

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Health



Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Oversight Hearing

**Testimony of
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Director**

**Before the
Committee on Health and Human Services
Council of the District of Columbia
Vincent Gray, Chairperson**

April 9, 2019
10:00 AM
Room 500
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Good afternoon, Chairman Gray and members of the Committee on Health. I am Dr. LaQuandra S. Nesbitt, Director of the District of Columbia Department of Health, or DC Health. I am pleased to testify before you today on Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2020 Budget and Financial Plan, the District's 24th consecutive balanced budget.

The Fiscal Year 2020 budget makes key investments to ensure District residents have a fair shot at a quality education, a safe place to live and work and an affordable place to call home. DC Health furthers these goals by advancing the importance of health in all policies and promoting strategic public health programming in all eight wards of the city, with the continued focus on health equity in our work.

For the fifth consecutive year, Mayor Bowser heard from residents before finalizing the budget. Through a series of budget engagement forums and telephone town halls, residents shared their ideas and priorities for affordable housing, education, public safety, economic development, and health and human services.

DC Health Operating Budget

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DC HEALTH OPERATING BUDGET

Proposed FY 2020 Budget: \$252,822,742

	FY 2019 APPROVED	FY 2020 PROPOSED	% CHANGE FROM 2019
OPERATING BUDGET	\$252,785,684	\$252,822,742	0.0
FTEs	636.9	610.8	-4.1

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FY 2020 PROPOSED BUDGET AND FINANCIAL PLAN

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DC Health's FY 2020 budget totals approximately \$253 million, essentially no net increase to the agency's FY 2019 approved budget. Previous investments are sustained to continue strategic initiatives implemented in prior years to address identified health needs. These sustained investments are yielding early and rewarding results, most notably within school health, teen pregnancy prevention, perinatal health and food access. In addition to the sustained investments, DC Health's FY 2020 budget includes enhancements that provide ample opportunity to continue the progress in the aforementioned areas and additional opportunities to continue to raise the bar on customer service. As we strive to build upon past successes and transform DC Health into a high performing, customer-centric agency, we continue to streamline processes and create efficiencies to improve service delivery.

For example, in FY 2019, the Food Safety and Hygiene Inspection Services Division made meaningful improvements to the mobile food vending program or food trucks, including a new, user-friendly application that provides guidance and outreach materials in several languages. With the help of the Lab @ DC and the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, we developed a guidebook for vendors that includes information and application instructions for each agency involved in the mobile food vending process. Working together, we streamlined a 14-page application packet into three pages and re-designed forms to ensure that only complete applications are submitted and accepted. Our improved process impacts both new and renewal applications. For renewal applications, we have substantially reduced the application review time. Presently, we can perform a review, confirm information, and identify any missing information, all while the vendor is on site at DC Health. This allows us time to provide excellent customer care by working one-on-one with vendors to make sure their applications are complete, thereby eliminating the lag time between acceptance, review and

approval. Additionally, we are now able to schedule inspections immediately after receipt of a complete application, significantly expediting the renewal process.

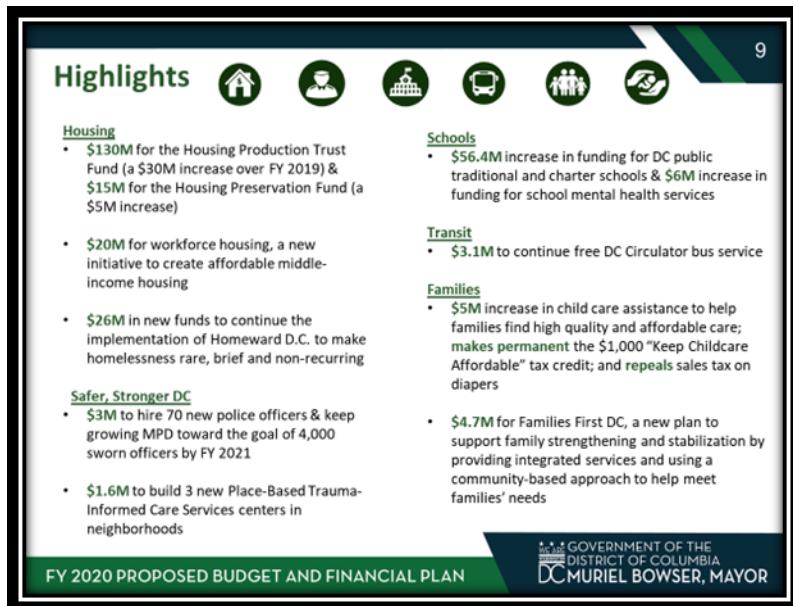
A noteworthy enhancement in the FY2020 budget is the addition of five sanitarians to the Food Safety and Hygiene Program (FSHISD). This directly impacts the number of inspections DC Health performs and enables increased surveillance of food establishments for safe food preparation practices. Per Standard 8 of the Food and Drug Administration's Retail Program Standards, the food safety program should have at least one inspector for every 280 to 320 mandatory inspections. In FY2018, the FSHISD program conducted 9,246 food and hygiene establishment inspections, including complaint and follow-up inspections; an average annual workload of 467 inspections per staff member. The addition of five Sanitarians in FY 2020 will enable us to increase routine inspections of the District's 7,500 regulated food establishments by 1,000 inspections per year, especially for those businesses which operate during nights and weekends. These increased surveillance efforts will help mitigate and prevent food-borne, public health hazards in the District.

