FAIR BUDGET COALITION
FY21 BUDGET REPORT

LOVE THE DISTRICT!

LOVE THE PEOPLE!
"Everybody always talks about how much they love DC, but if you love DC you've gotta love DC's people."

-DC resident, Edward Goins, to DCist in response to the clearance of the K St encampment

People from around the world love Washington, DC. While some people refer to DC simply as a proxy for national politicians, those who know DC for its history, its vibrant life, and its cultural contributions, know and love a different city. People love so many things about DC: our sports teams, our museums, our food, our music, our culture, and more! For work, play, or to live, DC continues to rise in the national spotlight.

When you ask DC residents about their favorite things in DC they’ll tell you about the cliffs at Georgetown, the Big Chair, Frederick Douglass’ house, the Goodman League, drag brunch at Nelly’s, crabs at the Wharf, and more! Washingtonians have a complex and beautiful history that has contributed to every single part of DC that people love. You cannot separate the city from the people. The history of DC boasts so many examples of the strength, resilience, and ingenuity of Black communities and communities of color, yet for far too long, local policies do not reflect this same commitment to retaining those who have been the architects of everything we love about DC.

In the past decade, over 100,000 new residents have relocated to now call DC home, with demographers anticipated hitting over 1 million residents in the next two decades. These new DC residents have made the difficult decision to uproot themselves to begin a new life, in search of new opportunities and learning to love their new home. We are proud of the growth that DC has made, but shiny new condos, beer gardens, and new dog parks continue to conceal the dark side of the historic growth of the city.

While new residents are able to partake in DC’s booming economy, longtime residents who recall the days prior to DC’s current prosperity, have been displaced or are left behind with fewer and fewer resources available to them. If we love DC, we must also love the people who have made DC what it is.

We cannot accept that the people we love are living in public housing units that are crumbling, filled with mold and sewage. We cannot accept homelessness or poverty as a given. We cannot accept that for those living in Wards 7 and 8, access to a grocery store is seen as a luxury. We cannot accept that longtime residents, primarily Black and other communities of color, don’t deserve access to the city’s wealth. They too deserve safe, affordable homes. They too deserve access to grocers in their own neighborhoods. They too deserve high-quality childcare at a price they can afford.

With an annual budget of over $15 billion and a historic annual surplus of over $200 million, it is clear that some of the city is prospering. Love is more than empty promises—love is ensuring the safety, dignity, and happiness of all DC residents. We can no longer accept that there isn’t enough money to do the right thing when the numbers tell a different story. Love is trust. Love is action. Love is accountability. As our Constituent Leader Lark Catoe-Emerson says, “I love DC, but DC doesn’t love me back.”

It is time for elected officials to show Black and other communities of color, particularly very low-income communities, that they understand DC is not DC without the people who built DC. Love can no longer just be words– it must be accompanied by significant investments into the communities who have been most harmed by past and current policies. Expressions of love unaccompanied by a radical vision of how to repair and restore Black and other communities of color are hollow.

It’s time for DC to show love to those who need it the most.

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Housing Security

Public Housing Repairs & Maintenance

End Homelessness

$60M
$80M

$10.57M for Permanent Supportive Housing for 302 families

$17.39M for Targeted Affordable Housing for 712 families

$41M for Permanent Supportive Housing for 1500 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness

$10.42M for 500 Tenant Vouchers for families and individuals

Build Deeply Affordable Housing

$204M

$180M in Housing Production Trust Fund (specifically for 0-30% AMI, family of 4 making $36K annually or less)

$24M for matching operating funds (Local Rent Supplement Program--LRSP)

Homeless Street Outreach

$2.1M

Project Reconnect

$1.75M

Fund Tenant Rights Bills

$3M

$1M for the Fair Tenant Screening Act:

