

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
*Metropolitan Police Department*



Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of  
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Before the  
Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety  
Charles Allen, Chairperson  
Council of the District of Columbia

Virtual Hearing  
March 30, 2022



*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.*

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Good morning, Chairperson Allen, members and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, and everyone watching this hearing remotely. Two weeks ago, Mayor Muriel Bowser presented her Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Budget and Financial Plan for the District. The 2023 budget proposal builds on the Recovery Budget the Mayor put forward last year to bolster core city services, improve the experience of residents and businesses interacting with the District government, and provide greater opportunity for residents to learn, grow, and thrive. I am pleased to provide testimony today on Mayor Bowser's budget for the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

For the past two years, our residents and police department have faced critical challenges to health and safety from the pandemic, a rising tide of gun violence, and our unique security issues as the nation's capital. But the District is a resilient community, and no matter what, it will rise. And whatever challenge our city is facing, MPD is there, supporting our residents and communities. We know that MPD is an essential element of making our city safer, and the investments in our budget are necessary to continue this citywide resurgence.

The Mayor's 2023 budget for MPD provides funding of \$532 million, an increase of about 3 percent from the approved FY22 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 (\$54.3 million) covers a variety of Nonpersonal Services (NPS) costs, including specialized law enforcement purchases, such as uniforms, firearms, ammunition, and contracts for the Police and Fire Clinic, fleet maintenance, and information technology. Of the local budget, about \$1.3 million – or one-quarter of one percent (0.25%) – 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, stenographers, 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 18 months. We are currently at the lowest staffing level for the department in the past two decades. Since the end of FY20, just 18 months ago, MPD has had a net loss of 280 officers. Since the retirement bubble started in 2014, the Department is down more than 450 officers.<sup>1</sup> Rest assured, MPD is doing all that it can to try to meet all the needs of our city despite the shrinking workforce, but it is becoming increasingly difficult.

The goal is to bring the Department up to 4,000 officers, while maintaining strong hiring practices that result in the best officer candidates. But as you know, returning the Department to a stable and appropriate staffing level will not be a quick process. With full funding of the Mayor's budget, MPD would have a net gain of 36 officers at the end of the fiscal year. With a

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<sup>1</sup> As of March 26, 2022, MPD's total sworn staffing is 3,519. On September 31, 2020, it was 3,799. On September 31, 2014, it was 3,971.

commitment to fund ongoing retention and recruitment strategies, we project that we would reach 3,800 officers in 2028 and 4,000 officers in 2031. This funding is essential to stabilize staffing, but to be clear, with current conditions, we will not reach the September 2020 staffing levels until 2028, and only if we pursue an aggressive recruitment and retention campaign.

How does this decrease in staffing affect our community? A key area is in response to calls for service. Based on data from the Office of Unified Communications (OUC), response time to priority one calls – the most serious incidents – increased by almost 90 seconds in 2021.<sup>2</sup> Ninety seconds may not seem like a long time if you are watching a hearing, but if you are the victim of a violent crime waiting for police to arrive, that can seem like an eternity. And if you have committed a violent crime, 90 additional seconds to get away probably sounds pretty good.

An appropriately staffed MPD makes the District safer in a number of ways. Recent research has highlighted that additional police can deter homicides and other serious crimes, like robbery, rape, and aggravated assault. The study found that a net gain of 10 officers prevented one homicide a year.<sup>3</sup> So reaching 4,000 officers would potentially save 48 lives each year. More officers means that when you call for a police officer to deal with your emergency, we will be able to get there quicker. More officers ensure we can appropriately staff patrol and investigations, as well as critical specialized units.

More officers provide the surge capacity that we absolutely must have to deal with emergencies and security risks in the District. And realistically, when these times of heightened risk happen almost without end, we need to look at them not as emergencies, but as inevitable functions that the District must plan for and staff appropriately. These demands have required MPD officers to work more than 1.1 million overtime hours in each of the past two fiscal years. This is more than the annual totals for at least the past decade, and the equivalent of more than 550 additional officers each year. While the use of overtime is a necessary tool, and some overtime is inevitable, it is not the best solution, as it contributes to employee stress, illness, injury, and burnout.

Of course, every sworn member in the headcount is not available for deployment. For instance, the 140 recruits in the Academy are included in the sworn headcount. And for every 40 hours of mandatory training for all sworn members, there are 60 – 70 fewer officers on the street all year long. And that is just for the class participants, not for the staff dedicated to training. A robust training program is critical for success, but in order to do it right, we must plan for this staffing impact.

