



State of Human Rights in the District of Columbia as a Human Rights City

An update to the February 5, 2012 Report

December 10, 2015

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This Report and its Appendices are posted at: <http://afsc.org/resource/report-state-human-rights-dc>

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Appendices are available along with this Report at <http://afsc.org/resource/report-state-human-rights-dc> as separate PDF documents.

Introduction

This update to the 2012 Report represents a summary of our findings. It is a product of the Steering Committee and was made possible using diverse resources, which includes valuable research done by four American University students noted on page 1.

To provide context for this update the following is excerpted from the introduction to the 2012 report:

As the culmination of a campaign initiated by the American Friends Service Committee of DC Peace and Economic Justice Program and PDHRE, and broadly supported by more than 20 community organizations, on December 10, 2008, the District of Columbia Council declared Washington, DC a Human Rights City (HRC). On May 26, 2011, the Steering Committee of DC Human Rights People's Movement, the group established to focus on follow up to this historic declaration, and on the initiative of the American Friends Service Committee, created a process to develop an annual report on the human rights status of residents of the District of Columbia. This report was to focus on the achievement of political, social, and economic human rights recognized as fundamental human rights by the global community.

The completed report is an evaluation of progress by the District of Columbia government toward fulfilling the promise of the 2008 declaration of the District as HRC. At the outset, we recognize the continued failures of the federal Executive and the U.S. Congress to address the long-standing demand for equal rights for our residents, including full voting rights in the Senate and House of Representatives, as well as control over our legislation and budget comparable to the 50 states, a status that can only be enjoyed with full statehood for the District of Columbia. We recognize that, with the achievement of DC Statehood, our elected government would be empowered to negotiate reciprocal income tax arrangements with surrounding jurisdictions and secure other fiscal and political goals denied to District of Columbia residents under the current Home Rule status.

We stand by the conclusions expressed in the introduction of the 2012 report:

Nevertheless, even within the restrictions imposed by Congress via the Home Rule Charter, it is critical that we hold our elected District of Columbia government fully accountable for the commitments made upon its Declaration of D.C. as a Human Rights City, and to evaluate progress we have made in the three years since that declaration. In this report, we consider whether our District government has in fact made significant progress toward achieving basic human rights for its residents since committing itself to that task three years ago, even under the political constraints of the District's semi-colonial political status. To the extent our elected local government has failed to meet these commitments, this failure itself serves to disempower our residents in our common

struggle for full self-determination, DC Statehood.

As summarized on the Report Card presented at the beginning of this document, the District has a long way to go toward achieving the promise of its declaration as a Human Rights City. In developing this report, we strive not to simply catalogue the failures of our limited government, but to illustrate for our fellow D.C. residents what we should be striving to achieve. In this way, we hope to mobilize D.C. residents to effectively demand and secure their human rights and to hold our elected officials accountable for falling so far short of that goal.

In this report, we list each subject area covered by the 2012 report, with its recommendations, followed by an update, new recommendations when applicable, and a grade. This grading follows the criteria of the 2012 report, with further clarification.

Report Card

Utilizing the criteria offered by human rights law and practice, we have developed the following Human Rights Report Card for elected officials of the District of Columbia, as well as those in the private sector whose actions have a significant impact on public policy decisions. The grades are intended as both a measure of progress in different areas of human rights practice and as identification of areas where more must be accomplished before the District can be in any sense considered a Human Rights City.

A – Excellent – objectives achieved

B - Decent progress but one or more significant problems remain

C – Limited progress achieved

D – Barely passing

F – Failure to achieve even the most basic human rights standards

Our grading in this updated report aimed on capturing the gap between the real capacity (e.g., the DC tax base) to address issues of income inequality and poverty and our local elected government's actual use of this capacity given the comparative data from our 2012 HR report versus now. We also recognized that DC is impacted by upturns and downturns in our national economy, so potentially modest improvements since the recession of 2008-2010 at least in part reflect these trends, nevertheless given the updated data systemic poverty and income inequality continue.

Grades	2012	2015
Federal Government (Executive and Congress)	F	C- (Congress)
District Government and Elected Officials		
Promotion of Self-Determination and Statehood for DC	B+	B
Poverty reduction and income equality	F	D-
Welfare of Children	F	F
Access to Affordable Housing and Ending Homelessness	F	D
Budgetary and Tax Priorities	D	F
Human Rights Education	C	C+
Public Education	D	D
DC Criminal Enforcement System	D	D
Health (present report includes Environmental Justice)	C	C
Immigrants' Rights	A-	A
Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation	A	A-
Discrimination based on Race	D	D
Discrimination Against Women	D	D+
Discrimination based on Religion (a new subject for this report)		D

Recommendations

Recommendations at the end of each section are submitted as suggestions to how the District government can more effectively address the deficiencies in present District policies. We recognize that many of these proposals have been made before and that our proposals should be a basis for dialogue. We strongly encourage organizations, such as the Fair Budget Coalition, Empower DC, One DC, DC Jobs with Justice, Returning Citizens United, DC for Reasonable Development, Justice First, DC for Democracy, DC Working Families and the DC Statehood Green Party as well as individuals to consider, improve, and expand these recommendations and join together for a People's Agenda to advance human rights in DC.

SUBJECTS CONSIDERED

The International Human Rights Context

2012 Report

To date the United States government still has not ratified the following relevant treaties: The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

2015 Updates

The 2012 report is still accurate. Nevertheless both the U.S. and District governments should be held accountable to these conventions with respect to their human rights records.

Promotion of Self-Determination and Statehood for DC

2012 Recommendations

The District government should immediately appoint members to the 51st State Commission and provide adequate funding for its charge. We strongly recommend that Eleanor Holmes Norton use her official voice to promote DC Statehood nationally and internationally by holding our Executive and Legislative branches of federal government fully accountable for their continued denial of our political rights. Further, we urge Eleanor Holmes Norton to lobby the National Democratic Party to put support for DC Statehood back in the 2012 Democratic Party Platform, a statement that was removed in 2004 and 2008 Platforms (note that the only national electoral party to presently support DC Statehood in its Platform is the Green Party of the United States).

2015 Updates

After intensive lobbying by Statehood activists DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton introduced The New Columbia Admissions Act starting in 2013. DC Statehood bills are gaining support in both the House and Senate, thanks to grassroots organizing which has resulted in systematic lobbying. The status of national political platforms is still valid.¹

Thus far, the Bowser Administration of the District of Columbia is continuing the improved commitment to full Statehood that was demonstrated during the tenure of the Gray Administration. Although the DC Statehood Delegation (the two United States Senators - Senator Paul Strauss and Senator Michael Brown and the U.S. Representative Franklin Garcia) still serve without a direct salary, the DC Council passed legislation to fund a paid staff and

¹ For additional documentation go to: <http://www.newcolumbiavision.org/>, <http://www.dcstatehoodyeswecan.org/j/>, <http://standupfordemocracy.org/j/>, <http://the51st.org/>.

some other administrative costs. Statehood advocates continue to push for real salaries and resources for the members of the DC Statehood Delegation equivalent to those received by other lobbyists who advocate for national causes.

The Executive Office of the Mayor under the new Mayor Muriel Bowser has thus far convened two meetings of the DC Statehood organizations and individuals. The mayor's stated agenda was to get ideas from the meeting invitees to create new strategies and ideas, which the executive office could pursue. This was seen as significant for two reasons: 1) statehood was the only approach to be used to resolve the issue of lack of full citizenship rights of DC residents (incremental approaches, such as voting rights or budget autonomy were not presented as part of the agenda; and 2) it was made clear by the presence of top members of the Mayor's executive staff that the Mayor has a serious commitment to the issue of DC Statehood.

Funding for nonprofit organizations to pursue projects and strategies to increase national support for DC democracy continued under Mayor Bowser as it has throughout each administration since Mayor Anthony Williams launched the first allotment of DC government funds. However, Williams restricted his funding of \$1 million in 2005 to DC voting rights. He did not include DC Statehood as a focus of his funding whereas since the inclusion of DC Statehood as a possible recipient, the funding has steadily decreased from \$1 million to \$250,000 for the nonprofit organizations.

Also, it must be noted that Mayor Bowser, then a Councilmember, was arrested along with then Mayor Gray, 5 other Councilmembers and individual Statehood and budget autonomy advocates in 2011.

2015 Recommendations

Our local government should:

1. Fund the Statehood Delegation (Shadow U.S. Senators and Representative) at a level adequate to fulfill the commitment of our Mayor and Council to achieve DC Statehood as soon as possible.
2. Appoint a DC Statehood strategist to the executive office level.
3. Facilitate an ongoing education and advertising campaign to make DC Statehood and the effect our lack of rights effects everyday life in DC.
4. Convene Ward town hall and major citywide meetings to engage and educate the public on DC Statehood and our lack of citizenship rights.
5. Follow up on implementing signage on streets that was discussed several years ago, renaming streets such as No Taxation Without Representation Street, etc.
6. Make the quest for DC Statehood a regular part of official dialogue and language.

Poverty Reduction and Income Inequality

2012 Report

The Occupy Movement nationally and locally has focused our attention on the issues of poverty and income inequality. In DC and globally, there has also been increasing income and wealth inequality. The standard measure of inequality is the Gini coefficient (named after its designer), which ranges from 0 (lowest level of inequality) to 1 (highest level). According to the Census, DC now has the highest Gini coefficient in the US and thus the highest level of inequality nationwide, set at .532. We also have the most households in the nation making over \$200,000 (8.4 percent of households or 21,194 households).

2015 Updates

Income inequality

The Gini index cited above was for 2008, 2009, the highest in the United States compared to the 50 states, 0.532 +/- 0.010.

The latest data available is for 2013, no change from the previous value, i.e., 0.532 +/- 0.012, again the highest in the United States compared to the 50 states. Baltimore's Gini index for 2013 is 0.527.²

Poverty

Poverty rate in 2013: 18.9%; Baltimore: 23.3% (Civildashboards.com).

Poverty rate in 2014: 17.7%, 25.9% for Black population, 26% for residents under 18 years old. (Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014 Current Population Reports Issued September 2015 P60-252, By Carmen DeNavas-Walt and Bernadette D. Proctor).

Child poverty in 2012: 27% (2014 KIDS Count Profile)

The human costs of poverty are strikingly apparent in Ward 8 with one half of children in poverty in 2013 (the DC rate was 28.7%³). The infant mortality rate in 2013 was 10.9 per 1000 live births in Ward 8 and 11.9 in Ward 5 (with a child poverty rate of 27.1%), compared to a DC average of 6.8.⁴

Minimum wage, Living wage

² Household Income: 2013 *American Community Survey Briefs* By Amanda Noss, Issued September 2014 ACSBR/13-02

³ <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/Tables/6748-child-poverty-by-ward?loc=10&loct=3#detailed/21/1852-1859/true/36/any/13834>

⁴ Washington Post, B3, May 6, 2015

In 2014, the Council of the District of Columbia passed law L20-0091, or the Minimum Wage Amendment Act of 2013. This legislation raises the minimum wage in the District from \$8.25/hour to \$11.50/hour by 2016, in a series of steps. While this increase ensures wages that are more reflective of the Consumer Price Index, it falls short of granting a living wage, calculated at \$14.84/hour for one adult. Poverty and income inequality will continue to remain a human rights issue for the District without subsequent legislation to provide a living wage in lieu of a minimum wage.

Washington, D.C., \$15 per hour Minimum Wage Initiative

“A \$15 per hour minimum wage measure may be on the ballot for voters in Washington, D.C., on November 8, 2016. If approved, this measure would increase the city's minimum wage to \$12.50 per hour in 2017. The minimum wage would then increase annually until it reached \$15 per hour in 2020, after which the minimum wage would be adjusted each year according to increases in the cost of living. The initiative was designed to increase the minimum wage of tipped employees to \$15 per hour by 2025. The minimum wage in Washington, D.C., is currently \$10.50 per hour. It was set to increase to \$11.50 per hour in 2016.”⁵

A court decision regarding a challenge to this initiative from the D.C. Chamber of Commerce is expected in the near future. If this challenge is rejected, then petitioning will begin to gather the required number of signatures of DC voters to place this initiative on the ballot.

Employment and Workforce Development

2012 Recommendations

The District government should strengthen enforcement of the First Source Act and the Living Wage Act, including shutting down projects that do not hire DC residents and pay them a living wage, and use fines against these violators to fund job training and apprenticeships.

The District government should take the lead in promoting a comprehensive program to train DC residents in jobs for the economy of the 21st century, with a focus on green jobs in urban agriculture, energy conservation and solar energy technologies. For example, high schools should have apprenticeship programs that guarantee employment upon graduation and strongly encourage and support college education with the same focus. The District should partner with non-profits especially co-ops, businesses and unions.

2015 Updates and Recommendations

See the Fair Budget Coalition Good Jobs Workforce Development and Income Support Issue Group recommendations, page 55 with documentation in the Appendix.

⁵ https://ballotpedia.org/Local_ballot_measures,_Washington,_D.C.

Welfare of Children

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Benefit Status

2012 Recommendations

The rapid and complete elimination of child poverty should be a priority for the District government. Restore TANF benefits for needy residents cut off in the last few years. Raise the TANF benefit to above the regional poverty level.

2015 Updates

In light of the new developments regarding TANF, these recommendations are still very relevant. Please see documentation in the Appendix.

DC's Child Sexual Exploitation

District of Columbia's child prostitution rate is among the highest in the country. Since 2009, the city has been cited as a hub for the sexual exploitation of children (Ali, 2009; Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2009). Prostitution among young vulnerable populations is a commercial necessity utilized to generate income (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Kiem, 2009; Munir & Yasin, 1997). Child prostitution is particularly manifested among poor children living in urban cities, those residing in public housing, and the growing numbers of youth forced into homelessness by national welfare reforms (Brooke, 2004).

Poverty is the most frequently cited explanation for the involvement of a considerable number of youth in the sex trade (Boye, 1996; Lederer, 1996; Lombardo & Toro, 2004; Longford, 1995; Munir & Yasin, 1997). With the continued economic downturn, an increasing number of District of Columbia homeless children are daily confronted with factors outside and beyond their control. Unable to seek work, secure food, or find shelter, some of these children are left with few options other than to sell their bodies (Gaetz et al., 1999; Kiem, 2009).

