

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

*Metropolitan Police Department*



Budget Oversight Hearing on the

**Metropolitan Police Department**

Testimony of  
**Pamela A. Smith**  
Chief of Police

**Before the**  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Council of the District of Columbia  
The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairperson

April 9, 2024  
12:00 p.m.  
John A. Wilson Building, Room 412



Good afternoon, Chairperson Pinto, members of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, everyone gathered here today in person, and those joining us online. My name is Pamela A. Smith, and I am Chief of Police for the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

Last week, Mayor Muriel Bowser presented her Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Budget and Financial Plan for the District of Columbia. The Mayor's FY25 budget prioritizes strategic investments in three pillars for long-term growth: public safety, education, and downtown. I would like to thank the Mayor for her unwavering support for public safety and the Metropolitan Police Department. She knows that public safety is essential for the District of Columbia and its communities and residents to thrive. Today I will brief you on the Mayor's FY25 budget for MPD, and how it supports our goal to have a safe city for all our residents and visitors.

### ***Public Safety Update***

To begin, I would like to update you on the tremendous work the men and women of MPD are doing, and the progress we are making in fighting crime in the city. As you know, a year ago in March 2023, crime began to spike, in particular in carjackings and robberies. In July, after the Mayor appointed me Chief of Police and the Council passed emergency legislation reflecting the shared priorities of Councilmember Pinto and Mayor Bowser, we began to reverse this spike. I would like to thank you, Chairperson Pinto, for quickly stepping up in support of the Department and a safe city, and for continuing your efforts with the passage of Secure DC. Your leadership and these legislative changes are vital to our crime fighting efforts, and I appreciate you.

Today, I am pleased to report that for 2024 to date, DC index crime is down across the city, in all seven police districts. Citywide, violent crime<sup>1</sup> is down 22 percent. This includes a 17 percent decrease in robberies, 23 percent in carjackings, 33 percent in assaults with a dangerous weapon, and 28 percent in homicides. Property crime<sup>2</sup> is down 12 percent, including a 16 percent drop in burglary, 21 percent in theft from auto, and 31 percent in stolen vehicles. There has been one more

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<sup>1</sup> DC Code index violent crime includes homicide, sex abuse, assaults with a dangerous weapon, and robbery. Carjackings are a subset of robberies and are included in this crime index. Data is through April 8, 2024, as of April 9, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> DC Code index property crime includes burglary, motor vehicle theft, theft from auto, theft, and arson. Data is through April 8, 2024, as of April 9, 2024.

sex assault than this time last year, and 166 additional thefts. But as you have may have seen in the news, our officers are making many arrests for sex assaults, organized retail theft, and porch thefts.

I know we still have work to do. I am not satisfied with simply driving crime down. I can envision a future where we will be able to talk about having achieved and sustained historically low crime in the District. We are not there yet, but what these numbers tell me is that we are making strides forward. Our neighborhoods are safer for our residents and visitors to enjoy. And MPD officers are working hard to ensure our residents are safer and feel safer. Mayor Bowser's budget provides critical investments to support continued progress.

### ***FY25 Budget Overview***

The Mayor's FY25 operating budget for MPD provides funding of \$574.7 million, an increase of approximately 14 percent from the approved FY24 budget. As always, most of MPD's local budget, or about nine out of every 10 dollars, is for people, otherwise known as the Personal Services (PS) budget. The remaining local budget (\$54 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, only about \$1.9 million – or just one-third of 1 percent (0.33 percent) – is not already committed to salaries, benefits, major contracts, and vital programmatic spending. This fraction of a percent covers a wide variety of small but necessary operating expenditures, such as language access interpretation and translation services, promotional testing, and subscriptions to legal databases. The Mayor's FY25 budget supports MPD's mission primarily through investments in people and crime-fighting technology.

### ***Investing in People***

Our top priority remains hiring and retaining dedicated and talented sworn officers and professional staff. Our current sworn staffing of 3,319 sworn members is the lowest level in the past five decades. It will take years to reach 4,000, but the Mayor's budget for sworn personnel is a critical step forward. It will fully fund 3,370 sworn police officers, which is the number we

believe we will be able to hire and retain by the end of September 2025. On the other hand, our sworn staffing is not as low as it was expected to be. A year ago, staffing was projected to be below 3,300 at this time. Fortunately, with stronger hiring and reduced attrition, we are making steady gains.

