



**TESTIMONY OF MURIEL BOWSER,
MAYOR OF WASHINGTON, DC**

**Before the Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives**

**James Comer, Chairman
Robert Garcia, Ranking Member**

September 18, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Garcia, and members of the Committee.

I am Muriel Bowser, Mayor of Washington, DC. I am joined today by Phil Mendelson, Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, and Brian Schwalb, the Attorney General for the District of Columbia.

I am pleased to be here today to report on the State of the District.

First, a bit of a primer on my hometown. In 1973, Congress passed the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, creating a local government with an elected mayor and an elected 13-member council. We are represented in this body by a mighty warrior, but without a vote and no representation in the Senate. DC residents are full-blooded, taxpaying Americans. We are a donor state: we give more to the federal government than we get back. We have all the responsibilities of citizenship but not the most important benefits: representation and full autonomy.

I'm proud to report that the state of the District is strong, and while we face macroeconomic headwinds, with our continued sound financial management and your help, our economic growth outlook can improve.

I recently sent the Council our 30th consecutive balanced budget with no new taxes or fees; a budget that reflects the reality of our time: declining revenues due to the unfortunate continuation of remote work, the reduction and relocation of the DC-based federal workforce, and other macroeconomic shifts. In 2024, we had the fastest growing population in the nation; our schools grew in enrollment and achievement; our parks system was rated number one; over 27 million people visited our city, besting our previous record; and our Metro system rebounded faster than any other transit system in the nation. And, in 2024, we drove down violent crime by 35%.

DC's Public Safety Ecosystem

In DC, like what happened across our country, we experienced some serious and concerning post-COVID crime trends, especially in 2023.

When I was here last, I explained how we would drive down crime and it is working. Today, compared to 2023, burglaries are down 34%; motor vehicle theft is down 37%; homicide is down 44%; robberies are down 60%; and carjackings are down 71%. Overall, violent crime is down 53% compared to 2023. And in the recent federal surge, we accelerated those gains, including a one-month reduction in carjackings of 75%.

In my last visit, I also explained the peculiarities of our criminal justice system.

We are very proud of the men and women of the Metropolitan Police Department who commit their lives to protecting the Nation's Capital. And they have my commitment to work every day to get our force strength up to 4,000 officers with critical changes to our policy environment, a 13% pay raise, and enhanced recruitment and retention efforts. While we have slowed attrition, the competition for great people who want to do law enforcement in this region is fierce. All interested in joining MPD should visit joinmpd.dc.gov.

But MPD is one piece of a complex criminal justice system: one that is a mix of local, federal, and independent agencies.

MPD makes arrests. Most adult cases are then prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney for DC, whose office is part of the United States Justice Department. Our youth offenders are prosecuted by our locally elected Attorney General, and our Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services is a local agency; but our youth and adult offenders are supervised by federal agencies. DC Jail is local, but most of our residents who are serving time are at federal facilities across the country.

Candidates for judicial positions are recommended by a panel of DC residents, through the Judicial Nomination Commission, but are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Right now, the Commission has recommended candidates for 13 vacancies on the DC Superior Court and two on the Court of Appeals. With retirements, two additional vacancies will be created.

Our system is complicated, but we are responsible for making it work.

Local Actions

As I've told DC residents: We are putting every necessary resource towards public safety.

That's why I've authorized the Chief to use any overtime they need at MPD. Last fiscal year alone, MPD officers worked 1.8 million hours of overtime, and we spent nearly \$75 million of local funds on that overtime.

It's also why we've led regional and federal partnerships to tackle carjackings and homicides with the support of the USAO, FBI, ATF, and DEA. And why we will continue to use enhanced federal resources as outlined in my Mayor's Order creating the DC Safe and Beautiful Emergency Operations Center, that also includes coordination with the U.S. Park Police, U.S. Capitol Police, and the Secret Service.

In 2023 and in the years and months since, we pushed for legislation to rebalance our public safety ecosystem, including the Secure DC omnibus legislation. We

provided greater discretion for the Courts to determine who should be held pre-trial, and I believe that holding more violent offenders pre-trial has been key to driving down violent crime.

With the right investments and by passing comprehensive public safety legislation, we have shifted our public ecosystem back in favor of accountability and created a more supportive environment for our police officers.

How Can Congress Help

We have worked collaboratively with this committee on critical shared priorities: public safety, the federal Return to Work, implementing the DC budget Fiscal Year 2025 fix (which awaits House approval), and the revitalization of RFK. And there are several key issues for which we ask for your support and partnership again. We hope that you will reconsider advancing DC bills that I believe make us less safe and less democratic, and instead prioritize a forthcoming request from President Trump and consider the following priorities in line with our Safe and Beautiful framework:

Public Safety:

- Work with us to get our police force back to 4,000 officers over the next 3 years (adding roughly 800 net new officers).
- Fund a new 100-bed Youth Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (\$60 million).
- Fund a new MPD and Fire and EMS training academy (\$250 million).

America 250 Beatification:

- Fund the Ceremonial Corridors Initiative.
- Fully fund the National Park Service to support enhanced cleaning and beatification of national parks, as well as a new MOU with DC for a DC-led Clean Corridors team.

Homeless Services:

- Fund 200 beds of bridge housing (\$55 million) that will dramatically reduce the unsheltered population and create more flow through the entire homeless services system and build upon our two existing bridge housing sites.

Finance and Economic Resilience:

- Create a DC-wide Opportunity Zone, which will infuse private capital into underutilized buildings and convert them to vibrant uses, including the federal properties that are being disposed of.

- Create a federal tax incentive program for DC much like Puerto Rico's Act 60, which reduces certain income and capital gains taxes for individuals and businesses that locate in DC.
- Accelerate the redevelopment of current and formerly owned federal properties which have significant economic development potential, such as RFK, Poplar Point, the Armed Forces Retirement Home, Carter Barron, the Historic Walter Reed Hospital, and the St. Elizabeths Quad.

I raise these opportunities for collaboration because we have something extraordinary ahead of us: our country's 250th birthday next year. With it, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the nation's capital to be the safest and most beautiful it's been at any point in its history, not just for our residents, but for the millions of Americans who will come to Washington, DC to celebrate our country's heritage. This is our moment to be that shining city on a hill that every American can look at with pride. But we can only seize this historic moment if we see past our differences and work together. The choice is ours.

When I last testified, I asked you to work with us to reimagine the RFK campus – to help us shape its future as a campus for sports, housing, an indoor sports complex, and beautiful connections to parks and the Anacostia River. Because we worked together, we are officially on the path to opening day in 2030.

I am grateful for the trust of DC residents. They care deeply about our city and our country. Over the past two years, our community has rallied around public safety solutions that work for DC. And they have handled the unique circumstances of the past several weeks with great care for each other and our democracy.

I stand ready to work with the committee to advance our shared priorities.