

FAIR BUDGET
≥ COALITION

D C
T A K E S
C A R E

OF OUR OWN

A BUDGET FOR CARE AND SUSTAINABILITY

**If there is no struggle,
there is no progress.**

**Those who profess
to favor freedom,
and yet depreciate
agitation, are men who
want crops without plowing
up the ground.**

**They want rain without
thunder and lightning.
They want the ocean
without the awful roar of
its many waters.**

**This struggle may be a
moral one; or it may be a
physical one; or it may be
both moral and physical;
but it must be a struggle.**

**Power concedes nothing
without a demand. It never
did and it never will.**

**– FREDERICK DOUGLASS,
abolitionist,
orator, author,
and civil rights leader**

A BUDGET FOR US.
BY US.



06

LETTER FROM
THE EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



08

OUR
HOPES



10

OUR
PROCESS



15

OUR
PRINCIPLES



24

EDUCATION



30

FAIR TAXES &
PUBLIC DEALS



34

FOOD
ACCESS



36

HEALTH
JUSTICE

TABLE OF
CONTENTS



16

COMMUNITY
SAFETY



20

ECONOMIC
JUSTICE



40

HOUSING
SECURITY



46

FBC ORGANIZATIONAL
MEMBER LIST



47

FBC INDIVIDUAL
MEMBER LIST

MARCH 2026



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Can you feel it?

Over the past year, the ground has shifted beneath our feet. In our FY26 Platform, our coalition warned Mayor Bowser and the Council that mounting federal pressures, as well as a deepening austerity culture headed by a risk-averse Chief Financial Officer, would further harm everyday DC residents and threaten our very autonomy. We also encouraged them to see the budget as a tool to protect and uphold DC's values, and to prioritize DC's people in their decisionmaking as a means of safeguarding our communities.

This past year, the conditions we face have only worsened. President Trump's deployment of thousands of federal troops into our neighborhoods and public spaces unleashed terror on our residents, especially our Black and brown neighbors and our youth. We've weathered dozens of ICE kidnappings, and navigated terror and torture of our immigrant and non-immigrant neighbors, family members, teachers, students, and loved ones of color. Our Mayor openly colluded with the President, passing a DC executive order allowing federal agents and ICE officers to use DC resources and encouraging our Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to coordinate with federal agents—a collaboration which has had very little oversight or accountability and led to further erosion of trust between community and police.

The federal interference in DC doesn't exclusively impact our neighborhoods, though. We have navigated multiple episodes of Congressional overreach into DC's governance, including directly into our budget. In once such instance, Congress effectively prevented us from spending **\$1.1 billion** of our own dollars that we raised in revenue, with the express purpose of undermining our ability to govern ourselves. As we await the fate of another \$700 million in estimated revenue threatened by Senate Republicans' desire to undermine Council's vote to decouple from costly federal tax cuts, we are reminded that the threats to our very right to govern ourselves are not only not going anywhere, **they will get worse.**

¹https://go.mpdconline.com/GO/EO_25_005.pdf

We are navigating a federal regime bent on eugenics and persistent in its vision to move us into full-fledged fascism, starting as the authoritarian playbook so often does with capture of our capital city. But anyone who lives here knows we're so much more than that. DC is a vibrant, beautiful community of nearly 700,000 residents who risk losing everything we have worked so hard to build for ourselves should the District fall under full purview of this racist, fascist regime. That is why it is more important than ever, particularly as we look ahead to America's 250th anniversary celebration and the undoubted terror it will unleash on our most vulnerable neighbors, that we see bold, decisive leadership from our electeds in defense of our ability to self govern, including serious re-investments in DC's social safety nets in a commitment to take care of our own.

Our coalition proudly presents our **"DC Takes Care of Our Own: A Budget for Care and Sustainability"** Platform this year as a declaration of our commitment to one another and our shared vision for a future which provides pathways for economic mobility, stability, wellness, and increased opportunity for DC residents from all walks of life. We have gone bolder than previous years in our recommendations, **because it is what the moment demands of us.**

We firmly believe that a change is coming, and **it is our shared responsibility to make sure that when that change does come, we are ready to receive it.**

With Mayoral, Congressional, and Council races all happening in the same year, DC is facing its largest electoral shifts in its history. While this shuffling may cause temporary uncertainty, **we must see the hope it offers.** It means the end of a Mayoral regime with which our Coalition has been unable to achieve meaningful partnership with. Despite efforts to rewrite her legacy in her final term as one of 'keeping promises to DC residents', her annual budgets tells a different story – one that shows her consistently prioritizing keeping developers' pockets lined while vital social safety nets are slashed, consistently harming DC's most impacted communities.

With Mayor Bowser out of office, we may have new leadership that genuinely wishes to take care of DC residents with our local budget, and we must be ready to capitalize on that.

The new council race means a renewed opportunity to urge Chairman Phil Mendelson and DC Council to take bold, unwavering stances against mayoral overreach and Congressional overreach into our budget and to center the needs of their constituents through robust re-investments in DC's social safety nets and forward-thinking programs for long-term self-sustainability. It also means we have the space to remind the council that they serve us, the people, and are meant to legislate on behalf of us or risk undermining our access to democracy as DC residents —**and risk losing their seats on council to more community-driven candidates.**

Finally, it means our Coalition has the chance to not only imagine this new world, but to advocate for and resource it. If we can help our new mayor understand that DC can and must budget for care and self-sustainability, we help protect and foster our ability to take care of our own – through local food ways, an independent, progressive tax system, community schools and vocational training, a reimagined and racially just housing landscape, and shared public space that upholds the dignity and wellbeing for all. It is all too clear that our elected officials will not move unless we move them.

Moving DC towards true autonomy and resilience against the ongoing threats of federal occupation begins and ends with a local budget that truly allows DC to take care of its own, and that's the budget we hope to achieve with this year's recommendations. **Thank you to all who continue to rise up and support our Coalition in this critical fight for DC's future.**

In service, in unwavering courage, and in deep solidarity,

Niciah Petrovic Mujahid
Niciah Petrovic Mujahid
Executive Director, Fair Budget Coalition



FAIR BUDGET
≥ COALITION

OUR HOPES

AS YOU READ THIS YEAR'S BUDGET PLATFORM

FOR COUNCILMEMBERS AND STAFF

We hope that **Councilmembers and staff** will see this Budget Platform as a reminder that we are all DC—that you, as residents yourselves, should be invested in building a local budget that takes care of our own. **One that is for DC, by DC.** The people want to know that their elected officials are hearing and centering their needs when developing their budget policies, not just answering to those corporate and federal interests that consistently put power and profit above the people.

As you read through our Coalition's recommendations, we hope that the throughline is clear:

Significant investments into healthcare, food access, housing security, and economic opportunity, among our other priority areas, **are the true investments that will improve our community's safety and, ultimately, secure DC's wellbeing for generations to come.** We are facing an unprecedented attack on DC's autonomy and right to self-governance, in large part because of persistent myths about the District being unsafe and unable to govern itself. We believe that you, the Council, **can and should** be the local leaders that answer the call to defend DC against further federal intrusion and that shift the narrative around **which investments truly keep DC safe, healthy, and thriving.**

FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We have three main hopes for **community members** reading this Platform: 1) to gain a deeper understanding of the budget process so that you can **confidently take your seat at the decision-making table** and share your demands around DC's budget; 2) to remind you, your family, friends, and neighbors **that there are plentiful resources available to take care of us all**, but that we must mobilize and organize our people to demand these resources and investments that our communities deserve; and 3) to better understand the importance of **building a better budget through the lens of achieving racial justice for all, with an emphasis on addressing the anti-Black history of gentrification, displacement, and theft of wealth and labor.**

As you read through the platform, ask yourself, "how can our budget help to address systemic harms and move us closer towards a racially just DC? How can I push myself and my community to deepen our commitment to the fight for a People's Budget this budget season, next, and for years to come?"



FOR ADVOCATES

We hope that **advocates** will be able to use this Platform as a tool to strengthen your capacity for collective bargaining with the larger community in mind as you decide **where to focus your advocacy efforts to increase our shared transformative power.**

As we make our policy asks throughout the upcoming budget season, **we invite you to stand firm on the values, principles, policies, and commitments we built together as a community,** and to resist the urge to comply in advance or write-off the fight because it seems impossible to win.

We ask that you unlock your radical imagination around **what can be done** within our current systems, and **what will come** from the power of caring for one another outside of the systems—a unified front that moves us closer to **our vision of a local budget that is rooted in abundance, not austerity.**

FOR ALL OF US

We began this section with our hopes for specific groups that we believe would benefit from reading our fiscal year 2027 (FY27) Budget Platform but, **at the end of the day, we are a collective. We are all DC.** Whether you are an advocate, policy expert, elected official, excluded worker, returning citizen, unhoused neighbor, mama, daddy, auntie or uncle, educator, community leader, organizer, or neighbor, **this platform is for you.** And we need you more than ever.

We must be able to collaboratively imagine beyond **what we know to be true now to dream of and build the budget that DC deserves.** What are your deepest desires for your neighbors? How do you imagine a DC where we have enough—**because we do have enough**—to feed, house, and support all residents? How can we build a budget and budget process that uplifts Black self determination and self-governance?

How does pulling up the gnarled roots of anti-Blackness underpinning the ongoing federal attacks and historical theft of Black wealth and labor serve to actually uplift us all?