District of Columbia youth often trade sex for shelter or food (Ali, 2009; Klopott, 2010). This situation prompted the District of Columbia Council (2009) to unanimously pass "The Prohibition Against Human Trafficking Bill", which included language prohibiting adults from engaging or facilitating consensual sex with a minor in exchange for goods or services (District of Columbia Council Bill 18-70, 2009). Meanwhile, the sexual exploitation of city youth continued (FBI, 2010). In 2013, reports surfaced that youth are forced into the sex trade to make ends meet (Lavers, 2013). To date, District of Columbia legislators have failed to address the core motivating reasons that compel city youth to engage in survival sex.

District of Columbia homeless youth have often explained their reasons for engaging in survival sex, but their calls for help have yet to be heard.⁶

⁶ <http://streetsense.org/article/survival-sex-not-a-choice-for-many-homeless-youth/#.VmS9coRuRS0>

Meanwhile, city legislators who often boast of the city's budget surplus, continue to fail to meet the basic needs of the poor and homeless city youth, many of whom are forced into the sex trade to meet their needs for shelter and food.⁷

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⁷ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/little-shelter-available-for-dcs-homeless-teens/2013/12/16/cb4af8ec-61ae-11e3-bf45-61f69f54fc5f_story.html

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2015 Recommendations

1. Direct clear guidance to DCPS to ensure poor DCPS students receive a free meal without verification of their homeless status or without regard to whether or not they will be compensated from HUD.
2. Publicly fund the homeless youth shelter providers. Homeless youth outreach programs should also provide therapists who are well familiar with treating young children exposed to sexual abuse.
3. Include in new and existing youth outreach programs clear warnings of the physical and psychological harm of engaging in the sex trade.
4. Adequately fund homeless youth shelter programs.
5. Include language that requires the District of Columbia youth services to fund homeless youth outreach programs.
6. Include mandates with each budget surplus, a clear percentage to fund homeless youth shelters to ensure homeless youth are not forced into trading sex for temporary stay with adults who can terminate their stay at a moments notice.

Access to Affordable Housing and Ending Homelessness

2012 Recommendations

The District government should prioritize funding for the Housing Production Trust Fund, expand the provision of permanent supportive housing and open homeless shelter facilities for men, women, and families in downtown DC.

The District government should provide structural support to prevent and limit the number of families becoming homeless and reduce the number of homeless families living in shelters or in the streets. DC should implement a comprehensive structural analysis of DC's housing market; offer preventive programs; citywide system support; and employ specific measures to enable its most vulnerable population to continue to live in their own homes, provide family shelter centers available for homeless families; increase length of stay for homeless families with children in local shelters; and provide shelters for young persons presently living in the child protection or juvenile system.

In addition it is critical if not urgent for the DC Council to consider implementing and integrating supportive social assistance services, educational support systems and comprehensive programs aimed at addressing the unique social challenges DC homeless children and youth face, as well as offer homeless services and programs to help homeless children and youth avoid exploitation; and increase funding for homeless youth intervention services tailored to their needs instead of the current available programs that mainly target the adult homeless population.

District government should reconsider its school consolidation plans and adjust its shelter policies for youth and families to ensure homeless children maintain school enrollment.

In addition we endorse the key public policy recommendations of *An Affordable Continuum of Housing... Key to A Better City* (see Appendix).

2015 Updates

Affordable Housing is Vanishing for a Majority of DC Residents

In spite of the mechanisms now in place to address the housing crisis, funded by the District budget, affordable housing for a majority of residents is vanishing.⁸ A majority of DC residents now pay more than 30% of their income (the HUD maximum for affordability) for housing, mainly in the form of rent (personal communication, Wes Rivers, DCFPI).

Recent History of Poverty and Homelessness in DC

According to a recent Thrive DC report, one-fifth of DC residents live in poverty, and more than 57,000 individuals live in extreme poverty, unable to meet even their basic needs,

⁸ See e.g., <http://www.dcfpi.org/going-going-gone-dcs-vanishing-affordable-housing-2>

including purchasing food. On any given night, there are over 7,300 individuals without homes in the District of Columbia. Families make up 40% of our homeless community.⁹ A lack of affordable housing and increasing rental prices are the two biggest obstacles to preventing and ending homelessness in the District. Since 2002, the District has lost 50% of its affordable housing while annual rent has increased by \$3,000.¹⁰

DC is one of the wealthiest cities in the United States

It took household earnings of almost \$520,000 to make dc into the region's top tier in 2010, according to a new analysis of Census Bureau data.¹¹ That represents a slight increase from \$517,000 in 2007, despite the many intervening months of recession and economic stagnation. Nationally, the top 1 percent of all households had annual incomes of \$387,000 or more in 2010. Only 11 metropolitan areas had a higher threshold than the Washington area. Most of them are in Connecticut or New Jersey, within commuting distance of New York City. The San Francisco and Boston areas round out the top dozen big-money citadels. The District's threshold for a 1 percenter — \$617,000 — was even higher than the region's, though it had dropped from \$673,000 in 2007, before the recession. If the District were a state, it would be second only to Connecticut, home to several Fortune 500 companies and major hedge funds, as well as many commuters to Wall Street. Among the states, Maryland had the fifth-highest threshold, almost \$477,000. And Virginia's was eighth highest, at more than \$427,000.¹²

The District's median household income grew from \$55,500 to \$60,000 in that time, even though the city's unemployment rate in 2010 was almost 10 percent. The city gained population in the decade beginning in 2001, attracting college-educated young adults and burnishing its reputation as a cool place to live. DC Data • Population – Today: 646,449; African American = 50.1%; White = 42.9% – 1980: 638,333; African American = 70.3%, White = 26.9% • Income – Today: Median household income in DC = \$64,267 • Today: Median household income in US = \$53,046.¹³

Homelessness, Gentrification and Race in DC

Definition of Gentrification • Originally, the replacement of an existing population by a “gentry” (affluent middle-class households). • The replacement of lower-income residents and businesses with higher-income residents and businesses. – Part of a much larger economic,

⁹ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness.

¹⁰ Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments [HTTP://WWW.THRIVEDC.ORG/WHAT-WE-DO/HOMELESSNESS-HUNGER-IN-DC/](http://www.thrivedc.org/what-we-do/homelessness-hunger-in-dc/) HOMELESSNESS AND HUNGER IN DC INCREASING NUMBERS. INCREASING NEED.

¹¹ What it takes to be a 1 percenter in the Washington area. By Carol Morello, February 1, 2012, Washington Post.

¹² The figures come from a report released by Sentier Research, a firm that analyzes census income data. If anything, the statistics understate wealth, said Gordon Green, one of the report's two authors. It includes just income, not capital gains or one-time windfalls. The local slippage did not drag down the District, which stood out with an 8 percent increase in median income from 2007 to 2010. In the same period, median household income dropped 3.5 percent nationally, 2 percent in Maryland and Virginia (the entire states, not just the D.C. suburbs), and 1 percent in the Washington region... That unevenness is evident throughout the region. The median household income in Maryland dropped \$1,200, to \$70,000, from 2007 to 2010. In Virginia, it fell by \$1,100, to about \$61,000.

¹³ Gentrification in DC Johanna Bockman Sociology and Anthropology Department George Mason University Blog: Sociology in My Neighborhood: DC Ward 6 March 2, 2014

social, and spatial restructuring of the city for a new class. Today: Median household income in Washington Metro Area = \$107,500 This is Area Median Income (AMI), the number used by the DC government to calculate income limits for affordable housing. The artificially high number means that those making up to \$32K are considered very low income and thus more people are competing than would if the DC median was used (\$19K as very low income). – 1979: Median household income in DC = \$16,211 • 1979: Median household income in US = \$16,841.¹⁴

For any number of reasons, the homeless population in the District of Columbia is overwhelmingly African-American. In 2010 and consistent to the present the homeless population in the District of Columbia is comprised of 87.2% African-American or Hispanic men, many served in the city's low-barrier shelter system. This is contrasted with these same groups comprising 61.3% of the District's total population. The broader homeless population in the District remains an overwhelming 84% African-American. Id. The most recent census data for the District of Columbia indicates that African Americans comprise 52% of the total population of the District. Twenty two percent (22%) of the District of Columbia's population is disabled.¹⁵

While the District of Columbia claims advances in fight against homelessness in the District, a closer review of a series of reports indicates a lack of any forward movement, indeed further setbacks, in providing housing to vulnerable classes of people in the city. The District of Columbia remains the area's leader in terms of homelessness. With increasing housing cost and a diminishing stock of truly affordable housing, many in the District remain on the edge of homelessness with still far too many falling into homelessness. Single African American men, many with cognizable disabilities, remain more likely to become and remain homeless in the District of Columbia. Thus, even though the District reports declines in the number of homeless families, the number of homeless men continues to climb in the absence of any effort to increase available housing or shelter space for this population.

¹⁴ Poverty – Today: Poverty rate = 18.5% (US = 14.9%) – 1979: Poverty rate = 18.6% (US = 12.4%) Census Quick Facts, District of Columbia 2013: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/11000.html>; 1980 Census: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/tab23.pdf>

Gentrification in DC Johanna Bockman Sociology and Anthropology Department George Mason University Blog: Sociology in My Neighborhood: DC Ward 6 March 2, 2014.

¹⁵ Based on this disproportionate representation of African-Americans in the homeless population, any policy shift or change would have a disproportionate effect on a protected class. Any adverse effects which the city's homeless must now endure may certainly give rise to violations of this group's civil rights. Without some concrete plan that goes beyond the closing of shelters for the aspirational goal of permanent supportive housing that only serves a limited few, the laudable goal of providing adequate shelter and housing will remain elusive. The District community is filled with rumor and suspicion that African-Americans are being forced out or displaced through higher taxes, unaffordable rents and a broader trend of costs that many citizens have trouble bearing. This is not surprising. Whether intended or not, these fears are not unfounded. The cost of housing continues to rise along with number of homeless citizens. Based on a report from Greater D.C. Cares, the homeless population in the District of Columbia is comprised of a larger percentage of persons suffering from some cognizable disability. Further, according to the Greater D.C. Cares Factsheet, 71% of homeless individuals and 53% of some person in homeless families living in the District of Columbia suffer from either substance abuse or a mental illness. Greater D.C. Cares Factsheet: Homelessness in DC Report. The report further indicates that 40% of the "street-bound" homeless have co-occurring disabilities, i.e. mental illness and chemical dependency. Id. Of the broader homeless population, 36% of individual homeless suffer from chronic substance abuse, 19% suffer from debilitating mental illness, 16% are dually diagnosed, and 12% are living with HIV/AIDS. The report further indicated that, among single homeless persons in low barrier shelters, 26.6% have chronic health problems, 34.5% are chronic substance abusers, 12% are living with HIV/AIDS, 23.1% are physically disabled, and 18.9% are severely mentally ill - only 9.2% of the population reported no disability. Id; also see The District's Consolidated Plan FY 2006.

As a whole the District has 63% of the region's homeless population. This consists of a rate of 11 homeless persons for every 1000 residents, far outpacing the rates of homelessness in the surrounding jurisdictions. And even though the District claims a slight decrease in the incidence of homelessness from 12 per 1000 residents in 2014 to 11 per 1000 residents this decrease is limited to one segment of this population. Even so, the District has led the region with rates of homelessness that far exceed those of its neighbors.¹⁶

In the Report On Homelessness compiled by the Council of Governments the District identifies a number of changes to its strategy for addressing homelessness in the District (see "Homeless Report", p. 64). First, the District describes efforts to end long-term homelessness by making it "rare, brief and non-recurring." While describing a shift in its strategic goal, the District does not elaborate on these efforts except for reemphasizing its efforts in advancing Permanent Supportive Housing. While laudable in the scope of services offered, the only tangible commitment described in this report is limited to a 40 unit facility that focuses on chronically homeless veterans, a HUD grant for 22 permanent supportive housing units, again directed at homeless veterans, and other programs directed at rehousing and rapid rehousing of homeless families. The new policy goals and tangible efforts described by the District do nothing to address the broader incidence of homelessness for various groups of African-American men, including returning citizens and those persons suffering from some cognizable disability. These groups will continue to be homeless, either sheltered or unsheltered.¹⁷

Shelter Closings in DC

Prior to closing La Casa, the Urban Institute reported that at least 13,000 single adults and 2,800 adults and children use emergency shelter in the District every year, and that the shelters were in excess of capacity on a regular basis: 164% over capacity at New York Ave., 125% over capacity at Franklin Shelter, 111% over capacity at 801 East. This report illustrated the regular overcapacity of shelters prior to closing of downtown Franklin Shelter and La Casa.^{18 19} For challenges in local and federal court, please see related links and citations.²⁰

¹⁶ The rate of homelessness continues to rise in the District, attributed to an ever increasing lack of affordable housing in the District, including high rents and mortgages, a rise in physical and psychological abuses suffered by the homeless, stagnant wages and slashed public assistance, lack of adequate mental health facilities and the lack of adequate day care facilities.[viii] The Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless (WLCH) reports that approximately 16,000 people are homeless in Washington DC over the course of a year, one of the highest rates in the country. WLCH, Homelessness and Poverty, Washington, DC (2009) at 1-2 (hereinafter "WLCH report"). In 2009, approximately 6,228 persons in the city were homeless, a 3% increase over 2008. More than 2000 D.C. families apply for shelter over the course of a year, yet only about 400 families are served by emergency services each year. Approximately 2,112 homeless youth were reported in the District over the course of a year, with only 64 emergency shelter beds and 78 units of youth housing available. WLCH report at 2-5.

