



DC RESIDENTS URGE MAYOR AND COUNCIL TO REVERSE SAFETY NET CUTS AFFECTING 10% OF DC RESIDENTS

FY26 LOCAL DC BUDGET CUTS AFFECTED MORE RESIDENTS THAN FEDERAL SNAP AND MEDICAID CUTS

Charnal Chaney, a 2025 [Constituent Leadership Program](#) graduate, spoke on February 5, 2026 at a presser hosted at the Wilson Building featuring a coalition of organizations advocating for the DC Council and our mayor to revamp, restore, and protect social safety net programs including Alliance, ERAP, and TANF.

She shared her experience working with DC's rapid rehousing program, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) while trying to serve her community and keep herself and her five kids safe and sheltered.

Read a transcript of Charnal's speech below:

Good morning, community.

My name is Charnal Chaney. I am a mother of five. I could be your sister, your cousin, or your niece. I am the daughter of Lashonia Thompson El.

I am here today on behalf of the Fair Budget Coalition's Constituent Leadership Program, speaking out against the harmful cuts proposed in the FY26 budget.

I moved into my apartment in June of 2024, and I exited the Rapid Rehousing Program in November of 2025. During that time, I was supposed to be supported and transitioned into long-term stability.

Instead, I was set up for failure.

I was placed in a five-bedroom apartment in Southeast DC where the landlord was charging the program \$5,000 a month.

That is not a realistic rent for an average apartment in Ward 8.

My portion was calculated at \$300 a month.

So I ask if my rent was calculated at \$300 a month, how was I ever supposed to afford a \$5,000 rent once the program ended?

These were the only options I was given while I was in shelter.

Now it's February. I'm facing eviction. I'm over \$15,000 in debt, and I have a court date next month.

I didn't fail this program. This program failed me.

I was not set up for success. I was set up for a cycle.

These programs don't need to be cut. They need to be revamped.

The city is wasting money placing families in housing they will never be able to afford. Landlords jack up prices, families exit the program, get evicted, and end up right back in shelter.

*That's not progress. That's regression. **That's harm.***

I also want to speak about TANF and Medicaid.

I worked on and off for over ten years. I started my own business five years ago. I was able to get off TANF three years ago.

But when cuts started last year and after I was displaced, I had to reapply.

And that says a lot.

TANF is not designed to help families rise above the poverty line. Whether you're trying to build a career or become an entrepreneur, **the system supports survival, not growth.**

TANF should be a bridge to independence, not a trap that keeps families cycling in and out of crisis.

In April of last year, I was hospitalized due to a ruptured aneurysm. My hospital bill was so high it would have wiped out even a wealthy person's finances. Thank goodness for Medicaid—I didn't pay a thing.

But I did lose income because my body required rest. Without strong Medicaid protection, I don't know what I would have done. **And now thousands of my neighbors have fewer services to cover their health needs.**

Cuts to Medicaid don't save money. They push families deeper into debt and instability.

I own and operate Bold Yoga Collective, where we create safe spaces for youth and families through yoga, meditation, and healing. We partner with nonprofits and government agencies across this city.

I have poured into DC. My family has poured into DC.

There is no reason my children and I should be facing homelessness.

It destabilizes entire households.

These programs don't need cuts. They need reform. Families deserve stability, not cycles of harm.

When families are recycled back into shelter, it traumatizes children—especially teenagers.

Mayor Bowser, if you care about your legacy as a Black woman, as a community leader, and as the mayor of this city, then you must rethink these cuts.

But the DC Council also bears responsibility. You are charged with making sure this budget does not harm the very communities you were elected to protect.

And let me be clear about something else.

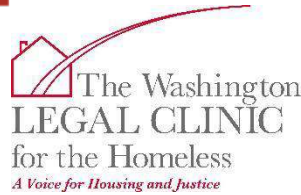
DC is one of the wealthiest places in the country. If there isn't enough revenue to protect the safety net, that is a choice—a choice not to ask the wealthiest residents and corporations to contribute their fair share.

Instead of dismantling safety nets, invest in families.

Don't just help us survive.

Help us thrive.