Our recruiting strategies are among the best in the nation. Our marketing team works closely with our recruiters to supplement in-person recruitment ensuring a cohesive and effective recruitment strategy. In 2023, we received nearly 5,500 applications to become an MPD recruit. So far this year, we have seen a 47 percent increase in the number of applications compared to the same time last year. Our in-house marketing team purchases ads directly, which ensures that we are able to get the best pricing and cast a wider net for our recruitment campaigns. This approach maximizes visibility while minimizing costs, and allows us to reach a wide audience for recruiting beyond our region. Custom recruiting software developed by MPD volunteers streamlines the application process, enhances applicant engagement, and provides valuable analytics for informed data-driven decision-making. We maintain a strong focus on ensuring our hiring process is streamlined and among the fastest for police agencies. Anecdotally, we often hear from new recruits that MPD was the first offer they received.

We leverage the latest technology and industry-leading best practices in recruitment marketing, including techniques such as targeted programmatic ads and social media engagement. In addition to high-tech recruiting strategies, our in-person recruiting team relies more on relationship building, such as by working with universities and partnering with the US military to develop and sustain a lasting recruiting pipeline. And of course, our most productive recruiting pipeline is our Cadet Program, which provides young DC high school graduates a scholarship for up to 60 credit hours and a pathway to becoming a recruit officer. We currently have 131 cadet officers. In the past 30 months, 57 cadets have successfully transitioned to recruit officers, and another 18 are scheduled to transition in May. The FY25 budget maintains our funding for 150 cadets.

Police departments from across the country and around the world seek MPD's expertise in recruiting. One of MPD's recruitment videos, in fact, won the 2023 Police1 Recruiting Video of the Year award, even besting an entry that featured a cameo by Shaq! In short, we are doing

everything every other police department is doing, and more. To leverage these efforts, the Mayor's budget continues to fund the incentives that attract top talent, with a \$25,000 hiring bonus for recruit officers, a \$5,000 bonus for cadets converting to recruits, and up to six months of housing support for those moving to and staying in DC.

We are also investing in our current officers and the future of the Department. The budget continues our strong police officer retention program, which provides support to members with between three and eight years of service who have college loan debt. This targets a time in officers' careers when they are more likely to separate from the force. For FY24, we are able to make awards to 75 members. The grants award up to \$10,000 and are paid directly to the lender. In addition, we are very intentional in providing development and leadership opportunities to our members. I instituted bi-weekly briefings with all lieutenants and above to make sure they have the information to help them be effective leaders. We have implemented a Police Leadership Academy for mid-career members, bringing together a diverse group of passionate future leaders from across the country to engage in shaping the future of law enforcement. We also send qualified civilian and sworn employees of all ranks to various programs and trainings at entities such as the Naval Postgraduate School, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Senior Management Institute for Police.

The Department is also attractive to both current and prospective members because of our commitments to wellness programming and to diversity and inclusion. MPD's Employee Assistance Program and Family Support Unit have long provided strong support for our members. I am pleased that we are now able to expand the methods of support to include individual services, such as our wellness checks that have reached more than 1,300 members, and supportive resources, such as expanding the Chaplain Corps, wellness trainings embedded in education at all levels, and providing everything from newsletters to yoga trainings. Through these and other initiatives, the Department is making sure everyone has the knowledge and opportunity to integrate wellness into their routine and their lives.

This emphasis on wellness has been a sea change in law enforcement. We recognize that a healthy workforce that is grounded in principals of compassion and equity is better able to foster those

values in its work with the community. I am also pleased to be able to support partnerships for wellness and positive change in the community. For instance, MPD is engaging with our Faith Advisory Council, which is focusing on important issues such as youth engagement, community outreach and engagement, crisis response and support, and advocacy and social justice.

MPD is one of the most diverse police departments in the country, its demographics closely mirroring the city's. We have taken steps to ensure that the Department is attractive to women who are interested in a career in law enforcement. In 2022, MPD announced its commitment to the 30 x 30 pledge—a national effort to ensure that 30 percent of law enforcement recruits are women. We have already met that mark. Now we are striving to reach 30 percent of our sworn members being women. With women accounting for 24 percent of the force, we already exceed the national rates of approximately 13 percent. Not only do we support women joining MPD, but we are supporting women joining law enforcement and becoming leaders in all areas of their lives. The Department's inaugural Women's Conference, hosted in March during Women's History Month, sent a powerful message on this point. Almost 500 women attended this transformative event designed to empower and inspire women in their personal and professional lives. It was an important opportunity to develop women in MPD and across the workforce.