OUR PEOPLE

Fair Budget believes that it's not just the "right" policy outcomes, but the processes we use to get to them, that will **shift the power in the Budget Policy sphere away from corporations, politicians, and the wealthy, towards the people** – and specifically our most impacted and historically excluded communities. As our Coalition grows (**180+ members and counting**) we find ourselves expanding our understanding of what this process can look like within our Coalition in ways that inform and strengthen our advocacy for shifts in DC's budget process because the core goal is the same:

SHIFT THE POWER BACK TO THE PEOPLE AND LET THE BUDGET SERVE THEM.



CONSTITUENT LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES OF IMPACT

Constituents and impacted communities ("communities of impact") are the heart of our Coalition, our recommendations, and our work towards a more people-centered DC budget and budget process. Our Coalition includes individual community members, and we specifically have a skill-building incubator program, our Constituent Leadership Program (CLP), that nurtures and emboldens existing community leaders to rise into their own power –and bring their neighbors along with them.



POLICY ISSUE COMMITTEES (PICs) AND THE POWER IN ACTION COMMUNITY COMMITTEE (PiACC)

We have updated the structure and naming convention of our Issue Groups (now our Policy Issue Committees) and Direct Action Task Force (now our Power in Action Community Committee) to ensure there are distinct but equally impactful spaces for Coalition members to plug in and advance our mission.



POLICY ISSUE COMMITTEES (PIC)

Fair Budget centers our work around seven issue areas that impact our neighbors: community safety, economic justice, education, fair taxes & public deals, food access, health justice, and housing security. We have seven groups, called Policy Issue Committees (PICs) that focus primarily on developing and advocating for budget and policy recommendations, for each issue area, serving as the main forum for in-depth policy analysis and strategy around issue-based advocacy. PIC chairs are responsible for finalizing and socializing our issue-specific budget recommendations with the larger Coalition, as well as developing our advocacy strategies.



POWER IN ACTION COMMUNITY COMMITTEE (PiACC)

Formerly the Direct Action Task Force, this committee has expanded its scope to engage in popular education, base and power building, and organizing issue-specific campaigns designed to mobilize community members to act. More about this in the process section, but the PiACC maintains strong communication channels with our PICs to strengthen community input within our recommendation process.



STEERING COMMITTEE

The Fair Budget Coalition Steering Committee is made up of policy experts, seasoned organizers, advocates and, most importantly, members of our impacted communities. Our Steering Committee uses a rubric to score the proposed Budget Recommendations on their impact, Coalition support, how much they are able to build power, how rooted they are in FBC's anti-racism principles, and the degree to which impacted community members have been involved in forming and advocating for said recommendations.



FBC STAFF

The administrative side of the process happens here. Fair Budget Staff organizes the ideas set forth by our PIC chairs and presents it to our Steering Committee for scoring, as well as to Members & Constituents for voting. Staff weighs input from all stakeholders, calculating both Coalition votes and steering committee scoring, and produces the final Budget Platform you have before you based on those calculations.

A WORD ON OUR PROCESS

The creation of the FBC Budget Platform happens in distinct phases that allow us to ensure each group involved in our process has an opportunity for input and collaboration.

1. FBC HOSTS THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET FORUM

The People's Budget Forum (PBF) is an annual gathering where FBC members, community, and outside supporters of our movement for a more people-centered budget can together discuss the issues DC faces, develop a shared understanding of which issue areas most deeply impact our communities, and ultimately inform our budget recommendation process.

Our staff synthesizes the input gathered from attendees and ensures that the information we have is made available to decisionmakers including the Mayor's office and DC Councilmembers through Forum readouts and meetings with staff.

The PBF sets the tone for the upcoming budget season.

2. PICs BEGIN DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UPCOMING BUDGET PLATFORM

The themes and information gathered at the People's Budget Forum get sent to our Policy Issue Committees (PICs), who use this information as a baseline for their recommendation development process. Each PIC is tasked with developing recommendations that are reflective of the real needs of our community and actionable via budget policy.

Sometimes, there is cross-collaboration between various PICs to bring to life a multi-faceted recommendation and several members of each PIC will work together to develop the recommendations. The PIC chairs (formerly Issue Group chairs) are responsible for communicating their PICs recommendations to PiACC and staff.

3. PIC AND PiACC COLLABORATE THROUGHOUT RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This is the newest component of our updated process to ensure community voices are centered and that their input is considered and integrated into the recommendation development process. During this period, members of our PICs and PiACC communicate back and forth about the proposed recommendations, flagging any concerns and providing additional insights from impacted community members to strengthen the final budget recommendations.

4. STAFF VETTING + SYNTHESIS OF PIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Once the PICs have developed their budget recommendations, FBC staff vets and synthesizes their proposed recommendations into finalized language that Coalition and community members can vote on. PICs often generate more recommendations than there is space for in our platform, so this step in the process is vital to ensuring the most actionable and community-anchored recommendations make it to the voting stage.

5. COALITION MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS VOTE ON RECOMMENDATIONS

FBC hosts Coalition voting where both organizational and individual FBC members vote on the proposed recommendations, as well as community voting in the form of Community Voting Town Halls. This part of the process is vital to ensure that we are truly getting community input into what recommendations make it into the final budget platform, and continuing to foster spaces where constituents can make their voices heard within the FBC process.

6. STEERING COMMITTEE SCORES PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Steering Committee takes the recommendations that receive the most votes from both the Coalition and community, and scores them according to the recommendation rubric and selects approximately 25 recommendations to include in the final Budget Platform. The rubric used to screen proposed budget recommendations assures that our Platform is effectively and actively anti-racist, impactful, liberatory, transformative, and shifts power.

THE OUTCOME

At the end of this process, we are able to collaboratively produce our annual Budget Platform—the one you see in front of you today—to kick off our budget season fight, centering our anti-racist and liberatory principles that work to transform our local budget and shift power back to the people.



Our final Budget Platform should reflect our whole-person and whole-community approach to equitable resource reallocation in DC, and serves as a tool for the DC Council to create legislation that supports the needs of all DC residents.

This Platform also serves as an accountability tool that DC residents can use to measure how the Council is (or isn't) creating budget policies that meet their needs. In addition, our Budget Platform serves as a centerpiece for District-wide advocacy, focused on making sure our collective advocacy efforts work to route resources to our most impacted residents so that they have what they need to achieve better health outcomes, access greater housing security, are afforded more economic opportunities, experience holistically safe communities, access more healthy foods, pay fair taxes, and to truly thrive.

SIX PLATFORM PRINCIPLES

1

We believe in **shared abundance**, recognizing that scarcity is manufactured by specific policy choices that we reject. We are grounded in the understanding that DC has more than enough resources to address the longstanding harms caused to Black, brown, Indigenous, working class, poor, and immigrant communities. These resources can and should be directed toward creating the conditions in which all residents can thrive. A key part of realizing this vision is taxing wealth for redistribution in alignment with a harm-repair agenda. **We have more than enough when the 1% pays their fair share.**

2

We reject a strategy of accommodation, which only invites further harm to our people by signaling our unwillingness to fight for them. In the face of federal threats to our autonomy, our residents, and our budget, we will not submit in advance or bow to intimidation. We will not be silent. We will not appease or surrender. We will stand firm in defense of our people, unwavering in our values and unyielding in our commitment to protecting DC's communities against any push for disinvestment.

3

We understand that true Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is not simply a matter of representation or race-based inclusion—it is about civil rights, racial equity, and repairing systemic harm. **We are committed to leading fearlessly** with racial justice and standing in deep solidarity with all communities under threat by the current administration and the growing tide of fascism. We reject all moves, rhetoric, and policies to harm our LGBTQIA+ and trans siblings, our unhoused neighbors, federal workers facing illegal mass layoffs, immigrants and refugees, the poor, folks with disabilities, and children.

4

We are committed to investing in the care and wellbeing of the people. We center the lives and needs of our communities as the primary drivers of our recommendations, advocacy, and organizing efforts. This is not just a principle—it is our practice. We make our decisions with the community at the forefront of our priorities and processes. We will not act if it does not serve the best interests of our people. **We demand the same level of commitment from policymakers.**

5

We will not falter in our **words, deeds, policies**, or actions when it comes to serving our community. We will not self-censor or retreat from the commitments we have made to our people.

6

We are committed to **building power** alongside and in partnership with our Black and brown community members, our working-class neighbors, organized labor, and the non-working poor. Together, we will build collective strength and move toward the just future we deserve.



COMMUNITY SAFETY

CONTEXT

We are bearing witness to the atrocities that are being brought to our communities right now by the **very same well-funded systems** that decisionmakers claim are protecting and serving Washingtonians.

Entire vibrant communities are being silenced, forced out of public life, and denied basic human rights in the name of ‘community safety’. Instead of feeling safe, our neighbors are being shown that they are not welcome, that their lives are not valued, and that their voices do not truly inform decisions being made for—and about—them.

This is not our vision for what true community safety looks like. **It is not part of the thriving DC we are collectively building.**

Our vision for a safer DC is one rooted in holistic community wellness, where community-centered solutions both prevent and address violence while respecting the lives and dignity of all people.

This vision asserts our self-determination and does not rely on law enforcement and carceral punishment logic to achieve its goals.

We know that safer communities are achieved through decriminalizing poverty, diverting people away from carceral systems, providing safe and supportive learning environments for our youth, and supporting victims and survivors of crime. Investing in community safety in these ways is preventative **and** restorative while also addressing root causes of violence. Black and brown working class communities continue to receive the most meager budgetary investments towards meeting the basic needs **proven to increase community safety** while also being the targets of overpolicing and state violence. For our communities and our neighbors to survive, we must collectively shift the narrative around what true ‘community safety’ looks like in the District.