$1M for the Eviction Record Sealing Authority Amendment Act

$1M for Lead Hazard Prevention and Elimination Act of 2019

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

$12M

Economic Justice

Birth-to-Three for All

$40M

Career Pathways Innovation Fund

$650K

Equitable Vendors License

$300K

Create an Independent Ombudsperson for DHS

$1.5M

Wage Protection Fund

$150K

Community Safety

Expand and Fund Domestic Violence Prevention Services

$500K

Increase Funding for Domestic Violence CORE Services

$6.5M

Victim Services Enhancement

$2M

Create an Independent Ombudsperson for Child Welfare

$600K

Expand Investigative Authority of the Office of Police Complaints

$132K

Food Access and Justice

Grocery Store Retail Funding

$11M

Increase Funding for WIC Outreach

$250K
The Fair Budget Coalition’s Housing Security Group understands that access to housing and housing affordability are critical needs for every person’s survival. For years, the District has failed to meaningfully invest in deeply affordable housing or methods to increase housing access for those in the city who are most vulnerable. This under investment has led to overwhelming displacement and trauma for DC’s low-income Black and other communities of color. The Mayor and DC Council have an obligation to create and maintain housing that is accessible and equitable for all of DC’s residents.

**Repair and Maintain Public Housing**

We recommend that the Mayor and DC Council act with urgency and dedicate $60 million to the repair and maintenance of DC’s public housing stock. The vast majority of households in public housing are Black and extremely low-income, and have experienced structural neglect for decades. This immediate investment would begin to address some of the deteriorating conditions that residents in public housing have had to endure.

Currently, public housing is DC’s only guaranteed stock of affordable housing and large bedroom units. Dedicated funding would help to improve the lives of thousands of DC families by preserving that stock, ensuring that more long-time residents will be able to stay in their homes and communities.

Cost: $60 Million

**End Family and Chronic Homelessness**

“Ending Homelessness” is not achieved by further displacing or removing those experiencing homelessness from visibility on DC streets. Only through sustained investment in permanent supportive housing will DC see a decrease in the number of residents experiencing homelessness. Years of neglect cannot be fixed in a single budget cycle, but DC government must prioritize stabilizing the lives of people struggling with homelessness by addressing its housing crisis with urgency.

Cost: $80 Million

**Increase Funding for 0-30% Housing**

We recommend increased funding for the creation and preservation of affordable housing units for extremely low income residents (those living within 0-30% AMI or $36,000 or less for a family of four). The Mayor has introduced a new initiative to build 36,000 new units of housing in DC in 5 years—12,000 of which will be affordable. To be consistent with the current Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) allocation percentages, we support at least half of those affordable units being reserved for residents with extremely low incomes (0-30%AMI). The $180 million allocation is necessary to create 1200 units of extremely low income affordable housing units imagined in the first year of the Mayor’s five year housing commitment. Ideally, the Mayor’s initiative should also provide at least 300 units of affordable housing for returning citizens, a target population with increased housing needs. The increase in LRSP will ensure that the necessary operating funds are there to support the actual creation of the units that are allocated for 0-30% from the HPTF.

How the money should be allocated:

- $180M in Housing Production Trust Fund (specifically for 0-30% AMI )
- $24M for matching operating funds (LRSP)

Cost: $204 Million
### Housing Security

#### Homeless Street Outreach

We support continuing to fund DC’s Comprehensive Street Outreach Network to ensure that all of our neighbors who are living on the street, in vulnerable situations, have access to housing and life-saving supportive services.

Cost: $2.1 Million

#### Project Reconnect

We recommend doubling current investments in Project Reconnect, a rapid exit program for single adults who are newly experiencing homelessness. Project Reconnect utilizes creative problem solving to help people exit homelessness quickly including family reunification strategies to prevent people from falling into long-term homelessness.

Cost: $1.75 Million

#### Pass and Fund Tenants Rights Bills

We support the passage and funding of 3 bills that strengthen the rights of housing applicants and tenants in DC.

1) **The Fair Tenant Screening Act**: protects housing applicants from denials of housing based on old or irrelevant credit and rental history as well as strengthens the protections against voucher discrimination.

2) **The Eviction Record Sealing Authority Amendment Act**: directs the court to seal eviction records that are either more than 2 years old or meet other criteria, like that the judgment was actually in favor of the tenant.