In addition to support for sworn staffing, the FY25 budget demonstrates a strong commitment to building and maintaining the professional staff necessary to support a world-class police department. To be clear, our goal of reaching 4,000 sworn officers has not changed. But professional staff serve in roles that do not require police authority and bring experience and expertise that our sworn members may not have. In short, having a strong professional workforce allows police to focus on critical operations. But civilians constitute a smaller proportion of MPD's workforce than most police departments. Currently, nearly 18 percent are civilians, compared to 23 percent in comparably sized cities.<sup>3</sup> Most of the recent increases in civilian staffing have been due to the growth of the Cadet Program.<sup>4</sup> The Mayor's FY25 budget funds more than 100 new civilian positions to support the Department and our crime fighting efforts. These positions include

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<sup>3</sup> Cities with a population of 500,000 to 999,999, according to 2019 FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, *Crime in the United States: Full-Time Law Enforcement Employees by Population Group*, Table 74. Police Cadets do not have police authority and are therefore included in the civilian count.

<sup>4</sup> Police Cadets do not have police authority and are therefore included in the civilian FTE count.

full-time equivalents (FTEs) to better leverage our crime-fighting tools, such as in the Real Time Crime Center and for our expanded CCTV network and helicopter deployments. Some new hires will replace sworn members in functions such as police station customer service representatives, cell block technicians, and background investigators.

I am pleased that the FY25 budget will fund a new Community Safety Ambassador program, an emerging best practice in law enforcement. The Community Safety Ambassadors (CSAs) will provide community-oriented support for certain non-emergency, non-priority situations and roles that do not require a response from a sworn officer. This can include supporting the Mayor's Community Hubs, the Safe Passage Program, and our Telephone Reporting Unit. These positions will engage with the community through high visibility and community events. We anticipate them directly supporting sworn members such as by collecting administrative data at our Traffic Safety Compliance Checkpoints and assisting with low-risk functions such as canvassing for missing persons and preventing the entry of unauthorized persons onto certain scenes. The CSAs will not be sworn police officers and will not respond to calls in which a suspect is on the scene or likely to return, or in which an arrest may become necessary. Some of these details will be fine-tuned over the next six months, but we believe this will be a strong addition to the Department and the community.

### ***Investing in Crime-Fighting and Safety Technology***

Mayor Bowser's FY25 budget demonstrates her commitment to targeted investments that will make our communities safer. Strategic investments in technology will help to make our crime-fighting efforts more effective and efficient. It is important that DC use industry standard technology that is helping police across the country effectively and efficiently protect the community, while respecting privacy and constitutional rights. Yesterday, Mayor Bowser, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Lindsey Appiah, and Chairperson Pinto joined me at MPD headquarters to cut the ribbon on the Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) and to launch CameraConnectDC.

CameraConnectDC gives residents, business owners, and institutions a way to help us solve crimes. By helping to solve crimes, you can help to prevent crime. There are two ways to get involved in this effort.

- First, by **registering your camera system**. If you have a doorbell camera or a private CCTV system at your home or business, we are asking you to go online and register it. There is no cost to register your cameras. This platform allows residents, businesses, or anyone with a security camera anywhere in the District to register their existing cameras. When a crime occurs, the RTCC team will be able to send you an alert that asks you to review your video and upload the footage so we can quickly get ahead of those who want to cause harm.

I want to make it clear that by simply registering your camera, you are in no way giving MPD live access to your camera or footage. But it helps us identify potential sources of video evidence around a possible crime and create a way for us to quickly communicate with you to ask for video. You choose what to upload. If you previously registered your cameras with MPD, you will soon receive an email asking you to confirm your information. There is nothing else you will need to do.

- Second, businesses, apartment complexes, and commercial facilities, can go a step further by **integrating their cameras** with MPD. To be clear, these are cameras that are only viewing areas in which there is no reasonable expectation of privacy. But by leveraging state-of-the-art technology, you can integrate and make your camera system available for direct access should a threat or incident occur near your location.

Cameras across the city will be a force multiplier for public safety, allowing us to provide real-time information to responding officers. That is a very powerful public safety tool. I encourage you to go to MPD's website to learn more about how you can be part of making our community—*your* community—safer.