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February 5, 2026

DC Leaders Cut Safety Net Programs As Deeply as Congress in 2025

Mayor Bowser and the DC Council should reverse cuts affecting 10% of DC residents

DC leaders undermined the health, housing stability, income and earnings of more than 64,000 struggling DC residents in 2025. **Their actions represent an unprecedented attack on the dignity and well-being of Black and brown residents and a shocking reversal of DC's values.**

- The collective impact of cuts to public benefits in the FY 2026 DC budget are likely to reflect the largest reduction of DC's safety net in at least a generation – in the number of residents affected and the depth of the cuts – if not since the start of home rule.
- The safety net cuts made by Mayor Bowser and approved by the DC Council come at the same time that federal cuts will reduce or eliminate SNAP and Medicaid coverage for thousands of residents. *Shockingly, the number of DC residents affected by a major reduction in locally funded benefits is as large as the number facing a major loss of benefits due to federal cuts.*¹

The FY 2026 budget reduced services for DC residents this year - but that's only the beginning. The budget includes a plan to slash the safety net even more in the next few years. Unless reversed, these steep cuts will deepen poverty and hardship at a time when income inequality is at an all-time high; result in more hunger and homelessness; widen DC's already gaping racial income and wealth gaps; and roll back collective efforts to improve quality of life for residents struggling with the lowest incomes. **As the mayor and Council prepare the FY 2027 budget, they should reverse these actions that will otherwise cause avoidable pain and suffering, with long-term impacts on DC's future.**

¹ The local cuts described here will affect over 65,000 residents, who will either entirely lose a benefit or will face a large reduction in one or more benefits. By comparison, about 31,000 residents are expected to lose Medicaid coverage over the next decade due to federal cuts, and an estimated 32,000 residents will be in households losing more than \$25 a month in SNAP benefits.

Health Care Eliminated for 26,000 Residents: The budget phases out the DC Healthcare Alliance by 2028, entirely eliminating health insurance for 24,000 residents with low-income.

The Alliance was established in 2001 and contributed to DC's long-term status as #2 in the nation in insurance coverage. That will now end. In addition, nearly 2,000 residents will lose eligibility for Medicaid with no back-up insurance.

- **Key Health Benefits Eliminated for 16,000 Residents:** The budget moved 16,000 residents from Medicaid to a “basic health plan” through DC Health Link, which lacks dental and vision coverage, long-term care, and other important services.
- **Cash Assistance Cut for 22,000 Children and Parents:** 10 years ago, DC's leaders made a commitment to supporting families through the TANF cash assistance program. This year, the mayor proposed, and the Council accepted, TANF cuts that will push 15,000 children and 7,000 parents deeper into poverty, bringing already-low TANF benefits as low as \$151 a month for a family of three. TANF is DC's only flexible cash program for families, helping pay for rent, diapers, clothes, school supplies, and more.
- **Wage Cuts for 3,3000 Childcare Teachers:** The budget provides no funding for the Pay Equity Fund (PEF) in FY 2027 and beyond. The PEF helps childcare providers pay teachers a living wage. Without it, teacher pay will fall \$10,000 or more, harming a workforce of primarily Black and brown women and risking the ability of this essential sector to attract and keep staff.
- **No Housing for Adults Experiencing Homelessness:** For the first time in years, the budget included *no funding* to help single adults move into permanent affordable housing. There was no new money to connect the 792 people living outside or the thousands of individuals in shelter to life-saving housing.
- **Family Homelessness Drastically Increasing as a Result of Cuts:** Due to budget cuts and removal of due process rights and legal defenses for DC residents in rapid re-housing, as well as inadequate funding for permanent affordable housing, thousands of families have lost their rental assistance and are becoming homeless, and others are finding that there is no longer any path to exit emergency shelter.

These deep cuts will have lasting harmful impacts on individuals, families, and communities, including increased hunger and homelessness, higher school truancy and worse school outcomes, more untreated health needs and added pressure on DC's entire health system. This retrenchment will also set the entire city back and prevent resilience in our economy when we most need it.

DC's leaders should be protecting and enhancing basic assistance programs to help cushion the blow of the federal cuts. The mayor and DC Council should make commitments now, before the start of DC's annual budget season, to commit to restoring and protecting key programs in the budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

- Alliance eligibility and services should be restored to levels in place through FY 2025.
- Anyone on a Basic Health Plan who meets the Medicaid eligibility rules in effect through FY 2025 should have dental, vision, and long-term care coverage.
- TANF time limits and enhanced sanctions should be cancelled, and TANF benefits should receive annual cost of living adjustments.
- The Pay Equity Fund should be fully funded.
- Policymakers should fund significant numbers of Permanent Supportive Housing vouchers for single adults (as well as families) and put DC back on the path to ending chronic homelessness.
- The FY 2027 budget should include enough permanent affordable housing to ensure that all families in rapid rehousing or emergency shelter have access to safe, affordable, and permanent housing.