

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

ROBERT C. WHITE, JR.
COUNCILMEMBER AT-LARGE
COUNCIL OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

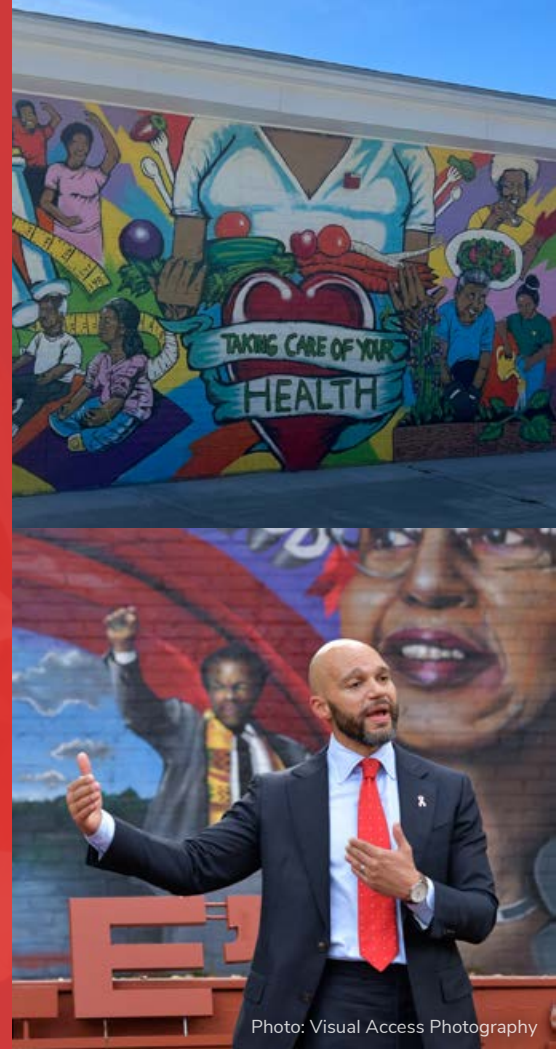


Photo: Visual Access Photography



OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER AT-LARGE

ROBERT WHITE

robertwhiteatlarge.com

A Message from the Councilmember

Dear Neighbors,

This has been a year of getting to the bottom of problems and getting things done. My team and I have passed major bills, done aggressive oversight, and gotten over \$100 million in funding for housing for people with modest incomes. Despite the progress, we have a lot more work to do, especially on public safety and housing.

That's why I spend so much time in communities understanding what people are experiencing and working so hard to solve them. No matter where folks live in the District, the main issues they bring up with me right now are public safety and housing. In my annual report to you this year I'm going to focus on these two issues. My team and I are doing work on your behalf in many areas, including increasing access to mental health supports, keeping strong teachers in our schools, protecting abortion access, championing the LGBTQIA community, and fighting climate change. To stay in the know about all our work, follow my office on social media or use this QR code to subscribe to our newsletter.



Robert White



HOUSING

When I took over the Housing Committee in January 2023, I said I would get to the bottom of housing issues and bring the Housing Committee into the community. Over the past year that is what I've done, though there is still much to do. Here's some of what my team and I accomplished for residents in 2023:

- ✓ Fought to add \$68 million to Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), a financial lifeline that residents can receive once annually in order to avoid eviction, with the support of Council colleagues (the Mayor initially proposed \$8 million for FY24). And then, in November, fought successfully to block the Mayor's attempt to take \$20 million from ERAP
- ✓ Secured dedicated funding of nearly \$75 million a year starting in 2028 for public housing maintenance and repairs
- ✓ Introduced the [Common Ground Amendment Act](#), which would require more affordable housing and family-sized units when DC government properties get redeveloped
- ✓ Created 250 more housing vouchers (the Mayor initially proposed 0 new vouchers) in order to move people from homeless encampments into housing, and pushed for more support to voucher holders to ensure they can be successful in their communities
- ✓ Worked to uncover the root causes of the housing voucher application backlog and introduced and passed legislation to help resolve it
- ✓ Expanded Project Reconnect, which reunites people experiencing homelessness with family or friends and also provides financial assistance to help them avoid the shelter system
- ✓ Actively worked to transform the DC Housing Authority:
 - Reformed the DCHA board of directors
 - Worked to get an experienced permanent executive director at the helm of DCHA who will prioritize residents and welcomed the new executive director, Keith Pettigrew, to that role in November

The Washington Post

D.C. residents face long housing aid delays as 3,100 vouchers sit unused

Oct. 8, 2023 | By Meagan Flynn and Marissa J. Lang



- Held multiple oversight hearings on agency ethics issues, the condition of public housing, questionable bonus payments for executive leadership, the slow housing voucher process, and progress on responding to the 2022 HUD audit
- Regularly visited DCHA properties to meet with residents about living conditions, maintenance issues, public safety, and more
- Forwarded cases of potentially illegal or unethical staff behavior to the Office of the Inspector General for investigation
- Passed legislation to require an annual audit of how DCHA spends taxpayer dollars

wtopnews 103.5 FM | WTOP.COM

DC lawmaker calls for criminal investigation into actions of Housing Authority employees

March, 2023 | By Megan Cloherty



In July, in response to community requests, I hosted two housing resource fair events in Wards 8 and 7, in partnership with Councilmember Trayon White (Ward 8) and Councilmember Vincent Gray (Ward 7). With these events we were in community with residents to hear direct feedback on gaps in our housing system. Each event began with a discussion portion, followed by a resource fair that featured over a dozen housing and human services agencies and organizations.

