Remarks for Public Employee Relations Board Oversight Hearing
DC Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
Executive Director Royale Simms
February 26, 2026

Good afternoon, Chairperson Bonds, and members of the committee. I'm Royale Simms, Executive Director of the Public Employee Relations Board, also known as PERB.

As you know, PERB was established in 1979 as part of the Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act—legislation enacted to create a modern, flexible, and comprehensive system of public personnel administration for the District.

Within that system, the Council established PERB as the agency responsible for implementing a public policy of effective collective bargaining that improves the morale of employees and the quality of services to the public.

We are an independent, quasi-judicial agency, led by a multi-member Board of labor relations experts.

One member is designated as the labor representative, one as the management representative, and three as public members—with the Board's chairperson drawn from the public member seats. Currently, PERB has four confirmed Board members, with one public member seat vacant.

That independence is foundational to everything we do. We can only be trusted as a neutral arbiter if we are, in fact, neutral.

Our mission is narrow but essential. And PERB has held steadfastly to it—driving collaboration and process improvements with a consistent focus on more effective labor relations outcomes for the District.

Now let me tell you what that has looked like in practice.

When I took over as Executive Director, PERB was managing a significant and sustained increase in caseload.

- **In FY2023, we opened 35 cases.**
- **In FY2024, that number jumped to 101.**
- **In FY2025, we opened 65 cases.**
- **And in just the first quarter of FY2026 alone, we have already opened 44.**

Increased case volume is not a temporary spike—it is an enduring pattern, and we have structured our workflows accordingly. And throughout this growth, PERB has remained focused on efficiently processing cases while:

- **safeguarding parties' access,**
- **maintaining a record of well-reasoned decisions,**
- **and upholding our core values of neutrality and fairness in all of our proceedings.**

As Executive Director, one of my top priorities was to make sure we were organized to meet this moment.

That's why in FY2025, we created a Chief of Staff position: a new strategic leadership role to coordinate our operations across budget, personnel, procurement, and technology. We also restructured our reporting lines to improve accountability and efficiency.

These weren't cosmetic changes. They were investments in our capacity to deliver.

And I'm pleased to report that PERB just hired an additional attorney advisor this month, bringing us to 7 of our 8 authorized FTE positions filled. We expect to recruit and hire for that final vacancy after April.

We've also been innovating where we can. One example: PERB identified a challenge our colleagues at the Office of Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining were facing: they weren't receiving timely notice when new cases were filed with their client agencies.

Delays meant additional filings. Additional filings meant slower resolution.

We fixed that. We implemented a new notification process, and the result has been meaningful savings in time and resources for everyone involved.

That's the kind of proactive collaboration I want this agency to be known for.

We also brought our own website calendar management in-house—a small change that has improved accuracy and timeliness in how we communicate with the public we serve.

I want to be transparent with the committee about where we face a few headwinds.

Our 120-day case resolution target—for cases not requiring a hearing—is one we did not meet in FY2025. With our caseload growing and a period of staffing shortage, our average processing time was 147 days. That's 27 days over our goal, and I do not take that lightly.

What I can tell you is that we know exactly why it happened, we have taken concrete steps to address it—including the staffing investments I just described—and we remain committed to closing that gap.

What I am particularly proud of: not a single PERB decision has been overturned on appeal—and in fact, courts have affirmatively upheld our decisions seven times in the past two years alone.

In a body of work that now includes 14 pending appeals, that record reflects the quality and rigor of our legal reasoning. That is a standard I intend to protect.

Chairperson Bonds, the work of this agency touches every District employee who files a complaint, every union seeking certification, every agency navigating collective bargaining. It is work that is often invisible—until someone needs us. And when they need us, we are there, ready to assist.

I am proud of what PERB has accomplished. I am clear-eyed about our challenges. And I am committed to this agency's continued growth and excellence in service to the District.

Thank you for the opportunity to report on PERB's performance. I look forward to your questions.

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