¹⁷ Research indicates that families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population in the country (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2011). The rise in the number of homeless families has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of homeless students (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 2013; Flannery, 2010). In recent years, the number of District of Columbia homeless families with children has significantly increased (The Homeless Children's Playtime Project [HCPP], 2012), and as of February 2013, more than 601 high school homeless students were enrolled in District of Columbia Public High Schools (DCAYA, 2013). (Mai <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10566-014-9298-2>)

¹⁸ The WLCH also reports that, for most applicants, the wait for emergency family shelter is approximately 6 months and there is in excess of four hundred families on the wait list for emergency shelter, with numbers increasing daily. Fifteen percent of respondents in an April 2009 surveyed said they were forced to sleep on the streets due to shelters being full, and 40% refused to enter shelters due

Underestimation of Homeless Numbers in DC

To add insult to injury, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) study followed this HUD study, and reported that D.C. has the highest concentration of homeless in the greater metropolitan area. Service providers and researchers expressed concerns about the ability of HUD's point in time count to fully capture many of those experiencing homelessness for various reasons. Although agencies collect data on those experiencing homelessness, the data have a number of shortcomings and do not capture the true extent and nature of homelessness. These derive from difficulty of counting a transient population that changes over time, lack of comprehensive data collection requirements, and the time needed for data analysis (GAO report p. 16). GAO stated that most of studies reviewed defined their target populations narrowly, making it difficult to generalize results to broader populations or to compare or compile them (GAO report p. 32). According to GAO, such shortcomings in homelessness data have limited the understanding of the extent and nature of homelessness.

to overcrowding. On average, homeless individuals were turned away from emergency shelter 25 times each night. According to the WLCH report, as of October 2009, at least 15,411 households remained on the wait list for DC Housing Authority's Public Housing and 26,704 households on the wait list for Housing Choice Voucher Program, 13,000 of whom are homeless. What's more, the number of public housing units in the District has decreased by 4000 units since 2000, and will continue to decrease, with at least 68% of all project based subsidized unit set to expire by 2023. WLCH report at 3-4. In addition, DC has on average 2000-3000 returning citizens from prisons nationwide each year. Those with criminal records or substance abuse histories may not be eligible for federal housing assistance, and these factors sometimes are associated with increased incidences of homelessness. Pl. Ex. 5, GAO report: U.S. Government Accountability Office: Homelessness: A Common Vocabulary Could Help Agencies Collaborate and Collect More Consistent Data, GAO-10-702 (June 2010) at page 43 (hereinafter "GAO report") available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10702.pdf>.

¹⁹ Pl. Ex. 6, Major Recommendations: Summary Report of the Urban Institute's Assessment of the District of Columbia's Public Homeless Assistance System, June 2, 2008 at page 2 (hereinafter "Urban Institute report") available at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411696_assessment_dc_homeless.pdf.

²⁰ Civil Rights Litigation involving men's public shelters in DC: Briefs for Appellants, Boykin et al. v. Fenty, No. 13-7159 USCA DC Circuit., Boykin et al v. Fenty, Civil Action No. 10-1790 (PLF) USDC for DC. *See also* Howard Univ. Law School, BRIEF OF AMICUS CURIAE, HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW FAIR HOUSING CLINIC AND CIVIL RIGHTS CLINIC IN SUPPORT OF RESPONDENTS, No. 13-1371, Supreme. Ct. United States (Inclusive Communities).

https://www.google.com/webhp?source=search_app&gws_rd=ssl#q=howard+university+law+school+inclusive+communities+amicus+brief. Brief of Amici Curiae, WLCH et al., NO. 14-CV-292 (DCCA) (District of Columbia v. Reid).

<http://www.legalclinic.org/local-and-national-organizations-law-professors-support-appeal-of-dc-homeless-families/>. *See also*

<http://ahomeforeveryheart.org/2014/09/30/reflections-on-family-homelessness-case/>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/03/13/family-homelessness-surged-this-winter-the-city-didnt-see-it-coming/>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/03/20/judge-rejects-citys-arguments-on-use-of-rec-centers-as-shelter-but-stops-short-of-ruling/>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/03/19/battle-over-rec-center-shelter-heads-to-court-tomorrow/>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/03/18/in-dispute-over-private-rooms-for-homeless-families-d-c-government-adds-its-own-definition/>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/03/21/district-lawyers-if-judge-bans-use-of-rec-centers-as-shelter-city-cant-comply/>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/03/24/judge-orders-d-c-to-stop-sheltering-homeless-families-at-rec-centers/>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/03/25/despite-threats-city-complies-with-court-order-on-homeless-sh>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/07/14/d-c-general-is-awful-closing-it-could-be-worse/>

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2014/10/22/shelter-skelter-why-shuttering-d-c-general-wont-be-easy/>

Homeless Numbers Keep Rising

According to a recent report by the Washington Post, the number of people in the emergency care of the District surpassed 4,000 — easily on track to eclipse last year’s record-breaking number of sheltered homeless. The number has grown by more than 1,500 over the past four weeks and continues to expand daily, often with 100 families or more seeking shelter when the temperature drops below freezing, advocates say... But most of these families are no closer to a long-term housing solution. Despite a sustained period of city revenue growth and more scrutiny than ever, the District government has failed over the past year to make serious progress on one of its most vexing and visible social challenges. Even as its new mayor, Democrat Muriel E. Bowser, promises a new course, the city is largely in a holding pattern, spending millions on emergency services and doing little that’s new to provide longer-term housing for those who need it.²¹

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, which released the statistics, said the “single greatest barrier to ending homelessness” in the region was a “diminishing number of affordable and available permanent housing opportunities for the lowest-income households.” ...The council also said a shortage of living-wage jobs has prevented the 39 percent of working homeless parents counted in this winter’s tally from earning enough to provide housing for themselves or their families... The council said the count highlighted a dangerous lack of affordable housing and the need for governments to do more. ...Along those lines, the count did not include more than 2,600 formerly homeless people that area governments housed for the first time over the past year... On the night of the count, there were 14,262 single adults and family members in permanent supportive housing or apartments paid for with government assistance. They are no longer considered homeless.^{22 23}

Family Homelessness Crisis is an Affordable Housing Crisis

²¹ When Bowser took office Jan. 2, however, the city had already reached capacity at its main shelter. To demonstrate her commitment to a new approach, she had little choice but to keep the program open to families, placing them in sought-after motel rooms until her fledgling administration could formulate a plan.... The city is now renting more than 400 rooms for the homeless each night, and at an increasing cost per room, records show... and because the city offers emergency shelter to families only on freezing nights, it faces a mountain of pent-up demand for social services at the start of each winter. Among those flooding the system are women and children seeking to escape abusive partners or parents as well as those who have worn out their welcome with friends or family members — including some hosts who put their own leases or public-housing subsidies at risk by letting families double up. Juliet Eilperin contributed to this report.

²² By Aaron C. Davis May 13 A closely watched annual count of the nation’s homeless found 11,623 people without permanent shelter this winter in the Washington region, a 2.7 percent drop from a year earlier, even as other data showed the problem may be getting worse.... The tally, released Wednesday, confirmed a continued crisis of homelessness in the Washington region evident to almost anyone who lives, works or visits the city’s downtown core during winter, when homeless men and women amass in entrances to Metro stops and many other spots where they can stay warm. Unlike last year, when the number of homeless families peaked near the date of the 2014 federal count, this year several hundred entered shelter or were placed in overflow motel rooms in the District throughout February, March and even early April... By the end of the winter, the District had placed almost 1,000 additional parents and children into shelter than a year earlier. In that time, it also turned away more than 900 additional families, saying those parents had friends or family members they could stay with until they found housing of their own... Beyond the District, numbers of homeless families also surged this winter in the city of Alexandria and in Fairfax, Frederick and Montgomery counties. Given that trend, few on Wednesday celebrated the slight decrease in the total from last year’s count...

²³ D.C.’s homeless crisis: City eclipsed last year’s record in shelter] Aaron Davis covers D.C. government and politics for The Post and wants to hear your story about how D.C. works — or how it doesn’t.

The District is in an affordable housing crisis. Currently, in the District, a person making minimum wage must work approximately 132 hours per week, 52 weeks a year, or earn \$27 an hour at 40 hours per week to afford a 2 bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent, which is \$1,412 per month (“Pont In Time Count” Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, 2015). The reality of this housing market is that if you are a senior citizen on a fixed income, a person with a disability, or a minimum wage worker, you cannot live in DC without some sort of housing subsidy. In other words, there needs to be a way to fill the gap for these individuals between what is reasonable to spend on housing and the market rate.²⁴ The most effective way to fill this gap is through long-term subsidies. Unfortunately, the District’s subsidized housing waitlist is currently closed and numbers approximately 70,000 households. The consequence of the lack of long-term subsidized housing is the explosion in family homelessness that we are dealing with today.

We emphasize that although the Department of Human Services can play a role in alleviating the family homelessness crisis, it is not the cause of the crisis. Furthermore, DHS is not equipped to solve the crisis. We are in this situation due to years of failed housing policy on both a local and national level. For too long, the District has made neither the production of new affordable housing nor the preservation of existing affordable housing a priority. On a funding level, the District has routinely pitted programs such as Rapid Rehousing, Local Rent Supplement, and Housing Production Trust Fund against each other. On a policy level, the District has gutted rent control through the use of Hardship Petitions and Voluntary Agreements, failed to produce deeply affordable units through its Inclusionary Zoning program, and has essentially given away billions of dollars’ worth of valuable public land without getting appropriate levels of affordable housing in return.

Meanwhile, in the midst of all this, DC’s flagship affordable housing program, the New Communities Initiative, will not add one net new unit of hard stock affordable housing. Instead, it only seeks to replace demolished public housing units. Even more disturbing with respect to New Communities is that the program has not come remotely close to its stated goal of one-for-one replacement of already demolished or soon to be demolished public housing units. All of these factors, together, lead to the loss of thousands of affordable housing units per year with no real plan to replace—let alone add— any affordable housing stock.

The solution to this crisis is not for District leaders to enact regressive policies to deal with homelessness. Any such plan would only serve to cynically scapegoat the victims of the District’s own failed policies. Instead, DC should make affordable housing the number one priority in all future development, invest in programs that purposely and efficiently produce deeply affordable hard stock units, and strengthen current programs meant to preserve existing affordable units. If we fail to do these things and continue on the same path, we will be at this

²⁴ The following testimony was delivered by Legal Clinic staff attorney, Will Merrifield, at the DC Council’s Oversight Hearing on the Department of Human Services held on February 26, 2014.

exact hearing next year debating the family homelessness crisis once again. The only difference is that it will look even worse than it does now.²⁵

This winter, DC has seen more than a twofold increase in the number of homeless families in shelter. Many factors may be contributing to this increase, including the continuing loss of affordable housing units in the city, the unusually cold temperatures this winter, closing the front door to family shelter six months of the year, and increasing reliance on short-term rental subsidies that can recycle families back into the system.²⁶

The city has responded to the crisis in several ways. First, the good: We support DHS' plan to intensify services to families in shelter to speed up shelter exits and commend DHS for working closely with advocates to figure out ways to improve the Rapid Rehousing Program. Families clearly are spending too much time in shelter and need intensive support to find affordable housing and move out. On the singles side, we believe that the Mayor's/DHS' cold weather plan and additional resources brought on line during the "polar vortex" such as the warming buses, have been successful in saving lives.

We do not, however, support the city's use of recreation centers as shelter for homeless families or the provisional placement legislation sent to the Council as solutions to the crisis. Not since the mid-1990's have homeless families with minor children been sheltered like our single adult population: in communal settings, only from 9 pm to 8 am, and only on freezing nights. In the nearly twenty years since that time, our community acknowledged the problems with that approach and embraced better solutions to protect homeless children and meet the needs of their families.

A recent court decision from OAH found the rec centers to violate DC law that requires families to be sheltered in apartment-style units and, when they are not available, in "private rooms." This law exists because protecting the health and safety of children is a compelling public policy concern. There is a significant safety risk to children when they are placed in a communal setting with other adults who are strangers to them. To a child, privacy – including having a door to shut and lock at night – equals safety and not having that leaves you open to all kind of dangers. Especially for children with histories of trauma, as so many of the children in shelter do because their families have fled domestic violence, this type of setting can feel very unsafe. Moreover, it is developmentally harmful for young children to be sheltered this way – to not know where they'll be sleeping each night and to not get to sleep until 10 or 11 pm, causing difficulties in school, among other problems.

²⁵ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach 2012: America's Forgotten Housing Crisis*, p 41, March, 2013; AMU, *Deals for Developers*. March 20, 2013.

²⁶ *The Good and the Bad in DC's Response to Family Homelessness*

Posted on Feb 27, 2014 in DC Policies and Plans, Homelessness, Housing, Poverty, Shelter | 0 comments

The testimony was delivered by Legal Clinic staff attorney, Marta Beresin, at the DC Council's Oversight Hearing on the Department of Human Services held on February 26, 2014. We look forward to continuing to work with the DC government and our colleagues in the advocacy community to build upon the positive steps that have been taken and to forge new solutions that protect the rights and advance the interests of our clients.

Some people have compared our treatment of homeless families to the treatment of flood victims, but it is in fact worse. Katrina victims were not tossed out of shelter every morning and told to fend for themselves the following night if the temperature was over 32 degrees. Another problem with the rec center placements is that families are required to return every day to the Family Resource Center to be authorized for another night of placement. Our clients tell us that sitting down at the intake center every day means they miss other important appointments and opportunities – they can't go to work, can't apply for jobs, can't apply for housing opportunities, can't comply with TANF job training requirements. In other words, the daily hustle for your cot is taking a lot of physical energy and time of parents that could be spent finding jobs and housing.

DHS testified that since the city began relying on rec centers, there has been a decrease in the number of families staying in shelter. They concluded that the families that don't return to the rec centers must have other safe places to stay, but they have neither collected nor offered any actual data on where these families end up. Our clients tell us they don't return because they don't feel safe at the rec centers. Families are being forced to make choices between a rec center or returning to an abuser; between a rec center and staying with a friend in a dangerously overcrowded unit or unit with no electricity or running water. One client who had stage 4 sarcoma contacted us because she had been told by both the shelter hotline and FRC staff that the rec centers were the only placement available. She didn't go into a rec center but she didn't have a safe alternative placement either. By using the rec centers, DC sends a message to homeless families that they shouldn't seek assistance because they aren't going to get the help they need.

The solution to this crisis depends on how we define the crisis. Is the crisis that too many families are relying on government-funded shelter or that too many families in one of the wealthiest cities in the world are without safe housing? The administration would have us believe the former. In doing so they cast blame on the Council and on the families themselves, portraying the parents as overly dependent women who just need to be more self-reliant "like immigrants." If we instead accurately define the crisis as too many families unable to provide safe and affordable housing for their children, we're able to focus on real solutions.