The budget must change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase Funding for Domestic Violence Programming and Prevention, to Meet Increased Need

Domestic violence impacts every aspect of life in DC and the number of survivors reaching out for services is at historic levels and continues to grow. 47% of women and 43% of men in DC report experiencing domestic or interpersonal violence—higher than the national rates. Domestic violence is linked to mass shootings, gun violence and homicide, maternal and infant mortality, homelessness, migration, mental health and substance use, health outcomes and the cost of healthcare, and many other complex issues facing DC residents. We are advocating to continue funding for survivor services with an increase devoted to specific underserved communities and survivor-identified needs.

critical, new work. This is designed to help reach youth and communities before a person chooses to use violence in their relationships and to build skills to choose respect and healthy relationships. Additionally, funds will support flexible cash assistance to survivors to meet their specific safety needs. Financial independence and security has been linked to decreasing domestic violence and increasing the ability to get and stay safe following a violent and controlling relationship. The funding is necessary to serve today’s survivors: to help them get and stay safe and rebuild their lives without violence.

Total ask: \$4.4 million over FY26 level to the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants and the Department of Human Services

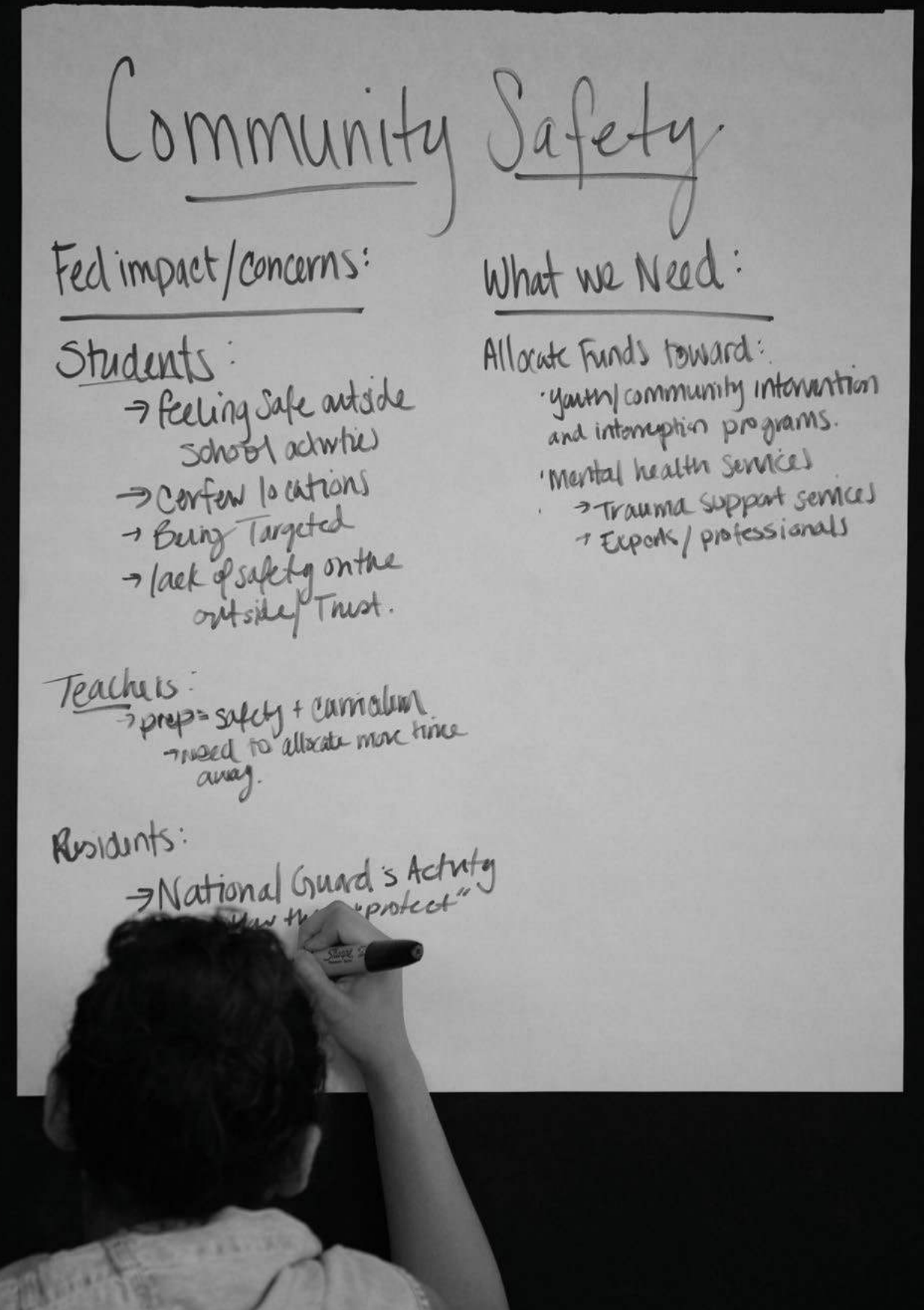
We need multiyear funding to build strong foundations and to deliver promising service and prevention programming for our communities. Prevention funding and economic empowerment funding are key to addressing the root causes of the problem. After years of advocacy, the Office of Victim Services and Social Justice Grants has now begun to fund primary prevention work, and maintaining funding will help continue this

Reallocate Police Funds to Fund the Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Community has been deeply impacted by unforeseen circumstances this past year, such as mass lay offs, the government shutdown, and a looming recession, on top of an already severe housing affordability crisis. The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) is an important mechanism for preventing evictions and homelessness and ensuring some level of housing stability among community members with low and lower incomes. Until we have access to adequate affordable housing, it is imperative that we fund harm reduction mechanisms like ERAP. Housing security is an integral component of public safety.

The annual ERAP budget has been slashed each year since the pandemic, however, even as the eviction rate, housing insecurity, and rents have all grown. Each time the portal opens for applicants, funds are exhausted within hours. This past fall a line of close to 1,000 households formed to apply for scarce ERAP dollars. We therefore recommend a significant increase in funding for ERAP to serve District residents facing housing crises or eviction. This money should be reallocated from the very hefty Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) budget for overtime and vacant or unfilled positions. This recommendation was created by a group of predominantly Black Fair Budget Coalition Constituent Leaders. Black women and their families are disproportionately impacted by federal layoffs and housing insecurity and will especially benefit from this funding.

Total Ask: \$100 million to the Department of Human Services, to come from the Metropolitan Police Department





CONTEXT

As DC’s economy has ruptured and shifted in light of this administration’s ongoing assault on federal workers, as well as the crushing impacts of the threat of increased state violence on many of our service workers, DC’s economic outlooks have also shifted. This year’s economic justice recommendations respond to the urgent moment we find ourselves in, where District families face rising costs, shrinking safety nets, and growing inequities, all while job prospects become harder and harder to come by. Many DC residents struggle to remain housed, afford basic necessities, and access essential services while the longstanding racial and economic disparities – particularly affecting Black, brown, immigrant, disabled, and low-income communities – continue to deepen.

At the same time, disinvestments in proven public systems risk **pushing people who are already in crisis into deeper hardship**, increasing long-term costs and strain on those same government services that are being cut. Investments that protect access to legal help, stabilize household incomes, lower the cost of utilities and transportation, and improve health and environmental conditions are especially critical now, as federal supports expire and local resources are stretched.

Together, these recommendations reflect a shared understanding that economic justice requires proactive public investment to prevent harm, promote stability, and ensure that the District’s recovery and future growth are equitable and inclusive for all residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fully Fund the Access to Justice Initiative

We recommend full and recurring funding for the Access to Justice Initiative to support access to civil legal services provided by more than 200 organizations to more than 40,000 DC residents annually. Residents rely on Access to Justice (ATJ) for representation in housing, domestic violence, and debt collection matters. Whereas there are constitutional protections for representation in criminal matters, defendants who cannot afford representation in civil matters lack this protection. This leaves defendants vulnerable to judgments against them. ATJ helps level the legal playing field and advances racial equity by ensuring that residents with lower incomes can protect themselves from predatory practices and organizations.

District residents’ safety, health, housing, and economic stability are at risk if access to legal help is unavailable, with added jeopardy for DC’s most vulnerable—children, elders, individuals with disabilities, immigrant communities, and others. In the case of housing matters, representation protects residents from a housing market in which residents face pressure to take on undue higher costs or are improperly evicted and eases the impacts of gentrification and displacement on Black residents. ATJ helps control debt collectors and saves residents money. It also supports residents living in violent homes to seek protections and safety. Having these services effectively funded and available means that District residents, particularly Black and brown residents and those with lower incomes, are better protected from public and private harms.

Total Ask: \$31.7 million in FY27 (\$126.8 million over the 4-year financial plan) to the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Fund the Sustainable Energy Trust Fund to Promote Health, Economic, and Environmental Justice

We are asking for funding of the Sustainable Energy Trust Fund (SETF), administered by the Department of Energy and the Environment, to support and expand high quality energy efficiency upgrades for at least 600 low- and moderate-income households. The SETF is financed by a surcharge on electric and gas utility ratepayers in the District to promote health justice, economic justice, and environmental justice. Economic barriers prevent many DC residents from being able to access healthier, safer, and more cost-effective energy options for their homes. Funds from the SETF help solve multiple problems: high energy costs for residents, high costs of replacing outdated fossil fuel systems, aging and dangerous energy infrastructure, and dangerous fossil fuel pollution that sickens residents. These funds also help prevent displacement of families from the District because necessary home upgrades are now within reach.

