GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Metropolitan Police Department

Budget Oversight Hearing on the

Metropolitan Police Department

Testimony of

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Chief of Police

Before the

Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

Council of the District of Columbia

The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairperson

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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 watching us remotely. My name is Jeffery Carroll, and I am the Interim Chief of Police for the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). I am pleased to be here today to discuss MPD's budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2027.

Mayor Bowser's proposed FY27 Budget, Grow DC, was formulated with three key considerations in mind: how to drive growth in our economy to fund the services and programs residents count on, how to keep families in DC and attract new residents, and how to create a business environment that draws new investment and creates new jobs. The District is navigating a pivotal moment that demands a more deliberate approach to growth. The federal dollars that once expanded DC's programs in unprecedented ways have been exhausted, and federal workforce reductions have introduced new pressures on DC's economy and commercial corridors. That being said, it's important to be clear: DC is still growing. Revenues have slowed, but the city maintains a strong financial foundation on which we can build by making the kinds of strategic and targeted decisions that will allow DC to continue growing while delivering the high-quality services our residents depend on.

Mayor Bowser's steadfast commitment to public safety and to MPD is as evident now in her twelfth budget as it was in her first. A safe city is essential to maintaining a strong DC, a principle that has guided Mayor Bowser's Administration over the past 12 years. At a time when difficult decisions are being made, I appreciate that Mayor Bowser's budget ensures MPD will be able to continue full operations, including recruiting and hiring new officers and deploying technology to help combat and deter crime. Today I will brief you on this budget and how it supports our shared goal of a safe city for all.

FY27 Budget Overview

The Mayor's FY27 operating budget for MPD provides funding of approximately $688 million, an increase of 14 percent from the approved FY26 budget. As always, about nine out of every 10 dollars in MPD's budget is for people, otherwise known as the Personnel Services (PS) budget. The remaining local budget of approximately $55 million covers a variety of Non-personnel 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, less than $2 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 FY27 budget supports MPD's mission with critical investments in people and crime-fighting technology.

Investing in People

MPD's top priority remains our employees, including hiring and retaining dedicated and talented sworn officers. I am disappointed to be the fourth MPD Chief of Police in a row having to testify about the dire circumstances we face with police staffing. With 3,157 sworn members right now, MPD's sworn staffing continues to decline, and we are operating at the lowest sworn staffing

level in more than 50 years.[1] To put it another way, since the beginning of FY21, MPD's sworn staffing is down the equivalent of two police districts.

Mayor Bowser's budget will enable MPD to hire as many officers as we believe we can, with a projected total of 3,092 sworn members in September 2027. That projection is based on current trends and anticipates more separations than new hires in both FY26 and FY27. MPD's struggle with staffing mirrors national trends. In December 2025, the National Policing Institute (NPI) identified "the workforce crisis" as the top high-stakes trend impacting U.S. policing.[2] As NPI noted, "This isn't just an HR problem…it makes every other challenge harder to solve." NPI also broadly described the solution: "The winning strategy will shift from a singular focus on recruitment to a holistic one on retention, wellness, job satisfaction, and workforce modernization."

Fortunately or unfortunately, MPD has focused on these issues for years; there aren't any low hanging fruit to grab to overcome this challenge. We have a nationally recognized recruiting and hiring program. With the support of Mayor Bowser and the Council, MPD was one of the first local agencies to offer a hiring bonus. The FY27 budget continues the hiring bonus, along with successful incentives like housing assistance to help new recruits move into DC, and a retention incentive to support higher education that prioritizes members at the stage of their career when they are most likely to leave – those with between three and eight years of service, or approaching retirement. In addition, Mayor Bowser's commitment to innovative technology for policing helps us keep pace with emerging crime trends and innovative criminals.

So what else can we do? We know we cannot outspend all of the agencies we are competing against. Given that, we have considered both top hurdles as well as our competitive advantages to identify low- or no-cost proposals to broaden our recruiting pool. The *Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Support Act of 2026* (BSA) includes three proposals to support hiring and retention.