Building the Pipeline of Social Workers, Caseworkers, and Behavioral Health Specialists to tackle issues like the housing voucher backlog, ongoing mental and behavioral health support for voucher holders, and addressing the violence plaguing the District.

Agency leadership and service providers told me they have a severe shortage of qualified behavioral health specialists that limits their ability to treat urgent problems. In response, I introduced two bills: the [Pathways to Behavioral Health Degrees Act](#) (which the Council passed this year!) and the [Social Work License Modernization Act](#) (currently under consideration by the Council):

- ✓ **My Pathways to Behavioral Health Degrees Act** established a Master's in Social Work program at the University of the District of Columbia and created a scholarship to make it free for residents! The scholarship covers tuition, the cost of books, and a monthly stipend for living expenses and transportation. This builds the workforce pipeline DC needs by requiring scholarship recipients to work for a District school, government agency, or health care provider organization for a minimum of three years after earning their degree and license. To stay up to date on this program, sign up [here](http://www.bit.ly/pathwaysbill) (www.bit.ly/pathwaysbill).
- ✓ **The Social Work License Modernization Act** would remove the social work licensing exam requirement—which the Association of Social Work Boards has acknowledged has staggering disparities in exam outcomes based on race, gender, and age—for the first two levels of social workers: Licensed Social Work Associates and Licensed Graduate Social Workers. A group of social workers and organizations that hire social workers brought this intervention to me to get more qualified professionals into the roles where they're needed. The professionals this bill would impact will have obtained their degrees, will have completed hundreds of hours of supervised clinical work, will be supervised by clinical social workers, and will be under the oversight of the Board of Social Work.



So many residents have told me how excited they are about these bills. Our residents are ready to be the heroes their communities need, and with this legislation I'm trying to help clear the path for them to do that.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Everyone in every neighborhood deserves to be safe, but in 2023 DC had over 250 reported homicides — an absolute tragedy and the highest number of homicides since 1997. Beyond the homicides, the trauma of gun violence, the injuries, carjackings, and property theft are hurting our city.

What we're doing right now on public safety isn't keeping people safe. There are massive gaps in our public safety system that need to be fixed, such as our 911 center not being responsive, the people committing violence not being held accountable because the U.S. Attorney's Office lacks the evidence to charge them, and an influx of guns but a lack of information about where they're coming from. My [Whole Government Response to Crime Act](#), which I introduced in October with the support of the majority of the Council, would take immediate steps to fix these gaps in our system and make residents safer. These are gaps that residents have shared with me in meetings, neighborhood walkthroughs with community leaders, and heartbreaking conversations with families who have lost loved ones to violence.

The Whole Government Response to Crime Act is the first in a series of bills I'm introducing to make the District safer, including forthcoming bills on violence prevention, and recovery in communities after crime occurs.

This year my team and I also:

- ✓ Passed emergency legislation to track guns seized in DC to their source so that we can identify where there are clusters of guns being seized in the District, as well as particular states, gun shops, or types of transactions that are leading to the proliferation of illegal guns on our streets
- ✓ Met with residents who have been victims of crime, which led to a provision in the Whole Government Response to Crime Act that will help residents get the support they need, including proactive follow up from a Victim Services Coordinator, after experiencing a crime
- ✓ Worked with Johnson Middle School to secure lighting in their parking lot to address security issues they'd been experiencing



DC Councilmember announces new bill to address rising violence

Oct. 5, 2023

- ✓ Designated 20 housing vouchers for returning citizens because housing security helps break the cycle of repeat offending
- ✓ Voted in support of the Mayor’s retention and recruitment enhancements for the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)
- ✓ Worked with fellow Councilmembers to restore the Mayor’s cuts to the budget for services for survivors of domestic violence
- ✓ Met with violence interrupters to understand their work and pushed for data collection to quantify the impact these programs are having



Latest In A Flurry Of Council Crime Bills Focuses On 911 Response, Crime Lab Staffing, And Violence Interruption

Oct. 5, 2023 | By Colleen Grablick



COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

I am committed to making myself and my office available and accessible to community members. Listening to your needs and working together to find answers is how we get to the root of issues and solve problems.

In the past year, my team and I have been meeting residents where you are by joining resident-led events like Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) meetings, neighborhood meet-ups, community festivals, and senior center ice cream socials. I also set up Community Office Hours at libraries in each Ward where residents met with me to raise the issues on their minds. These meetings have been a great way to hear directly from residents working to help their communities and get feedback on my work and I'll continue them in the coming year.



IN 2023 MY OFFICE ASSISTED MORE THAN **400** DISTRICT RESIDENTS

RESOURCES FOR RESIDENTS

- ✓ **For city services issues:** Dial 311 or visit 311.dc.gov/citizen/home
- ✓ **DC Housing Authority (DCHA) Housing Hotline** - For questions about housing vouchers or your status on the public housing waitlist call (202) 535-1000. To make an appointment for assistance with DCHA visit https://bit.ly/DCHA_Appointment
- ✓ **DHS hotline for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** - For questions about SNAP benefits call (202) 727-5355. To apply visit districtdirect.dc.gov/ua/
- ✓ **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)** - ERAP is an option that residents struggling to stay in their homes can make use of once a year. DHS opens the portal once per quarter, on the first day of the month (October, January, April, and July). For questions or assistance contact erap.program@dc.gov or call (202) 507-6666. Apply online through DC Health and Human Services at erap.dhs.dc.gov.
- ✓ **Utility bill assistance** - