

**Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the City Administrator**



Testimony of
Kevin Donahue
City Administrator

**Public Oversight Hearing
on the Performance of the
Office of the City Administrator
During Fiscal Year 2020 and
Fiscal Year 2021, to Date**

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Before the
Committee on Housing and Executive Administration
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Anita Bonds, Chairperson

Virtual Hearing

February 26, 2021
9:00 a.m.

Good morning, Chairperson Bonds and members of the Committee on Housing and Executive Administration. My name is Kevin Donahue and I am the City Administrator of the District of Columbia. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on the performance of the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) during Fiscal Year 2020 and Fiscal Year 2021, to date. With me are members of my staff, including Assistant City Administrator Jay Melder; Ben Stutz, who serves as OCA's Chief of Staff; E. Lindsey Maxwell, the Director of the Office of Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining (OLRCB); Jenny Reed, the Director of OCA's Office of Budget and Performance Management (OBPM), and Linda Harllee-Harper, the Director of Gun Violence Prevention.

This year's performance oversight hearing is unique given the COVID-19 public health emergency. I want to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of our front line workers across government, from public safety, to health, to critical city services, such as trash collection, that have kept our city running and provided critical assistance to our residents and businesses. I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the residents we've lost this past year and to recognize their families, friends, and loved ones.

I am particularly proud of my staff within OCA who have been involved in nearly every aspect of the District's COVID-19 response. OCA's work this past year exemplified the office's mission to coordinate and facilitate the effective and efficient implementation of Mayor Bowser's programs and policies by providing leadership, support, and oversight of District agencies. I will start today by providing an overview of the structure and general functions of OCA and then detail our work during the pandemic and beyond.

City Administrator Introduction

But before I get to that, let me briefly introduce myself to this Committee. While I am new to the role of City Administrator and to this Committee, I am not new to the District or District Government. I moved to DC as a 17-year-old college student and have proudly called this city home for the majority of my life. My first job in DC government was nearly 20 years ago, when in late 2002, I began working at the DC Department of Transportation as an entry-level program analyst. To sit here before you as the City Administrator is something that I never would have imagined when I began my tenure in District Government. In the subsequent years, I have served in many different capacities at both the agency level as well as within the Wilson Building. I worked directly for three City Administrators and served under three Mayors. It is humbling to be able to serve the city I love and spend my professional life trying to make it a more equitable and fairer place to live.

OCA's Function

The Office of the City Administrator is the central hub of all District government activities. We're responsible for putting together and managing the District's budget, like a household balances its checkbook. This means we monitor agency budgets throughout the year, try to predict what costs the District will see in the coming years, secure funds from the federal government, and evaluate whether programs are effectively using budgeted funds. We're also responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the government and working with agencies across the District on complex projects, such as closing DC General and expanding access to high-quality, equitable care by building new hospitals east of the River. Our work helps to ensure that projects like these are completed on

time, within budget, and as professionally as possible. We also negotiate working conditions and compensation terms with unions in the District through OLRCB.

In the coming fiscal year, two new positions within OCA will be critical to the way in which we provide services: a Chief Equity Officer will lead the new Office of Racial Equity and the Director of Gun Violence Prevention will lead the Gun Violence Prevention Emergency Operations Center (Gun Violence Prevention EOC), both of which I will talk about later in my testimony.

Another important function OCA provides is building relationships between the District government and our community. This includes residents, outside organizations, industry experts, and others who have thoughts about how we can better provide services or want to contribute to our work. This has been an especially important role of OCA in the actions we have taken to respond to the public health emergency.

COVID-19 Activities

All OCA staff have been heavily involved in the District's response to COVID-19. Beginning last February, OCA began to coordinate and respond to the public health emergency through multiple efforts.

I serve on the Emergency Operations Center's (EOC) Executive Policy Team—the Mayor's senior most decision-making body for COVID-19 issues—and have been involved in all of the Administration's key policy and operational decisions in response to the pandemic.

The OCA's Internal Services division has led the Modified Government Operations and Mission Support divisions of the Emergency Operations Center since the beginning of the pandemic. These EOC divisions were involved in creating and managing District testing sites, establishing the Contact Trace Force, and expanding unemployment insurance operations. This team also facilitated the coordinated closures and reopenings of government services and facilities as the pandemic progressed.

Internal Services also led the local strategic stockpile of personal protective equipment which has served the District's first responders, essential and emergency workers, local health providers, local businesses, child care centers, and schools.

Additionally, OCA's Office of Budget and Performance Management worked heavily on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic by rebuilding the District's budget to account for a \$1.5 billion loss in revenue and to respond to the many other impacts of COVID-19. OBPM managed a rapid budget formulation process to strategically allocate local and federal funds and created and managed a dashboard to support the financial and operational management of the District's COVID response. The dashboard helped inform the Mayor and other stakeholders on key metrics related to the District's response to the pandemic, including: meal distribution, operating status of District buildings, unemployment benefits processing, District employee COVID-19 testing and quarantine status, and personal protective equipment distribution.

