

# The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



## **The Committee on Housing, Budget Oversight Hearings**

**April 11, 2024, Hearing Regarding DC Housing Authority**

### **Testimony of Sondra L. Mills on behalf of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City**

My name is Sondra Mills, and I am submitting this testimony for the record on behalf of the Committee of 100 regarding the Mayor’s proposed budget for the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) for FY 2025.

The Mayor’s proposed budget puts a number of critical programs, particularly in housing, education, and social services, on the chopping block while Downtown is given priority for new funds. While the Mayor says that shared sacrifice is needed, her proposed budget is skewed toward Downtown with great sacrifice taking place across the city. The Council should closely examine the priorities in the budget and make substantial adjustments.

This is particularly true for the Mayor’s proposed budget for the public housing operated by DCHA. As the Council is well aware, the September 2022 report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) found that DCHA had failed to provide “decent, safe, and sanitary” housing for its residents in violation of federal requirements, and that many units are uninhabitable and vacant. While DCHA has promised to remedy the horrible conditions identified in the HUD report, the Council must evaluate whether the Mayor’s budget provides adequate funding to do so.

The Mayor’s proposed capital budget for DCHA includes \$101 million split over two years to repair and modernize public housing units. However, this amounts to a *6.5% reduction* in FY25 from the approved FY24 budget. In addition, the Mayor’s proposed budget cuts DCHA’s capital budget of \$113 million to *\$0 funding* for FY27 through FY30.

There are at least 8,000 units and 20,000 tenants in public housing, with 1 in 4 units typically vacant for an average of 2 years. These vacant units forego rents and federal subsidies. The last Point-in-Time count reported almost 5,000 homeless DC residents, many of whom could be eligible for public housing if units were available. The Council should fund renovation of the unused units as quickly as possible and at least restore last year’s funding level.

The Committee of 100 believes that sacrifices should not be shouldered by the most vulnerable, especially our Black and Brown residents. As evidenced by the budget cuts for public housing, the Committee of 100 believes that the budget strikes the wrong balance between rebuilding the central core and meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents.