

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Metropolitan Police Department



Testimony of
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Performance Oversight Hearing on the
Metropolitan Police Department

Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety
Charles Allen, Chair

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John A. Wilson Building
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Good afternoon, Chairman Allen, members and staff of the Committee, and guests. Last Thursday, I was honored and humbled to be selected by Mayor Muriel Bowser to serve as the Chief of Police of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). The gravity of being entrusted to safeguard both the city and this department cannot be overstated, a point which was hammered home just 12 hours after I was appointed, when two of our 5th District officers were shot in the Trinidad neighborhood in Ward 5. Thankfully, both officers are expected to fully recover, but the incident reminds us of the dangers our officers face every day.

Although we have been very successful as a city in driving down violent crime, some violent crime persists. If confirmed as Chief of Police, I look forward to working cooperatively with our community and this Council to continue to drive violent crime out of our city. The family of a police officer in our city should never get the news that their loved one is in a local hospital suffering from a gunshot wound, and the families of the people who live, work, and visit the District of Columbia should never have to receive that news either. I am confident that if we collectively roll up our sleeves, and continue to work on reducing violence on all fronts, that we will continue to see reductions of violence, such as we saw in 2016, when we had the lowest number of violent crimes in our city in over a decade.

I would like to first brief you on some key outcomes from last year, then share with you some of my priorities for this year. In 2016, there were fewer serious violent crimes—defined as homicide, sex abuse, assault with a dangerous weapon (ADW), and robbery—than in at least a decade. At the same time, over the past decade, the District’s population grew by more than 15 percent, and violent crime decreased by 27 percent. Additionally, there were 7 percent fewer violent crimes in 2016 than the previous low in 2014. This includes a 17 percent decline in homicides and a 13 percent drop in robberies, which decreased in every police district. Property crime also decreased by 4 percent, including a 17 percent drop in burglary and 14 percent reduction in motor vehicle theft.

As already noted, the Department remains focused on reducing violent and gun crime in the District. MPD’s patrol and specialized units recovered more than 1,800 guns in the District in 2016, and our homicide detectives achieved a 70 percent homicide closure rate. Although national figures for 2016 will not be released by the Federal Bureau of Investigations until the fall of 2017, MPD’s homicide closure rate averages about 20 percentage points higher than for comparably sized cities.

Of course, building a safer city is only possible with the strong support and cooperation from our community. The men and women of MPD – sworn and civilian – are committed to safeguarding and serving the District. We are proud of our success over the past decade, but we also recognize that there is still a great deal of work to do. To continue to move this agency on a positive trajectory, over the past year, we have launched or completed several initiatives that help to make our city safer, our relationships stronger, and our department better. Here are some highlights from our 2016 initiatives.



- **Body-Worn Cameras:** In December 2016, we completed the roll out of our body-worn cameras (BWC) to the second half of patrol members. This was the largest deployment of body worn cameras in the country. We believe the use of BWCs will benefit members of the community, and MPD, by improving police services, increasing accountability and transparency for individual interactions, and strengthening police-community relations.

MPD deployed cameras to half of the Department's patrol members in the summer of 2016. The cameras were purposely deployed to only half of our officers in order to study the effectiveness of the cameras. The impact of the cameras on policing in the District can now be compared to the control group of members who were not issued cameras, and this will provide invaluable insight into the effectiveness of the cameras on issues such as complaints, use of force, and officer discretion. My understanding is that this study will be one of the most comprehensive studies in policing regarding the effectiveness of body worn cameras. The study will be released later this year, and I will be happy to brief the members of the Committee on its findings upon its release.

I would also like to highlight that our officers have been open and eager to use this new technology. This has not been the case in some other police departments. The willingness of MPD officers to be early adopters of this technology demonstrates their strong commitment to safeguarding and providing the best service to our residents.

- **Combatting Robberies:** In December 2015, MPD launched a Robbery Intervention Task Force to focus on the robbery sprees that we were seeing in the city, and to better coordinate resources and information across multiple agencies. The results have been excellent. The creation of the Task Force and our focus on robberies contributed to the 13 percent reduction in robberies in 2016. This past summer was significantly safer, with 21 percent fewer robberies than the same period in 2015, and 15 percent fewer robberies than 2014.
- **Use of Force:** An independent review commissioned by the Office of the DC Auditor confirmed that MPD adheres to national best practices when it comes to the use of force. However, we are continually engaged in researching efforts to improve how police think about and train on use of force. This year, we are rolling out training on newly established use of force principles, policies, and training to emphasize necessity and proportionality in response.