During the pandemic, the Department of Employment Services rapidly stood up the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, created by the CARES Act, as well as reinstated the Shared Work Unemployment Compensation Program. At the request of the Mayor, The Lab @ DC applied its resident-centered design skills to develop user-friendly online application forms for both programs. Using a similar process, The Lab developed the DMPED small business microgrants application and three rental assistance applications for the Department of Housing and Community Development. These efforts helped provide District residents and business owners with a tested and approachable process to receive assistance.

OLRCB spearheaded the District's labor engagement during the public health emergency, most notably coordinating with DCPS to engage the Washington Teachers' Union regarding the transition to virtual learning and, more recently, the return to classrooms for students and teachers. OLRCB has also held several labor-management roundtable discussions with union leaders, members, and key agencies, such as DC Health, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, and the Department of Human Resources.

In addition, OCA, along with Chancellor Lewis Ferebee and Deputy Mayor for Education Paul Kihn, DGS, and the EOC Operations group, formed a working group to focus on DCPS issues during the public health emergency. The group worked on preparing DCPS facilities for the safe return of students and teachers; labor and workforce issues; and developing and implementing new models of in-person learning. The group is now working on initiatives that can be implemented to address learning loss that has resulted from the pandemic.

FY20 Achievements

In addition to responding to the public health emergency, in FY20 OCA continued pursuing its long-standing goals of efficiently allocating resources, improving government services, and promoting collaboration. Let me highlight a few of these goals.

A priority-driven budget process that best serves District residents

A key goal of OCA is to continue developing and implementing a data-informed and results-driven performance management program throughout District government. As part of the FY22 budget formulation process, OCA's Office of Budget and Performance Management conducted evidence reviews for all qualifying budget enhancement requests. This process included an analysis of research studies, case studies, and efforts of other jurisdictions related to the proposed enhancement. Also, as we do each year, OCA tracked agency performance through quarterly performance cluster meetings, where each agency's key performance indicators and strategic initiatives are reviewed and discussed.

Multi-agency projects and District-wide initiatives

OCA continued to prioritize working with other agencies to make customer service improvements to better serve District residents. Internal Services worked with DMPED and DGS to implement a recent Mayor's Order that prioritized government leasing in underinvested neighborhoods and worked with partners in the private sector to secure properties to relocate DGS and DC Health to Wards 7 and 8 in the coming years.

The Lab @ DC worked with DMPED to create a user-friendly website which will help match current and prospective homeowners to the District's over 40 homeowner assistance programs offered by 11 different agencies to help make homeownership more accessible citywide.

New hospitals

OCA also continues to support the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services to establish a new hospital at Howard University and a comprehensive healthcare system east of the Anacostia River anchored by a new, acute care community hospital, scheduled to open in late 2024. The OCA Chief of Staff leads the day-to-day implementation of the St. Elizabeth's partnership with Universal Health Services to track the new hospital project's progress and coordinate with the relevant District agencies.

Activities for the Remainder of Fiscal Year 2021

Looking to the remainder of FY21, OCA has several critical projects ahead of it.

Continued COVID-19 response

We will continue to coordinate key aspects of the District's COVID-19 response and recovery. This will require adjusting District operations as needed to safely maintain core services and manage the vaccine roll-out. We will also turn our attention more fully to handling critical aspects of our recovery from the pandemic, such as mitigating learning loss from virtual learning, stabilizing housing for those in crisis, and bringing jobs back to DC.

Coordination of federal COVID-19 relief funds

In order to maximize the use and impact of federal relief funds, OCA will work with the Deputy Mayors, the Assistant City Administrator, and agencies to develop spending plans for federal COVID-19 relief and stimulus funds. The effective use of federal funding will help to avoid significant cuts to existing operations and will free up local funds for other important investments.

Office of Racial Equity

In FY21, OCA will stand up the Office of Racial Equity. One of the first objectives of the Office will be to conduct an equity study to help understand the areas in which the District faces racial inequities. The Office will focus on developing an infrastructure to ensure policy decisions and District programs are evaluated through an equity lens and will collaborate with District agencies, residents, and external stakeholders to make meaningful progress toward a more equitable city.

Gun violence prevention

The Director of Gun Violence Prevention will head the Gun Violence Prevention EOC, which we also call Building Blocks DC. In partnership with impacted communities, the Gun Violence Prevention EOC will take a public health approach to reduce gun violence by focusing on the people and places in the District most at risk for gun violence. As part of this effort, the Director and the EOC will work to connect District residents to mental health services, stable housing, good paying jobs, education, and other critical supports. The gun violence prevention initiative is a key element in Mayor's Bowser's efforts to

create a safe and secure city for all of our residents, and to help provide pathways to success for every Washingtonian.

Conclusion

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to describe the performance and accomplishments of OCA and look forward to continuing to work with the Committee to serve the residents of the District. That concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.