Black and brown communities in DC have suffered significant health impacts from fossil fuels as well as from high costs of living. From July 2020 to July 2025, energy costs increased by 93% in the District. A key way to reduce these costs for families across the District is to ensure that appliances with the biggest energy footprint—HVAC and water heating equipment—operate with better quality and lower energy consumption. Moreover, the emissions from fossil fuel-burning indoor appliances cause much higher rates of asthma, and children in Ward 8 are ten times more likely to go to the hospital because of an asthma attack than children in wealthier areas of DC. Overall, Black Americans are 55% more likely to die from causes related to pollution from fossil fuel-burning appliances than white Americans. These improvements support residents' health and economic wellness and move us toward addressing environmental injustice.

Total Ask: \$10 million to the Department of Energy and Environment

No Cuts to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Protect 15,000 DC families from Losing Vital Benefits

We are urging there be no cuts to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to protect 15,000 kids in 7,000 of DC families with the lowest incomes from losing vital benefits. TANF provides essential but modest income that helps parents protect their children through economic hardship.

DC TANF benefits—just \$800 a month for a family of 3—fill the gaps left by other programs by giving families flexible cash to pay for what they actually need, such as rent, transportation, school clothes, and diapers. Earlier this year, Mayor Bowser approved cuts that would end cost-of-living adjustments, reinstate time limits, and increase sanctions for not meeting work readiness requirements. If these cuts go into effect, TANF participants—primarily Black and brown families east of the Anacostia River—will lose cash assistance in fiscal year 2027. Maintaining current funding is critical to prevent increases in child poverty and family hardship.

Many DC families are kept in the cycle of poverty due to historic and contemporary policy choices steeped in racism. Lifting families out of poverty requires a complete overhaul of our systems and must be done thoughtfully. Cutting supports like TANF only further sets us back in addressing poverty and systemic racism. Maintaining funding for TANF now is critical to ensure a strong safety net that allows us to move forward solutions that will meaningfully change the circumstances of DC children and their families.

We urge investing \$12.84 million (\$66.34 million over three fiscal years) to ensure no time limit; \$2 million (\$6 million over three fiscal years) to keep sanctions at current rates; and \$5.66 million (\$34.43 million over three fiscal years) to maintain cost-of-living adjustments (per last year's Fiscal Impact Statement).

Total Ask: \$20.5 million (\$106.77 million over three fiscal years) to the Department of Human Services

Fund Free Metro Buses for DC Residents (Families, Workers, Seniors, Community)

We seek \$47.4 million to make buses fare-free for District residents through a fare buy-down plan with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). This policy helps working families in DC by expanding access to transit, and encourages bus use in the District, reducing car dependence and emissions (particularly in working-class neighborhoods where pollution is more concentrated).

Public transportation is fundamentally inequitable within the District. Transit fares are deeply regressive, hitting the poorest riders hardest. Likewise, there are racial and income disparities between the number of poorer and working-class riders and those whiter and more affluent riders who take rail or can afford personal automobiles. The DC Council notes that 84% of bus riders in DC are residents, 68% of whom have household incomes below \$50,000. Fare-free buses put money back in the pockets of residents to pay for their other essential needs: childcare, housing, nutrition, and so much more.

Public transit should instead be treated as a public good just like libraries, parks and public spaces. WMATA is currently investing in initiatives to get more individuals to pay their fares when they board buses, including putting plainclothes and undercover police officers aboard public transit. Fare enforcement is costly, difficult to implement, and results in the policing of poverty. In addition to providing DC residents a free mode of transportation, fare-free buses increase public safety by eliminating the need to enforce fares.

Total Ask: \$47.4 million to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority



EDUCATION

CONTEXT

Public schools are centers of community—vibrant hubs where students, families, and partners can gather to build a vision for a bright future for DC youth to inherit. Our recommendations build on a rich legacy of educational advocacy, Black leadership, and community-led innovation that demonstrates our capacity for self-determination, as well as our collective commitment to fostering the material conditions for the next generation to thrive.

More than ever, with our Black, brown, and immigrant families under direct attack, we cannot back away from this legacy. From cradle to career, for our youngest learners and our adult students alike, Fair Budget Coalition stands for a vision of public education that centers community care **and** academic opportunity. Our recommendations are born from an understanding that our school communities deserve to have their mental wellbeing invested in; that working families deserve the peace of mind of a social safety net as

they navigate economic hardships; that students deserve rich learning experiences that extend beyond classroom walls; and that educators deserve respect, fair pay, and more support as their roles expand beyond teaching to meet the current moment.

Today, amidst hostile federal takeover and assaults on the foundations of public education, it is up to us, DC, to create opportunity out of fear. Our students deserve no less than community safety, emotional safety, and the ability to feel authentic and valued on their learning journeys. DC must take care of our own. Together, we must build towards caring, enriching learning experiences and holistic support that build self-determination, deep-rooted connection, and expansive opportunity for both students and teachers alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustain and Expand the DC Child Care Subsidy Program to Serve More Families

We recommend DC fully sustain and moderately expand the capacity of the DC Child Care Subsidy Program to serve at least 20% more families in fiscal year 2027 (FY27), bringing the program’s capacity to around 9,000 children. The Child Care Subsidy Program currently makes aftercare and early childhood education affordable for roughly 7,300 children each year, drastically reducing child-care costs from as much as 32% of a family’s income to less than 5%.

Demand and enrollment have risen over the past year; however, FY26 funding is at least \$31.2 million below the level needed to sustain current enrollment. This is forcing the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to consider reducing subsidy rates and creating the first subsidy waitlist in 20+ years, which threatens children’s learning and growth opportunities, parents’ ability to work, and child care providers’ financial stability. Fully funding the program in FY27 and beyond will avoid long-term harms, such as parents—primarily mothers—being pushed out of the workforce, exacerbating racial disparities in

access to early childhood development and educational outcomes, loss of tax revenue for DC, and classroom closures that will strain the supply of affordable child care programs available to families Districtwide.

Funding for the subsidy program also tackles root causes of family economic instability and child poverty by ensuring consistent, affordable access to child care so parents can work or pursue education and improve their family’s economic situation and mobility. Without affordable child care, families would be forced to choose between housing and child care bills (typically the two largest expenses in a family’s budget), locked out of the workforce, and trapped in cycles of poverty.

Total Ask: \$153.3 million, allotted to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education and the Department of Human Services (and reflects federal and local funding portions)

Invest in Teacher Retention to Improve School Success

Understanding that school stability and educator retention are the foundational building blocks of sustained school success, we are asking to establish a DC Educator Retention Fund, providing \$200,000 per year to 20 schools experiencing high turnover (for a total cost of \$4 million annually). These funds would enable these schools to implement impactful and research-based strategies to support the well-being and retention of their staff including the addition of permanent substitutes, the implementation of flexible scheduling, partnerships to support educator wellbeing and more—all solutions educators consistently share with us.

Teacher turnover harms student learning and relationships. For students, this turnover can cause disruption of learning, a sense of instability or abandonment, and learning loss. By preventing teacher pushout, we better support students and address the fundamental inequity of more affluent students being accustomed to stable adult mentorship and stable school environments while others in high need schools cannot count on this critical stability.

At the root cause of educator turnover and burnout are the extreme level of demands that have been placed on educators on top of their main job description, especially for educators of color who face additional demands. Historically, DC's most in-need schools have faced the highest turnover rates. Teacher retention issues exacerbate existing instability in our neighborhood schools. We are centering the schools that have faced historic divestment.

Total Ask: \$4 million to the Office of the State Superintendent for Education and DC Public Schools

Fully Fund the Pay Equity Fund, a Powerful Program to Strengthen and Stabilize Early Childhood Education

We recommend restoring and strengthening the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund (PEF) and HealthCare4ChildCare, ensuring all early educators receive compensation on par with DCPS teachers and maintain access to affordable health insurance. Investing in these educators protects the District's early childhood education system and its workforce, keeps child care costs down for parents, and ensures all children—especially infants and toddlers in low-income families

—receive consistent, quality care. Early education forms the foundation for all future learning for District children and is therefore deserving of sustained public funding as education is a collective, societal responsibility.

Before the PEF, the early education workforce faced high turnover, shortages, burnout, poverty, and reliance on public benefits. The PEF corrected this injustice by increasing wages by an average of \$13,000 a year for nearly 4,000 early educators. In doing so, the program reduced staff turnover, grew the workforce, and generated a 23% return on the District's investment—all without raising early education costs for parents who are already struggling to afford high-quality, reliable early care and education.

The PEF has, however, been chronically underfunded—leading to wage cuts that started in January, pay stagnation, program instability, and anxiety among teachers and child care program operators. Beginning in FY27, the Mayor eliminated the program. DC's early childhood educators—primarily Black and brown women—have historically been underpaid due to systemic racism and sexism which long relegated child care to be performed by enslaved women or, later, very low-paid poor women. Public funding for the PEF program levels the playing field so early educators are fairly compensated for helping young children grow to reach their full potential.

Total Ask: \$94 million annually, allotted to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (and includes \$12 million to sustain HealthCare4ChildCare)

Invest in Equitable Access for High Quality Out-of-School-Time Programs for Children and Youth

We recommend an expansion of grant funding for community-based afterschool and summer programming so more children and youth—especially those in Wards 7 and 8—can access high-quality out-of-school-time (OST) opportunities. This investment represents a 10% increase over the FY26 funding level, growing seat capacity through grantmaking at the rate that community-based OST providers estimate they can absorb annually. We urge that funding be prioritized for community-based providers to expand their seats equitably by neighborhood and need.

OST programs—enrichment programs for children and youth that happen before and after school, over the summer, and during school breaks—teach kids new skills, provide safe outlets for fun and joy, and foster direction and personal passion that help them see real possibilities for their future.

OST programs promote academic achievement and improve attendance, career and college readiness, and community safety outcomes.

