiated the successor CBA between Metropolitan Police and the Fraternal Order of Police.

This disciplined approach proved especially important as much of this negotiation cycle unfolded during the District's FY25 budget freeze, which required heightened fiscal coordination and restraint. In that environment, OLRCB ensured that bargaining strategies remained aligned with budget realities, structured agreements responsibly, and conserved District resources while preserving labor stability and operational continuity. The past year's work with the unions is evidence of the Mayor's continued commitment to the District workforce to provide first-class compensation and benefits to District government employees.

Litigation Activities

Litigation resources in OLRCB are used in three major areas: arbitration, unfair labor practice cases, and representation issues before PERB. The litigation of arbitrations and unfair labor practice complaints consumes the bulk of OLRCB's litigation resources. Each attorney in the office carries a litigation caseload and is responsible for all related investigations, pleadings, hearings, evidentiary matters and appeals to the PERB.

Research, Training and Citywide Initiatives

From the Mayor and the City Administrator to agency leadership, District government management recognizes the importance of continued learning opportunities in labor law and policy and building and maintaining positive—and at times collaborative—relationships with Labor. In FY 2024, OLRCB began to increase and expand Labor training we provide to District management employees. That momentum continued in FY 2025, with a measurable increase in both the number of sessions offered and the number of participants served. During FY 2025, we facilitated training sessions that provided labor law and policy information, best practices, and practical guidance to more than 200 management, supervisory, and executive suite District government employees.

In addition to these sessions, OLRCB continues to host quarterly Labor Liaison Forums, where we workshop common labor-management challenges and provide guidance on emerging trends affecting agencies across the District. These forums create a space for proactive problem-solving and allow agencies to address recurring issues before they escalate into formal disputes.

In FY 2025, we also facilitated labor relations trainings focused on “Managing in a Unionized Environment,” “Progressive Discipline,” “Understanding Douglas Factors” and

“Weingarten Rights,” equipping managers with the tools necessary to address performance and conduct issues lawfully, confidently, and consistently.

FY 2026 and beyond

In FY 2026 and beyond, OLRCB is focused on refining and optimizing its internal processes and systems to ensure we continue delivering efficient, consistent, and strategic representation to District government agencies. As the complexity of labor negotiations and litigation increases, we are committed to strengthening our infrastructure so that our service delivery remains responsive and forward-looking. Our long-term objective is to position OLRCB as the District government’s premier labor and employment legal resource, operating with the specialization, agility, and strategic depth of a boutique labor practice within government.

In closing, as we continue to provide high quality legal services to District government agencies, OLRCB’s well-known proactive and collaborative approach in working with our labor partners will remain a constant.

This level of collaboration with labor speaks volumes to the unyielding effort that we have put into this work. It is my belief that our ongoing investment in strengthening, and renewing trust with our labor partners will continue to pay off in FY26 and beyond in ways that we can all be proud of.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I am eager to answer any questions that you may have.