

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Metropolitan Police Department



Testimony of
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Interim Chief of Police

Public Oversight Roundtable on
***The State of the Metropolitan Police Department:
Crime, Community Policing, & Selecting the Next Chief of Police***

Committee on the Judiciary
Kenyan McDuffie, Chair

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Room 412
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004



Good evening, Chairman McDuffie, members and staff of the Committee, and guests. I was honored to be asked by Mayor Bowser to serve as the Interim Chief of Police of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) upon the retirement of Chief Cathy Lanier. Mayor Bowser understands that the public safety challenges in the District require more than just law enforcement resources to overcome, and, as detailed by Deputy Mayor Donahue, she has engaged diverse resources to help address these challenges. Over the past decade, I have testified before this Council many times on a variety of public safety topics. I appreciate this opportunity to appear now to share with the Council and the public my thoughts on the state of the department, based on almost 27 years of service to the District.

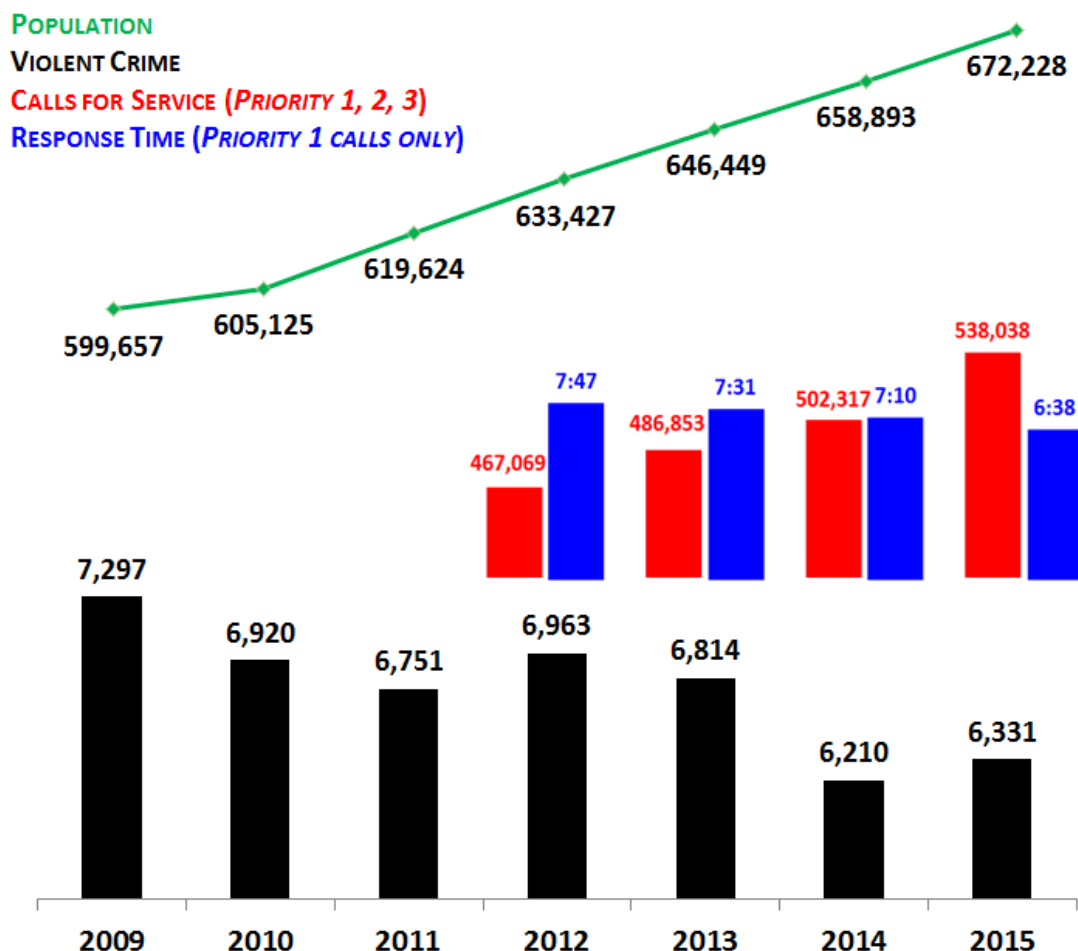
Serving as the Interim Chief of Police for almost seven weeks has given me a view of this agency and city that few people get to experience. The work is hard and the hours are long, but the rewards are numerous. In fewer than seven weeks, I have been able to talk with our community members in all police districts at more than two dozen meetings throughout the city. I have also been meeting with various ranks in the Department. Meetings are being scheduled with officers in all seven police districts. Although I have been very involved with most aspects of the Department over the past 27 years – such as fighting and investigating crime, managing patrol, overseeing internal investigations, and meeting with the union weekly – I have become deeply involved in even more management areas now. Recruiting and hiring is clearly one of our primary challenges, and issues like information technology and facilities management are also high priorities. The common thread running through all of these issues and opportunities for engagement is that the state of the Metropolitan Police Department is strong.