The Real Time Crime Center will serve as a nerve center for law enforcement in DC and throughout the region, collecting and analyzing data from various sources such as CCTV cameras,



emergency calls, and technology to enhance situational awareness, facilitate quick decision-making, and improve the overall efficiency of crime prevention and response efforts. The RTCC will play a crucial role in identifying patterns, coordinating resources, and providing timely information to officers on the ground, contributing to a more proactive and effective approach to policing. It is already doing that daily.

For example, on Friday night, within minutes of a getting a 911 call for a robbery in progress near the corner of Georgia and New Hampshire Avenues, the RTCC was able to provide responding officers with a description and images of the two suspects. Officers searched the area and, within just 10 minutes, placed both in custody.

And last Thursday, the RTCC was instrumental when 14-year-old Avion Evans was fatally shot on the Brookland Metro Platform. They worked to relay information between agencies, get information regarding the suspect, and about 30 minutes after the first 911 call, push photos of the suspect out to the entire police department. Fifteen minutes later, the RTCC worked with MPD's communications team to get the pictures out to the public. The FY25 budget will enable us to take additional steps to leverage this state-of-the-art facility to make DC safer.

The FY25 budget continues Mayor Bowser's sustained commitment for expanding DC's CCTV network on public space. We know that cameras support better investigations and prosecutions, and deter crime. In 2023 we deployed 48 new cameras, and will deploy 50 in 2024. The FY25 budget will accelerate this critical investment, supporting 200 more cameras. This investment will continue over the next four years until we reach 1,025 cameras in 2028. The FY25 budget also supports the necessary CCTV refresh program to ensure older cameras are updated so that images are clear and support investigations and prosecutions. They also help the city to deploy resources during major events, unrest, or threats.

The FY25 budget funds the purchase of 47 new License Plate Readers, or LPRs, and critical system support. We use LPRs to help locate missing persons, carjacked or stolen vehicles, and vehicles used in violent crime. They also help in the deployment of resources for special events and motorcades.

In addition, the budget will fund an upgrade and expansion of our electronic control devices (ECD) deployment, from 400 to 600 devices. This less lethal force option helps to ensure that force, when necessary, is proportionate and reasonable, and at the lowest level necessary. The ECDs are not always an appropriate option. But when a situation is appropriate for their use, they can help to protect the community, officers, and combative subjects.

These investments, in conjunction with the RTCC, will help make DC safer. As I said earlier, while we are already making great strides in crime reduction, that is not the ultimate goal. The District of Columbia should be the safest city in the country. The Mayor's budget can help us to reach that goal.

### ***Critical Capital Investments***

The FY25 budget makes additional critical capital investments to fight crime and support our employees and community. For one, it enables the Department to replace its helicopter. Falcon One and Two have been vital in helping police on the ground to find suspects. Last year, Falcon deployments assisted in the apprehension of a homicide suspect, and subjects involved in shootings, carjackings and other crimes, supporting 194 arrests. MPD helicopters also provide support with a high-level view of crime scenes, infrastructure, and crowd or traffic updates. Falcon deployments are essential for safety on our rivers, as they help to locate persons in the water or on bridges, and provide high-visibility patrolling. Air support also monitors traffic operations in the city when crashes occur. This investment supports public safety for everyone in or traveling through DC.

Lastly, the capital budget funds updates to our police stations. The Seventh Police District Station, which is located in Ward 8, is funded for a complete replacement. In addition, the budget funds smaller capital projects, such as HVAC updates, roof repairs, and so forth, to ensure our other stations are safe and healthy buildings. Our police stations in all seven patrol districts are important hubs for the community. Community members come to report crimes, access police services, print emergency parking signs, and attend community meetings and events. And of course, they serve as the home away from home for all of our patrol members, who work out of these stations 24/7.

Our officers deserve facilities that are safe and healthy, and we appreciate the Mayor's commitment to supporting our officers.

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In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present Mayor Bowser's FY25 budget. I am optimistic that with the investments in the FY25 budget, the dedication of MPD employees, and the support of the Mayor, the Council, the community, and government partners, we can continue our progress together in making DC a safer city. I know that you must contend with multiple budget priorities. However, a safe city makes all other progress possible. Therefore, I urge your full support for MPD's FY25 budget.