

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



October 29, 2021

Dear Mayor Bowser,

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With the retirement of Polly Donaldson, you have the responsibility to appoint a new director of the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The timing of the appointment coincides with new information from the U.S. Census that displacement of Black residents from 2000 to 2010 continued in the decade ending in 2020. This fact is alarming on its own, but it becomes a 4-alarm fire in the wake of the Office of the Inspector General's report¹ that DHCD over the past five years has misspent millions of public funds in the Housing Production Trust Fund by diverting funds away from the housing needs of extremely low-income residents, almost all of whom are Black.

The 2020-2021 pandemic and the emergency action you took to prevent personal and community devastation highlighted for many D.C. residents the inequality of the quality of life between Black residents and nearly everyone else in the city. With the support of countless residents, this summer the D.C. Council acted to amend the D.C. Comprehensive Plan to ensure that public actions and funding would benefit low-income Black people.

The need for a new direction is clear, the path has been set, and there is urgency to reverse course at DHCD in a way that targets spending and program management to benefit the city's lowest income residents. This can be done with new focused leadership at DHCD.

The Committee of 100, respectfully, recommends that the new DHCD director possess a constellation of personal and professional qualities that uniquely qualify that person to achieve immediate success in meeting the city's pronounced goals to eradicate poverty and ensure the self-sufficiency and dignity of all residents. We believe the essential qualifications that will prepare the new director to implement a redirected DHCD include:

- a strong racial equity background,
- extensive experience in a variety of successful housing programs with an emphasis on innovative affordable housing models,
- demonstrated and recognized experience with meaningful community engagement,
- a realized commitment to wealth building as key to reversing the poverty cycle,

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¹ DC Code Sec.42-2802(2021). OIG Final Report No. 20-1-23DB, DC Office of Inspector General, September 2021.

- accomplishments in the use of public investment to create an equitable inventory of affordable housing for individuals and families eligible for public subsidies, and
- a background of independent thinking, actions, and conduct that relies on transparency and accountability.

We know that you appreciate the significance of this appointment. It has the potential to give hope to the hopeless and the disaffected. But, most importantly, your appointee can provide concrete improvements in the life of tens of thousands of D.C. residents and families. If we can provide any assistance as you deliberate on candidates, we would be honored to help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirby Vining". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kirby Vining, Chair

Andrea Rosen, Co-Chair, Housing Subcommittee

Meg Maguire, Co-Chair, Housing Subcommittee