Record in 2014

In the span of less than two months, the District has significantly cut back on emergency shelter services it offers to families, seeking to make the homeless services system less "attractive" to the families who seek help. (Some administration officials have expressed their belief that families applying for shelter have options other than shelter that they could pursue. Not only is the District continuing unlawful and harmful rec center placements, but on January 30th, it suddenly ended a long-standing District practice that any family placed in shelter on a

hypothermic night would be allowed to remain in shelter until the family had a safe alternative.²⁷

In 2014, not only is the District no longer under the constraints of the Control Board, but financially, it's doing better than ever. DC has been operating at a significant surplus for last two years and the most recent revenue forecast estimates another \$139 million increase in FY15 revenues.²⁸ We're doing so well that the Mayor recently spent \$9 million on new trash cans for every DC household! And yet 19 years later, as of late January, DC has reverted back to a practice that it conceded was unacceptable, even when the District was mired in financial strife: placing children and their parents in makeshift shelters at rec centers.

Today, mothers and fathers "must still drag their children out of the facility immediately after breakfast" to return to the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center and reapply each day in order to get a referral for the following night. If they don't, they don't get beds. If it's not freezing and there's no hypothermia alert the following night, they're out of luck.

And what do families get when they are actually referred to a rec center? One father who became homeless after losing his job last year described the grind that he, his wife, and their two toddlers face each day. After spending anywhere from 4-6 hours at the family intake site to get a referral for the evening, the family then has to wait until 7pm for transportation to the rec center. The van usually shows up about an hour later, and the family gets to the rec center around 9pm. Once there, parents then have to set up their own beds and partitions which allow little privacy and provide no sound or light barrier. The next morning, they get up when it's still dark out to report back to the intake site to repeat the process. The father has noticed that his babies can't sleep well at night in the large gymnasium – it's drafty, crowded, and they can hear the dozens of strangers sleeping nearby behind makeshift partitions. He had a job interview

²⁷ DC Continues to Leave Children Without Safe Shelter, Posted on Mar 19, 2014 in Action Alert, Advocates, Clients, DC Policies and Plans, Homelessness, Housing, Hypothermia, Justice, Law, People, Poverty, Shelter

Last Friday, Ms. Q*, a single mother and domestic violence survivor, walked into our office with her one year old because she had nowhere else to turn. Ms. Q and her daughter had an active restraining order against her abuser and had just last week timed out of a temporary placement through Crime Victims Compensation with no safe place to go. She was placed in a rec center by the Department of Human Services ("DHS") on Thursday when there was a hypothermia alert in effect, but only for one night. The next day was warmer, so she and the other families from the rec center were placed on a bus back to the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center where they were given McDonalds gift cards and told good luck, and that they were on their own until the next freezing night.

We first contacted domestic violence programs to see if we could get help for Ms. Q, but every program we reached was full. We also contacted DHS and were told they couldn't help because there was no alert in effect. Desperate to get assistance for this family, we began tweeting about their situation to Councilmembers and to the Mayor. Two other families who had been placed in shelter on Thursday and who were left outside with their young children on Friday also called us. One of them, Ms. S*, was placed at a hotel on Thursday, and told that she would have a room there until she could hopefully get housing through the District's Rapid-Rehousing program. On Friday, when she returned to the hotel after work, she heard a different story. The staff apologized to her; they expressed confusion because they definitely had space available for her and her children, but someone from DHS had contacted them to say they were not to extend the stay. Luckily for Ms. S* and her kids, her church came through and paid for two nights at the same hotel, enough to keep the family safe until the next hypothermia alert on Sunday, when the District was once again legally obligated to place them. At a recent hearing, Director Berns of DHS testified that the District was forced to use the rec centers because it ran out of hotel and shelter space. We called two of the hotels that DHS had used to shelter families this winter; both had plenty of rooms available as of Friday.

²⁸ No Sweet Dreams For DC's Homeless Children

Posted on Mar 5, 2014 in Budget Cuts, Clients, DC Policies and Plans, Homelessness, Housing, Hypothermia, Justice, Law, People, Poverty, Shelter, Wealth Gap | 1 comment, <http://www.legalclinic.org/no-sweet-dreams-for-dcs-homeless-children/>.

scheduled for 10am one day, but he knows he is supposed to be at the intake site during that time to get a bed referral. He's faced with the impossible decision of which appointment to make.

As the Legal Clinic testified at the DHS Oversight Hearing, the use of rec centers violates the HSRA, which requires that families be sheltered in apartment-style units and, when they are not available, in "private rooms." This law exists because protecting the health and safety of children is an important public policy concern. Twelve hour shelter in a gymnasium (with little to no privacy) that is only available on nights when the temperature is freezing is not healthy or safe for children.

The Administration claimed that families have safe alternative placements because many of those who were referred to the rec centers only stay for a couple of nights or don't show up at all. We know there are families choosing to stay in dangerous, overcrowded situations or with abusers because the rec centers feel that much more unsafe to them. Most telling, we know that the Administration doesn't follow up with families to find out where they end up.

Our Executive branch still touts the use of rec centers as a solution to the family crisis, a crisis that they continue to frame as one of "too many families in shelter," instead of the more accurate "too many families in need of shelter because they don't have safe housing."

On March 4th, the DC Department of Human Services promulgated emergency rulemaking to define "private room" as "a part of the inside of a building that is separated by walls or partitions for use by an individual or family" in an effort to make legal a situation that harms children and that was rejected nearly two decades ago as too dangerous and too high a price to pay to be worth the budget savings.

Are we really going to go back to the regressive policies of the mid 1990's? In the intervening years, this community has learned that there is another way. A better way. We owe it to DC's homeless children to put this experience to use as we work to resolve the current family homelessness crisis, and as we work to assure that all District residents have a safe and decent place to call home.²⁹

Most Recent Developments

The Interagency Council on Homelessness has devised a Strategic Plan coined Homeward DC: 2015-2020, which boasts a lofty goal of ending long-term homelessness in the District of Columbia (<http://ich.dc.gov/page/homeward-dc-ich-strategic-plan-2015-2020>). The document states that, "By 2020, homelessness in the District will be a rare, brief and non-recurring experience."

Goals stated towards achieving this are:

²⁹ See, e.g., <http://www.legalclinic.org/local-and-national-organizations-law-professors-support-appeal-of-dc-homeless-families/>

1. Finish the job of ending homelessness among veterans by the end of 2015.
2. End chronic homelessness among individuals and families by the end of 2017 and;
3. By 2020, any household experiencing household loss will be rehoused within an average of 60 days or less.

Actions outlined to ensure that these goals are met are grouped under five main strategies:

1. Develop a more effective crisis response system.
2. Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing.
3. Remove barriers to affordable and supportive housing.
4. Increase economic security of households in the system.
5. Increase prevention efforts to stabilize households before housing loss occurs.

When we first learned that Mayor Bowser was considering changing the legislative standard for family shelter from apartment-style to private rooms for the shelters that will replace DC General (meaning no requirement for private bathrooms, cooking space, or separate bedrooms for parents and children), we wanted to make sure that families who live or have lived in homeless shelters had a seat at the decision-making table, at the head of the table if at all possible. Our experience has been that it is very difficult for people experiencing homelessness, particularly families, to actively participate in policymaking or the legislative process because they are often struggling just to take care of daily necessities, and there are many psychological and logistical barriers to participating in DC Council hearings or government task forces...

In a human rights city, as the DC Council in 2008 declared DC to be, it is appropriate for human rights strategies – *the engagement of impacted populations* – and human rights principles – *the right to adequate housing, the rights of the child, and the right to clean water* – to guide our government’s decision-making. We hope that this report adequately brings the voices and needs of families experiencing homelessness into the debate about how the nation’s capital will shelter children and parents while they face a homeless crisis.³⁰

Mayor Bowser has stated a commitment to achieve year-round access to shelter for families and DHS began placing some priority one families in shelter this summer, although not all families who were priority one were placed. Year round access to shelter is also a goal of the ICH Strategic Plan to End Homelessness, and the Family Design Workgroup of the ICH is working to develop a policy on year round access to shelter for families. With unprecedented investments in housing resources targeted at homeless families who are in the shelter system, DC is also better positioned now than ever before to move to a year round

³⁰ <http://www.legalclinic.org/report-homeless-families-input-on-critical-features-for-dc-general-replacement-units/>, Report: Homeless Families’ Input on Critical Features for DC General Replacement Units, Posted on Oct 26, 2015 (emphasis added).

access to shelter (FY17 Fair Budget Coalition Recommendation from Housing and Homelessness Work Group).

Clearing of Homeless Encampments Issue

From: Kurt Runge [mailto:kurt@miriamskitchen.org]

Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 10:58 AM

Subject: Encampment sign on letter update

Hello,

Thank you to the 25 organizations who signed onto the letter expressing concern about the administration's approach to encampments across the District and under the Whitehurst Freeway. The letter was sent on Friday to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and DC Council. However, despite the concerns and media attention, at 2pm on Friday 11/20, dozens of DC government staff came to move the encampment under the Whitehurst Freeway, and the administration is indicating they plan on clearing all encampments this hypothermia season. They seem to suggest their rationale for clearing encampments is to force people to seek shelter during the cold winter months. In addition, I think they are concerned about the tents that people are staying in, which have been given to people from a DC sanitation worker. The Deputy Mayor's response to the encampments is below in blue.

The DC government said there is a DC Water project happening at the site of the encampment, and a fence has been erected where people were staying. Although tents were taken down on Friday and some tents were taken, tents are now back up in the area. Details on what happened to everyone at the encampment are sketchy. We have heard that some people were offered housing, a guest at Miriam's Kitchen said he and others are in a hotel until his housing comes through.

Miriam's Kitchen continues to have concerns with the safety of people sleeping outside, and the time and resources being put into moving encampments when ultimately, people remain outside. In addition, we are concerned that the administration will use limited housing dollars to house people who are most visible, when there are people who are less visible but even more vulnerable who are still waiting for housing.

In terms of next steps, the Deputy Mayor is coordinating with the DC Fiscal Policy Institute to set up a meeting to discuss their approach to the encampments. There is limited space, but if it is something you are interested in attending, let me or Kate Coventry(Coventry@dcfpi.org) know. We will call a meeting prior to the meeting with the Deputy Mayor to prepare and discuss the future strategy for approaching the encampments.

Thanks again for your support.

Best, Kurt

(Message from Deputy Mayor Donald)

With hypothermia season here, we remain focused on extending a helping hand to our homeless neighbors, and connecting them with resources as soon as possible. This coming weekend, temperatures are expected to dip below freezing, and we need to intensify our outreach to those living on the streets. It is not safe for people to be outside when it gets dangerously cold, and because we firmly believe that we are our sisters and brothers' keepers, we need to stand together and bring them in from the cold.

With regard to the encampment under the Whitehurst Freeway (near Virginia Avenue), our plan is to work with people living there illegally - on an individual basis - to connect them with the resources they need to move into a safe place, and out of the elements. Without bathrooms or running water - or adequate protection from the elements - this area is unhealthy and unsafe for individuals staying there. With this in mind, we have provided 14-day notification of a site cleanup, in keeping with the District's cleanups protocol.

Today, District agencies will continue to clean encampment sites, and we will continue to provide residents with access to the services they need to get off the streets. We offer an array of services to persons experiencing homelessness – some of which are outlined in our Winter Plan.

Our work with individuals in the Whitehurst encampment did not start just this week, or overnight. For months, outreach teams from the Department of Behavioral Health and the Department of Human Services have been working with residents of the site to get them the services they need, such as housing services, food and mental health services. Over the last several months, we have helped 14 individuals from the Whitehurst site move into housing. We will provide the same intensity of resources and support to people in encampments that we provide to those living in shelter and in transitional housing, so that all individuals facing homelessness have a pathway to housing. After the encampments are cleaned up and the individuals are supported in their transition to a safer place, we will continue to monitor the sites to ensure that people who may come there in the future are connected in short order to services and shelter.

The District is leading the nation in our effort to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that residents experiencing homelessness have the resources they need to get back into a place they can call home - from mental health services, to emergency housing, to permanent supportive housing.

The District still has capacity at our shelter sites, and we will make accommodations to ensure that we are able to bring people inside. We also want to make everyone aware of our shelter hotline number: 1-800-535-7252.

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DC's Ward 8 Re- Development Projects are displacing its Residents

Ward 8 is the poorest Ward in the city with the highest proportion of Black residents (District of Columbia Department of Health, 2014; DC Fiscal Institute, 2013). In addition, Ward 8 has consistently suffered the highest unemployment rate in the city that generally hover between 18%-22% (DC Employment Services, 2013), Meanwhile, Wards 8 is undergoing a surge of new development and influx of middle class residents. Instead of initiating programs that will employ Ward 8 residents or its poverty rate, the city is proposing major development plans without the minimum of input from the local community, transparency, or offering a serious plan for accommodating the 444 families the project is displacing, (432 Barry Farm housing units, and ten adjacent units in Wade apartments). While, more than one thousand new units are slated for this housing project, a mere 40 affordable housing units will be available for low-income families.

In particular, the zoning plan of Barry Farm was approved by the city council — proposes to demolish 444 homes in the neighborhood and rebuild the community with 1,400 “mixed-income homes”. The plan calls for “one for one replacement of subsidized housing units,” along with affordable housing and market-rate homes both for sale and rental, new retail spaces, open green space, community center and gym, and roads to accommodate the new residents (New Communities Initiative, 2015).

The city's redevelopment plans were drawn by former Mayor Anthony Williams in 2006, and openly states the purpose of the Barry Farm development project: “reclaim neighborhoods troubled by concentrations of violent crime and poverty.” (Brooking Institute, 2005), which on its own merit sound innocuous, but for the mere fact, that this simple phrase assumes every Barry Farm resident is of the underclass and the community as a whole is made up of criminals who are without rights or are deserving of protection.

Furthermore, in other areas of the city when local residents were evicted for redevelopment the rate of former residents returning back to their historical neighborhoods is less than 8% (Neviss, 2015) These rates are echoed by prior studies that found similar projects in low income communities have largely displaced the original residents and subjected them to recurring residential instability without recourse (Urban Institute, 2004).

