



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

May 20, 2025

The Honorable James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear Chairman Comer and Ranking Member Connolly:

We write to express our opposition to two pieces of legislation we understand will be considered this week. Both bills would repeal provisions in laws that were carefully and deliberately enacted by the Council for the benefit of all District residents.

H.R. 2096 would repeal several efforts by the Council to ensure that police officers who violate the law and contravene public safety are appropriately disciplined. The bill would strip the Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) of the authority to discipline officers who violate the law or MPD policy. While repealing this provision may seem benign, stripping MPD management of this authority would greatly undermine the efficacy and safety of our Department and the city. A D.C. Auditor's report from 2022 catalogued cases where MPD was barred from firing officers who had committed sexual assault or domestic violence, who themselves were arrested for assorted criminal activity, and who gave false statements, misused their issued firearms, and slept on the job. Every MPD Chief for the past 15 years has supported this reform because it empowers police leadership — not a third party such as an arbitrator — to determine the appropriate standards of conduct and discipline for their officers. Congress should not substitute its authority for that of local elected leaders and MPD Chiefs who have examined these issues closely.

The bill would also limit the MPD Chief's discretion to impose disciplinary penalties greater than those recommended by the trial board. If, for instance, the trial board recommended a 10-day suspension for egregious misconduct that the Department believes should result in a 30-day suspension, H.R. 2096 would make it impossible for the Chief to do this, as the Chief could not increase the penalty beyond what the trial board recommended. Again, this would be second-guessing the Police Chiefs of the Nation's Capital.

In addition, H.R. 2096 would restore a 90-day statute of limitations for claims against police officers. The Council eliminated this provision because it was repeatedly used by officers seeking to avoid accountability in disciplinary cases, including in cases where their superior sworn officers deemed the discipline appropriate. This arbitrary timeline has led to officers who have committed serious misconduct like rape and domestic violence staying on the force due to technicalities in arbitrators' decisions.

Finally, H.R. 2096 would repeal language that requires MPD to publicly announce its adverse action hearings. This would undermine the public's ability to attend these hearings, a longstanding right that they have under District law. It's important to note that public notice of hearings is also done in many other jurisdictions with police trial boards or similar bodies, including New York City, Baltimore, Chicago, and Prince George's County, Maryland.

We support having a robust and strong police force and work closely with MPD leadership to provide them with the tools they need to make the city safe. Part of that effort includes ensuring that the force can appropriately remove officers who violate the law, MPD policies, and the public trust. When the public trusts that MPD can effectively police its own, residents are more likely to cooperate in investigations and more likely to assist in prosecution, making the city safer. H.R. 2096 would make it harder for law enforcement leadership in the Nation's Capital to remove bad actors who impede credible, competent, and lawful policing in the District.

In closing, we also oppose H.R. 884, which would repeal a 2022 law extending voting rights in local District elections to non-citizen residents. Non-citizens enjoy similar voting rights in 15 other municipalities, including San Francisco and Oakland, California, Montpelier, Vermont, and a number of jurisdictions in neighboring Maryland. It continues to be unlawful for non-citizens to vote in federal elections in the District. In fact, federal law has prohibited non-citizens from voting in federal elections since 1996. Our local law cannot and does not attempt to change that.

Thank you for your consideration and your attention to these important matters. We look forward to working with you on our shared goals to advance the safety, security, and prosperity of the District.

Sincerely,



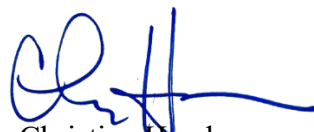
Phil Mendelson
Chairman, At-Large



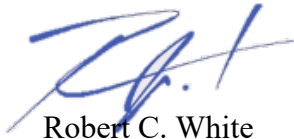
Keryan R. McDuffie
Chair Pro-Tempore, At-Large



Anita Bonds
Councilmember, At-Large



Christina Henderson
Councilmember, At-Large



Robert C. White
Councilmember, At-Large



Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1



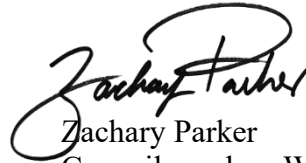
Brooke Pinto
Councilmember, Ward 2



Matthew Frumin
Councilmember, Ward 3



Janeese Lewis George
Councilmember, Ward 4



Zachary Parker
Councilmember, Ward 5



Charles Allen
Councilmember, Ward 6



Wendell Felder
Councilmember, Ward 7