Currently, access to free or affordable OST programs is not equitable. Increasing recurring grant dollars for community-based OST providers improves their financial stability to retain and increase staffing, which can in turn serve additional youth to fill service gaps in neighborhoods, schools, and populations with the greatest need. An estimated 53,000 students are missing out on subsidized afterschool seats and 57,000 on summer seats. The Afterschool Alliance found that 68% of DC children would participate in afterschool programs if one were available and affordable, showing substantial unmet demand. OST service gaps are greatest in Wards 7 and 8 where students are overwhelmingly Black and disproportionately living in families with lower incomes.

Total Ask: \$33 million, recurring (a \$3 million (10%) increase over the FY26 funding level) to the Deputy Mayor for Education and its Office of Out-of-School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes

Expand the Community Schools Model to Provide Critical Services to Students and Families at the Schools with Highest Community Need

DC should invest in a systematic expansion of the Community Schools model to provide critical wraparound services to students and families where they already are connected. Community schools coordinate supports, services, community partnerships, and family engagement strategies to ensure all students' needs are met. This model helps our students to excel academically, allows educators to focus on teaching, and ensures all DC families have access to the supports they need to thrive in their communities. Research shows that this model is associated with improved student academic performance and with decreased rates of student dropout and risky behavior (such as delinquency, juvenile crime, drug use) in the U.S.

We recommend adding 8 new community schools per year (a cost of \$250,000 per site) and increase the overall number of community schools by 32 over the coming 4 years. This expansion would nearly double the number of community schools currently in DC. We will also advance legislation to put all schools in the pipeline to be community schools that meet three of the following five criteria: bottom quartile food-access scores, top quartile of justice involved youth, over 60% “at-risk students,”

top quartile non-native English speakers, and bottom quartile on attendance. This prioritization gives schools in predominantly Black and brown communities the tools to address systemic poverty indicators caused by racism and racist policy. We also will require that schools designate a teacher liaison, who is given a reduced teaching schedule in order to assist the Community Schools Coordinator with implementation of the program, building teacher buy-in, and guiding accountability within the school.

Total Ask: An additional \$2 million (\$8 million over the 4-year financial plan) to the Office of the State Superintendent for Education and DC Public Schools

Maintain Funding for the School-Based Behavioral Health Program

We recommend policymakers maintain FY26 funding for the School-Based Behavioral Health program (SBBH). The SBBH program addresses two significant social problems: behavioral healthcare access is inequitably distributed across the District, and unmet behavioral healthcare needs negatively affect student learning. Putting clinicians in DC public and public charter schools helps to close gaps in access to behavioral health care and supports student learning. Students across DCPS and charter schools benefit from a robust SBBH program that is capable of offering multi-tiered systems of support (school-wide prevention services, focused interventions for groups at-risk of behavioral health concerns, and intensive individual services). Meeting students' behavioral health needs should, in turn, improve school attendance, decrease behaviors that lead to exclusionary discipline, and support academic achievement.

Additionally, we are asking for legislative language that preserves a minimum grant amount per school program as well as language that preserves existing clinical relationships while the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) develops its in-house capacity. This recommendation defends against significant cuts to the program, as proposed by DBH over the next three fiscal years. DBH's plan would sever existing clinical relationships on the promise that they will someday be replaced by DBH clinicians. Instead, we propose maintaining level funding and preserving existing community-based organization partnerships to ensure that there is no loss of service availability while DBH works to build an in-house model.

Total Ask: \$16.7 million to the Department of Behavioral Health



FAIR TAXES & PUBLIC DEALS

CONTEXT

We find ourselves with a budget for the third year in a row that faces “fiscal pressure.” Almost invariably, this means that policymakers are planning to find ways to cut costs by slashing safety net programs. Policy that disproportionately disenfranchises DC’s Black and brown working-class and poor communities does not and will not create the conditions for us to take care of our own. Building a budget with austerity in mind typically means “austerity for workers; business as usual for elites.” Last year, we saw drastic cuts to health care, homelessness services, and other parts of DC’s safety net, while the Mayor and Council gave close to \$1.5 *billion* in subsidies to billionaire sports team owners alone.

DC should always be taking care of our own, and equitably-raised revenue is essential for growing the pie that Council has to invest robustly in our communities. We should never hear from policymakers that “we don’t have the money”—particularly given DC’s extreme wealth and the fact that **there is enough**. Around 0.4% of households hold almost half of all wealth in DC, a jaw-dropping \$183 billion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enact a Business Activity Tax to Level the Playing Field and Close a Loophole Among Businesses

Lawmakers should create a Business Activity Tax (BAT) to ensure all businesses pay their fair share of DC’s business taxes, by taxing the economic activity of a business rather than the profits of its owners. The District should enact a BAT of 2%, exempting the first \$200,000 in economic activity, which would benefit small businesses. It would be simple to administer and comply with, and would affect only businesses that now pay little or no tax, largely wealthy white business owners. Smaller business owners who live in the District could see their taxes go down and their tax filing process made easier.

Yet much of this wealth is shielded from taxation or undertaxed. Moreover, DC should be raising revenue through tax policies that recoup some of the massive tax savings the wealthiest received in the 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act tax cuts.

Tax policy is one of the single greatest levers for redistributing wealth. Too often it is used to transfer wealth upwards rather than shifting it back to the us, the people. Using progressive, equitable tax policy to raise revenues is an important avenue for both finding the much-needed funds for critical investments into our communities and for imagining a tax system that promotes racial equity in the longer term. Our recommendations center the progressive ideal that **“those with the most ought to contribute the most”** and the racial equity ideal that the tax system **should not be biased toward growing white wealth or taxing Black and brown folks into deeper economic insecurity**.

The District currently cannot tax many professional services firms (such as law firms, lobbyists, and accountants)—businesses that pass along their profits to the owners as income—who are profiting immensely from their location in the District. That’s because federal law prohibits DC from taxing the business income of the owners if they live outside of the District, as doing so would be an impermissible tax on their personal incomes. (By contrast, every other state in the nation taxes nonresident owners’ income as a matter of course.) This means that businesses whose owners live in the District bear the full burden of business taxes. A BAT would help resolve these issues. It would also address the problem that large, multistate corporations can use accounting mechanisms to shield their profits from the income tax.

The dollars raised through a BAT can pay down the sales or payroll tax increases and help fund much needed investments in Black and brown communities and in the safety net.

Revenue Raised: \$505.8 million annually

Create a Dedicated Revenue Stream for WMATA with a Land Value Tax

We recommend implementing a Land Value Tax (LVT) in order to raise dedicated funding for our public transportation system (WMATA). Implementing an LVT means that the increase in value of land due to proximity to public amenities (including transit, schools, libraries, and more) is returned to the public. This tax would cleverly recycle that value back into supporting the transit system that raised the land's value. An LVT shifts the economic incentives for developers and landowners to build more housing on that land. Traditional property taxes tend to raise costs, discourage development of housing, and encourage sprawl, while an LVT would result in more housing built near Metro stations, more housing near jobs, and more accessibility to those jobs.

Additionally, the revenue raised through an LVT would give WMATA the necessary funding to run high-quality, frequent, and reliable service both by bus and rail throughout the District. We are asking for at least \$350 million of the revenue raised to go to WMATA for funding operations for mass transit service. Metro is the only major transportation authority in the country without a dedicated source of revenue. This means that every few years WMATA effectively has to beg for funding and often makes service cuts, layoffs, and fare hikes. With dedicated revenue that also incentivizes density, Metro would finally be put on course for long term sustainability—even possibly free, decommmodified mass transit for all!

Transit service is closely tied to racial equity, with 60% of DC residents who ride the bus being Black and 68% having household incomes below \$50,000.

Revenue Raised: \$505.1 million annually

Protect and Fully Fund the DC Child Tax Credit

We are asking for \$55 million in recurring funding to go to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) to implement a permanent, refundable DC Child Tax Credit (CTC) that will go to the families of 70,000 children. We also seek an additional \$1 million for an opt-in economic mobility coaching pilot program. A DC CTC will reduce child poverty, ensure lasting economic stability, and strengthen the well-being of families across the city.

The OCFO has estimated the newly adopted CTC (\$1,000 per child under age 18) will cost about \$55 million per year, benefitting about 70,000 children, with nearly 100% of the dollars going to households in the bottom 60% of household incomes (or under \$119,000).

Direct cash assistance is a proven tool for poverty reduction and a direct investment in racial justice. Research suggests that a credit of \$1,000 per child, when combined with the federal CTC, would reduce child poverty in DC by as much as 25% annually. Such cash boosts for families with low incomes significantly improve the educational and health outcomes of their children. This would be especially important for Black children, who make up 77% of children living in poverty in DC, due to a history of racist policy and practice.

An opt-in coaching program enhances families' long term economic mobility. In research on LIFT's financial coaching program, nearly 50% of participants increased their income significantly, and many also increased their savings and made progress toward educational goals.

Total Ask: \$56 million, recurring, to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer

Improve the Taxation of Wealth

This recommendation aims to correct the undertaxation of high wealth. We recommend three policy changes to DC lawmakers, all of which are equitable, sustainable, and targeted, with revenues derived from taxing high wealth:

- Create a progressively tiered surcharge on capital gains for taxpayers with an adjusted gross income (AGI) above \$500,000 and for capital gains at/above that level only. This policy shift would raise \$87 million annually.
- Alternatively, create a new "wealth proceeds tax" that piggybacks on the federal policy, known as "net investment income tax," to raise at least \$61 million annually.
- Lawmakers should also eliminate the "stepped-up basis" loophole, which would raise \$43.7 million annually.

All the revenue raised should be directed to safety net programs that help Black and brown working-class and poor residents make ends meet.