DC's housing projects' failure to house former neighborhood residents can be seen all across the city for example Capper/Carrollsborg, Temple Courts, and Lincoln Heights- where only 24 former families were allowed to return and the remainders were displaced in shelters and others moved to public housing in other areas of the city (Neviss, 2015) . DC's aggressive re-

development of prior neighborhoods is shrinking supply of affordable housing in the District of Columbia and contributes to the growth of family homelessness. Poor individuals are unable to meet their bare minimum basic needs, and are deprived of adequate shelter, food, clothing, health care, and access to essential resources. Acute shortages of affordable housing are hard-hitting the city's low-income renters. In fact, while gentrification is now disproportionately impacting Black residents, white young people who are moving to the city for job opportunities are also finding housing unaffordable.

Meanwhile, the question we need to ask- what will happen to former residents of Barry Farm? Where is the city proposing these families live during the duration of the project? What form of assurances is in place to protect the return of these families after the project is completed?

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Zoning Issues

“Zoning & Planning... is that what they call it?

This site has been developed to connect communities located throughout the District contending with problem projects -- projects that may be entirely public, private, and/or a combination of public and private. The ad-hoc, unscientific, opaque planning review and decision making happening in the District of Columbia right now exposes every DC resident to dispossession and other serious risks. The corporate condominium construction explosion is happening at the same time The City is closing schools, shrinking the safety net, and systematically dismantling our communities. Disinterested DC officials and their purposeful poor planning continue to leave entire DC neighborhoods disconnected, displaced, and downright disrespected.”

DELIVERED -- Open Letter to the City Council and Mayor

On September 15, 2014, the Coalition for Better Planning along with participants from DC for Reasonable Development and ONE DC gathered on the steps of the John A. Wilson building. We rallied for better planning in the District, calling for a halt to the purposeful poor planning that is ripping our city apart and based on arbitrary and capricious decision by planning officials at the Office of Planning and Zoning Commission.” (A copy of this letter is included in the Appendix).

Source: DC for Reasonable Development, <http://www.dc4reason.org/index.php>.

2015 Recommendations

1. The development of large parcels of public land (for example, as part of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative) into “new neighborhoods” should provide housing affordable to the 444 families displaced by this project.
2. Future D.C. government housing projects should ensure that one-half of the new units built are affordable on a long-term basis.
3. The city should coordinate housing and services funding in a way that supports low-income populations in housing, and create grants for non interest loan programs to help low income residents and homeowner of historic districts to repair their homes and remain in their neighborhoods.
4. Strengthen and increase funding of an emergency assistance program, at least for rent and mortgage for very low-income families to prevent homelessness.
5. Authorizing a task force of citizens and housing officials to balance the interests of tenants and developers D.C. should help raise incomes of low-income residents through education, training, job placement, and increasing the minimum wage.
6. Increase assistance to tenants seeking to purchase their units and offer the necessary institutional support by providing the technical, financial, legal, communal organizing,

and language assistance to tenants in exercising purchase rights. The process would be improved through educating tenants of their legal rights, providing, tenant counseling services, and linking tenants to interested landlords.

7. Command developers to include clear plans on how they will ensure the original residents will return to their homes.
8. Improve existing and future job training programs to meet the new work force demands, increase the capacity of DC's Employment office and job placement rates, and increasing the minimum wage to a living wage, at minimum \$15 per hour.
9. Legislators must pay more attention to increase subsidies directed to lower-income residents.
10. The DC Human Rights Act should be amended to include homelessness as a protected category.
11. Homeless people should not be moved from their encampments unless and until they can be offered immediate permanent housing with supportive services as appropriate.

Human Rights Education

2015 Updates

The resolution declaring DC the first human rights city in the United States noted that the American Friends Service Committee partnered with the District of Columbia Public Schools to create courses that teach our students about human rights issues. Since then, progress has been made by the American Friends Service Committee to expand human rights learning to more than 1,000 students between September 2009 and September 2011. The students are learning about human rights and are engaging in actions to bring about social change, peace and justice in their schools and communities. The Street Law program, which is in nearly all the DCPS high schools and some charter schools, has a textbook that includes a human rights focus. Some of its Georgetown Law Center law student teachers educate high school students about human rights. More could be done by the City to support the efforts of the American Friends Service Committee and other organizations working to educate our young people about the values of a human rights city.

Schools have a critical role to play in our lives and by extension the life of the communities of individuals who live and work in the District. They are key to the socialization of future generations, and play an invaluable role in preparing them to become active and engaged members of society. On a daily basis within the District, young people are exposed to poverty, inequality and other injustices which are a reflection of the wider world around them.

Schools, in incorporating elements of human rights education into their pedagogical practices

and curriculum, can provide an environment characterized by a language of equality, non-discrimination, inclusion, respect, dignity and participation, which are crucial to the goal of achieving a more peaceful and just society. As such, human rights education is critical for the cause of instilling the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that can foster a culture of human rights among children and youth.

In December 2008, a coalition of organizations and individuals led by AFSC-DC successfully presented a Human Rights City Resolution to the D.C. City Council, which gave its unanimous approval. The Human Rights City Resolution noted the important role of creating courses that teach DC students about human rights issues and create a place for active civic engagement at the local, national, and global level.

Prior to the Resolution, AFSC surveyed students from seven public and private schools to determine their knowledge about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An overwhelming majority (87 out of 89) responded that they had never heard of it. However, every single respondent also indicated that they were interested in learning more. AFSC-DC has since entered in partnership with DCPS to expand human rights education.

The 2012 State of Human Rights in the District of Columbia as a Human Rights City Report highlighted the expansion of the American Friends Service Committee's Peace and Economic Justice program in advancing human rights learning within the District of Columbia Public School system. The document highlighted that over a two year period (2009-2011), this initiative engaged about a thousand of DCPS' 10 926 high school students, including students at Ballou STAY, Dunbar, Wilson and Brightwood Education Campus. The AFSC-DC Human Rights Learning project is a fully vetted DCPS partner organization; however the project has not achieved the goal of expanding human rights learning to all DCPS students, for lack of resources.

A 2012 City Council Human Rights Resolution reaffirmed the City's commitment to make human rights education by calling for a Year of Human Rights Learning. This would be achieved through AFSCs continued expansion of human rights learning. Human rights education "teaches the values of human dignity, tolerance, multiculturalism and non-violence, and the skills of critical analysis and civic participation" (Human Rights Resource Center, 2000).

When analysing the state of Human Rights Education in the District's school system, information needs to be collected on the current state of the education system, as well as the overall situation of human rights in schools. The level of involvement of various actors need to also be evaluated. These actors may include government institutions, national/regional human rights institutions, universities, research institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as the role of similar types of education such as peace education, global education, and multicultural education within schools' curricula. Considering the nature of the framework of DCPS schools, each school seemingly exercises full creative control on the level of integration of human rights education into their curriculum.

In light of this however, along with the continued efforts of AFSC in progressing human rights education, there have been several new ancillary programs since the last report which operate in DCPS schools, which have assisted in advancing the development of teachers as human rights educators, as well as engaging the District's youths in human rights learning activities. Two such programs are the Speak Truth to Power Human Rights Teaching Fellows Program and the Youth Human Rights Ambassador Program.

- Speak Truth to Power Human Rights Teaching Fellows Program, now in its third year, is an intensive one semester program, which is a collaboration between the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, at the American University Washington College of Law and the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights. It is an initiative which focuses on student-to-student peer education in human rights. The program joins together law students, high school teachers and high school students in the District to promote human rights education and activism, basing lessons on RFK's Speak Truth to Power Human Rights curriculum. Law students teach classes in local high schools and collaborate with local high school teachers to develop appropriate lessons for integration into their broader curriculum.
- The Youth Human Rights Ambassador Program, which began in 2012 is a collaborative effort between the Commission on Human Rights and the Georgetown University Law Center's Street Law Clinic. The law students enrolled in the Street Clinic are committed to teaching high school students on different aspect of human rights. Students are then expected to analyse and reflect on their training, and present their analysis in a creative way. The goal of this program is to empower youth to be vigilant in the protection of human rights, as well as to be human rights advocates and activists.

While these programs can be lauded for their exceptional efforts, their concentrated operations in schools such as Woodrow Wilson High School, School Without Walls, and Annandale High School shows however that there is inequity in the provision of this form of education which may be most needed in communities with higher concentrations of the general underserved populations. We strongly believe, like other advocates around the world, that human rights education is vital for the achievement of peaceful, sustainable and inclusive societies based on respect for the human rights of every person.

More than just a human rights class, the AFSC-DC Human Rights Learning project's main goals are:

- 1) To increase human rights knowledge;
- 2) To foster critical thinking; and
- 3) To empower youth to become agents for peace and social change.

2015 Recommendations

We ask the City Council to help us expand human rights education by encouraging DCPS to

implement human rights classes as part of the curriculum as an elective or part of the Social Studies curriculum.

Public Education

2012 Recommendations

In 2007 Council Chair Vince Gray eliminated the DC Council's Education Committee and consequently made education the responsibility of the Committee of the Whole: While the Education Reform Act gave the D.C. Council an expanded role in overseeing D.C. public schools, unfortunately the Committee of the Whole fiduciary record is negligent and oversight ineffectual. The DC Council and Chair should reestablish the DC Council Education Committee of five to improve the DC Council's legislative and fiduciary oversight.

The Education Reform Act established Mayoral control for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and created 6 costly educational agencies with complicated bureaucracy and redundant functions

In 2008 the GAO outlined several structural problems DC's Education Reform Act has produced and recommended the evaluation and alignment DC's numerous educational agencies. So far DC has failed to address GAO's recommendations or address the heavy top, costly, redundant education bureaucracy. The DC Council should re-evaluate the 2007 Education Reform Act and consider GAO's recommendation to streamline and consolidate the function, role and objective of all six bureaucratic education agencies.

Since 2009, DCPS families have been left out without any structural support to address their needs- the DC Council should consider re- establishing an independent office to address DCPS parents needs. Finally, the District Government should proceed with a reopening of neighborhood public schools, reversing the pattern of closure since the Fenty administration. More neighborhood public schools would reduce transportation costs as well as neighborhood and city wide air pollution levels, and increase the teacher to student ratio, a metric critical to improving the educational performance of the students.

2015 Updates

Improving DCPS' student outcomes

Low-income families depend on the strength of their local public system to educate their young. DCPS' low student outcomes are considerable challenge for the city's its low income and homeless students. In the past, the city's Black community depended on their school system to build a professional and well-rooted middle class community, that were instrumental in actualizing the goals of the Civil Rights movement (Abdul Rahman, 2015), but they have yet to realize the fruit of their labor here at home

Since 2007, District of Columbia implemented school reform efforts that employed multiple and consecutive initiatives (GAO, 2009), Despite the intent of these school reforms that span

more than eight years, DCPS continues to struggle with meeting its minimal educational obligation towards its majority Black student population, or improve DCPS' overall student achievement rates (NCES, 2013). According to the Council of the District of Columbia, Committee on Education report (2013), it will take DCPS 30 years to achieve its stated objective of reaching 75% student proficiency in reading and math (Council of the District of Columbia, 2013). The absence of responsive legislative initiatives implicates District of Columbia legislators in gross human rights abuses (Rolnik, 2010). Without serious legislative attention to improve DCPS' student achievement, the city's homeless and low-income students will not receive the quality of education they depend on to escape poverty.

Despite recent modest improvements in DCPS' achievement outcomes, the average student proficiency rates remain very low (NCES, 2013). For example, in 2013, 15% of DCPS' 8th grade students scored proficient in math and 17% scored proficient in reading the NAEP test (NCES, 2013). Meanwhile, DCPS' 8th grade NEAP reading proficiency rate is 47% lower than the national NEAP proficiency average (36%), and 44% lower than the NEAP national math average (34%) (NCES, 2013b). Furthermore, that same year, DCPS' eighth grade students scored 65% proficient in math on the state's Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) test, which demonstrates the wide divide between DCPS' academic standards (DCPS, 2013), and the NEAP national standards (NCES, 2013b). Some assert that DCPS' hyper focus on student testing has become an issue of concern, where more than 60 instructional days in the DCPS school calendar are set aside to prepare, administer, and evaluate students (DCPS, 2014). Considering DCPS' high rate of low-income and poor students it is important for school leaders and city legislator to improve DCPS teaching and learning, and focus less on improving student CAS outcomes.

Regardless, *DCPS is legally mandated to meet the educational needs of its various student populations (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2015), including homeless youth who constitute a large percentage of DCPS' student population (OSSE, 2015; US Department of Education, 2015).* Focusing on the quality of education that DCPS delivers will be an important policy approach to help reduce cyclical and intergenerational poverty.

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2015 Recommendations

1. Evaluate and align of the role and purpose of the new created agencies to decrease redundant administrative costs and use savings to reduce class size.

2. Hold each of DC’s educational agencies accountable and require each to deliver clear plans and well-articulated plans on how each will meet the needs of Title I and homeless students, and improve Black student outcomes.

School Specific Recommendations

1. Reduce class size.
2. Provide specific indicators and uniform benchmarks to measure DCPS’ student outcomes based on content knowledge and critical thinking to meet the demands of the 21st Century.
3. Focus less on test taking skill drills, and spend time to teach the critical basic skills such as reading, math, and the sciences to improve student learning.
4. Provide students hands-on learning opportunities to improve content comprehension and problem solving skills.

DC Criminal Enforcement

2012 Recommendations

Stronger legislation and enforcement are imperative to end long standing discrimination against people with criminal records. The District should take steps to regain control over its criminal justice system. These would include re-forming the DC Board of Parole, removing DC parolees from the jurisdiction of the US Parole Commission; taking over prosecutorial functions from the Office of the U.S. Attorney; and eventually relocating D.C. prisoners to a local prison from the federal Bureau of Prisons.

The D.C. Office of the Attorney General should investigate arrest procedures and practices by the Metropolitan Police Department and other police agencies to address apparent racially-biased policing practices in D.C. In particular, the practice of mass misdemeanor and minor drug possession (including marijuana) arrests, mostly targeting African-American youth, should be re-evaluated and discontinued. We must put an end to the scandalous imposition of —New Jim Crow policing practices, which target African-Americans for arrest and prosecution, and subsequent stigmatization as an —ex-offender.

2015 Updates

The System of Criminal Law Enforcement in D.C.

