

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement



Fiscal Year 2017
Performance Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Del McFadden
Executive Director

Before the
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Charles Allen, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building
Council Chamber
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
February 22, 2018
9:30am

Good morning, Chairperson Allen, members, and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I am Del McFadden, Executive Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the progress ONSE has made since its establishment on October 1, 2017, and on our vision for its future.

I am profoundly grateful to Mayor Muriel Bowser for the confidence bestowed upon me with her appointment. I share Mayor Bowser's vision of recognizing that violence prevention cannot be achieved through law enforcement alone and that in order to make our city safer and stronger, we must provide stability, opportunities, and equitable access to quality services.

Since assuming the role of Executive Director, I've had the pleasure of meeting some members of the Council to discuss our shared goals regarding community-based violence prevention. I look forward to establishing relationships with those of you who I have not yet met and eagerly anticipate the opportunity to have a similar dialogue to contribute to this office's success.

I'd like to begin by telling you a little bit about my background and vision for this agency.

I grew up in Kenilworth in a single parent household on public assistance. At that time in my life, I had little hope and faced a number of obstacles both inside and outside of my home. However, the community rallied around me as mentors and exposed me to life beyond the four blocks of my community. That relentless support and care provided a strong foundation for me and is the reason I am here speaking today.

Throughout my entire career, I have worked to serve the best interest of the public, and much of this experience has already been brought to bear in my current day-to-day duties. My life's work has been focused on providing opportunity and hope to disconnected youth and families in underserved communities.

I have called upon my experience as a Critical Response Manager at Collaborative Solutions for Communities, formerly the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, where I developed a true appreciation for how seamless collaboration between government agencies, community-based organizations, and community stakeholders leads to building safer communities. Each partner plays a vital role in contributing to the quality of life of the District's residents.

I have also leaned on the lessons learned while serving at the National Center for Children and Families, where I worked closely with many young adults who experienced a magnitude of challenges in their early years of life.

The work of violence prevention in District government can be one of the toughest jobs, and we are only as strong as the people who support the mission of the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement. I would be remiss if I did not take the time to acknowledge my entire staff for their commitment to this work. Your compassion, professionalism, and dedication have not gone unnoticed, and I sincerely thank you.



This office provides us with an opportunity to remove long-standing silos and put the needs of the community first. It takes a village to foster a dream and a creative approach to address the socio-economic challenges that some of our most vulnerable communities face.

The Safer, Stronger DC Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement office was created to address violence in our city while assisting families dealing with the grief and trauma caused by these occurrences. As part of Mayor Bowser's FY2018 Budget, and in compliance with the NEAR ACT, the Safer Stronger DC Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement was created to consolidate the work being done by the Safer, Stronger DC Community Partnerships Office (SSDCCP) and the Community Stabilization Program (CSP) under one mission. I share Mayor Bowser's vision, and my goal is to continue to move forward to help our city to address violence at the root and to immediately deploy support to individuals impacted by violence.

Last October, we opened our office at 100 42nd Street, NE. For the past few months, we've been working hard to transform the vacant building into a violence prevention hub. Our goal is to co-locate with other agencies that focus on behavioral health, educational engagement, and workforce development. Work on Memorandums of Understanding with agencies that provide these services has already begun, with some already finalized.

Starting a new office from the ground up has been an exciting challenge. This work has included meetings with community stakeholders, non-profit organizations, government entities, and our faith-based community. It's refreshing to see how many entities want to be involved in this very impactful work.

In addition to the conversion of the building, the ONSE has made significant strides on building the internal structure of the office. Our office completed an FY18 performance plan and executed a contract with DYRS' Credible Messenger Program, which will directly support the Pathways Program. Additionally, over the past two months we've conducted more than fifty interviews for current vacancies, and are currently in the process of making final selections. Once selections are made, we will work with the Department of Human Resources to begin the onboarding process.

ONSE has 16 FTEs who serve in three main capacities:

- Violence Interrupters respond to all critical incidents of violence and work to identify high-risk individuals who may qualify for the Pathways program;
- Pathways Outreach Coordinators work in priority neighborhoods to build and deepen relationships and serve as case managers for participants in the Pathways program; and
- Community Stabilization Program staff respond to all homicides and near-fatal incidents, as well as crew/gang-related violent incidents, and work with victims and their families to identify their needs and connect them with District services.

I would like to provide more context to each of these ONSE functions.



In 2015, Mayor Bowser created the Community Stabilization Program specifically to serve as the District's critical response effort to support victims and families directly impacted by violent acts. The CSP team responds to all homicides and alleged gang/crew related shootings and stabbings, across the District. Since 2015, the CSP team has responded to over 400 victims and families to provide immediate support, connections to services, and to prevent further community violence and retaliation. With the hiring of three new FTEs under my leadership, the program will expand to cover additional incidents of violent crime across the District of Columbia.

The Safer, Stronger DC Community Partnerships Office (SSDC) was also created under the leadership of Mayor Bowser in 2015. SSDC brings vital District government services and community-based resources to communities to address violence before it starts. Since the inception of the SSDC office, more than 1,200 District residents in priority neighborhoods have been connected to economic and educational opportunities, health and human services, and other support services.

The Community Stabilization Program (CSP) and the Safer, Stronger Community Partnerships Office (SSDCCP) were housed under two separate Deputy Mayors, and now both have been consolidated under one umbrella. Mayor Bowser believes in maximizing resources and services and improving collaboration amongst government agencies. As a result, the two initiatives have been integrated into the ONSE, allowing for more cohesiveness as it relates to serving individuals and families impacted by violence.

The most recent initiative added under my direction has been the Pathways Program. This initiative aims to decrease criminal justice involvement and improve the outcomes of those most likely to be the victim or perpetrator of a violent crime. The Pathways Program will encourage a broad health-based approach focused on reintegration services, including: mental health, substance use, and employment. We will also use Restorative Justice practices to help individuals take ownership of their actions, understand the impacts caused to victims, and acknowledge the role they play in rebuilding their communities

We have partnered with DYRS to expand their Credible Messengers program as part of our Pathways initiative. The Credible Messengers will provide transformative mentoring to high-risk individuals enrolled in Pathways, keep them engaged, and help them learn to make better life decisions.

We understand that this work will be extremely difficult and cannot be done alone.

To support the Mayor's vision of interagency partnerships, we will closely work alongside our sister agencies committed to our mission of preventing violence. We will also incorporate the work of those community-based organizations which are strongly embedded in those communities that we serve. Collectively, we will continue to engage and assist the residents most in need. It is my belief that the men and women in these communities are gifted, worthy of a legitimate opportunity to transform their lives, the lives of their families, and the trajectory of their communities.



I am excited for the road ahead. I'm asking every young person that has been affected by violence who is watching this hearing to give this office a chance - a chance to support you in reaching your goals, assisting your family, and improving your employability, while providing alternative opportunities within your grasp. You are not voiceless or invisible. We understand your challenges and clearly see the potential within each and every one of you. We are ready to work with you to make sure you can take full advantage of the options you have in your life.

In closing, I'd like to thank the Committee for its leadership and support. We appreciate the opportunity to share our accomplishments and plans for continuous improvement and look forward to continuing to work with the Committee. This concludes my testimony. My staff and I are happy to address your questions at this time.