Title III. Subtitle E. Metropolitan Police Department Training Academy College Credit
First, I urge the Council to reconsider MPD's proposal from last year to allow new recruits to be hired with no college credits and earn the required 60 college credits through an MPD partnership with an accredited college. Frederick Community College (FCC) has evaluated the MPD recruit training program and agreed to grant 41 credits for successful completion of our coursework. Under the proposed program, FCC will provide 19 credits of classroom training at MPD for each cohort. This change is absolutely essential because in this region, only MPD and Arlington County Police Department still require college credits for new recruits. This past year, even Montgomery County eliminated their college requirement, and now only require a high school degree or GED. This leaves MPD at a significant disadvantage in recruiting new officers.

To be clear, we are not proposing eliminating this requirement that has been in place for 25 years. This program opens up opportunities to recruits who do not yet have the 60 college credits, while still ensuring that new police officers have the skills and training to successfully serve DC before they leave the academy. Last year, the Council considered the proposal and

[1] Current staffing figure as of April 23, 2026. Historical figures available at https://mpdc.dc.gov/node/1653316.
[2] https://www.policinginstitute.org/infocus/six-trends-to-watch-in-american-policing-in-2026/, accessed April 23, 2026.

approved reducing the pre-hire requirement from 60 to 40 credits. However, we have not had any applicants in the past seven months with only 40 to 59 credits. One key reason is likely that most college students who drop out of school do so in the first academic year. Between the fall semesters of 2022 and 2023, 22 percent of all first-time, full-time freshmen dropped out of college. Not surprisingly, this is more likely to impact first generation college students, who are more likely to seriously consider dropping out or be at risk of dismissal.[3]

Title III. Subtitle B. Metropolitan Police Department Cadet Program

If the 60-college credit requirement is one of the most significant hurdles in hiring, MPD's cadet program is one of our strengths. Recruit applicants must be at least 20 years and six months of age when applying. The cadet program allows us to bring in prospective recruits after high school to earn a good salary ($38,754 starting salary) for part-time work while completing college coursework at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). The program provides not just a scholarship for UDC, but also important life skills and lessons. It can help to keep young adults on a positive path to success so that they will still be eligible to be hired as a recruit by the time they reach the necessary age.

The BSA expands MPD's cadet eligibility. While MPD may not be the only cadet program in the region, it is one of the strongest and most established. In the past five years, more than 160 cadets have become officers, about one-fifth of all new recruits. We can use this competitive advantage to recruit young adults graduating from high schools in the region who may also want to become police officers. Our program harnesses that early interest in law enforcement, and keeps them employed and engaged until they are eligible to apply to become recruits.

I recognize that the cadet program has been, by design, a pathway for DC students and residents. I agree that it is important for DC students to have top priority. But MPD has been authorized for 150 cadets for years, yet actual cadet staffing has consistently hovered between 120 to 130 cadets. As we hire more cadets, others graduate and transition to recruits. Under the proposal, DC residents would still have a hiring preference, but up to 25 slots could be filled by cadets from jurisdictions in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.[4] We think this pool of applicants is a good prospect for the Department and the city.

Title III. Subtitle D. Metropolitan Police Department Senior Police Officer Eligibility

While the proposals regarding college credit requirements and the cadet program would expand the hiring pool, it is also important to consider retention efforts. MPD's strong pension plan is, on the one hand, helpful for recruitment, on the other, it makes retirement a financially sound decision. Sworn members are able to retire, collect their pension, and take another job or career.

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[3] Education Data Initiative, "College Dropout Rates." https://educationdata.org/college-dropout-rates, accessed April 23, 2026.

[4] In addition to the District of Columbia, the member jurisdictions of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments are, in Maryland: Bladensburg, Bowie, College Park, Charles County, Frederick, Frederick County, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Laurel, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Rockville, and Takoma Park. The jurisdictions in Virginia are Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax, Fairfax County, Falls Church, Loudoun County, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William County.