DC prisoners, overwhelmingly African-American, serve their sentences primarily in the most dangerous, high-security prisons, the 14 U.S. Penitentiaries. Unlike most other prisoners in the federal system, D.C. prisoners are mostly convicted of “street crimes” (petty robberies, etc.) and drug law violations. They are therefore considered to be more dangerous than other prisoners in this system, who tend to be higher level offenders (so-called “white collar criminals”) and more

often white.³¹

Every month, approximately 180 prisoners are returned to D.C. from the BOP after having served out their mandatory sentences, subject to constant supervision from the federal Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA). No D.C. agency or organization is provided with advance information for when these prisoners will be returning home and no provision is made for their housing or medical care. Such services, if provided, are handled by private organizations. The D.C. government agency, the Office of Returning Citizen Affairs (ORCA) has an annual budget of \$376,026 [City Paper, 9/30/15) and three staff. That agency is plagued by mismanagement and widely considered to be ineffective.

Fewer than half of these returning citizens are sent to halfway houses for temporary housing, with the rest returned to whatever options can be provided by family or friends. As many as 25 percent of returning D.C. residents become homeless upon their release, according to CSOSA statistics. The unemployment rate among the formerly incarcerated is estimated by CSOSA at more than 60 percent, and is likely much higher.

There are 5,187 D.C. residents under post-release supervision by CSOSA. They are required to undergo weekly, then monthly urine testing for alcohol, marijuana and illegal narcotic use. Any instances of “dirty urines” can result in re-incarceration for a period of at least one year, at the discretion of the U.S. Parole Commission, in decisions that are not subject to appeal. Further, any arrest for any criminal charge, including traffic offenses, can and usually does result in re-incarceration for violation of the terms of release, in addition to any jail time associated with the new offense. So-called “recidivism” rates among DC prisoners are estimated at more than 60 percent, that is, 60 percent of returning citizens are re-incarcerated. However, at least 20 percent of these incarcerations are for non-criminal violations of parole rules. More than 30 percent of re-incarcerations are for drug offenses, primarily drug possession. Fewer than 15 percent of re-incarcerations are for so-called violent offenses, including arson, assault, sexual assault and homicide (Nakamura and Weiss (2012). Measuring Recidivism in the District of Columbia. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Washington DC). There are approximately as many people returned to prison for violations of parole rules annually as are sent to the BOP on new felony offenses overall.

Returning citizens are released to unemployment, homelessness and poverty. Their communities lack resources to house or care for them. They are subject to constant surveillance by CSOSA. They are frequent targets for arrest. A comprehensive study of all arrests in DC from 2009 to 2011 found that more than 92 percent of people arrested in D.C. are African-American. Nearly a quarter of these arrests are for traffic offenses, another 20 percent for drug offenses. Four percent of arrests are for violent crimes as defined by federal agencies.

There are approximately 4,870 people on probation in D.C., that is, people who have been

³¹ <http://doc.dc.gov/page/inmate-demographics-and-statistics>; <https://thereentrynetworkdc.wordpress.com/employment/>;
<http://www.slideshare.net/sseuser/gentrification-in-dc>;
http://cjcc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cjcc/page_content/attachments/ReentryGrantReportFinalReportDecember2013.pdf.

convicted of minor offenses but subjected to supervision by CSOSA. Like parolees, they are subject to frequent drug testing and can be incarcerated for non-criminal violations of the terms of their release. Probationers are 94 percent African-American and 3 percent Hispanic.³²

2,000 – 2,500 offenders return to the District of Columbia¹ from prison and roughly 17,000 cycle through the D.C. Department of Corrections.³³ These individuals face a number of challenges upon their return, not the least of which are finding and sustaining adequate housing and meaningful employment. As is known, many offenders disproportionately return to a small number of neighborhoods, which are struggling with high unemployment rates, lack of affordable housing, and strained resources. This is, perhaps, useful for understanding why roughly 2/3rds of returning citizens recidivate upon their return to the community.³⁴ We find that both locally and nationally, these rates have been fairly consistent over the last several decades.³⁵

Given these high rates of recidivism coupled with the knowledge that the overwhelming majority of those individuals who are incarcerated eventually get released, the idea of reentry transitional planning becomes ever so important. Fortunately, the vast body of evidence-based knowledge on reentry transitional planning has provided much instruction on ways jurisdictions can improve the likelihood of successful reintegration of its returning citizens. For example, the continuity of care ensures those returning have the best odds of transitioning successfully back into the community.³⁶ More specifically, the foremost aspects of successful transitional planning is identifying the needs of offenders inside the facility, linking them to appropriate services, and supportive networks both inside the facility they are coming from, as well as back in the community to which they are heading.

Racial Bias and Policing

In 2013, two broad-based research reports documented the persistent racial bias in arrests and prosecutions in Washington, D.C. A report by the Washington Lawyers ‘ Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs. The report, “Racial Disparities in Arrests in the District of Columbia, 2009-2011: Implications for Civil Rights and Criminal Justice in the Nation’s Capital.” includes a detailed analysis of more than 142,000 arrest records for the period 2009 – 2011 (http://www.washlaw.org/pdf/wlc_report_racial_disparities.pdf). The data analyzed in the report revealed significant racial disparities in arrests throughout the three years studied, including that more than 8 out of 10 arrests were of African Americans and that more than 19 out of 20 arrests were for nonviolent offenses.

³² Court Services and Offender Supervision 2013 Fact Sheet <http://www.csosa.gov/newsmedia/factsheets/reentry-2013.pdf>, DC Department of Corrections 2013 Facts and Figures.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Nakamura and Weiss (2012). Measuring Recidivism in the District of Columbia. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Washington DC.

³⁵ See Langan and Levine (2002). Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Washington DC. Also see Pew Center on the States (2011). State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America’s Prisons. Washington DC.

³⁶ MacKenzie, D.L. (2006) What Works in Corrections? Reducing the Criminal Activities of Offenders and Delinquents. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press. Mandated reentry agency in the District of Columbia, which helps returning citizens reintegrate into society by providing workforce development services and referrals for housing, employment, mental health, and substance abuse. It should be noted that ORCA is a one-stop-shop and lifeline for over 5,000 often marginalized returning citizens each year in the city.

A second report released similar data related to arrests for possession of marijuana (ACLU of the Nation's Capital, *Behind the D.C. Numbers: The War on Marijuana in Black and White* (2013). The ACLU found that in 2010, 91% of all marijuana arrests were of African-American people, despite roughly equal marijuana usage rates between African-American and white populations.

After a succession of highly publicized murders of African-American men by police and private security forces in 2012 to 2015, from the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 in Florida and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014 to the killing of Freddie Gray in Baltimore in April 2015, a popular movement opposing racially-biased policing arose across the country, and in Washington, D.C. Groups like DC Ferguson, Black Lives Matter of DMV and organized groups of "cop watch" teams developed. These groups have demanded that the Washington, D.C. police forces reform its practices and in particular end the practice of routine arresting African-Americans for petty offenses for which whites are not arrested. They have identified these police practices as leading to the displacement of low income African-American communities from Washington, D.C. communities in favor of higher income white newcomers. There has been no concerted response from D.C. government leadership to the research reports on racially biased policing except attempts to justify the practices. The proportion of arrests of African-Americans has not decreased, and efforts to enforce greater accountability for police misconduct have been frustrated by D.C. government officials.

In response to a perceived increase in crime during the summer of 2015, the Bowser administration proposed legislation that would expand policing activities, focusing on people with criminal records. People with criminal records are overwhelmingly African-American in Washington, D.C., a result of the well-documented racial bias of the police. The Mayor called for power to conduct warrantless searches of the homes of people on parole or probation, among other "anti-crime" efforts.³⁷

Rather than addressing the issues around racial bias in policing and the legitimate safety concerns of all D.C. residents, the current administration, like previous administrations, has called for expansion and continuation of aggressive policing practices that disproportionately lead to the arrest and incarceration of African-Americans.

Health and Environmental Justice

2012 Recommendations

The District government should release its health statistics in a timely manner, noting the absence of such data to the public since 2008. While most residents are covered, there are still some who lack health insurance. A single payer system is long overdue, hence we urge the

³⁷ <http://aclunca.org/sites/default/files/docs/2013/ACLU%20Marijuana%20in%20Black%20and%20White%20Behind%20the%20DC%20Numbers%207%202013.pdf>

District government to establish a representative commission to begin the implementation of such a system that would guarantee universal coverage and access to first rate preventative and treatment services.

2015 Updates

DC has made progress with respect to recommendations from the last report. Updated health statistics were released with the *District of Columbia Community Health Needs Assessment, Vol. 1 & Vol 2*. In addition, there was an increase of capacity in home visitations for pregnant women as well as interagency collaboration and partnerships between government and community organizations. However, DC still lacks of a single payer system that would provide comprehensive coverage for all its residents.

Note: additional documentation to this section is provided in the document generated by the four American University students included in the Appendix section

Health

Life Expectancy & Infant Mortality Rates

Since the 2012 human rights report, DC has released updated health statistics in its March 2013 revised version of the *District of Columbia Community Health Needs Assessment, Volume 1*. This revised version found that the average life expectancy of DC residents at 77.7 years was slightly lower than the national average of 78.7. Hispanics had the highest life expectancy in the District with females living 88.9 years and Hispanic men living 88.4 years. White DC residents had the next highest life expectancy with females' life expectancy at 85.2 years and white males' life expectancy at 83.2 years. African Americans by far had the lowest life expectancy rates within DC. African American females are expected to live 76.2 years and African American males were expected to live 68.8 years.

Comparing white life expectancy to African American life expectancy, on the surface whites are living longer, however, gains in life expectancy have been greater for African Americans. Life expectancy for African American men grew 10.4 years in the past decade while life expectancy for white males only grew 7.9 years. For African American women life expectancy rose 6.1 years while life expectancy for white women rose 4.2 years. There are a number of potential explanations for the rise in life expectancy rates in the District including reductions in infant mortality, effectiveness of medical intervention, improvement in public health insurance, migration, shift in resident population, and urbanization. Migration, shift in resident population, and urbanization play a key role as DC is a very transient city. In terms of life expectancy by Wards, Wards 5, 6, 7, & 8 had the lowest gains compared to Ward 2 which had the highest climb in life expectancy of 21.2%. Life expectancy is currently highest in Wards 2 & 3. Life expectancy gains remain extremely low in Ward 8 where residents are expected to live an average of a half a year longer from 2000-2010.

The infant mortality rate estimated for 2013 in the U.S. was 5.2, while in Cuba it was 4.76

(Source: CIA, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_infant_mortality_rate). According to the revised Community Health Assessment after years of extremely high infant mortality rates, DC's rate is currently at 8.0 deaths per 1,000 live births. While this is still higher than the national of 6.1 deaths per 1,000 live births, it does mean that DC achieved its objective (Healthy People 2010) of reducing infant mortality to no more than 8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. This is a 29.2% decline from 2006 rate of 11.3 deaths per 1,000 live births. DC's infant mortality rate is now lower than both Baltimore (11.0 per 1,000) and Richmond (12.8 per 1,000). Wards 4, 5, 6, and 8 had the highest rates of infant mortality within the District. However, Ward 8 had the largest meaningful reduction from 28 infant deaths in 2009 to 17 in 2010. White mothers actually saw an increase from 2.9 infant deaths in 2006 to 5.3 in 2010. African American mothers saw a decrease from 17.4 infant deaths to 10.5 in 2010. The overall reductions within the District may be explained by the recent decline in infant deaths to African American mothers. Another cause that may explain the lower infant mortality rate is the emphasis DC has placed on the importance of prenatal care for maximizing healthy outcomes for both infants and mothers. In 2008, DC launched its Infant Mortality Citywide Action Plan. Home visits performed by the Department of Health more than doubled in both Wards 7 and 8.

Child abuse

The revised Community Health Needs Assessment indicates there were 7,835 referrals for child abuse and neglect. Of these 7,835 referrals, 6,231 reports were referred for investigation and 2,050 children were victims of abuse or neglect in DC. This is a rate of 18.4 kids per 1,000 representing 4.4% decrease from 2012. Seventy-two percent of cases involved neglected children, 18.4% were physically abused, and 2.4% were sexually abused. Comparing 2009 child abuse victims to the data provided in the revised Assessment, child abuse victims have decreased by 37.5%.

Mental Health

DC has attained all three goals in relation to mental health (Healthy People 2010 Objectives). This included expanding the prevention oriented services for children in DC charter and public schools, expanding the prevention-oriented services for children and adolescents (ages 5-18) in the mental health rehabilitation services (MHRS) programs by 10% annually, and final and increase by 5% annually the services that are provided to persons 18 or older who are homeless with serious mental illness.

Under the Behavior Risk Assessment Surveillance System, 7.6% of DC residents who participated indicated that in the past 15-30 days they had poor mental health. The survey found that females were more likely than males to experience poor mental health in last 15-30 days at 9.3% compared to 5.6% for males. Adults ages 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64 had the highest percentages of people experience 15-30 days of poor mental at 8.8%, 8.5%, and 8.7% respectively. African Americans more than any other group were likely to report 15-30 days of poor mental health at 10%. Education and income level also played a role in the level of poor mental health in 15-30 days. DC residents who have less than a high school education were more likely than all other education subgroups to indicate 15-30 days of poor mental health. In

terms of income, 16.4% of adults with a household income of less than \$15,000 were more likely than all income groups to experience 15-30 days of poor mental health. In terms of Wards, Wards 7 and 8 had the highest percentages of people experiencing 15-30 poor mental health days at 12.3% for Ward 7 and 11.8% for Ward 8.

Access to Health Care

In 2010, 92.2% of adults living in the District had health insurance. This rate was higher than the national average of 85.0% in 2010. Sixty-six percent of these adults were enrolled in Medicaid. The Physician-to-resident ratio per 100,000 was 817, much higher than the national average of 273. However, there are still great disparities of wards. For instance, Ward 3 has a much higher concentration in the number of physicians than all other wards. Coverage is the worst in Ward 7 where there is 11-30 physicians within the Ward as indicated in the 2010 Physician & Physician Assistant Workforce Capacity Report by the District Board of Medicine. The map of physicians' distribution in the wards has very large number range. Poorly covered areas are defined as having 1-10 physicians, low to medium coverage 11-30 physicians, medium physicians coverage ranged from 31-150, and densely covered areas ranged from 151-850. The ranges provided can be misleading as it may make policymakers and residents assume higher numbers of physicians exist when they in fact do not. It is important to note that most physicians are concentrated around the city's hospitals, which could explain the low coverage in Ward 7.