In addition, DC Health's FY2020 budget enhancements include \$500,000 in grants to support senior dental health—a cost that is often outside of health insurance coverage; an investment of \$100,000 to fund a city-wide assessment of programs to address dementia and other cognitive impairments; and, \$100,000 to fund hire of a demographer to perform a study of long-term care services and supports.

In 2015, DC Health established the Office of Health Equity to coordinate efforts with public and private partners, community advocates and other healthcare stakeholders, to promote health beyond traditional investments in access to healthcare and insurance. The Office of Health Equity released the "2018 Health Equity Report: District of Columbia," which provided a

baseline assessment of the social and structural determinants of health in the District. The Health Equity report is critical in framing new conversations and informing strategic actions that engage the whole community, all of whom are essential to achieve tangible changes in policies, practices and outcomes. Through the work of the Office of Health Equity, the District has advanced the health-in-all policies agenda through partnerships with Safer, Stronger DC, Vision Zero, the Resilient DC Initiative and others.

Although not reflected solely in DC Health's budget, Mayor Bowser's FY 2020 overall budget makes many investments and improvements that address the key drivers of health needed across the city, as delineated in the Health Equity Report.



Highlights

Housing

- \$130M for the Housing Production Trust Fund (a \$30M increase over FY 2019) & \$15M for the Housing Preservation Fund (a \$5M increase)
- \$20M for workforce housing, a new initiative to create affordable middle-income housing
- \$26M in new funds to continue the implementation of Homeward D.C. to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring

Safer, Stronger DC

- \$3M to hire 70 new police officers & keep growing MPD toward the goal of 4,000 sworn officers by FY 2021
- \$1.6M to build 3 new Place-Based Trauma-Informed Care Services centers in neighborhoods

Schools

- \$56.4M increase in funding for DC public traditional and charter schools & \$6M increase in funding for school mental health services

Transit

- \$3.1M to continue free DC Circulator bus service

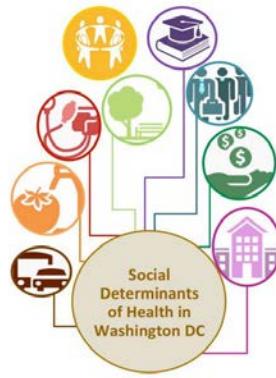
Families

- \$5M increase in child care assistance to help families find high quality and affordable care; makes permanent the \$1,000 "Keep Childcare Affordable" tax credit; and repeals sales tax on diapers
- \$4.7M for Families First DC, a new plan to support family strengthening and stabilization by providing integrated services and using a community-based approach to help meet families' needs

FY 2020 PROPOSED BUDGET AND FINANCIAL PLAN

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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Health Equity Report: District of Columbia 2018



The Social & Structural Determinants of Health
Office of Health Equity, District of Columbia, Department of Health

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The Health Equity Report identifies nine key drivers of health: education, employment, income, housing, transportation, food environment, medical care, outdoor environment and community safety.

Nine Key Drivers:

	1. Education		2. Employment
	3. Income		4. Housing
	5. Transportation		6. Food Environment
	7. Medical Care		8. Outdoor Environment
	9. Community Safety		

As such, funding allocations to housing, employment, education, public safety, transportation and economic development are additional investments that improve the health of the residents of the District of Columbia.

Education as a key driver of health

Education is directly associated with improved health outcomes and social development at the community and individual level. A child's early experiences are lifelong determinants of health and well-being. The FY 2020 budget includes a \$6 million increase in funding for school mental health services. This builds on Mayor Bowser's \$3 million investment in FY 19 and expands school mental health services to 67 new public and public charter schools, bringing the total number of schools served to 119. This funding also creates a new School Mental Health Graduate Internship program and places the District on track to meet 100 percent coverage of all schools in the next four years. These strategic investments provide a range of services that promote a positive educational climate, ensuring that our children have the in-school resources they need to support their social and emotional development; thereby creating a cadre of school-aged children who are better prepared to learn, and thus graduate, from our public school's college and career ready.