3) **Lead Hazard Prevention and Elimination Act of 2019**: will help prevent lead exposure through stronger and more frequent testing for lead-based paint in rental units that were built before 1978, and by empowering tenants to enforce DC’s lead laws through a private right of action.

Removing barriers of discrimination for tenants and low-income renters is a proven tool to expand access to more housing options and opportunities.

Cost: $3 Million

#### The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

This proposal seeks to increase funding for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which provides rental payment assistance for people facing eviction and also security deposits. ERAP is one of DC’s most effective tools to halt displacement of Black and other communities of color in DC, yet it runs out of funding every year, with many eligible applicants turned away.

- Based on an average of $2,500 per ERAP payment, $12M would prevent 4800 evictions

Black people and other people of color living on low incomes are most likely to experience eviction in DC. Rental payment assistance is the most effective and direct way of preventing eviction and homelessness while allowing residents the opportunity to keep their housing. Millions in funding have been cut from this program over several years. Residents must be able to continue to utilize this program so that they can remain in their homes and fight the traumatic experiences of eviction and displacement.

Cost: $12 Million

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The Food Access, Equality and Justice Issue Group understands that access to food is an issue based in the lack of food shopping options, the lack of innovation and urgency to provide Black and other residents of color in DC with quality, diverse and healthy grocery stores.

Over 70% of DC's grocery stores are concentrated in the wealthiest, whitest wards. In contrast, DC's wards with the lowest income and highest percentages of Black residents share only 3 grocery stores, resulting in widespread food insecurity and poor health outcomes. We must work collectively to address food access and equity and invest in programs that bring grocery options to Wards 7 and 8.

### Grocery Store Retail Funding

We propose an increase to existing and create new municipal programs dedicated to helping locally-owned, community-driven grocery stores open in Wards 7 and 8.

We propose:

- Increasing funding & technical assistance resources through DSLBD’s Healthy Foods Retail Program and DMPED’s Neighborhood Prosperity Fund Grants.
- In support of the DC Food Policy Council’s proposal to create a DC Good Food Investment Fund to invest in locally-owned food businesses serving District neighborhoods with low access to healthy food. As a public/private partnership, this Fund would provide catalytic grants, flexible loans, and technical assistance to address the District’s persistent grocery gap, preserve and support small businesses owned by District residents, and create high-quality jobs. The working group advocates that these programs prioritize resources for projects located in Ward 7 and 8.

Cost: $11 Million over 3 years

### Increase Funding for WIC Outreach

We recommend that DC Health dedicates $250,000 in FY21 to conduct targeted, strategic outreach to increase participation in Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Outreach should include community education and appointment assistance. The (WIC) program is a critical federal nutrition program for low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five.

Participation in WIC is proven to improve birth outcomes for mom and baby, to provide nutritious food options for young children, and to reduce household food insecurity. In the District of Columbia, participation in WIC has decreased by 18% in the last four years. Even more alarming, just 54% of eligible women, infants, and children in DC participate in WIC. DC Health must do more to reach out to eligible DC residents so that more women, babies, and young children are connected to the program.

A portion of the funding should be dedicated to helping families stay on WIC (retention) and research to identify additional reasons why families choose not to participate (barrier identification).

Cost: $250,000
Healthcare

There are significant health disparities between white DC residents and Black and other residents of color. Poor access to quality mental and physical healthcare means that Black and other communities of color have less overall wellness, more stress, miss more work/school and have fewer family planning options. While these poor health outcomes can be linked directly to systemic racism and generally to poverty, we also need to explicitly address the mental and physical healthcare needs for all DC residents.

**Healthcare Alliance Recertification**

Fair Budget’s recommendation would fund the repeal of the Healthcare Alliance’s 6-month, in-person re-certification requirement & implement a replacement model consisting of an annual re-certification requirement. There are over 15,000 DC residents who do not qualify for healthcare services like Medicaid. DC has implemented a successful program (Healthcare Alliance) to help these residents gain access to healthcare; however the government has also placed an additional barrier.