This is more attractive now than ever with consumer pessimism and rising inflation.[5] MPD's longstanding Senior Police Officer (SPO) program has provided an option to allow members to apply to return to MPD after retirement as an officer at a rate of pay no more than the middle step of the officer pay scale (Class 1, Step 5). (D.C. Official Code § 5-761) The member benefits by being able to collect both their pension and a salary, and historically the Department and the city have been able to retain trained and experienced members at a lower rate than their pay upon retirement. Importantly, MPD retains the discretion of whether to rehire the member. Poor performers are not welcomed back.

Over the past decade (FY2016 – FY2025), 477 members have been rehired through this program, a critical support to police staffing.[6] However, only 17 members were rehired in the past two years. Why so few hires now? There are probably a variety of factors, but one clear reason is that the *Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022* prohibited the hiring of sworn members who had previously been determined to have committed serious misconduct. The intent of this provision was to codify MPD's practice for new or lateral hires to ensure that poor performers from other departments did not try to get a job with MPD. However, because SPOs are "rehired" each year, ensuring that they are continuing to provide a valuable service to the city, members with serious misconduct in their history are no longer eligible. This includes members who may have committed serious misconduct 10 or 20 years ago, but learned a lesson and continued to serve MPD and the city very well after.

The BSA would modify this prohibition for the SPO program by allowing rehire if a member did not receive a suspension of ten days or more in the five years preceding retirement. To be clear, MPD would still maintain the discretion to not rehire someone into the program with prior disciplinary history if the Department determined that they would not be a valuable member. But it would acknowledge that discipline is intended to be rehabilitative, and MPD is in a position to determine whether it was for retired MPD members.

Investing in Crime-Fighting Technology and Equipment

Strategic investments in technology make our crime-fighting efforts more effective and efficient. Technology can be a force multiplier, which is essential given current staffing levels. Mayor Bowser's FY27 budget continues to make strategic investments that make our communities safer.

Closed-circuit television cameras (CCTVs) and license plate readers (LPRs) are proven technology that can provide real-time information to responding officers. They support better investigations and prosecutions that ultimately can deter crime, and help inform the deployment of resources. LPRs have been valuable in locating missing persons, carjacked or stolen vehicles, and vehicles used in violent crime.

The Department has been able to leverage these tools to even greater effect in MPD's Real Time Crime Center. Their use has contributed to MPD's high closure rates for violent crime, closure

[5] Dillard, Jarrell and Maria Paula Mijares Torres, "US Consumer Sentiment Falls to Record Low on Inflation," Bloomberg, April 24, 2026.

[6] This includes rehired detectives and sergeants that were previously authorized in DC Code.

rates that currently and historically exceed the average for comparably-sized cities, as reported to the FBI. For example, the closure rate for homicides rose from 52 percent in 2023, to 60 percent in 2024, to 85 percent in 2025. Assaults with a dangerous weapon rose from 51 percent in 2023 to 63 percent in 2025. Closing cases is especially difficult for shootings on public space, which drives DC's gun crimes. For instance, there is rarely DNA in these cases, and it can be harder to identify any relationship between the victim and the suspect. Increased use of cameras helps to bridge these gaps. Mayor Bowser's FY27 budget continues investment in this vital technology, with 145 CCTVs and 50 LPRs.

In addition, the budget funds an expansion of MPD's drone program, with the purchase of six indoor and eight outdoor drones. The indoor drones are needed for use in barricades and other life safety missions. The additional outdoor drones are needed to ensure equipment is available for operations and training, even when some are undergoing routine maintenance or repairs. Lastly, the budget includes annual planned investment in replacement vehicles, with 240 marked and unmarked cruisers, and 23 motorcycles and scooters.

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In addition to the funding that I've highlighted, Title Subtitle C of the BSA includes a provision to support greater efficiency in handling fingerprinting and FBI background checks. MPD processes about 20,000 sets of fingerprints a year for individuals needing a criminal background check for a variety of reasons, such as licenses for security personnel, teachers, home health aides, or limousine operators. Since the demand for the service is not steady throughout the year, peak periods may result in longer lead times to schedule an appointment.