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<sup>2</sup> There are multiple factors contributing to this increased response time. MPD started to see an increase in response time beginning in June 2020, at the time of enhanced deployments for First Amendment assemblies. Since then, in addition to ongoing assemblies, the January 6th insurrection resulted in injuries and continuing security risks. MPD has also had periods with high rates of COVID absences, either from illness or quarantine. However, all of these were also at least partly offset by a 21 percent drop in all calls for service (Priority 1, 2, & 3), and the overtime our officers have been required to work in order to meet urgent public safety needs. Therefore the most dominant factor appears to be the drop in staffing.

<sup>3</sup> National Public Radio. “When You Add More Police to a City, What Happens?” April 20, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2021/04/20/988769793/when-you-add-more-police-to-a-city-what-happens>, in reference to: Chafin, Aaron, Benjamin Hansen, Emily K. Weisburst, and Morgan C. Williams, Jr. “Police Force Size and Civilian Race.” National Bureau of Economic Research. December 2020.

Mayor Bowser's budget makes critical investments to ensure the Department can return to a stable staffing position that supports the police work that our residents and communities want. The budget provides incentives to support recruiting the best and brightest to MPD through:

- A hiring bonus for new recruits and for converting cadets who come on board in FY23.
- A temporary housing stipend for new recruits living outside of the District. 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. We routinely have more interest in this program than the funding allows.

The Mayor's budget also provides retention incentives for our current officers, who have continued to work through all of these recent challenges with dedication. In addition, good retention programs make good recruitment pitches if they are well established and sustained.

- The budget invests in a program to allow officers who live in the District to have a dedicated take home vehicle. A take home vehicle program is a common incentive in other police forces recruiting from the same pool of applicants.
- The budget expands our education incentives. The Police Officer Retention Program 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.
- The budget invests in staff to support our officer wellness program and in leadership development efforts. In order to have a strong department, we need to have healthy officers and to help develop a legion of leaders prepared to face the ever changing challenges in our city. We know that today's cadets and officers are tomorrow's assistant chiefs and chiefs of police, and we should start preparing them now.

The budget also funds force multipliers that will support our efforts to combat crime. While these are sound investments on their own, they are absolutely critical to help us combat serious crime as we are trying to continue to serve our community with stretched resources.

- We need to invest in a robust digital intelligence investigative platform that will help detectives more quickly and accurately review the millions of pages of documents they receive each year in response to lawful searches of cell phones, social media accounts, and other key evidence. Currently, this is all done by detectives manually reviewing huge quantities of data. The platform helps to quickly analyze large volumes of data to identify patterns and connections with greater speed and accuracy, allowing police to identify incriminating or exculpatory information related to serious crimes. To understand the current process, you need only imagine going to a library to conduct research on a topic. But once you get to this library, not only do you not have a computer to Google for information, but you don't even have a card catalogue to help you know which books to look in. You would have to review all the books to find the few that may be helpful, and then review those in detail. We need to give our detectives the tools so that they don't have to read all the books.

- We want to hire six intelligence analysts to help expand MPD's capacity to conduct robust analysis around violent crime, repeat violent offenders, and emerging trends and patterns. These professionals would directly support detectives with investigations and specialized units and patrol in deploying assets more strategically.
- The budget also provides necessary support for CCTV operations. Video footage is a vital tool for solving violent crimes. An analysis of 2018 homicide cases showed that in cases where detectives had video footage, it advanced the investigation in 7 out of every 10 homicides. It contributed to a closure in more than a third of the cases with videos. With a recent significant expansion in the CCTV program, we have nearly 300 fixed cameras and two dozen mobile cameras. The Mayor's budget provides funding for ongoing licensing, field support, and maintenance of the cameras as well as a video management tool that would enable the Department to more quickly access, catalogue, and store video evidence. With nearly 6,000 requests to retrieve videos last year, we need to provide staff with appropriate tools to help facilitate investigations and public requests for videos.

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In closing, I recognize that there are many competing priorities in budgeting for the District of Columbia. However, a safe city makes all other progress possible. Policing is only one part of Mayor Bowser's citywide public safety plan, and her proposed budget continues important investments in violence prevention programs and alternatives to police responses. Mayor Bowser's funding for MPD is just one investment that will contribute to a safer stronger city, but it is an essential one. We urge your full support of MPD's proposed budget.