The progressively tiered surcharge on capital gains proposal would raise the income tax on capital gains income by one percentage point for taxpayers with an AGI over \$500,000 and for capital gains income at or above that level only, meaning capital gains below the threshold would still benefit from the lower marginal tax rates in current law. For taxpayers with an AGI between \$750,000 and \$1 million, the proposal would raise the income tax on capital gains income by two percentage points, and by three percentage points for taxpayers with an AGI over \$1 million. The proposal could raise \$87 million annually, affecting just 1.85% of taxpayers overall—all of whom are in the top 5% of the income distribution.

In lieu of creating a surcharge on capital gains, DC could create a new tax on proceeds generated by wealth, such as capital gains, dividends, interest income, and annuities, as well as some rents, royalties, and business income. This proposal has lower administrative barriers because it piggybacks on a federal tax (created to fund Obamacare) and definition of wealth that already exists. The federal tax applies to taxpayers with incomes over \$200,000 (single)/\$250,000 (joint/married), with 75% paid by those with million dollar or more incomes. DC could adjust that income threshold and would ask taxpayers to pay a percentage of what they report to the federal government. According to research from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, a modest 1% Wealth Proceeds Tax, based closely on federal rules, could raise \$61 million in revenue annually for DC. A 2% tax would raise \$120.8 million.

Lastly, DC should eliminate the "stepped-up basis" for capital gains passed to heirs at death, to bring in \$43.7 million annually. If a DC resident leaves an appreciated asset to an heir, neither they nor the heir will ever owe capital gains tax on the growth in value up to that point. Essentially, this loophole allows the wealthy to pass decades or a lifetime of untaxed income to their heirs when they die.

Revenue Raised: \$104.7 – \$130.7 million annually, depending on the combination of policies

Increase Income Taxes on the Highest DC Earners

Increase the marginal tax rate on the highest DC income earners to raise \$109 million annually. With the tax cuts afforded on the federal level to millionaires after the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, it is high time we raise the tax on those with the highest incomes in the District. Our current personal income tax structure is considered the most progressive in the country, but that isn't saying much, since the highest earners pay almost the same marginal rate as those earning significantly less.

We should make the marginal rates more progressive by increasing the rates on all those earning more than \$500,000 and adding at least one new income bracket for income above \$3 million. This proposal benefits DC by generating revenue to secure the funding for a robust DC Child Tax Credit sufficient to eliminate child poverty, as well as by making DC's tax burden more progressive. We recommend hiking the marginal income tax rates:

- For incomes \$500,000 - \$1 million, increase the rate by .25% to 10%
- For incomes \$1 - \$3 million, increase the rate by .75% to at least 11.5%
- For incomes above \$3 million, increase the rate by 1.75% to at least 12.5%

Tax policy is able to address the root cause of DC's deep racial income and wealth gaps by generating more revenue with a progressive approach (shifting the burden more to those who have the most resources) and using the revenue to address racialized economic inequality in DC.

Revenue Raised: \$109 million annually

FAIR TAXES & PUBLIC DEALS



FOOD ACCESS

CONTEXT

We move closer towards achieving food sovereignty and food justice for us all when we adopt a dignified, community-centered approach to food access that meets the needs of our District's residents. Every resident deserves access to affordable, high-quality, nutritious food, because food is a basic human right. Yet for too many families, particularly those most disenfranchised by our current food system, this right remains out of reach due to decades of disinvestment and denial of resources to build truly robust food infrastructure.

Food insecurity in the District is driven by structural inequities, not individual circumstance. Communities East of the River face higher food prices, fewer healthy retail options, and unreliable access to fresh and culturally appropriate foods. These challenges are the result of historic redlining, inequitable land-use decisions, and long-standing underinvestment that shaped where grocery stores, distribution hubs, and public resources get to exist in our communities. As a result, these residents often travel farther and pay more for food that is less nutritious, while managing higher rates of diet-related chronic disease.

At the same time, emergency food providers are serving more residents with limited resources while

local farmers, food entrepreneurs, and community-based organizations struggle with rising costs and insufficient storage, processing, and distribution capacity. These gaps result in inefficiencies across the food system.

Building a Community Food Hub East of the River and Food First Responders Platform is a critical investment in food justice and community stability. This food hub would strengthen our local food system in a way that prioritizes equity and community benefit and provide improved reliable access to nutritious food while supporting small businesses, local growers, and workforce development. Locating food distribution and coordination infrastructure closest to communities with the greatest need also increases efficiency, reduces transportation costs, and ensures faster, more equitable responses during crises.

Achieving food sovereignty requires a sustained, multi-year commitment to a comprehensive food system—from production to distribution—that builds real political power, challenges harmful narratives and stigma around food access, and increases District investment into our collective health and wellbeing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build a Ward 8 Community Food Hub and Food First Responders Platform

We recommend funding of \$1.25 million for the Department of Health to support the building of a Ward 8 Community Food Hub and Food First Responders Platform. This funding protects food access for thousands of people across Wards 7 and 8 and replaces lost federal support for hunger. Many residents east of the Anacostia River do not have steady access to healthy food. More than 11,000 residents across Wards 7 and 8 will benefit, including seniors, families, people with chronic health conditions, SNAP shoppers, school communities, and residents with low incomes, many of whom are currently at risk of losing services due to federal cuts.

This recommendation is an ecosystem-wide solution that supports local food infrastructure and gives flexibility and cultural competence in responding to crises in the community, with food being an entry point for community resilience. The Ward 8 Food Hub will bring fresh food, local produce, emergency food support, and nutrition programs directly into the neighborhoods that need them most. It will also help people save money on groceries by restoring SNAP matching programs. The Food First Responders Platform will allow trusted community groups to respond quickly during emergencies, job loss, or crises that make it hard for people to get food. This recommendation creates a long-term solution by building local food power, supporting health needs, and keeping control of food resources in the community, all while responding to the urgent rise in hunger.

Total ask: \$1.25 million to the Department of Health





HEALTH JUSTICE

CONTEXT

Health Justice for residents of the District of Columbia requires responsible allocation of resources and services where people live, work, play, and pray. Our communities are hurting from years of inequitable access to resources that **make life better for a few at the expense of everyone else**. Physical pain and emotional distress have largely been left unresolved, with people increasingly distrustful of institutional support due to systemic racism and inadequate care. We have a healthcare system that is too often unresponsive to cultural and social context, and many residents are dealing with serious concerns about the presence of law and immigration enforcement when seeking even life-saving care —meaning that **our ability to improve the current conditions for health access in DC is truly life or death**.

The District's healthcare delivery infrastructure is also under enormous strain. Provider organizations and the healthcare workforce still have not fully caught their breath following the COVID public health emergency, and 2025 brought significant federal resource reductions, with more coming down the road expected to exacerbate this strain. Lost funding endangers our healthcare provider network, and a depleted, underpaid, and burned out health care workforce can

not provide the care that District residents deserve and need for optimal health outcomes.

For the health of our communities, we must also acknowledge that DC's government has taken a step back from previous commitments in their current policy choices. Instead of universal insurance coverage, public policies put in place now offer limited coverage only for our poorest and most disabled neighbors. Instead of diverting child behavioral health crises away from police response, they've reduced the numbers of behavioral health clinicians available to respond to those same children. Instead of ensuring safe homes, they've left building inspectors to go unit-by-unit to combat pests, infestations, and unsanitary conditions that almost always are building-wide in scope.

Fair Budget Coalition's fiscal year 2027 (FY27) platform recommendations for health justice are a call to our government officials to honor those previous commitments that would help our communities weather the difficult days ahead, and that would reflect the kinds of social investments that truly drive our communities' health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve the Alliance and Medicaid, Healthy DC Programs

We recommend that DC prioritize expansive healthcare access for all community members and improve its Alliance and Medicaid, Healthy DC programs and coverage. Last year's budget set in motion significant reductions in coverage and the eventual near-elimination of the Alliance for 27,000 residents. It also shifted approximately 14,000 Medicaid participants to Healthy DC, resulting in the loss of vision and dental services (and 1,600 former Medicaid recipients left with no affordable option). Health care is a human right and an essential need, and DC must return to providing a strong healthcare system to DC residents with low incomes.

Policymakers should restore three core features of the Healthcare Alliance by returning income eligibility to 215% of the federal poverty level, removing age limits for new applicants, and restoring service coverage

(e.g., vision and dental) to levels prior to October 1, 2025. Healthy DC recipients and residents who are no longer income-eligible for Medicaid, but who also do not qualify for the Healthy DC plan, should receive dental and vision coverage. These changes alone would restore healthcare coverage to levels before the deep FY26 cuts.

This recommendation solves the root issue by moving DC towards healthcare being a human right, and maintains healthcare for racially marginalized DC residents (primarily immigrant and low-income residents (Alliance) and primarily Black residents east of the Anacostia River (Medicaid, Healthy DC)).

Total Ask: \$85.1 million to the Department of Healthcare Finance and Department of Human Services

Restore the Child and Adolescent Mobile Psychiatric Service to Care for our Youth

We recommend the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) restore the District's only youth mobile crisis response team, the Child and Adolescent Mobile Psychiatric Service (ChAMPS), to its FY25 funding level of \$1.37 million. ChAMPS serves youth ages 6 - 17 across the District, providing crisis intervention over the phone and in-person, whether at home, school, or anywhere else in the community.

When youth are experiencing a behavioral health crisis, they deserve a caring and capable behavioral health response. ChAMPS reduces the utilization of law enforcement for behavioral health crises and helps to prevent unnecessary hospitalization, both of which can be traumatizing. Although ChAMPS is available for all youth, it is especially critical for Black and brown youth, who face specific risks when encountering police during behavioral health crises. Black youth face a higher rate of juvenile system involvement when a behavioral health professional is not able to respond to their needs. Restoring funding to FY25 levels will allow ChAMPS to continue providing critical services at the same capacity and will allow more Black and brown youth to get the health services they need.