The Healthcare Alliance is a locally-funded health coverage program for low-income District residents who don’t qualify for Medicaid. However, the 6-month, in-person re-certification requirement has proven to be a serious obstacle for enrollees trying to keep their coverage, due to long lines and capacity limitations at Department of Human Services (DHS) service centers. This recommendation would align the Alliance’s re-certification schedule with Medicaid, and make the Alliance’s re-certification schedule and process similar to other District safety net programs.

Cost: $35 Million

**Healthy Futures**

We support increasing funding by at least $1.5 million for Healthy Futures. This funding will allow this vital program to expand to up to 60 new child development campuses, improving the mental health and well being of thousands of infants, toddlers, parents, guardians, and educators.

Cost: $1.5 Million

**Healthy Steps**

Fair Budget’s recommendation of an increase of $300,000 will allow Healthy Steps to expand to an additional clinic in Ward 7 or 8. The Healthy Steps program ensures the healthy development of babies and toddlers by addressing common and complex concerns such as exposure to trauma and toxic stress, and providing families with parenting guidance, support between visits, screenings for postpartum depression, referrals, and care coordination.

Cost: $300,000

**More Mental Health Services for Students**

Fair Budget supports the third year of a four- to five-year process to expand school-based behavioral health services, bringing the total to 179 schools in FY 21.

- $70,125 per school 179 schools in Cohorts 1 - 3.

Onsite clinicians in schools increase access to mental health services in the place where most children spend most of their time during the school year. They also support improving the schools’ acceptance of mental health as a key component in educational success, improving classroom environments, reducing time needed to respond to mental health crises, and addressing the experiences of trauma that remain far-too-common for District children and adolescents, especially those who come from Black and other communities of color.

Cost: $12.6 Million
Community Safety

Though Community Safety often implies police intervention, FBC believes that addressing the District’s social problem is the best way to create safer communities. We live in an age of mass incarceration, detention, and deportation, but the Coalition believes in a District that respects the lives and dignity of all people and offers community-centered solutions to violence that do not rely on law enforcement. FBC supports programs that divert people away from our justice system, supports victims and survivors of crime, and decriminalize poverty.

Expand & Fund Domestic Violence Prevention Services

Our recommendation emphasizes an expansion of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking prevention funding. Young people experience the highest rates of domestic violence. DC needs dedicated local funding for prevention of dating violence, sexual assault, rape & trafficking.

Currently, DC has significantly more domestic violence and sexual assault intervention programs in place than prevention programs that center on healthy relationships and consent. As there is no dedicated local funding for the primary prevention of dating violence, sexual assault, and trafficking in the District, many schools and community based organizations are struggling to meet the demand for training and education needed to meet the mandates set forth by the School Safety Omnibus Amendment Act (School Safety Act). As research consistently proves, prevention is the most cost-effective approach to ending dating violence, sexual assault, and trafficking.

Cost $500,000

Increase Funding for Domestic Violence CORE Services

This recommendation will increase the funds directed towards domestic violence services in the District. Not every domestic violence survivor fleeing abusive relationship will have the same set of needs. Thus it is important to ensure that DC funds multiple service lines of support to meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence.

These services include domestic violence specific crisis shelter, legal services and culturally specific services.

Cost $6.5 Million

Victim Services Enhancement

As the District moves to increase the city’s overall ability to respond to trauma, we must leverage the expertise of domestic violence service providers. Domestic violence organizations and advocates on the ground providing lifesaving services are under-resourced and under-funded. Our recommendation proposes the following:

- $847,500 for domestic violence staffing infrastructure
- $1.2 million for cost of living adjustment

This recommendation will allow for more advocates to work in the service sector who reflect the population served. This will not only help survivors navigate an intimidating and biased system, but it will also create more opportunities for people of color to enter a space which lacks diversity in middle and upper management positions.