It is critically important that our community knows that all allegations of use of force are investigated thoroughly and impartially. Last fall, I gave a presentation at the Council-Mayor breakfast on MPD's use of force history. I have given the same presentation to community forums in all seven patrol districts and to the Mayor's Interfaith Council. My goal has been to educate folks on MPD's history regarding use of force, and the different responsibilities of MPD and the USAO when conducting use of force investigations.



- **Recruitment and Retention:** We have expanded our efforts to recruit and retain members. So far this fiscal year, we have 39 more officers on board than at the end of FY2016. We are working to build interest in a career in law enforcement among our high school students through 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 this past August. 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 enter the Police Academy as a recruit. 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. Expansion also means that even more District young adults will benefit from access to employment opportunities, secondary education, a career in public service, and a pathway to the middle class.

- **Inauguration:** Lastly, MPD was proud to once again be a leader with District and federal agencies in preparing for the Presidential Inauguration. It was, as always, a complex event that required many months of planning by District, federal, and regional partners – as well as 3,000 additional officers from around the country. MPD officers responded professionally to keep safe the million or so total participants at the Inauguration, the Women’s March, and the Right to Life March. While we had a small number of people who came here intent on committing violence, they were far outnumbered by the hundreds of thousands who have come to Washington to peacefully express their First Amendment rights.

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My plans for the coming year will continue the progress and successes of MPD. In particular, I will focus on four areas:

Community Trust

The cornerstone of a successful police department is the relationship that it has with the community it serves. MPD officers have a positive and strong relationship with our community, and my top priority is to continue to build on those successes.

We will do that in a number of ways. For one, I will continue to deliver a message to all of our officers and recruits that the community’s view of the Department depends on each interaction with every single member, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The residents of the District are



entitled to have a police department that is professional, responsive, empathetic, and, most importantly, trusted.

Beyond the message from me and other MPD leaders, we have and will continue to deploy training for our members that support fair, constitutional, and empathetic policing. That includes trainings on implicit bias and cultural competency. The body-worn camera program supports accountability and trust for every police interaction. The BWCs were fully deployed throughout patrol and some specialized units in December 2016 – less than three months ago – so the benefits are still new to the city and the Department. Thanks to the support of the Mayor and Council, we are a national leader in the deployment and use of body-worn cameras.

We also have more targeted efforts to support trust and service in communities that have been historically underserved by government and police. With the significant changes at the national level over the past few months, members of some of our most vulnerable communities have become more concerned and fearful. As a result, after meeting with representatives from the African, Asian, deaf and hard of hearing, Latino, and LGBT communities – all of which are served by MPD’s special liaison programs – I moved MPD’s Special Liaison Branch directly under my office at the end of 2016. The move will help raise the profile of these issues in the Department so that the liaison units have greater access to coordinate with all bureaus.

With new leadership and energy, the Special Liaison Branch is already expanding its reach. In light of the January 29th attack on a mosque in Quebec and the Executive Orders on travel restrictions from predominantly Muslim countries, there was an immediate need to connect with our own Islamic community. Two Muslim MPD members joined Thomas Bowen, the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Religious Affairs, to visit mosques and Islamic centers throughout the city. We also began reaching out to our Jewish community, which is even more important now given the reprehensible wave of threats against Jewish centers and vandalism at Jewish cemeteries elsewhere in the country. My newly appointed lieutenant at the Special Liaison Branch, Brett Parson, is the current president of the District’s Washington Metropolitan Area Shomrim Society, an organization of Jewish law enforcement members, and is active in the local Jewish community. He is ideally situated to conduct and coordinate that outreach.

As Mayor Bowser has made perfectly clear, the District government provides municipal services to all our residents, regardless of when or how they got here. MPD’s longstanding policy is that we do not ask individuals about their immigration or residency status. Immediately after the Executive Orders on immigration were issued, MPD issued guidance to our officers that made it very clear that there had been no change to our policy. We have developed a flyer in multiple languages that we are providing to our immigrant communities to reassure them of our support for them and that our officers will not ask about immigration status. We will be attending Councilmember Nadeau’s forum on Immigrant Rights tonight and will be handing out the flyers.



We are happy to provide flyers to every Councilmember's office as well and encourage you to distribute them at any community events you attend.