This BSA provision will enable MPD to apply to the FBI for authority to contract with a channeler to address this challenge. A channeler is an FBI-approved private contractor that acts as a liaison on behalf of government agencies or other entities to submit fingerprints to the FBI and receive the criminal history. Entities must be authorized by statute to submit fingerprints to the FBI. A state must enact a law identifying the category of individuals subject to fingerprint-based background checks and the FBI must approve it before contracting with a channeler. However, language approved in the FY26 BSA was deemed insufficient by the FBI, underscoring the uncertainty of federal approval. The FBI will not review proposed legislation or provide feedback unless it is enacted. This proposed revision is informed by some FBI feedback on the FY26 BSA.

Multiple agencies and industries have asked for this opportunity to help streamline their administrative processes. Last week, the Committee of the Whole approved similar legislation, the *Background Check Adjustment Amendment Act of 2025*. However, that bill focuses on just one industry – background checks for entities providing services to children and youth. I encourage the Council to support the more expansive provision in the BSA.

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Lastly, I would like to address the use of overtime, a significant cost driver in MPD's budget. First, let me reassure the Council and our residents that I am committed to being a trusted steward of District of Columbia resources. Since being named Interim Chief, I have been

working with my team to identify efficiencies in overtime usage while maintaining a positive public safety impact. All overtime must be approved by a supervisor. In addition, overtime is reviewed each pay period across the agency and by managers in each bureau. There has been some initial success, with a 14 percent reduction—almost 50,000 hours—in non-court local overtime hours when compared to the same pay periods last year.[7]

Although MPD works to use overtime judiciously, overtime is a critical and largely inevitable function of police work. When an officer makes an arrest, he or she cannot check out at the end of the shift and leave the processing to someone else. For officers not on a day work shift, follow-up with prosecutors and potentially in court requires overtime. Similarly, detectives investigating a case do not hand it off to another detective when they are off duty. And perhaps most importantly, police must have the ability to shift resources and tours of duty at short notice or for a limited time to respond to emerging or serious public safety issues. With provisions in the collective bargaining agreement governing notice for changes in work schedules, and a need to maintain regular staffing, these often must be staffed through local overtime.

These drivers of local overtime correlate with the historically low staffing. MPD must be able to respond to calls for service, while continuing proactive crime deterrence efforts and meeting the unique needs of the nation's capital. Although the city has enjoyed a positive start to 2026, with historic lows in serious violent crime over the first three months, violence has ticked up in April. Combatting this upturn may require local overtime. Other factors, such as the continued prevalence of "teen takeovers," will also be a draw on limited local resources. In addition, as the country celebrates its 250th birthday, the District is expected to host numerous large-scale events, including a two-week Great American State Fair, a landmark 4th of July celebration, the Grand Prix race, and more. The District may be hosting record-breaking crowds throughout the summer. MPD will certainly need to use overtime to staff these events and maintain response to residents and a presence in our neighborhoods. While most of this overtime will likely be reimbursed by federal dollars, there may be an impact on local overtime.

Lastly, even if overtime hours decrease, costs will increase for FY26. This is the first year with a higher pay scale under a new collective bargaining agreement for sworn members. The new pay scale incorporates a cumulative raise of 13 percent for FY24 through FY26.

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In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present Mayor Bowser's FY27 budget for MPD. Like several recent years, the FY27 budget will require difficult choices. This year started out very strong, with levels of crime lower than DC has experienced since perhaps the 1960s. However, the violence in the past month has been a stark reminder that we still have far to go to ensure all of our neighborhoods and residents are safe. In short, we cannot take our foot off the gas. The funding for MPD in the Mayor's budget is critical so that we can continue the significant progress we have made. A safe city makes all other progress possible. Therefore, I strongly urge this Committee and the Council to fully fund MPD's FY27 budget.

[7] FY 2026 (pay period beginning 12/14/25 through pay period ending 04/18/26), compared to FY 2025 (pay period beginning 12/15/24 through pay period ending 04/19/25). This includes time when Interim Chief Carroll was serving as the Acting Chief of Police.