HIV/AIDS Crisis

DC's HIV/AIDS rate was 8.2 times higher than the national rate in 2010, in spite of a 43.2% drop in the HIV age-adjusted mortality rate. Since 2007 the newly diagnosed rate fell 57% and transmission from intravenous drug use has been reduced by more than 80%. In 2013, no babies within the District were born with HIV. However, the prevalence rate of 2.5% still qualifies the HIV/AIDS scenario in DC as an epidemic. In response the District has come up with its 90-90-90-50 plan to combat the HIV/AIDS. The plan states that 2020 90% of people know their HIV status, 90% of the people who are living with the virus are in care or receiving treatment, 90% of people who are living with HIV have an undetectable level of the virus, and the goal is to reduce the number of new diagnoses in DC by 50% by 2020. The success of combating District prevalence rates is in part due to local policies of increased testing and awareness campaigns, however, changes to health care policy have also helped. For instance, with Medicare, Medicaid, and private health insurance now paying for routine HIV testing, there was been a decrease in the demand for public funding. Despite the dramatic reduction in cases of new infections, the HIV/AIDS rate in the District is expected to remain high. This is mainly due to patients receiving treatment are living longer with the disease than in the past.

Obesity

According the DC Department of Health (<http://doh.dc.gov/service/obesity-overview>), more than half of all adults living in DC classify as overweight or obese. When looking at Wards 7 & 8, which are east of the river, obesity rates rise to over 72%. Like with many other health

indicators, large racial disparities exist for obesity within the District. While one in every ten white District residents are obese, one in three African-Americans are considered obese. Obesity is linked to a number of health problems including an increased risk for heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, strokes, sleep apnea, and other health care costs. In addition, obesity takes a toll on life expectancy. Obese women are expected seven years less than their counterparts of a healthy weight while obese men are expected to live four years less than their healthy counterpart.

In terms of child obesity rates DC ranks 27th in the US for 2-4 year olds from low-income families with a rate at 13.1% in 2011. In relation to children ages 10-17 from low-income families, DC ranked third in the nation for prevalence of obesity with 21.4% of children in this group being afflicted. Of the children currently living in the District one of three children are at risk of being overweight or are currently overweight.

One of the major factors contributing to DC's high obesity rates is the lack of availability of healthy foods. For instance, in 2010-2015 Obesity Action Plan Ward 8 received a grade of D- in terms of access to healthy foods, the lowest score received by any of the wards. Ward 8 also has the highest prevalence of obesity within the District. To further emphasize the severity of the problem the number of households that were food insecure between 2011 and 2013 rose from 35,075 households to 40,602. Between 2008 and 2012, 30.5% of households with children in DC said they were unable to afford enough food making it the second worst rate in the nation, only to be exceeded by the state of Mississippi.

A number of initiatives and acts have been implemented to address obesity. Two of the most well known are the Healthy Schools Act and the Healthy Corner Store Program. The Healthy Schools Act sets high standards for the food students are served to insure the healthiest meals possible, including breakfast and dinners. In addition, to providing healthy school meals, DCPS has school gardens on over 90 of its campuses, provides after school cooking classes, and culinary education courses in order to "create lifelong good habits". The Healthy Corner Store Program aims to bring fruits & vegetables into corner stores as they are the only source closest to some District residents. In addition, access to foods has become a major part of DC's Sustainability Plan, under which a Food Policy Council was created to address numerous food related issues within the District.

Hunger and Food Hardship in the District

Levels of child food insecurity in the District also lowered since publication of the last report. In 2013, the child food insecurity rate was 30.5%. However, nationally, this number was only 21.4%, demonstrating an ongoing need to target District children for human rights work.³⁸

In 2014, DC's City Council passed Bill B20-0726, or the Student Nutrition on Winter Weather Days Act of 2014, which "require[s] the Office of State Superintendent of Education to develop

³⁸ Map the Meal Gap. Feeding America. <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2013/child>, <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2013/child/district-of-columbia>

a plan to provide healthy meals to low-income students on days when public schools are closed due to inclement weather.” This Bill will hopefully positively impact child food insecurity in the coming years.

Environmental Justice

Green Space

Large contiguous green space is good for human health and overall wellbeing.³⁹ Parks can help clean harmful particulates from the air.⁴⁰ Low-income persons have the least access to green space, and this is an important component of improving health and quality of life outcomes.⁴¹

Air Quality

The American Lung Association recently released their *State of the Air 2015*. The report looks at ozone pollution, particle pollution in a 24-hour period, and particle pollution on an annual basis. Ozone pollution and particle pollution are emphasized, as they are the two most threatening air pollutants in terms of health risks. According to the American Lung Association, ozone places a risk of premature death, immediate breathing problems, and cardiovascular effects on those who are exposed to it. Particle pollution, can increase the risk of heart disease, lung cancer, asthma attacks, and can interfere with the broking working and growth of the lungs. In addition, particle pollution has also been linked to death from respiratory and cardiovascular causes, including strokes, increased mortality infants and young children, increase in the number of heart attacks, inflammation of the lung tissue in young healthy adults, increased hospitalization for cardiovascular disease, including strokes and congestive heart failure, to name a few. For children suffering from asthma particle pollution can increase their hospitalization and the severity of their asthma attacks. In terms of the grading criteria, the District passed for its particle pollution on an annual basis, it received a grade of a C for particle pollution within a 24-hour period and F for its level of ozone pollution. In fact, the report found that the DC Metro area is one of the 25 most ozone-polluted cities (ranked 22). DC is well aware of its ozone pollution and has created a goal within the Sustainability Plan to cut its prevalence.

Sustainable DC

Sustainable DC was launched in July 2011, and after significant community input during 2012, a Final Report of this process was issued in February 2013 by Mayor Gray.⁴² Sustainable DC demonstrates a very welcome commitment by our Mayor and Council for DC to becoming a global leader in energy conservation, renewable energy implementation, and other sustainable

³⁹ <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/exeter-study-land-sparing-big-city-parks-impact>

⁴⁰ http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Nowak-Heisler-Research-Paper.pdf

⁴¹ <http://www.parksandrecreation.org/2014/August/Green-Justice-The-Promise-for-Equity-in-Our-Parks/>; full article in Appendix

⁴² Sustainable DC website: <http://sustainable.dc.gov/>

practices, combined with equity for all of our community. Significant progress has already been achieved in meeting its goals.

Sustainable DC set a goal of 50% renewable energy by 2032, which is arguably too modest given the present and growing capability of wind/solar energy technologies, and the ever-growing challenge to prevent the onset of irreversible catastrophic climate change. In a robust wind/solar transition, electric-powered public transportation and cars would replace our present mode, along of course with bicycles. Such a transition would have huge health benefits to our residents with the reduction of air, soil and water pollution (e.g., the childhood asthma epidemic, linked to air pollution produced by vehicles powered by fossil fuel derivatives).

However, meeting these goals is now being threatened by the potential takeover of Pepco by Exelon. The Public Service Commission (PSC) initially rejected this takeover, but after intensive lobbying the PSC is now reconsidering an appeal to its decision. According to Power DC a coalition of many grassroots organizations:

The proposed Pepco-Exelon merger threatens DC residents and local businesses with higher energy bills and lower reliability ... reverses the District's progress on local renewable energy and energy efficiency, and it moves decision making for the District's grid from here in DC to a powerful corporation's headquarters in Chicago. Exelon's corporate interests are not aligned with the policy objectives of the District of Columbia, and Exelon's acquisition of Pepco is not in the public interest.⁴³

Further, as a leading nuclear power corporation, Exelon has actively lobbied against measures to accelerate the implementation of wind and solar energy capacity, for example, opposing the federal wind energy tax credit, in spite of the fact that federal subsidies to the fossil fuel and nuclear industries have historically been many times greater than to renewables.⁴⁴ Exelon has demonstrated its unwelcome agenda of resisting this transition to renewable energy supplies, e.g., by its close alliance with the Edison Electric Institute (Exelon CEO Chris Crain is Vice Chairman of the Edison Electric Institute), which actively collaborates with ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council. ALEC is a national group pushing a legislative agenda for voter disenfranchisement/suppression, particularly targeted against the African-American, Hispanic and the low-income electorate, as well as the removal of subsidies for wind/solar power development.

Whether or not the Exelon takeover of Pepco is approved by the PSC, there is growing interest in replacing private with public ownership of our utilities, municipalizing Pepco, thereby putting our supplier under full public ownership, made fully transparent and accountable. DC Public Power has been created to achieve this goal.⁴⁵ There are numerous examples of municipalization, such as in Boulder Colorado. According to one Minneapolis resident "what we pay for our utility bills would recirculate back into the city general fund rather than us paying for corporate jets, multimillion dollar lobbying sprees, lavish executive bonuses, [and]

⁴³ <http://www.powerdc.org/>

⁴⁴ <http://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/Utility-Exelon-Trying-to-Kill-Wind-and-Solar-Subsidies-While-Keeping-Nukes>

⁴⁵ <http://www.dcpower.org/>

dividends to distant out-of-state shareholders...It is demoralizing that a distant corporate board of directors ... gets to decide where our energy comes from by monopoly power...” The American Public Power Association points out that, “More than 2,000 cities and towns in the United States light up their homes, businesses and streets with “public power” — electricity that comes from a community-owned and -operated utility.”⁴⁶

Once created, a DC public electric utility could help foster the creation of micro-grids throughout DC, thereby promoting community-managed renewable energy systems, in parallel to the growing capacity of organic food supply from neighborhood urban farms. DC could achieve a 100% renewable energy supply with photovoltaics on roofs, aggressive energy efficiency in buildings, coupled with a regional offshore wind power supply. This transition could be promoted with the timely creation of a DC Public Bank, receiving our tax revenues instead of Wall Street, partnering with local banks to leverage financing of wind and solar power creation and energy efficiency technologies, for homeowners, tenants, businesses and city-owned buildings, as well as truly affordable housing with state-of-the-science energy efficiency.⁴⁷

Making solar energy affordable, especially to low-income residents is an ongoing challenge. DC SUN has taken the lead in making sure that regulations governing the COMMUNITY RENEWABLES ENERGY ACT OF 2013 provide mechanisms to insure affordability, such as full credit for offsite photovoltaics.⁴⁸

2015 Recommendations

The District should

1. Provide further increase of health services to historically underserved areas within the District, with a particular focus on Wards 7 and 8, still suffering from lower life expectancy, higher rates of infant mortality and obesity.
2. Provide further funding of programs like the Health School Act and the Healthy Corner Store Initiative to improve access to healthy food options for DC’s low-income residents.
3. Commission a study on the affordability of food within the District based on Wards and the average income within that Ward in relation to all other household expenses. The report should provide recommendations on how to address the affordability factor in order to increase food access within the District.

In addition,

1. Under the DC Sustainability Plan, the reduction of ozone pollution has been given the status as a medium-term goal. With the threat of climate change, this goal should be raised to a priority since its impact will further worsen air quality by increasing ozone

⁴⁶ <http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/rea/news/article/2014/06/microgrids-create-municipalization-benefits?page=all>

⁴⁷ <http://dcpublicbanking.org/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.dcsun.org/community-renewables-energy-act-of-2013/>

pollution.

2. The development of DC's 25-acre McMillan Park should include a requirement to remain largely open park space (as opposed to high density development; see innovative approaches at <http://friendsofmcmillan.org/>).
3. We go on record in opposing the Exelon takeover of Pepco, and support efforts to municipalize our utility, i.e., achieving public ownership and management of the provision of electricity to our residents and businesses.
4. We support efforts to make the benefits of solar energy fully available to renters, homeowners with shaded roofs, tenants of apartment buildings, and others, by removing the remaining regulatory barriers to the implementation of the Community Renewables Energy Act of 2013.

Immigrants' Rights

2015 Recommendations

Given the current hostility refugees and immigrants face in many countries including the United States, DC should continue its commitment to protecting immigrants' rights in the District. To this end,

1. DC should continue to review and undertake steps to revise laws, regulations, practices, and policies that have the effect of discriminating on the basis of race, color, and/or national origin.
2. Furthermore, DC needs to ensure that it meets the language access needs of its residents to guarantee full civic participation and access to basic human rights.
3. We support the right of green card residents to vote in our local elections.⁴⁹

Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation

2012 Recommendations

The human rights of LGBT community must be vigorously protected by proactive action of our District government and its police. The LGBT community should be partners in formulating and implementing these policies.

2015 Updates

In a 2012 study 10% of District residents identified as LGBT (Study conducted by Gallup, as a part of the Gallup "State by State" series. It is thus far the largest random sample of Americans

⁴⁹ See https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/should-legal-immigrants-have-voting-rightscontentious-issue-comes-to-dc-other-cities/2015/02/09/85072440-ab0f-11e4-ad717b9eba0f87d6_story.html

surveyed to identify the national state-by-state percentages of individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender.⁵⁰ The District has a distinct history of supporting issues such as marriage equality and including sexual orientation as a protected class. Nonetheless, the District has a responsibility to protect and advocate for the human rights of LGBT residents. Homelessness and sexual exploitation of LGTQ youth is an ongoing problem nationally and within the District.

Homelessness and sexual exploitation of LGTQ youth is an ongoing problem nationally and within the District. Since the publishing of the previous report, the LGBTQ Homeless Youth Reform Act was passed in 2014. The law provides funding for additional beds designated for LGBTQ youth, and contains provisions that require the Interagency Council on Homelessness to keep data on LGBT youth and make annual recommendations on how best to serve that specific population. Shelters will also be required to amend and update policies regarding protections for and treatment of residents based on sexual orientation and gender identity, including allowing gender nonconforming youth to access gender-specific facilities in accordance with their self-identification.

Compelling evidence has recently been presented by the DC Office of Human Rights regarding serious job discrimination against transgender applicants.⁵¹

2015 Recommendations

We call on our Mayor and Council to take necessary action to end job discrimination against transgender applicants.

Discrimination based on Race

2012 Recommendations

The D.C. Council must pass the Human Rights for Ex-offenders bill, which would bar discrimination against otherwise qualified job and housing applicants based on their criminal records. The D.C. Office of Human Rights and the Office of the Attorney General must step up enforcement of existing laws banning race discrimination in housing, utilizing testing and other mechanisms to insure equal access to decent and affordable housing.