Officer Well-being

I firmly believe that the well-being and satisfaction of our members goes hand in hand with better service to the community. You can't have one without the other. The well-being of MPD employees encompasses more than just their physical health. I want our employees to be healthy in body, mind, and spirit. I want the sworn and civilian members of MPD to feel proud of the work they do each and every day, and I want them to know that their leadership and community members stand behind them.

Over the last few months, I have made it a point to meet with as many of my sworn and civilian employees as I could. I held a series of meetings where I could listen to the concerns they have. From those meetings, I was able to learn that while the tone of the national conversation around law enforcement over the past few years has taken a toll on police, our members remain extremely dedicated to the job and optimistic about what we can continue to accomplish here in the District.

Our city is fortunate to have such a dedicated group of sworn and civilian employees. I am confident that I speak for everyone when I say we are profoundly grateful for the faithful service of all employees of MPD.

Hiring and Retention

Keeping officers on the street as MPD grapples with a retirement bubble has been and will continue to be a focus for the Department. Of course, not all attrition is retirement, and not all attrition is bad. Attrition also includes terminations, resignations, and disability retirements. When hiring increases, resignations and terminations also increase. That is because the first year or two of time with the department is when both the agency and the recruit are trying to determine if this is the right fit. Law enforcement is a tough and challenging job, and if someone doesn't belong here, it is best to figure that out right away.

We will continue to encourage members looking at retirement to take advantage of the Department's Senior Law Enforcement Officer Program. Thanks to the support of Mayor Bowser and the Council, we expanded the Program in 2016 to include sergeants and detectives, and have retained 31 sergeants and 12 detectives through this program. Additionally, MPD received funding in FY16 to provide a specialized tuition reimbursement program to support our retention efforts. The program provided financial support to employees and/ or their dependent children in return for signing an obligated service commitment. In FY16, almost 90 officers received awards totaling almost \$1 million.



The Department is very competitive in terms of salary and benefits. We have one of the strongest retirement programs in the region, as well as step increases, longevity bonuses at 15, 20, 25 and 30 years of service, and one of the most generous paid family leave programs in the nation.

We also offer excellent specialized training opportunities, both for officers and promotional candidates. Through the Graduate Certificate program, MPD sponsors select members to attend either the Johns Hopkins Public Safety Leadership Academy or George Washington University's Police Science program. The Department also offers a Tuition Reimbursement Program where employees may receive up to \$800 per semester scholarships to reimburse them for academic expenditures, with an annual limit of \$2,400. In addition to the formal academic programs with these area institutions, the Department continues to sponsor MPD members to attend the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy and other law-enforcement specific management training courses.

Employee Development

The retirement bubble represents more than just a reduction in staffing. It is a turn-over in experience. One of our challenges is ensuring that the next generation of officers is ready to step up and lead. Although we lose valuable experience with attrition, we also benefit from having new hires. Our new recruits are joining with more education, including advanced degrees. Our recruits also have different experiences and points of view that mirror younger generations in the District, and bring useful perspective for modern policing and our city.

The challenge of ensuring these new officers are prepared to address the needs of the city and the Department rests with agency leadership. We will soon be launching a revised Field Training Officer Program to continue training new officers in patrol after they graduate from the MPD Academy. The program leverages best practices in adult learning to provide on-the-job, practical training to ensure that new officers apply the skills and knowledge learned at the Academy when they start working in the community.

We also need to ensure the Department's middle managers are prepared to assume leadership roles as command staff – which includes sworn and civilian members of the rank of inspector and above. The deployment of the sector concept in January 2017 is an opportunity to support greater development of our captains so that they are ready for promotion to command staff.

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In closing, while we face many challenges as a Department and as a city, I have no doubt that we will succeed. Our officers on the ground are the best in the country. And I am fortunate to have a great team of sworn and civilian managers and leaders who are deeply committed to our city and our Department.



Chairperson Allen, I look forward to continuing to work with you, the Council, each of our communities, and the Department's dedicated employees so that we can collectively support a vibrant, safer, stronger DC. Our work will help MPD serve as a national model for fair, unbiased, and constitutional policing. Each of the District's residents, workers, and visitors needs to know that every day, we live our Department's motto: We are here to help.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the great and selfless work done by the officers and civilian staff at the Metropolitan Police Department. My full testimony is available on our website at www.mpdc.dc.gov and I am available to answer any questions.