Total Ask: \$690,000 to the Department of Behavioral Health

Create a Medicaid Buy-in Option for District Residents with Long-Term Disabilities

The District should create a Medicaid buy-in option for District residents with long-term disabilities who qualify for Medicare disability coverage. The Medicaid program offers additional services often needed by people with disabilities, but the Medicaid program has income and asset limits that sometimes exclude people with disabilities. This buy-in program would allow approximately 6,175 Medicare enrollees ages 18 - 64 who are above Medicaid asset or income limits to enroll in Medicaid, giving them enhanced access to health services not covered through Medicare.

This plan could also help to ensure continuing access to health insurance depending on changes happening in the District Medicaid program. This budget policy dramatically increases funding, drastically improves quality of service, and solves a broad problem for

a sizable population. Income and asset limits in the Medicaid program, while targeting resources to those who generally have less income and wealth, also creates poverty traps that force people to choose between additional income or assets versus keeping access to their health coverage. This is particularly perilous for people with disabilities. This recommendation seeks to help people with disabilities avoid poverty traps and allows adult children of people who have escaped poverty to have access to the health services those adult children with disabilities need.

This recommendation will support enhanced access to health services for primarily Black and brown District residents with disabilities and will add pressure to resolve age-related coverage gaps for people over 65 who need Medicaid as well as Medicare covered services.

Total Ask: \$9.6 million to the Department of Health Care Finance

Increase Funding to the Department of Buildings to Better Protect Tenants and Families from Housing Code Violations and Health Risks

We recommend additional funding to the Department of Buildings (DOB) so that it can more effectively protect tenants and families from the health risks associated with housing violations. Additional funding should be used to target violations that threaten health, permit a building-wide approach in the case of pest and rodent infestations, and to strengthen the processes between DOB and other agencies doing housing inspections.

These changes will improve housing code enforcement, which will lead to improved housing conditions and better preservation of affordable housing stock. Improved housing conditions such as the reduction of pest infestations and mold will improve the health of residents, especially for people with chronic conditions like asthma and for those with compromised immune systems. This program predominantly impacts Black and brown residents.

DOB should broaden the scope of violations to include those that present an immediate risk to health and rank complaints in tiers to ensure that housing conditions resulting in negative health consequences (such as asthma) are prioritized for inspections and violation notices. DOB should also allow a building-wide approach to inspections and code enforcement when there is a pest

or rodent infestation affecting more than one unit in a multifamily building. Treating infestations apartment by apartment is ineffective and wastes time and resources in addressing the problem. DOB also needs to be more effectively connected to other agencies engaged in housing inspections so residents can track complaints as they move from one agency to another (as, for example, when there are mold complaints that move between DOB and the Department of Energy and Environment).

Total Ask: \$2 million to the Department of Buildings

Protect the Behavioral Health Court Urgent Care Clinic at DC Superior Court

We urge full funding to maintain the Behavioral Health Court Urgent Care Clinic offering urgent care for behavioral health conditions at DC Superior Court. For the past several years, the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) has proposed eliminating this program, despite its benefit of annually stabilizing hundreds of people experiencing behavioral health crises at the Court. This program provides crisis support at a time and place of high stress, deescalates crises and avoids unnecessary interruptions of legal proceedings and deployments of mobile crisis teams. Follow up services help to ensure that people continue to receive the help they need once they leave the court.

Approximately 600 people annually benefit from having a behavioral health crisis response onsite at the DC Superior Court and connection to follow up resources. This recommendation defends against catastrophic cuts to a program, a real risk given DBH's persistent attempts to defund the program in the past several years.

While this recommendation does not "fix" historic inequality, it makes important resources available to people who are disproportionately marginalized community members (Black and brown people, poor folks and those with lower incomes, LGBTQIA+, and others), who have experienced historic and ongoing inequities and oppression. They may be more likely to need those services than other groups and, if unassisted, would be left to await less helpful, or even harmful, responses delivered by law enforcement rather than healthcare professionals.

Total Ask: \$900,000 to the Department of Behavioral Health





HOUSING SECURITY

CONTEXT

DC is one of the least affordable housing markets in the nation, making displacement and homelessness both serious threats to our communities. **Under a federal regime that is philosophically opposed to best practices in housing, and even downright hostile to those without it, our local leaders have underfunded proven solutions.** In recent years, despite ample data and community testimony, the Mayor and Council put forth budgets that demonstrate a fair weather commitment to ending homelessness or housing insecurity in the District. We've seen drastic cuts and policy changes to programs that adversely impact tenants and unhoused residents while corporate and police interests are championed.

As Mayor Bowser develops the last budget proposal of her 3-term tenure, Fair Budget Coalition presents a slate of recommendations to course correct in pursuit of housing justice. While we're still under unnecessary occupation by the National Guard and facing constant threats by an immigration enforcement agency

operating beyond the limits of law, and in the wake of devastating layoffs across the federal workforce, we're urging the Mayor and Council to prove through their investments that DC takes care of our own. For fiscal year 2027 (FY27), our recommendations **bring our neighbors off the streets and keep our neighbors in their homes.**

Our vision is a DC where homelessness is brief, rare, and non-recurring because a variety of housing options, including social housing, are prioritized in funding and the human right to housing is enacted policy. We envision a DC of intergenerational home stewardship, where people born here can stay here without fear or danger of gentrification and displacement. **We understand that stable, dignified housing for all is integral to community prosperity and actual community safety.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fund and Expand DC's Youth Homelessness System

We recommend DC increase investment in DC's youth homelessness system to expand capacity for longer-term, higher-intensity housing and age-appropriate wraparound supports for youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The recommendation responds directly to young people's feedback that short-term housing models (such as transitional housing and rapid-rehousing) fail to provide sustainable housing and income stability—particularly for young parents. We urge an expansion of extended transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and improved inter-system coordination.

Roughly 2,600+ youth aged 18 - 24 experiencing homelessness interact with the homelessness system annually, yet, due to capacity constraints, only a portion can receive developmentally and culturally appropriate services through the youth system. More youth are receiving services each year, yet youth bed capacity has declined 16% since fiscal year 2020 and system funding has remained flat when adjusted for inflation. This means service providers are being asked to do more with less, while youth are being shortchanged the full set and length

of services they need to be on a path toward a financially stable early adulthood.

By increasing funding, more youth will be connected with the District's youth serving organizations and find case managers and services that offer greater understanding, community, and safety. They can then access more stable housing placements, with longer-term support and wraparound services, resulting in stronger pathways to mentorship, education, and employment, setting youth up for long term stability, and breaking cycles of chronic homelessness. Better funding also opens more support to young parents who are at elevated risk of recurring homelessness and address gaps arising from racial inequity, LGBTQIA+ discrimination, family instability, and insufficient youth-specific services in the District's homelessness system.

Total ask: \$28 million (a \$3.7 million increase over the FY26 level) to the Department of Human Services

Invest in Public Housing Repairs

For years now, Public Housing residents and their allies have demanded local funding for repairs to public housing units. Public housing is the only truly deeply affordable housing in DC. A lack of investment in public housing will lead to further displacement of the lowest-income and Black residents and reduce the stock of deeply affordable housing. Funding for public housing repairs and maintenance must continue in order to improve the living conditions and health outcomes of public housing residents.

After decades of disinvestment from the federal and DC governments, public housing has fallen into significant disrepair and residents have been forced to live in deplorable conditions that threaten their health and safety. The current presidential administration seeks to make further cuts to public housing and introduce harsh policies that hurt subsidized tenants. Moreover, DC Housing Authority stated in its FY25 oversight response that it has 5,416 occupied units of a total stock of 8,026 units, even as thousands wait on the housing waitlist. Funds and increased Council oversight are necessary to protect residents, safeguard public housing properties, and minimize the continued displacement of marginalized community members.

This recommendation seeks to push DC elected officials to see public housing as a local, not federal, responsibility and to commit to annual funding for public housing repairs. Public housing residents know what is really happening in public housing and know the solutions.

Total Ask: \$60 million to the DC Housing Authority

End Encampment Clearings and Fund Storage Options

The Bowser administration and federal government have escalated inhumane, dangerous encampment clearings of unhoused community members, causing displacement, trauma, and disconnection from service providers. Many clearings are executed without adequate notice, clear metrics, or even a transparent policy rationale. Recent federal government actions have increased a law enforcement presence and heightened the vulnerability of unhoused residents. Erasing the visibility of homelessness does not erase homelessness. The solution to homelessness is housing, not further displacement and dispossession.

Reducing or eliminating clearings will save funds that can be reallocated to other programs, though we need increased transparency from the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS) to determine the cost. Any savings should go towards permanent supportive housing (PSH) vouchers, particularly after the FY26 budget, where not a single PSH voucher was funded for individual adults living outside.

We urge the following as part of this recommendation:

- Suspend all encampment clearings. Instead, conduct trash-only clearings, provide additional trash cans at encampments, and maintain portable bathrooms and hand washing stations. This avoids the trauma and harm of further displacement.
- Create legislative policies that standardize criteria, definitions, and metrics related to encampment evictions, along with due process for encampment residents.
- Invest \$1.5 million in secure storage options to safeguard the belongings of those experiencing homelessness. Unhoused residents should not have to choose between seeking shelter and keeping their belongings.
- Refuse DC government direction or cooperation on any federal government targeting of encampments for evictions/displacement.
- Reallocate any remaining funds to invest in ending homelessness.