Crime is down significantly in the District. When comparing the first ten months of 2016 to the same time last year, serious violent crime is down 5 percent, and property crime is down 4 percent. This includes a 16 percent reduction in homicide, a 13 percent drop in burglaries, and an 8 percent decrease in robberies. In addition to deterring crime, we have also been working to investigate serious violent crimes and make arrests. In the past seven weeks, our detectives have closed 12 homicide cases, bringing closure to families and communities. Indeed, MPD's detectives have been able to leverage information from the community to consistently achieve higher homicide closure rates, averaging about 20 percentage points higher than in comparable cities. Over the past decade, MPD has distributed almost \$4.3 million to 360 community members for information leading to an arrest and conviction in 195 homicide cases. So I know that many of our community members trust MPD, and they are helping to make the District safer for everyone.

Our detectives have also been making excellent robbery closures that do not get much attention from the media. For instance, MPD has been working on a robbery spree case that began in July in which the suspect used the Offer-Up app to lure victims to robberies. A suspect has been charged with four counts of armed robbery and one assault. Another case resulted in the arrest of two suspects, one of whom was armed, who were using the MeetMe app to target victims. In the past seven weeks, we have also been successful in arresting two different suspects tied to armed robberies of four restaurants, three dry cleaners, one neighborhood market, and two armed car jackings.



I know that after so many years of decreasing crime, the increases in homicide and robbery in 2015 were shocking to many. They were certainly a significant concern to us. But working with the community and various partners, we have together helped to reverse that uptick and return to the downward direction that we hope to see continue. As the chart in my testimony shows, our long term trends are very strong, particularly in light of the tremendous growth and development we have seen in the District. Over the past four years alone, since 2012, the residential population in DC has grown 6 percent. Over the same time, dispatched calls for police service have increased 15 percent, while response time to Priority 1 calls – the most serious ones – has dropped 15 percent. Most importantly, serious violent crime is down 9 percent over that time period.



Of course there are areas in which MPD and law enforcement can and must do better, and I will address this. But I think it is important to acknowledge that the negative incidents alone do not define either our department or profession. Nationally, a Gallup¹ poll released just last week

¹ http://www.gallup.com/poll/196610/americans-respect-police-surges.aspx?g_source=Politics&g_medium=newsfeed&g_campaign=tiles



shows that Americans agree. In a poll that Gallup has run nine times over the past five decades, 76 percent of respondents said they have “a great deal” of respect for the police in their area. This is the highest percentage since 1967. In all polled subgroups—across demographics and major political parties—at least two-thirds of respondents reported having a great deal of respect for police.

Why does there seem to be a discrepancy between what people respond in a poll and the broader public perception? Certainly one reason is that the media, in almost all arenas, focus on the negative and sensationalist. They tell us that positive news stories don’t sell. That is unfortunate as the positive stories are far more numerous than negative ones. Fortunately, many of our community members spread these stories on their own.

Nationally we have seen cases of police use of force that appear to be inexplicable, even to me. As a police officer, our training teaches us not to rush to judge an incident before knowing the facts—and we encourage others to do the same. But certainly there are incidents and recordings that give me pause. What we do as police leaders is closely examine and try to learn from these incidents to determine how we can better teach, equip, and support our members to avoid these incidents. At MPD, we have spent more than two years discussing this topic internally and with national and international law enforcement leaders. We have been actively engaged in redefining how police think about and train on use of force. We have changed our mission to make this clear. Our mission is 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.”*

New equipment, such as ballistic shields and other less lethal munitions, were issued to officers, along with appropriate policy and training, to provide defensive protection and alternatives to members. MPD tends to require more training than most other departments, with 16 hours on use of force and firearms and weapons training, as well as 24 hours of other training each year. In addition, all of patrol officers receive training each work day

2015 Bromwich Report

“MPD’s Command Staff remains committed to limiting and managing use of force – and to fair and constitutional policing”

“MPD has reduced its use of the most serious types of force, including firearms, even during periods of increased crime in the District of Columbia”

“We have seen no evidence that the excessive use of force has reemerged as a problem within MPD.”

“We found that MPD’s use of force policies are both consistent with the MOA and continue to reflect best practices in law enforcement.”

“MPD is plainly a very different, and much better, law enforcement agency than it was when DOJ began its investigation in 1999. In addition, Chief Lanier and her command staff have confronted the important issue of how best to identify officers whose behavior creates risk for themselves, MPD and the public and have launched an innovative program to address those risks.”



in roll call. In 2016, all members are participating in trainings on de-escalation, implicit bias, procedural justice, and police legitimacy. We will continue to address these issues in 2017.

