

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Metropolitan Police Department



Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
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Chief of Police

Before the
Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety
Brooke Pinto, Chairperson
Council of the District of Columbia

Virtual Hearing
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It is the mission of the Metropolitan Police Department to safeguard the District of Columbia and protect its residents and visitors with the highest regard for the sanctity of human life. We will strive at all times to accomplish our mission with a focus on service, integrity, and fairness by upholding our city's motto, Justitia Omnibus -- Justice for All.

Good afternoon, Chairperson Pinto, members and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, and everyone watching this hearing remotely. Last week, Mayor Muriel Bowser presented her Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Budget and Financial Plan for the District of Columbia. In light of the challenges the city is facing, the 2024 budget proposal focuses on strategies and investments to support a strong and equitable comeback for Washington, DC. Public safety is one of Mayor Bowser's top priorities, as we all know that public safety is essential for communities and the city to continue to thrive. Today I will brief you on the Mayor's FY24 budget for the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), and how it supports our strategies to maintain a safe city for all our residents and visitors.

The Mayor's FY24 operating budget for MPD provides funding of \$516 million, a decrease of about 2 percent from the approved FY23 budget. As always, most of MPD's local budget, or about nine out of every ten dollars, is for Personal Services (PS). The remaining local budget (\$48.1 million) covers a variety of Nonpersonal Services (NPS) costs, including recruiting and retention efforts, specialized law enforcement purchases, such as uniforms and ammunition, and contracts for the Police and Fire Clinic, fleet maintenance, and information technology. Of the local budget, about \$600,000 – or just one-eighth of one percent (0.12%) – is not already tied up in salaries, benefits, and major contracts and vital programmatic spending. This covers a wide variety of small but necessary operating expenditures, such as language access interpretation and translation services, promotional testing, office supplies, and subscriptions to legal databases.

Mayor Bowser's priority for ensuring sufficient police service to the city is for MPD to be able to hire as many officers as possible to offset the drastic drop in staffing over the past 30 months. We are currently at the lowest staffing level for the department in at least the past 50 years. Since the end of FY20, MPD has had a net loss of nearly 450 sworn members. Since the retirement bubble started in 2014, the Department is down more than 600 officers.¹ To reiterate a point I made in my testimony during the February Performance Hearing, we are no longer in a space where debating the maximum size of the police force is necessary or productive. Absent significant shifts in national employment levels, the environment for law enforcement, or the interest of younger generations in long-term government careers, MPD staffing may not recover for more than a decade. The budget fully funds our anticipated staffing levels based on these recent hiring and attrition trends. If these trends continue at the

¹ As of March 25, 2023, MPD's total sworn staffing is 3,361. On September 31, 2020, it was 3,799. On September 31, 2014, it was 3,971.

same rate, the Department projects we will have 3,279 sworn members at the end of this fiscal year, and 3,131 sworn members at the end of FY24.

Given this reality, the Department and the Administration are working to identify new ways to meet the needs of our city. The MPD budget reflects three primary strategies to address this challenge:

- Hiring as many officers as possible while maintaining strong hiring practices that result in the best officer candidates;
- Retaining our current officers; and
- Maximizing our workforce through efficiency and civilianization efforts.

First, MPD is committed to maximizing our hiring opportunities while maintaining our strong standards. The Mayor's budget continues funding for incentives to support recruiting the best and brightest to MPD through a \$20,000 hiring bonus for new recruits and for cadets converting to recruits, as well as a temporary housing stipend for new recruits who currently live outside of DC to move into the city. If we want our officers to live in DC, we can help them get started living here so they can experience our world-class city first-hand. With these incentives, MPD will continue to work to attract new candidates in a competitive market with comprehensive advertising and marketing strategies, and by being a leader in the field with efforts such as our Cadet Program and our 30 X 30 commitment to have women make up 30 percent of our recruits by 2030. I am pleased that we have met that initial goal—32 percent of our recruits over the past 12 months have been women—and will continue to work to build on the progress.

