

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Executive Office of Mayor Muriel Bowser**



Public Roundtable

on

**PR24-1084, the “Sense of the Council on the Adoption and Implementation of
the Gun Violence Reduction Strategic Plan Resolution of 2022”**

Testimony of

**Kevin Donahue
City Administrator
and
Interim Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice**

Before the
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
The Honorable Charles Allen, Chairperson
Council of the District of Columbia

Virtual Hearing
December 15, 2022
9:30 am

Good morning Chairperson Allen, Councilmembers, and Committee staff. I am Kevin Donahue, City Administrator and Interim Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. I am here to discuss PR 24-1084, the “Sense of the Council on the Adoption and Implementation of the Gun Violence Reduction Strategic Plan Resolution of 2022” and the District’s efforts on reducing gun violence. I am joined by Delano Hunter, Interim Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE), and Linda Harllee Harper, Director of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP).

I want to start by acknowledging the work done by the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) in developing the Gun Violence Reduction Strategic Plan. The Executive supports the plan’s recommendations, in whole or in part, and we have already begun implementing them. Gun violence in our communities has a devastating impact, most deeply on its victims and their families, but also more broadly by eroding our sense of public safety. When gun violence forces communities indoors, relationships suffer and community bonds wither.

Reducing gun violence is one of the Bowser Administration’s highest priorities. The District has invested very significant resources into a multipronged public safety approach that invests in law enforcement, prevention efforts, youth programming, rehabilitation, and re-entry. Indeed, the City Violence Prevention Index conducted by the Community Justice Action Fund recently found that the District was at the national forefront of violence prevention investments. The majority of the NICJR Strategic Plan’s recommendations have been implemented into our existing gun violence prevention strategies. Perhaps most importantly, we are actively working to improve coordination and alignment across agencies and programs. We are seeing some encouraging results from those efforts, but we still have much more to do.

The District Has Seen Significant Reductions in Violent Crime in Second Half of 2022

I want to highlight an essential fact: Violent crime is down this year, with double-digit reductions in homicides, assaults with a dangerous weapon, and burglaries. We see demonstrable evidence that crime trends are returning to pre-pandemic levels. However, we are extremely concerned about the ongoing challenges of ensuring a sufficient police force to meet the city’s needs.

Based on data as of this morning, citywide violent crime is 6% lower than the same time last year. We are seeing a 10% reduction in homicides, a 16% reduction in assaults with a dangerous weapon, and a 10% reduction in burglaries. Equally promising, we have seen reductions in both gunshot wound victims and total gunshot incidents compared to 2020. Finally, the Metropolitan Police Department has recovered 3,092 illegal guns this year – an increase of 860 from last year.

These reductions are more pronounced when you consider that during the first six months of this year, violent crime was up 17%. But, in the six months since June 1, violent crime has dropped 20% compared to the same time period last year.

While there have been meaningful reductions in 2022, there are still areas of challenge. We have far too many people carrying and using illegal guns. We have too many people being shot – especially among juveniles. We have too many people acting without accountability for the terror they’re inflicting on our communities. We are especially concerned about gun violence involving

our juveniles. We have had almost 100 juveniles shot this year, compared to 53 at the same time last year. Tragically, 16 juveniles have been killed this year, twice as many as last year. While our strategies are helping us achieve important progress, we have much more work to do to.

The Bowser Administration Has Been Operationalizing the NIJCR Recommendations

As I noted earlier, the majority of the NIJCR Strategic Plan's recommendations have been implemented and are being operationalized by our agencies and their programs. There are a few specific NIJCR recommendations I want to highlight in our implementation efforts.

- **Create Community Resource Hubs that employ a “no wrong door” strategy**

This recommendation overlaps with work currently being done by District agencies. Over the past few years, we have opened several sites that function as community resource hubs:

 - Eleven Family Success Centers located in Wards 5, 7, and 8, as part of the Child and Family Services Agency's Families First Initiative, which customizes services and supports tailored to each family.
 - Since October 1, 2020, the Family Success Centers self-reported having served a total of 22,444 families. Services with the highest number of referrals are: food pantry (1,240 referrals), housing search assistance (1,215 referrals), and income-based housing (948 referrals).
 - The Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants' Trauma Response and Community Engagement Program (TRCEP) is located in Ward 7 and offers trauma-informed services, referrals, and community outreach.
 - In Fiscal Year 2022, the TRCEP had over 1,500 resident interactions; it is staffed by 56 life coaches and another 16 are currently in training.

- **Implement a comprehensive, coordinated, citywide Gun Violence Reduction Strategy**

Since the launch of the Safer Stronger DC plan in 2016, the District has been implementing and continually refining a more focused gun violence reduction strategy. With the increase in gun violence we have experienced since the start of the pandemic, we enhanced our strategies in several ways:

 - In February 2021, we established the Office of Gun Violence Prevention which succeeded the Gun Violence Prevention Emergency Operations Center that operated for nearly a year.
 - Last year, the District added \$59 million in new funding to reduce gun violence in the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget, including new person-based services and place-based investments, which were continued and expanded in Fiscal Year 2023.
 - In April 2022, the District launched the People of Promise Initiative to engage individuals identified as having the highest risk of involvement in gun violence and connect them with mentors and resources through ONSE.
 - Last month, ONSE revamped the interagency gun violence intervention case coordination process to increase coordination among violence interrupter teams operating within different agencies.

- **Institute a Real Time Incident Review & Response Center (“Peace Rooms”)**

The District has implemented a shooting review process that it continues to refine and improve, which includes:

- A weekly crime briefing with the Mayor, City Administrator, and MPD Chief Contee discussing violent crimes and data trends.
- An incident response process led by OGVP and ONSE with several calls each day:
 - Morning call with MPD to review incidents from the previous day;
 - Afternoon call with violence interruption service providers to review incidents and coordinate responses; and
 - ONSE has a daily call with its Family and Survivor Support Services to coordinate delivery of timely services to gun violence victims and family members.
- Additionally, twice-daily Safe Passage calls reviewing any incidents happening during students’ transit to school.

Directors Harllee Harper and Hunter can provide additional context to our implementation and operationalization of the NICJR Strategic Plan recommendations. We are committed to continuing to enhance, refine, and expand our efforts to reduce gun violence.

The Proposed Resolution Contains Factual Errors

I want to close with a statement about the Proposed Resolution. Our residents expect us to work together to reduce gun violence. They don’t care about who comes up with an idea or who gets the credit, so long as they feel safe in their communities. That is why it is very unfortunate the Proposed Resolution contains needlessly divisive language that has no connection to the broader purpose of endorsing a thoughtful plan to reduce gun violence.

If the Council is going to use this Resolution to formally endorse the NICJR Strategic Plan – a plan the Executive supports and whose recommendations are being implemented – we believe it should be amended to focus on the transcendent goal of supporting a thoughtful document that is the product of collaboration across government.

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Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Bowser Administration’s violence prevention strategy. Directors Harllee Harper and Hunter and I are available for any questions.