The Department also updated its use of force investigations manual based on recommendations from a study by the Police Executive Research Forum, as well as a report by the DC Auditor's Office following up on the landmark Memorandum of Agreement that MPD voluntarily entered into with the Department of Justice in 1999. As many Washingtonians will remember, back in 1998, the *Washington Post* ran a Pulitzer winning series on the excessive use of force by MPD. This was a stain on MPD's reputation and our relationship with the community that we have worked very hard to erase, beginning with then Chief Charles Ramsey inviting the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to enter into an MOA to overhaul our use of force policies, practices, and training. We worked with DOJ and its compliance team until 2008 to ensure that the reforms mandated by the MOA were implemented and institutionalized. In 2015, Bromwich Consultants, which included members of that DOJ compliance team, returned to MPD to evaluate whether the reforms established by the MOA had taken hold. The findings of the review confirmed that MPD continues to be a leader in use of force practices, and "remains committed to limiting and managing use of force – and to fair and constitutional policing." I have included additional outtakes in my written testimony.² Because it is so important for the public to understand uses of force and to trust that allegations of use of force are investigated thoroughly and impartially, I have been briefing the public about this issue over the past seven weeks. I have also briefed the Council and religious and spiritual leaders in the Mayor's Interfaith Council. The conversations have been lively and insightful, and have also helped to build much greater understanding in the community.

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As we all know, these are challenging times around the country for law enforcement and our communities. Yet every day here in the District, I see moving examples of our community's support for the men and women of MPD, and of the sacrifices that our employees make for this community. For our city – our communities, our neighborhoods, and our youth – to be successful, we must work together to ensure that this relationship is continually getting stronger. Our mission is to serve and protect everyone in DC, but we need your trust and support to do that well. When I was selected as the interim Chief of Police, I shared with the community the overarching priorities that have long guided my work and leadership in the Department:

- The cornerstone of a successful police department is the relationship that it has with the community it serves. The residents of the District are entitled to have a police department that is professional, responsive, empathetic, and, most importantly, trusted. MPD's officers have a positive and strong relationship with the community, and my goal is to continue to work with both the community and our members to build on those successes.

² http://www.dcauditor.org/sites/default/files/Full%20Report_2.pdf



- Our officers won't be able to achieve the first priority if they are not healthy, productive, and satisfied with their job. The most important assets that we have in this line of work are the people who do the job. I want to do everything I can to ensure that our officers and civilian employees are healthy in spirit, mind, and body. Ultimately, this will benefit the community as well.

My plans for the coming year will continue the progress and successes of MPD. Continued recruitment and development of our personnel is essential. For the immediate term, we are looking to expand our hiring target to 360, which would include new recruits and senior law enforcement officers authorized under the new legislation. We are currently reviewing several dozen applications from members to become senior law enforcement members.

We are also escalating our efforts to expand participation in the Cadet Program. 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 DC who are available in the coming years, so it is an important investment in the Department's future. Expansion will also mean that even more District young adults will benefit from access to employment opportunities, secondary education and a career in public service.

We are starting to build the interest in a career in law enforcement even earlier 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. Forty-eight students are currently enrolled in the program.

With the robust hiring program and so many younger officers, strong training and development are essential for MPD's success. In the coming year we will finalize incorporating into training the new use of force principles and policies that emphasize the sanctity of human life, and the need for proportionality. The Field Training Program is designed to continue training after members graduate the academy and are assigned to a police district. The program provides on-the-job, practical training to ensure that officers apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge when working in the community. In FY16, MPD developed a revised training model that better leverages best practices in adult learning. In FY17, MPD will deploy this improved and modernized Field Training Program.

Over the next three months two major efforts will be coming to fruition. The first is the final deployment of body-worn cameras (BWC) to patrol members. 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. We currently have almost 1,300 cameras deployed to about half of our patrol members, some specialty units, and the Academy. This deployment was designed by a team of national researchers who will analyze the impact of body-worn cameras on issues such as citizen complaints and uses of force. The lessons and findings of this evaluation will benefit District residents, MPD, and law enforcement agencies and communities across the country that are also



considering the use of body-worn cameras. The study period will last until December 2016, when the remaining eligible patrol members will receive cameras. We expect to be able to share the results of the study in 2017.

Last month, we were pleased to be able to present our body-worn camera program to an audience of more than 300 police chiefs and law enforcement professionals who are looking to MPD as one of the leaders in this national effort. What became very clear at this conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police is that not only does our development and implementation team deserve a great deal of credit for what they have been able to accomplish, but our officers do as well. Our officers have been open and even eager to use this new technology, which is not the case at all departments. The willingness of MPD officers to be early adapters of this technology demonstrates their strong commitment to safeguarding and providing the best service to our residents.

Additionally, MPD is proud to once again be a leader with District and federal agencies in preparing for January's Presidential Inauguration. Although many may take the success of inaugurations for granted, it is an extraordinarily complex event that demands long-term planning, and not only all of our resources, but nearly 3,000 additional officers from around the country. MPD is, as always, proud to play such a pivotal role in our nation's premier event.

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In closing, I look forward to continuing to work with the Mayor, Council, our communities, and the dedicated sworn and civilian members of the Metropolitan Police Department to support a safe and vibrant city, where our police force will serve as the national model for fair, unbiased, and constitutional policing.