Cost $2 Million
Create an Independent Ombudsperson for Child Safety and Well-Being

Our recommendation is for the DC Council to establish an independent Ombudsperson for Child Safety and Well-Being to provide information to the public regarding the policies and practices of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA); to investigate both individual complaints and systemic issues regarding CFSA’s policies and practices; and to provide children, youth, and families involved with the child welfare system a place to seek assistance in working through case-level conflicts and problems, and to improve engagement with CFSA.

Most importantly, the independent Office of Ombudsperson would hold CFSA accountable to the children, youth, and families it is tasked to serve. The Office of Ombudsperson would operate in accordance with the US Ombudsman Association Standards, which provide best practices to ensure independence, impartiality, confidentiality, and a credible review process.

The need for an independent Ombudsperson is particularly critical now because federal court oversight of CFSA in LaShawn v Bowser will be ending in the near future, and along with it a Court Monitor who has acted to identify systemic agency issues as well as try to address individual stakeholder concerns. When LaShawn ends, we will lose this accountability tool, and that void will need to be filled by an independent Ombudsperson.

Cost: $600,000

Expand Investigative Authority of the Office of Police Complaints

Our recommendation proposes that the DC Council increase the authority for the Office of Police Complaints (OPC). Our recommendation would:

- Allow OPC to initiate investigations into police misconduct even in cases where constituents have not filed a complaint;
- Allow a process for investigations into anonymous complaints from constituents about police misconduct;
- Hire two additional investigators to handle the resulting increases in investigations.

Police accountability and transparency are critical to protecting the civil rights and civil liberties of all DC residents, and OPC plays a vital role as an independent agency charged with investigating complaints of police misconduct and issuing recommendation to improve police practices, policies, and training.

In 2016, the DC Council strengthened the role of OPC by requiring that all constituent complaints about Metropolitan Police Department and DC Housing Authority police officers go through OPC. This change has resulted in greater transparency and accountability of police practices in the District. However, OPC continues to have limitations in authority that significantly interfere with its key monitoring and oversight functions. For example, OPC cannot investigate an incident involving potential police misconduct if no one has filed a complaint about it, meaning that even if something is caught on camera, it may go unaddressed. Furthermore, we often hear from community members who are hesitant to file complaints about police officers out of fear of retaliation. Expanding OPC’s authority to initiate investigations with or without a complaint and ensuring that constituents can make anonymous complaints to the agency is an important and logical next step in increasing police accountability and ultimately, repairing trust between communities and law enforcement.

Cost $132,000
DC’s poorest families have seen a dramatic loss since the Great Recession, as their income is now lower than in most major cities. Income inequality is also far higher here than in almost any US city. The District must invest in our lowest-income residents, protect workers, ensure that all families have access to high quality childcare, and make sure that all eight wards and all income levels have access to the resources they need to thrive.

Fund Birth-To-Three for All

Our recommendation is dedicated funding for the Birth-to-Three For All DC law in FY21 to help improve the quality of childcare in DC, expand the availability of subsidized childcare slots, and raise wages for early childhood educators. This will ensure high quality, affordable and accessible childcare for D.C childcare 0-3, while ensuring workers make a livable wage.

A $20 million enhancement to subsidy reimbursement rates will enable educators - who are almost exclusively women of color - to receive better pay, ameliorating our shortage of qualified early childhood educators, making DC a leader in early childhood education pay equity, and ensuring teacher compensation matches the value of the skilled work being performed.

A $20 million investment to raise reimbursement rates and enable subsidized early childhood education programs to improve their quality of care will better ensure all of DC’s littlest residents have every opportunity to succeed.

- $20 million to increase the quality of early childhood education through DC’s child care subsidy program
- $20 million to increase compensation for early childhood educators doing critical and highly skilled work to support a child’s development and to enable parents to continue working

Cost: $40 Million

Increase Career Pathways Innovation Fund

Our recommendation is for the DC Council to increase the ongoing money allotted for the Career Pathways Innovation Fund (CPIF) to at-least $2.15 million. The barriers of finding gainful employment, education and housing as an individual who speak English as a Second Language are steep.

