GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Metropolitan Police Department

Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
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Before the

Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety

Council of the District of Columbia

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John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairperson Allen, members and staff of the Committee, other members of the Council, and guests. I am pleased to provide testimony on Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2018 budget entitled, "DC Values in Action, a Roadmap to Inclusive Prosperity." Last week, Mayor Bowser presented the District's 22nd consecutive balanced budget. It reflects the ideas and priorities of District residents and fulfills our commitment to deliver for District residents each and every day. Mayor Bowser's FY 2018 budget makes strategic investments in public safety, education, affordable housing, transportation, infrastructure, job training, and employment services that keep residents on the pathway to the middle class. These investments reflect the key priorities identified by District residents at Budget Engagement Forums held during the budget formulation process.

The Mayor's investments in the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) will allow us to continue to build upon our success last year, when we finished 2016 with a ten percent reduction in violent crime - the lowest numbers in at least a decade. And we continue to work tirelessly to drive down crime in 2017, where so far this year, we stand at a 24 percent reduction in violent crime.

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Briefly, the Mayor's proposed FY18 budget for MPD provides local funding of approximately $502 million. Most of MPD's local budget, 90 percent, is for personal services (PS). The remaining 10 percent of the total budget – approximately $51.4 million – covers a variety of Nonpersonal Services (NPS), including specialized law enforcement purchases – such as uniforms, firearms, ammunition, as well as contracts for the Police and Fire Clinic, fleet maintenance, and information technology. Of the local budget, only $1.2 million, or less than a quarter of one percent, is not tied up in salaries, benefits, and major contracts and programmatic spending. This $1.2 million covers a wide variety of small but necessary operating expenditures, such as postage, stenographers for disciplinary hearings, subscriptions to legal databases, and mandatory language access translations.

Mayor Bowser recognizes the need for investment in public safety, and it shows in this budget's support of recruiting and retaining MPD officers. We are optimistic, as we have 56 more officers now than we did at the end of FY16. In the first six months of FY17, the number of hires has doubled, and separations are down 14 percent.[1] The investments in recruitment and retention incentives over the past two years have helped to improve MPD's staffing.

The proposed FY18 budget – for both MPD and other agencies – provides $11.7 million to continue this support for putting more officers on our streets. This includes $7.8 million in MPD's budget, and $3.9 million in budgets of other agencies. In addition, because we know that creating a safe city requires support from more than just police, the budget provides $970,000 to launch a new arrest diversion program to support individuals in crisis because of problems with substance abuse, mental health, or homelessness. I will briefly describe each of these initiatives for you.

[1] This compares the first six months of FY17 to the same period in FY16.

- MPD's many dedicated sworn and civilian employees are our greatest asset, and my goal is to provide them with the opportunity to serve in the roles that best leverage their talents, expertise, and training. Civilianization is important because it allows our officers to focus on operational functions that require police powers, while often bringing in technical expertise that our officers do not have. And over the long run, civilianization costs taxpayers less. I thank Mayor Bowser for her strong support for this program, which has provided MPD with 124 civilianized positions during her tenure. Mayor Bowser has provided more support for MPD civilianization than anyone in at least the past two decades.

  The Mayor's proposed FY18 budget continues this critical investment with $2.9 million for 22 positions in the Department of Forensic Science (DFS) and $2.6 million in MPD's budget for 25 positions. At DFS, the funding will enable the Lab to convert 22 temporary scientist positions to full-time employees. In turn, this will support 23 MPD officers returning to operations in MPD. The $2.6 million in MPD's budget will support hiring that: (1) returns officers to operations; (2) fills positions vacated by retiring sworn members with civilians; or (3) establishes new civilian functions that optimize efficiency and effectiveness. For instance, as sworn members retire, we have been looking for more opportunities to have functions – or even part of a function – done by civilians. One example is our team of Criminal Research Specialists (CRS) that supports operations by combing through the information and tools that we have available to quickly identify crime patterns or suspects. This team has helped our officers and detectives quickly apprehend numerous violent criminals. So while hiring these civilians does not put an officer on the street, it makes every officer and detective better able to do their job.

- Speaking of the "job," I have long believed that serving the District as a police officer is a truly great career opportunity. I continue to share this belief with the young people I meet each day out in the community, and I look to our cadets as the next generation of MPD officers. The Mayor's budget provides $1.8 million to expand MPD's Cadet Program from 35 to 70 members. This is an important step in the overall strategy of providing access to careers in public safety to District youth. The structured program to build interest in a career in law enforcement among our high school students begins with the Public Safety Academy at Anacostia High School. Under Mayor Bowser's leadership, MPD partnered with the Washington, DC Police Foundation (WDCPF) and DC Public Schools (DCPS) to launch the Academy in August 2016. The Academy will allow students to pursue a career path in law enforcement and criminal justice. Today, 54 students are enrolled in the Academy.

  Once these students graduate, they can apply for the MPD Cadet Program, which allows District high school graduates to earn the college credits necessary to become an MPD recruit officer. Cadets attend the University of the District of Columbia full-time and work at MPD part-time. We appreciate the Council's support for raising the age of eligibility from 20 to 24. Extending the age of eligibility for the Cadet Program will increase the pool of talented recruit officers from the District who are available in the coming years, so it is an important investment in the Department's future. The Mayor's budget puts the funding behind the implicit promise that if our students successfully graduate from the Academy and meet all

other qualifications, they can continue on the path to becoming an MPD officer through the Cadet Program. It also means that even more District young adults will benefit from access to employment opportunities, secondary education, and a pathway to the middle class.

- In addition to the Cadet Program, Mayor Bowser's budget provides housing incentives to support officers that choose to live in the District. For up to 200 new recruits, the budget will provide a housing allowance of $1,000 per month for six months so they can live in the District. For officers ready and able to purchase a home,[2] the budget will double the down payment assistance grant available through the Employer Assisted Housing Program (EAHP) to a total of $20,000.
- Beyond offering housing incentives, we also seek to invest in our officers early in their careers as an incentive to remain with the Department. In FY16, almost 90 officers in the beginning of their careers took advantage of MPD's student loan forgiveness program, in exchange for a commitment to stay with the Department for four more years. This is important because most resignations happen in the first eight or nine years with the Department. Mayor Bowser's FY18 budget invests $1.5 million in this program that provides $10,000 in student loan forgiveness to eligible MPD officers.
- The final investment in recruiting and retention is a one-time $750,000 fund for a professional public relations campaign. I am optimistic about our ability to persuade the next generation that there is no better career in public service than law enforcement, and no better police department to join than MPD. We are a police department, and not public relations professionals. The Department needs assistance to get the word out to ensure we can continue to attract and hire the best recruits.
- In addition to the funding to support MPD staffing, Mayor Bowser's budget provides $970,000 to launch a new arrest diversion program to support individuals in crisis because of problems with substance abuse, mental health, or homelessness, consistent with one goal of the NEAR Act. Comprehensive harm reduction strategies can help to move some of these issues from the law enforcement arena to the public health and services realm where they belong. We must work together to break the continuing cycle that awaits too many people dealing with addiction, health issues, or homelessness: a cycle of arrest, incarceration, release, and re-arrest. The intervention strategies themselves will be developed by the service agencies that have expertise in this area. MPD will work with its partners in the criminal justice system, especially prosecutors, to establish the parameters of the diversion program.

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In closing, I recognize that building a budget to meet the complex needs of the District, now and in the future, requires difficult choices. It is important to recognize, however, that public safety makes everything else possible. In order for the District and everyone living in or visiting it to

[2] The $1 million in funding is budgeted in the DC Housing and Community Development budget and will be available for up to 100 officers, firefighters, and teachers.

continue to thrive, they must be and feel safe. I appreciate the continued support of Mayor Bowser, Chairman Allen, the Committee, and the Council in this collaborative effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My staff and I are available to answer any questions you may have.