Total Ask: \$1.5 million to the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services

Reallocate Police Funds to Fund the Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Community has been deeply impacted by unforeseen circumstances this past year, such as mass lay offs, the government shutdown, and a looming recession, on top of an already severe housing affordability crisis. The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) is an important mechanism for preventing evictions and homelessness and ensuring some level of housing stability among community members with low and lower incomes. Until we have access to adequate affordable housing, it is imperative that we fund harm reduction mechanisms like ERAP. Housing security is an integral component of public safety. The annual ERAP budget has been slashed each year since the pandemic, however, even as the eviction rate, housing insecurity, and rents have all grown. Each time the portal opens for applicants, funds are exhausted within hours. This past fall a line of close to 1,000 households formed to apply for scarce ERAP dollars.

We therefore recommend a significant increase in funding for ERAP to serve District residents facing housing crises or eviction. This money should be reallocated from the very hefty Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) budget for overtime and vacant or unfilled positions. This recommendation was created by a group of predominantly Black Fair Budget Coalition Constituent Leaders. Black women and their families are disproportionately impacted by federal layoffs and housing insecurity and will especially benefit from this funding.

Total Ask: \$100 million to the Department of Human Services, to come from the Metropolitan Police Department

Fund Expansion of the Nuisance Abatement Fund to Enable Swift Housing Code Violation Repairs

We recommend expansion of the Nuisance Abatement Fund to enable the Department of Buildings (DOB) to repair housing code violations directly without relying on lengthy court processes. Currently, DOB must seek court judgments against landlords, which only impose fines and do not guarantee repairs are made. This leaves thousands of tenants in unsafe conditions for months or years, while landlords may view fines as “the cost of doing business.” With these funds, DOB can act immediately to correct violations, improving housing conditions without delay.

Expanding this fund will allow DOB to address widespread capital needs in DC’s aging housing stock, protect tenants, and ensure safe, habitable homes. This investment is essential for housing justice and public health. For decades, low-income and predominantly Black communities have endured unsafe housing conditions because enforcement systems relied on slow, fine-based court processes that rarely result in timely repairs. Expanding the Nuisance Abatement Fund helps correct this systemic inequity.

This is not a handout to landlords: the costs of repairs are assessed against the property through a priority lien, and DOB’s own data show higher collection rates for liens than for fines. Moreover, every dollar invested in the Nuisance Abatement Fund goes directly to improving housing conditions, unlike adjudication processes that only indirectly attempt to enforce compliance.

Total Ask: \$75 million to the Department of Buildings

End Chronic and Family Homelessness

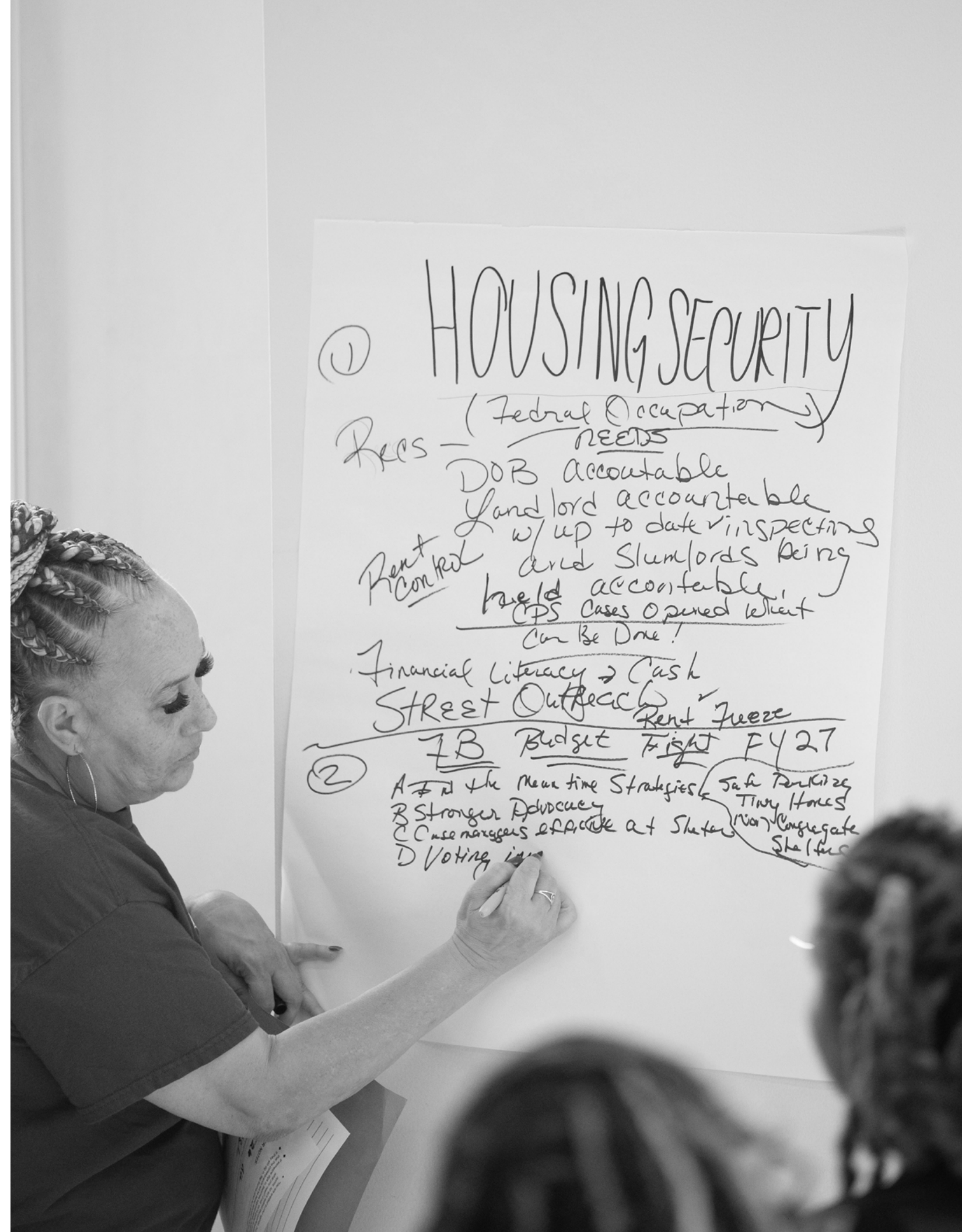
PROGRAM	HOUSEHOLDS	COST
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) - Individuals	1260 (multi-year ask for 3 consecutive years)	Estimated \$36.29 million/ year
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) - Families	782	Estimated \$37.63 million
Targeted Affordable Housing (TAH)	938	Estimated \$40.87 million
Local Rent Supplement Program (LRSP) Tenant Vouchers	2988	Estimated \$94.1 million
Local Rent Supplement Program (LRSP) - Returning citizens	60	Estimated \$1.89 million
Outreach	---	Estimated \$6.4 million
Total	6028	\$217.18 million

The vast majority of people experiencing homelessness in DC need permanent housing subsidies to maintain housing stability. Despite overwhelming housing need, the FY26 budget failed to fund even a single voucher for unhoused individuals and underfunded voucher resources for unhoused families. Failing to invest in permanent housing resources has real consequences for DC residents in need of such critical support. DC must adequately fund all types of permanent housing vouchers to serve the varying needs of those experiencing homelessness, invest in outreach, and increase oversight of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the DC Housing Authority (DCHA) to reduce delays in voucher processing.

This recommendation would end homelessness for 6,028 households in DC. See the chart above for the numbers and types of housing vouchers needed for our community members.

The crisis with housing affordability has its roots in racist policy and oppression and is still deeply racialized. Subsidized affordable housing is one critical element of addressing these racial inequities, providing housing stability, and meeting the mandate that households do not pay more than 30% of their income in rent, so as to leave enough income to afford other basic household costs. It is essential that DC moves away from a system that relies on temporary assistance to magically end homelessness and also moves away from a system based on racist and classist myths that unhoused residents will become dependent on assistance unless there are draconian time limits in place.

Total Ask: \$217.18 million to the Department of Human Services and DC Housing Authority



FBC FY27 BUDGET SEASON MEMBER LIST

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

ACLU DC
 ATU Local 689
 Beloved Community Incubator
 blakQuity
 Bread for the City
 Chesapeake Climate Action Network
 Children's Law Center
 Claudia Jones School for Political Education
 Coalition for Carceral Nutrition
 Coalition for Environmentally Safe Communities
 Community Services Agency of the Metropolitan Washing-
 ton Council, AFL-CIO
 DC Action
 DC Behavioral Health Association
 DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 DC Fiscal Policy Institute
 DC for Reasonable Development
 DC Hunger Solutions
 DC Jobs with Justice
 DC Justice Lab
 DC Kincaid Alliance
 DC Latino Caucus
 DC Safe
 DC Statehood Green Party
 Educare DC
 Empower DC
 EmpowerEd
 Everyone Home DC
 Festival Center
 FirstShift DC
 Food Recovery Network
 Friendship Place
 Green New Deal for DC
 Health Justice Alliance Law Clinic
 Jews United for Justice
 Legal Aid DC
 LIFT DC
 Live It Learn It
 Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America
 Miriam's Kitchen
 More than Our Crimes
 Mother's Outreach Network
 Nyame Kua Farm Collective
 ONE DC
 Progressive Workers Union
 Save Chinatown Network
 Sierra Club DC Chapter
 So Others Might Eat (SOME)
 SPACES In Action
 Spur Local
 The Wanda Alston Foundation
 Tzedek DC
 United Planning Organization
 Voices Unbarred
 Ward 8 Woods Conservancy
 Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
 and Urban Affairs
 Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless

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