2015 Updates

The District is widely recognized for its racial and ethnic diversity. However, as the 2012 report identified, there remains a disproportionate amount of racial minorities, particularly African-American and Latino residents, who are subjected to housing and employment discrimination. Additionally, gentrification has led to increased racial and economic segregation within the District. This has had and continues to have a profound effect on the status of racial minorities

⁵⁰ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/160517/lgbt-percentage-highest-lowest-north-dakota.aspx>

⁵¹ ohr.dc.gov/page/QualifiedAndTransgender, Nov. 4, 2015, Groundbreaking Report Show 48% Discrimination Rate Against Transgender Job Applicants

indigent to the District with respect to access to housing, employment opportunities, and police-driven violence. Notably since the release of the 2012 report, the national movement, Black Lives Matter, has driven the discussion in the District's disproportionate policing and police brutality.

Discrimination Against People with Criminal Records

In response to the overwhelming unemployment and impoverishment of D.C. residents who have been incarcerated, the D.C. Council has created legislation to provide limited antidiscrimination protections for people with criminal records. The DC Council passed the "Fair Criminal Record Screening Act" on July 14, 2014, which was signed by then-Mayor Gray. The bill became law in December 2014. The District of Columbia is about to become the 14th jurisdiction nationwide to "ban the box" – to prohibit employers from asking job applicants to check "the box" indicating whether they have ever been arrested. DC employers who ask an applicant questions about his/her criminal history early in the hiring process or who use criminal history to eliminate an applicant from the employment pool will be subject to a fine by the DC Commission on Human Rights. This new law applies to public and private employers who employ more than 10 employees in the District. Unfortunately, the law does not provide the ability for aggrieved job applicants to file a lawsuit in court if they believe a potential employer has violated their rights under the new law. The only option is to file a complaint with the D.C. Office of Human Rights, which can eventually fine the employer if found liable.

2015 Recommendations

See Strategic Recommendations, *infra*.

Discrimination Against Women

2012 Recommendations

Besides raising the TANF level above the regional poverty level, implement a cost-of-living adjustment to secure the purchasing power of TANF for DC's women and children struggling with poverty. Ensure that TANF recipients have access to and are therefore able to pursue training according to skill sets, which will lead to long-term security, rather than siphoning recipients to the most easily available job or work program.

Anti-discrimination laws must be vigorously enforced, and if necessary strengthened. The economic and social status of women and people of color must be prioritized by District budgeting and policy; see sections on poverty, housing etc.

Discrimination based on Religion (a new subject for this report)

DC Muslims Right to Worship

Islamophobia affect the best of us. In 2003, the DC Muslim community initiated several meetings with the MPD to request the help of their department chiefs in addressing the targeted abuse many experience from angry protesters, in sight of police officers who don't intercede on behalf of Muslim worshipers entering the mosque. In 2013, the Muslim community initiated several meetings to address this issue. While well attended by several members of the MPD officers, the situation remains an issue of concern. This last October, an anti-Muslim hate group targeted Masjid Muhammad, one of the oldest Black Muslim mosques.⁵²

While, MPD police officers are legally mandated to protect residents' right to worship, that is often not extended to DC Muslims. The MPD's lack of initiative in protecting the right of Muslim worshipers violate DC ordinance policies related to:

- Sound ordinances
- Hate speech and human rights violations
- Proximity of demonstrators to Muslim houses of worship targeted group
- Providing Muslim worshipers adequate police protection
- Targeting Muslim houses of worship for parking violations on their days of worship

The DC Muslim community is considerable and includes every race, class, ethnic and gender affinity. The MPD needs to be mindful of protecting the right of the DC Muslim community to enter their houses of worship without fear of harassment.

Recommendations

To improve MPD's community relationship, several steps should be taken to improve training for all MPD officers by including:

1. Cultural competency training that provides a basic knowledge of Islam and other minority religious traditions, and best practices when working with these communities and houses of worship.
2. Proper engagement practices with demonstrators, including when the proximity to the targeted community threatens safety and especially when the actions and language threaten to cross into unprotected speech.
3. Partnering and strengthening MPD relationships with Muslim DC houses of worship.
4. Building strong partnerships with the DC Muslim community by involving Muslim community leaders in new and existing MPD programs including citizens advisory council to ensure the needs of the local Muslim community are incorporated.
5. In the police academy sensitivity training on Islam and the historical role of the DC Muslim community that pre-dates the US revolution. Ensure new police recruits interact with the Muslim community is respectful and in accordance with "D.C. Official Code §

⁵² <http://www.mintpressnews.com/anti-islam-hate-group-calls-for-rallies-outside-mosques-nationwide-on-oct-9-and-10/210207/>

2-1401, et.seq. (District of Columbia Human Rights Act), that mandates the MPD shall not discriminate, either in the enforcement of the law, or in the provision of police service, on the basis of religion, race, national origin, or personal appearance.

6. Making contact with members of the Muslim community when disputes arise to resolve the matter in an amicable and orderly manner and ascertain any issues of police importance or community concerns is shared in an environment in which the Muslim community members are comfortable sharing information without fear that their concerns will not be met or addressed.
7. Members of the Muslim community in new and existing community outreach programs and advisory committees to strengthen MPD ties to the Muslim DC community and providing innovative ways for the police and the Muslim community to respectfully engage on matters of mutual concern and create open lines of communication.

In addition we recommend:

8. Including Islamophobia in relevant DC human rights laws including definitions of hate speech and protected speech.

Meeting the District's Human Rights Obligations

2012 Report

Aside from changes in policies, which require little or no budgetary commitment, we examine here whether the District government could have better met its human rights obligations drawing on untapped revenue and by changing its budgetary priorities.

- 1) District taxes...
- 2) Subsidies to the corporate sector and other potential sources of revenue...

And here is a critically important recommendation: we urge any new revenue generated by tax increases and cuts in unjustified subsidies to the corporate sector, as well as a significant fraction of fiscal year end budget surpluses must be required to go directly into essential low income programs in the budget that have been chronically underfunded for many years, and that this provision be put into any new legislation providing for such changes in tax and subsidy policies. Further, the implementation of this requirement must be carefully monitored and vigorously enforced, given the long-standing record of diversion of budgetary funding from essential programs by the Council.

In addition, we recommend serious consideration of the establishment of a DC Partnership Bank. Such a bank would be publicly owned and publicly accountable that, in partnership with local financial institutions, would deliver quality, sound financial services to promote jobs, sustainable local businesses and affordable housing in Washington, DC; enhance the financial health of the city's general fund; and to enhance the District of Columbia's sovereignty over its

fiscal and monetary policies.

2015 Updates

The DC tax structure for residents remains regressive above \$50K family income, with the top 1% income bracket (millionaires) paying an overall lower rate than all but the poorest families. In 2013, the most recent data available, DC returns with adjusted gross incomes of \$1 million and above had a taxable income of \$3.62 billion. Those returns with adjusted gross incomes of \$100K per year and above had a taxable income of \$14.3 billion, 70% of the DC total.⁵³ Information on the present DC tax structure for residents and recent history regarding this issue can be accessed at <http://www.dcctj.org/>.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are transferred every year by the District government to big developers as subsidies that have largely gone to gentrification and the resultant vanishing of affordable housing to the majority of our residents, especially those with low-income.⁵⁴ The alternative to gentrification is equitable development.

The non-partisan DC Public Banking Center is making significant progress towards its goal of establishing a DC Public Bank, with the same functions as the “DC Partnership Bank”.⁵⁵

Strategic Recommendations

(with big potential impacts on several subjects)

As the first Human Rights City in the United States, our Council and Mayor should act to put DC Statehood front and center of a human rights movement for political, economic, social and environmental human rights, with these objectives:

1. Require a \$15/hour living wage for all DC workers, and ensure the effective transition of our Returning Citizens to living wage employment, including the sealing of the records of non-violent victims of the drug war.
2. Prioritize affordable housing for the majority of DC residents now paying more than 30% of their income for housing, by using the hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers revenue per year now being spent in subsidizing gentrification.
3. Establish a progressive DC tax structure that is capable of increasing income security for our residents and generating essential revenue for supporting low-income programs in our budget.
4. Raising the TANF income benefit to above the federal poverty level (child poverty is driven by low-wage jobs and a TANF income benefit that is 1/4 of the Federal Poverty

⁵³ IRS data, <http://www.irs.gov/uac/SOI-Tax-Stats-Historic-Table-2>; open DC on the map

⁵⁴ See the CFO’s Unified Economic Development Budget Report: Fiscal Year 2014 Year-End, issued March 2015

⁵⁵ <http://dcpublicbanking.org/>

Level (FPL), and if funded will increase to only 40% FPL by FY 2017 to be equal to the present Maryland benefit).

5. Establish a publicly owned and accountable DC bank that would deposit District tax dollars, instead of Wall Street being the recipient, and in partnership with local financial institutions, promote jobs, sustainable local businesses and affordable housing.

Additional Recommendations and Endorsements

In addition we strongly endorse the recommendations for the FY 2017 Budget made by Issue Groups of the Fair Budget Coalition (see Appendix I for details):

Housing and Homelessness

- To provide year-round access to shelter for DC “priority one” homeless families (i.e. those without a safe place to stay)
- Fully fund the Interagency Council on Homelessness Strategic Plan to End Homeless Year 2 targets.
- Repairs to Public Housing (Budget \$50 million)
- Increased investment in the Project/Sponsored Local Rent Supplement Program
- Increase funding for the tenant-based and project/sponsor based local rent supplement program to provide affordable housing for very low-income residents in DC.
- \$100 million investment in the Housing Production Trust Fund

Good Jobs Workforce Development and Income Support

- Fund the establishment of a paid family and medical leave program for everyone living or working in the District.
- Modify the TANF time limit to ensure that it is responsive to family circumstances, helps families take steps toward greater independence, and does not push children into deeper poverty.
- Support expanded transportation subsidies for adult learners in FY17
- DC invest \$100,000 in a worker cooperative pilot. Through the pilot, Cooperation DC will establish worker-owned business of predominantly returning citizens, which we expect to grow to over 100 employees in 5 years.

- Support DC’s adult education and workforce development systems by ensuring strong leadership at the Workforce Investment Council (both on the Board and on staff), submitting a strong WIOA State Plan, and ensuring proper and efficient implementation.

Health Food and Nutrition

- DC fund a \$13 million expansion in DC Healthcare Alliance eligibility policy – eliminating the burdensome 6-month recertification requirement and allowing beneficiaries to recertify their benefits every year.
- Fund the expansion of the DC Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and their families. The expansion was passed in November 2014, but given a start date in 2017 subject to appropriations in the FY 17 Budget.
- DC continue to fund the Joyful Food Market program through the DC Department of Health. The budget requested for this program, \$750,000, is consistent with the prior year.
- At a minimum, restore funding cut from DCOA’s FY16 budget, reallocating the funds to have the greatest impact on direct services for older adults with the highest needs.
- Strengthen and streamline the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program).

Public Safety

Maintain Office of Victim Services (OVS) local funding at approved FY16 levels and local domestic violence housing and services funding administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS) at approved FY16 levels.

Tax and Revenue

The Tax and Revenue Committee recommends that no tax abatements and tax increment financing be offered to economic development projects through the Deputy Mayor of Economic Development (including business location incentives and abatements for specific industry or site investment) through the Fiscal Year 2017 budget. We also recommend that tax abatements offered for purposes of economic development be capped and budgeted for in the Deputy Mayor of Economic Development’s (DEMPED) budget for future fiscal years. [Note: this recommendation does not include justified projects which enhance human rights]

FBC broadly supports tax reductions for low and moderate income residents – especially increases to the Standard Deduction and Personal Exemption as prescribed by the Budget Support Act of 2014. However, we do not support the implementation of these reductions

by way of automatic, revenue forecast triggers, and instead, we recommend that each tax cut be examined through the normal, annual budget process.

Finally we endorse the People's Platform Principles and Demands, which go far in advancing our struggle for Human Rights in our Community

The People's Platform Manifesto

The People's Platform⁵⁶ is a movement of low-income and working class DC residents of color and people who share our values and vision. We seek to organize, educate, fight for and win truly affordable housing, sustaining work, and wellness for all in DC. The state of income & housing security and wellness for DC residents is bad and only getting worse. Where the city has successfully encouraged wealthier and whiter residents to move into the city, it has destroyed welfare and social programs, attacked workers' rights and supported a severe reduction in spending on programs for the most vulnerable. The beneficiaries of this policy are the wealthy.

We envision a DC that is equitable and just place to live for all of its residents. We demand that the District of Columbia become accountable to the needs of its residents, not developers and corporations, and not just the 1%.

We will accomplish our goals by centering the leadership of working class black women; being funded by our base; prioritizing political education and leadership development in our work; always seeking to build a deeper analysis and assessing our work; building alternative institutions; learning from past movement's successes and limitations; championing non-reformist reforms; and always seeking to be a part of a broader movement that is multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-gender, and multi-class.

The People's Platform principles are:

1. Housing for every person. Housing is a human right, not an opportunity to exploit and profit.
2. Decent, dignified, and sustainable work or occupation for everyone who wants it.
3. A right to health for humans and the earth.
4. Government transparency, accountability, and participatory democracy.

⁵⁶ <http://www.onedconline.org/peoplesplatform>

5. Equitable development that values people over property. Development without displacement that cedes power over land use to democratic community control.
6. Equitable and equal access to a free, decent, holistic, non-imperialistic education that creates critical, political thinkers and leaders.
7. Full access for returning citizens to housing, jobs, education, as well as decriminalization, demilitarization, and prison abolition.
8. Access to safe and affordable transportation so that we can travel between our homes, jobs, schools, and recreational spaces.
9. A process of restorative justice for residents who have faced physical, emotional, or psychological violence at the hands of the District government and its agencies.
10. The right of return and reclamation for those who have been forced out of the District by developers and gentrification. We demand self-determination, which depends on our ability to control the land.

The People's Platform Demands can be accessed from their website:

<http://www.onedconline.org/peoplesplatform>. These Demands are included in Appendix II

Conclusion

We strongly encourage DC residents, local authorities and organizations committed to human rights to use this report and its recommendations and join together to insure that our community lives up to the ideal of a Human Rights City for meaningful positive economic and social change.