The CPIF supports integrated education and training, a service delivery strategy where low skilled/English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students learn basic skills like math, reading, and ESOL while developing job skills.

Cost: $650,000

Fund Equitable Vendors Licenses

Our recommendation is for the DC Council and Mayor to fund equitable vendor licenses for 60 vendors. This is an important first step in creating a system for attaining ambulatory vending licenses that reflects racial, gender, language, and income equity. Vendors are calling on the Council for help, as they face increased criminalization simply for trying to earn a living. To put an end to conflicts with police and DCRA, we ask that lawmakers make it easier for vendors to sell goods in public spaces by lifting the moratorium on vendor licenses, and offering equitably priced licenses.

Cost: $300,000
Create an Independent Ombudsperson for Department of Human Services

Fair Budget’s recommendation is to establish an independent Office of Ombudsperson for the Department of Human Services. Unfortunately, the DC Department of Human Services’ (DHS’) Economic Security Administration (ESA) and Family Services Administration (FSA), have instituted unnecessary and unreasonable barriers to access public benefits and services with no meaningful or timely method to raise or obtain resolution of complaints. There are extremely long lines, burdensome and unnecessary documentation requirements, untrained staff who require documentation that is not required by law or policy, incorrect denials of benefits and services, and erroneous termination of benefits and services. Moreover, constituents are too often treated with contempt and disrespect by DHS staff.

This independent office would be responsible for:

- Handling constituent concerns with the agency
- Providing timely resolution to claims filed against the agency
- Identifying and correcting pervasive DHS policies, systems, and practices that undermine racial equity in DC

Cost: $1.5 Million

Wage Protection Fund

Fair Budget recommends use of the Budget Support Act to implement the following protections and precautions for DC employees:

- Reallocation of funds for the Wage Bond and Restitution Fund to be made available to workers (includes provisions of the Initiative 77 repeal).
- Strengthen enforcement of penalties and punishments for employers committing wage theft; and the inclusion of use of liens as additional penalty,
- Addition of enforcement provisions to make determinations public information, as well as, increased transparency and specificity for wage claim statistics.

- $60,000 for staff time to manage the fund
- $30,000 for administration of the fund
- $60,000 as the starting amount for the fund.

Protecting the wages of DC employees; especially low-wage earning workers, should be a priority for the DC government. Our most vulnerable workers in industries like hospitality, childcare, construction, and other industries are not protected by local and federal labor laws. Understanding that workers in these industries are predominantly Black and other communities of color, we expect DC government to implement effective strategies to protect workers.

Cost: $150,000
Since its founding in 1994, the Fair Budget Coalition (FBC) has brought together human service and legal services providers, community members directly impacted by poverty, advocates, faith organizations and concerned District residents to advocate for a District budget and public policies that address human needs. We were born out of the value that human needs must be addressed in a strategic and comprehensive way. Standing together representing a variety of interests and perspectives, the Coalition brings this message and the voices of impacted residents into the local decision-making processes.

American Civil Liberties Union DC (ACLU DC)
Amara Legal Center
Bread for the City
Children’s Law Center
Coalition for Smarter Growth
DC Alliance of Youth Advocates
DC Behavioral Health Association
DC Central Kitchen
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
DC Fiscal Policy Institute
DC for Democracy
DC Greens
DC Hunger Solutions
DC Jobs with Justice
DC Kincare
DC National Organization for Women (DC NOW)
DC Statehood Green Party
DC Working Families Party
Economic Security Project
Empower DC
Everyone Home DC
The Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance (GLAA)
Good Faith Communities
HIPS
Jews United for Justice
La Clinica Del Pueblo
Legal Aid Society of DC
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Miriam’s Kitchen
Many Languages One Voice (MLOV)
People for Fairness Coalition
Platform of Hope
The National Reentry Network For Returning Citizens
Restaurant Opportunity Center DC (ROC DC)
Sierra Club
So Others Might Eat (SOME)
Unity Healthcare
Ward 3 Democrats
Washington Lawyer’s Committee
Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
And 37 Individual Members