

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



Public Hearing on

**Beyond 100 Homicides: Violent Crimes in the District of Columbia  
and  
B21-0261, the “Sale of Synthetic Drugs Amendment Act of 2015”**

Testimony of

**Kevin Donahue**

Deputy City Administrator  
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

**Cathy Lanier**

Chief of Police

**LaQuandra Nesbitt**

Director, Department of Health

Committee on the Judiciary  
Kenyan R. McDuffie, Chairperson  
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1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
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Good evening Chairperson McDuffie, members and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary. I am Kevin Donahue, the Deputy City Administrator and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. Joining me tonight is Cathy Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department, and Dr. LaQuandra Nesbitt, Director of the Department of Health. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to discuss what Mayor Bowser and her Administration are doing in response to the current increase in the District's violent crime. And we are also prepared to testify in support of Bill 21-261, the "Sale of Synthetic Drugs Amendment Act of 2015."

I want to begin by providing a brief overview of our year to date crime statistics. This will provide some context on the trends we've seen over the past year and Chief Lanier will provide more details in her testimony.

Like a number of other cities, the District has seen an unacceptable increase in homicides this year. We have suffered 110 homicides, a 41 percent increase from the same time last year. Let me be clear: Any homicide is one too many. Our goal is to have zero homicides and make the District one of the safest big cities in the country. Unfortunately, cycles of trauma and violence, especially when combined with access to illegal guns, play a significant role in escalating personal disputes into fatal encounters.

I want to note, however, that the District's overall violent crime statistics – which is comprised of homicide, sexual abuse, assault with a dangerous weapon, and robbery – has increased one percent. And while assault with a dangerous weapon is down five percent this year, robberies are up five percent.

Overall, we have seen a four percent decrease in property crimes this year. In particular, burglaries are down significantly with a 23 percent decrease. Motor vehicle thefts are down two percent, while thefts from cars are up a moderate four percent.

I'd like to highlight a few particular points from this data.

The Sixth District, which generally encompasses Ward 7, has seen reductions in crime from last year, with overall crime down 11 percent and violent crime down 15 percent. Specifically, homicides are down 22 percent, robberies are down 20 percent, car thefts are down 19 percent, and assaults with a dangerous weapon are down seven percent.

Although violent crime in the Seventh District, which generally encompasses Ward 8, is down six percent this year, homicides have increased 77 percent. This increase in lethality is occurring even though assaults with a dangerous weapon are down 9 percent and robberies are down six percent. We have seen a similar increase in the Fifth District, with overall violent crime up 13 percent, led by a 69 percent increase in homicides.

### **The Bowser Administration's Response to Crime Increase**

This leads me to my next topic: What has the Bowser Administration done in response to this uptick in crime?

Over the past few months, the Administration has intensified social and human services to communities most traumatized by crime, as well as having the Metropolitan Police Department redeploying resources to communities suffering from violent crime. This strategy is showing results. When we compare the crime statistics over the last 30 days with the previous 30 days, we see double-digit reductions in overall crime in each of our seven police districts, as seen in the chart below. In her testimony, Chief Lanier will discuss the specific strategies she has used.

### Crime Data Last 30 Days Compared to Previous 30 Days

	1D	2D	3D	4D	5D	6D	7D
Homicide	-100%	0%	-67%	0%	100% (from 2 to 4 homicides)	400% (from 1 to 5 homicides)	-29%
Sex Abuse	-33%	-80%	-50%	0%	-63%	-40%	0%
Robbery	-28%	5%	-13%	-47%	-4%	2%	-7%
Assault Dangerous Weapon	-11%	50%	-14%	-44%	-54%	-37%	-2%
<b>Total Violent Crime</b>	<b>-25%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>-43%</b>	<b>-33%</b>	<b>-17%</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Burglary	-28%	-5%	24%	-6%	-9%	0%	-33%
Theft	-34%	-15%	-34%	-11%	-5%	-29%	-8%
Theft From Auto	-7%	-5%	-20%	-22%	-42%	-40%	19%
Stolen Auto	19%	6%	13%	-12%	-11%	-22%	-32%
Arson	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	-100%
<b>Total Property Crime</b>	<b>-23%</b>	<b>-11%</b>	<b>-22%</b>	<b>-16%</b>	<b>-21%</b>	<b>-28%</b>	<b>-14%</b>
<b>Total Crime</b>	<b>-23%</b>	<b>-10%</b>	<b>-21%</b>	<b>-22%</b>	<b>-23%</b>	<b>-25%</b>	<b>-11%</b>

As you can see from the chart, homicides remain our biggest issue. Solving it will involve more than just a law enforcement solution – and both Dr. Nesbitt and I will speak to some of the non-police strategies we are employing in some of our most vulnerable communities.

### Mayor Bowser’s Proposed FY 16 Supplemental Budget

Yesterday, Mayor Bowser announced her FY 2016 Supplemental Budget Request for more than \$23 million to be allocated to several important initiatives focused on greater economic opportunities and public safety.

The Mayor proposes \$4.5 million to fund a year-round jobs training program for 400 of our most at-risk 22-24 year olds. The program will connect these young people with education and training opportunities, and ensure their continued success by offering wraparound services and transportation subsidies.

In addition, the Mayor has proposed a \$2.3 million expansion of the L.E.A.P. Academy (Learn Earn Advance Prosper), which trains residents in growing fields and places them in jobs. The expansion is focused on two District agencies with a high demand for specific jobs.

First, the Department of Public Works will launch a Workforce Development project to connect qualified individuals with jobs related to waste collection and litter remediation. As we have seen from the numerous neighborhood walkthroughs the Mayor has done throughout the city, trash is a major quality of life concern for our residents and we need to do more to improve the physical conditions of our communities.

