

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



**The Committee on Housing, Budget Oversight Hearing on April 29, 2024
Regarding the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services
Testimony of Deirdre P. Brown, J.D.
on behalf of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City**

My name is Deirdre Brown, and I am submitting this testimony for the record on behalf of The Committee of 100 (C100) regarding the Mayor's proposed budget for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS) for the FY 2025.

The Mayor is pushing for the largest budget in DC's history, yet it puts critical programs, especially in housing, education, and social services, at risk of cuts while directing new funds primarily to Downtown. Despite the Mayor's call for shared sacrifice, it's crucial for the Council to carefully examine the budget's priorities. We believe that any sacrifices should not unfairly burden the most vulnerable, particularly our Black and Brown communities. The Committee of 100 argues that the budget fails to strike a proper balance between revitalizing the central core and meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

DMHHS stands out as one of the few offices still set to receive significant federal funding, despite the expiration of \$80 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. We recognize that with an additional \$184 million from federal grants boosting its operating budget, the proposed FY25 budget exceeds that of FY24 by \$15 million. While C100 supports the Mayor's initiative to augment the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, there are concerns regarding proposed cuts to critical housing programs. Specifically, the Mayor's plan includes a reduction of over 25%, amounting to more than \$63 million, for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), Permanent Supportive Housing Program, and Rapid Re-housing Program. While acknowledging the strain on local funds due to declines in commercial real estate revenue, C100 urges the Council and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) to carefully assess the duration and extent of this financial impact. In the interim, drastic cuts to programs aiding residents with limited alternatives appear unjustified and avoidable.

The C100 also notes that the Mayor has proposed Budget Support Act amendments that will affect the Rapid Re-housing Program and ERAP reporting requirements to the Council. We do not support repealing the monthly reporting on ERAP at a time when its budget could be significantly reduced. We recommend that the Council consider these reporting amendments via the regular legislative process to allow for public comment and more thoughtful consideration of the proposal.

In conclusion, the proposed budget cuts to vital programs within DMHHS represents a troubling shift away from supporting the city's most financially vulnerable residents. These reductions will significantly impact the city's ability to address and prevent homelessness. It is imperative that these budget priorities be reconsidered to ensure equitable access to housing and support for all residents, particularly those most in need. For these reasons, we are asking that the Council undertake a comprehensive review of the budget's priorities and make significant adjustments accordingly.

Thank you,

/s/ Deirdre P. Brown, J.D. for The Committee of 100 on the Federal City