

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



**Before the Committee of Transportation and the Environment
Performance Oversight Hearing for the Department of Energy and Environment
Testimony of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City**

February 29, 2024

On behalf of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City (C100), I want to thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony for today's Performance Oversight Hearing on the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). My name is Dennis Chestnut, and I am a member of the Parks and Environment sub-committee of the Committee of 100.

I am fortunate to have observed DOEE, previously the District Department of Environment (DDOE) from its inception as a new DC agency for over two decades. What I have observed is an agency that carries out its mission to improve the quality of life for the residents and natural inhabitants of the nation's capital by protecting and restoring the environment, conserving our natural resources, mitigating pollution, increasing access to clean and renewable energy, and educating the public on ways to secure a sustainable future. The agency has demonstrated success carrying out its core responsibilities including, but not limited to, enforcing environmental regulations; monitoring and assessing environmental risks; developing energy and environmental policies; issuing permits; and providing residents and local businesses with funding, technical assistance, and information on initiatives designed to ensure a more resilient and sustainable city. I can truly say that DOEE performs all its agency mission activities with the highest integrity to uphold the public trust.

DOEE has demonstrated a commitment to service to the communities, the people, and the environment of the District and serves as responsible stewards of

the air, water, land, and natural resources we all share. I am a resident of Ward 7, east of the Anacostia River. There has been a history of the east of the river communities of Ward 7 and Ward 8 being described as “underserved, marginalized, and disfavored” compared to the Wards located west of the Anacostia River. DOEE has focused and prioritized programs, projects, resources, and initiatives for east of the river communities, and has improved the delivery of services, resilience, and sustainability for the residents of these communities. A few examples are its River Smart Homes and Flood Smart Homes programs which should be fully funded. These efforts have the District ranked as one of the top five most sustainable jurisdictions in the country. While it is not a DOEE project, the NPS Anacostia Trail extension and Arboretum Bridge by NPS in Kenilworth Park can ensure that better public access, amenities, and service for the citizens East of the River is included and that this idea should be carried forward by **all** DC departments. Also, it is important to emphasize Kenilworth Park North and how important this is to the Kenilworth/Parkside neighbors and to prioritize that the remediation be done, and transfer completed. All within the rubric of better serving the often-forgotten citizens.

DOEE has done an excellent job obtaining federal funding and has been an excellent steward of these funds for work in the District. The hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding DOEE receives for environmental project support directly benefit residents. Some examples include miles of lead pipes being removed, increasing drinking water safety for the public, new green infrastructure like rain gardens, permeable pavement, green roofs, and green alleys, are being installed on public and residential land throughout the city, and streams are being restored, improving stormwater management, lessening neighborhood flooding, reducing pollution in the Anacostia River, and beautifying District. Hundreds of single-family homes as well as multifamily homes are receiving energy retrofits to make them more energy efficient and switching their energy source to solar, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality, and making buildings healthier.

DOEE prioritizes equity through the federal justice40 Initiative that aims to deliver at least 40% of the benefits of certain federal government programs to disadvantaged communities. DOEE has demonstrated commitment to leveraging funds to support environmental justice and equity in the District and strengthen communities most at risk of being adversely affected by climate change. The first Resilience Hub in the District has been established in Ward 7 with the technical and resource support of DOEE. It is extremely important to continue this work. The Flood Smart Homes program needs to be fully funded to address flood risk in vulnerable communities in Wards 7 & 8 where over **85%** of DC residents who live in the 100-year floodplain reside.

DOEE has demonstrated that, if provided the budget, it will not only sustain the present level of operations, but also implement the many initiatives that it has been tasked with and might envision as they complete their mission and grow their vision to create a nation's capital that sets the standard for environmentally responsible and sustainable practices, and envisions a city whose rivers and waters are fishable and swimmable; whose buildings and infrastructure help protect our health and environment; and whose residents, businesses, and visitors embrace and employ smart environmental practices in their daily lives and work together to deliver a clean, healthy, and vibrant city to future generations.

Thank you again, and I will address any questions that you may have.