Second, the Department of Parks and Recreation will hire customer service representatives for its facilities. The District has extraordinary recreation centers and we want to ensure that every resident receives excellent customer service when they visit. This initiative will bring good jobs to District residents and will help our residents earn a good living.

To support our neighborhoods that are at risk or have suffered from crime, the Mayor is proposing the creation of a \$1.25 million fund that will provide “mini-grants” to community nonprofit organizations and individuals. These grants, which will respond to individual community needs, will strengthen resources related to violence and mediation, mentoring, youth enrichment, and family supports. They are combined with the commitment of intensive government resources to address obstacles that individuals and families in these communities have to accessing opportunities and realizing their full potential.

The mini-grants will focus on five specific Police Service Areas (PSA) experiencing ongoing violence: PSA 507, which includes Langston/Carver; PSA 602, which includes Lincoln Heights; PSA 604, which includes Benning Terrace; PSA 702, which includes Woodland Terrace; and PSA 705, which includes Congress Park.

We know security cameras are a very useful tool to deter crime and to help MPD investigate criminal activity. One recent case helped MPD identify and arrest several individuals who assaulted a bicyclist on the Metropolitan Branch Trail. To encourage the installation of more security cameras, the Mayor has proposed creating a \$500,000 rebate program that will financially assist property owners, businesses, and churches in purchasing security cameras.

Another effective way of preventing crime is simply by turning on the lights. The Mayor has proposed spending \$1 million to install lighting at parks and recreation centers in neighborhoods that have experienced an increase in crime. We want residents to feel safe when they visit our recreation centers; proper lighting will help keep them safe.

We have seen a disturbing increase in the use of synthetic drugs, particularly by some of our most vulnerable and at-risk residents. According to the most recent patient transport data from Fire and Emergency Medical Services, ambulances transported 608 individuals in August who were believed to have used synthetic drugs; that’s a 47 percent increase from July. The Mayor proposes spending \$326,000 on a Synthetic Drug Surveillance program to enable the Department of Health and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to improve the detection of synthetic drug use locations and prevalence. This will allow our health officials to reach out to the most affected communities and educate them on the dangers of synthetic drugs and available treatment programs.

One of the key components of combatting crime is evidence analysis. To make up for years of underinvestment, the Mayor has proposed an \$8 million increase for the District's Crime Lab at the Department of Forensic Sciences to go directly towards supporting crime analysis. The funding will allow DFS to resume DNA testing, eliminate evidence backlogs, and increase scientific expert staffing levels. Additionally, the funding will allow DFS to fully assume its role in conducting crime scene investigations, which will civilianize roles currently filled by law enforcement officers and allow MPD to return as many as 50 police officers back to street patrols.

Nationwide, we have seen the use of body-worn cameras by police officers quickly becoming a new standard of the profession. Mayor Bowser's proposal will help the District become a national model for body-worn cameras by providing \$5.3 million to fully fund her plan to equip 2,800 MPD officers with body-worn cameras, as well as to cover the costs of Freedom of Information Act requests for the video footage. We will be submitting a legislative package shortly to establish the regulations for public access to the body-worn camera footage. Contrary to some erroneous stories, the Mayor's body-worn camera regulations will provide the public with some of the most open access to body-worn camera footage. We look forward to the submission of the legislative package and a robust public discussion.

### **Community Stabilization 2.0**

Last February, the Mayor organized an inter-agency program intended to work closely with families affected by violent crime and literally bring an array of available government services and programs directly into their living rooms. We call this the Community Stabilization Team and it involves my office, the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, the Department of Behavioral Health, the D.C. Public Schools, the Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services, the Child and Family Services Agency, the Office of Victim Services, the D.C. Housing Authority, the Mayor's Office of Community Relations, MPD, CSOSA, Pre Trial Services, Court Support Services, community partners, and the faith-based community when they have previous involvement with the affected family.

Since its inception in February, we have used the Community Stabilization Team to provide services to 23 families affected by violent crime, with 22 of the families being victims and one family being connected to an arrestee in a case. These 23 families have well over 100 total family members. We have also reached out in a preventative capacity to more than 20 other families that did not have a violent incident to prompt the intervention. All the families we have reached out to have been highly receptive to working with the Community Stabilization Team to discuss the family's strengths, needs, and safety concerns.

Several of the families have members who are students and, in some instances, we have worked to relocate the youth to new schools as a safety precaution. The youth have received counseling services through the school staff, in addition to the Department of Behavioral Health and the Office of Victim Services offering counseling and therapy to the families.

Because of its success in assisting families in time of great crisis, the Mayor has expanded the Community Stabilization Team's efforts to respond to a larger segment of our communities

through what we informally call “Community Stabilization 2.0.” Part of this expansion will include the \$1.25 million “mini-grants” initiative that I referenced a few minutes ago.

### **Upcoming Safer, Stronger Legislation**

As the Mayor noted in a recent speech at the former Malcolm X Elementary School in Ward 8, she will soon be submitting a comprehensive legislative proposal to the Council that includes some of the items in the FY16 Supplemental Budget Request, as well as additional mechanisms to protect our residents.

This past Monday, the Mayor announced her proposal to allow D.C. Jail inmates to earn additional “good time” credits for completing rehabilitative programs and to allow some pretrial misdemeanants to serve their sentences in a way that allows them to keep their current job.

We look forward to submitting the Mayor’s crime prevention legislation shortly and look forward to a robust discussion with this Committee.

Chairperson McDuffie, thank you for the opportunity to present the Administration’s testimony on how we are working on a comprehensive plan to make the District safer and stronger. Chief Lanier, Dr. Nesbitt, and I are available to answer any questions you may have.