Second, while it is critical for the long-term sustainability of the Department that we continue to emphasize hiring, internally we maintain a strong focus on fostering a work environment that supports our current members, and thereby encourages them to stay. Last year, the Administration, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), and MPD reached agreement on a new labor contract, five years after the last agreement. This was an important step in recognizing the critical contributions of MPD's rank and file to the safety and success of the District. The Mayor's FY24 budget continues this support for our officers in a number of ways. The most direct investment is through our successful Police Officer Retention Program that provides a one-time tuition reimbursement grant for officers at the time of their careers that they are most likely to leave through resignation or retirement. The enhancement also funds opportunities for members without existing student debt to continue their advanced education. Further, it provides more opportunities for members to pursue specific career development programs.

Mayor Bowser's budget also supports our continued focus on employee wellness, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our strength is our people, and having a supportive work environment is critical for our employees' success. Moreover, this benefits the community as well. We are all familiar with the idea that trauma feeds more trauma. Hurt people, hurt more

people. The opposite side of that coin is also true; a workforce that is grounded in principals of compassion and equity is better able to foster those values in its work with the community.

The cumulative impact of exposure to violence throughout law enforcement careers is vicarious trauma and potentially compassion fatigue. This takes a toll on physical and mental health, and can impact an officer's ability to provide empathetic service to community members and victims of crime. Working to address compassion fatigue is essential to the officers as individuals, their families, and MPD's overall organizational health. In addition, focus on suicide prevention is critical in law enforcement, and efforts to support officer families is a growing field. The funding will support two additional professional staff members to support program delivery or expansion.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is not always recognized as a business imperative across organizations and agencies, but it is here at MPD. A strong DEI foundation can help to strengthen equity and cross-cultural understanding while combatting discrimination. This in turn fosters a positive working environment that supports retention as well as recruitment. The Mayor's budget will support DEI managers and compliance and training specialists who will identify and implement DEI strategies and programs that also foster employee satisfaction and retention.

Third, in order to continue to meet the critical needs of the city, we must find new ways to maximize efficiency while focusing on mission critical functions. The Mayor's budget returns needed focus to our professional, or civilian, workforce. Many critical functions in MPD are performed by professional staff, either because the position requires specialized expertise or because police powers are not necessary to perform the function. Yet the number of non-cadet civilians has decreased 13 percent since 2019. For these critical functions, the workload has to move to sworn members or to already fully utilized professional staff. This stopgap solution is neither ideal nor sustainable.

The budget invests in professionals in a few key areas. It funds seven civilian staff assistants and legal instrument examiners to handle support functions instead of sworn members, which will allow them to return to more operational positions. The budget invests in two positions to enhance our recruiting team, and nine positions for training, curriculum, and instructional design. This strengthens the foundation of so many of our efforts to ensure MPD officers represent the best in policing, with fair, constitutional, and empathic service to our community. Moreover, for new members, the recruit training program is often the first introduction to the Department and sometimes to DC. The best recruit training program is, first and foremost, a vehicle for transmitting the essential knowledge, skills, and ethics to foster the commitment to excellence that we want to see in all of our officers. It is also a critical tool for retention. It builds a commitment to and love of our city and department, so that new recruits will not only stay, but thrive.

Lastly, the budget will move the crime scene processing function from the Department of Forensic Services (DFS) to MPD. This would return the function to MPD, which had performed it until the creation of DFS. Although we appreciate the support that DFS has provided in this realm over the past decade, the fact is that the resources and service has never been sufficient to fully meet our needs. This may be in part because processing crime scenes is closer to a core function for MPD than for DFS. In the meantime, MPD has had to continue to augment DFS resources with sworn officers in order to fully process crime scenes and return officers to service. Moving this critical function to MPD will allow us to manage the resources directly to ensure that scenes are processed quickly, while reducing the burden on officers to either process scenes or remain out of service while holding a scene. Overall, we believe this will be more efficient for both the Department and the city.

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Thank you for the opportunity to present the Mayor's FY24 budget for MPD. The city is facing numerous challenges and competing budget priorities. However, a safe city makes all other progress possible. Although policing is only one part of Mayor Bowser's citywide public safety plan, it is an essential one. Therefore, I urge your full support of MPD's proposed budget.