Housing as a key driver of health

Housing affordability and availability impacts health in a myriad of ways. Housing costs may drive household decisions to decide between essentials such as food, utilities and medical bills. The investments in housing and economic development are influenced by policies geared toward promoting health equity and well-being. For example, in the FY 2020 budget, the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) increased by \$30 million to \$130 million. The HPTF provides financial assistance to a variety of affordable housing programs and opportunities across the city. The \$30 million increase will fund, in part, the building of much needed affordable assisted living facilities in the following locations:

- Senior Residence at Southern Avenue – Ward 8; 152 units; opening January 2021;
- The Residences at Kenilworth Park – Ward 7; 155 units; opening April 2021;
- The Residences at St. Elizabeth – Ward 8; Units TBD; opening 2022; and
- The Residences at The Grant – Ward 5; Units TBD; opening 2022.

As articulated in the District's Health Systems Plan, additional and affordable assisted living facilities are necessary to meet the goals of diversifying the District's options for community based services and supports and ensuring that the continuum of care is affordable. The proposed assisted living facilities will provide greater options for older adults to live in home-like settings and age in place.

In addition to the investments in the Housing Production Trust Fund and other affordable housing tools, the Department of Aging and Community Living's Safe at Home program will receive an additional \$2 million to meet program demands. This program provides safety adaptations in and around the homes of qualifying seniors and adults with disabilities. Safe at Home also provides, at no cost, a private security camera system to eligible District seniors and residents with disabilities.

Food Environment and Health

Food environments and opportunities for healthy food access differ across the District of Columbia and are a key driver for health. Investments to housing and economic development can be leveraged to address barriers to food access and create greater options for healthy food. Mayor Bowser's Neighborhood Prosperity Fund (NPF) will support projects to fill the gaps in non-residential components of mixed used projects, real estate, or retail development and incentivize developments that includes grocery stores to certain neighborhoods, especially those

East of the River. The FY 2020 budget is inclusive of an additional \$1 million for the Great Streets and Neighborhood Prosperity Fund, for a total of \$8.3 million to support business development across the city, with a focus on mixed-use development. The investments in the Neighborhood Prosperity Fund build on the historical investments in food access programs in the DC Health budget, such as Produce Plus and Healthy Corner Stores, and are key components of the continuum of food access investments that are critical in adequately addressing food deserts in the District.

Community Safety as a driver of health:

Safety and violence prevention are paramount to health equity. The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) partners closely with DC Health's Office of Health Equity, as well as other key stakeholders, to implement the Safer, Stronger DC initiative—the comprehensive public safety agenda designed to reduce violent crimes. This on-going, multi-pronged initiative employs public health approaches to violence prevention. The Mayor's budget includes \$1.6 million to the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants to build three new place-based trauma informed care services centers in neighborhoods and \$2.5 million to ONSE for community-based grants for violence interruption that will expand current services.

Transportation as a key driver of health

Transportation connects the drivers of health. As stated in the Health Equity Report, transportation is an economic necessity that should be planned with an eye to access, affordability, safety and active transportation. Transportation access is essential for connectivity to jobs, schools, food, and medical care.

The FY 2020 budget makes key investments in transportation that will make our streets safer and provide more convenient access to transit options in underserved areas. According to the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2017 the average US resident spends 17 percent of annual income on transportation, the second-highest expenditure after housing, at 32 percent (BLS, 2017). The budget includes \$3.1 million to continue the Free DC Circulator program to increase access to transit and \$13 million for new Circulator buses, including new expanded routes to Ward 7. The budget also includes support for critical public health initiatives and recommendations from Healthy People 2020 to prioritize transportation infrastructure improvements related to bicycle and pedestrian safety using injury and crash data. This budget also proposes a \$2 million investment for safety improvements related to Vision Zero to reduce serious injuries and traffic fatalities.

The DC Trauma Registry reports that from 2016 to 2018, three-quarters of motor vehicle injuries were experienced disproportionately by Black or African American residents in the District. Fatalities from motor vehicle crashes in the District also disproportionately affect Black and African Americans. Among all 2017 District resident motor vehicle fatalities that occurred in the District, 57 percent were non-Hispanic Black. Since Black populations make up slightly under 50 percent of the District's resident population, both metrics demonstrate a disproportionate burden. This highlights the importance of the investments to transportation in the Mayor's FY 2020 budget.

In summary, the overall FY 2020 budget is equity-informed and includes many investments that are critical to making improvements in health outcomes. The FY 2020 budget proceeds with the efforts to work collaboratively with public and private partners to deliver high quality health initiatives in all eight Wards, using evidence-based, evidence-informed and

promising practices. We gain insight about areas for improvement and additional investments through qualitative and quantitative approaches that are both formal and informal, including the use of scientific community health needs assessments and input from stakeholders.

In closing, I would like to thank the staff at DC Health for being efficient, effective stewards of the District's resources and their commitment to our mission to make DC the healthiest city in the nation. We have gathered momentum and are reaching our collective goals. We look forward to continued work with you and the Council, members of the healthcare community and advocates across the District to create greater health equity for DC residents. I am available to respond to questions at this time.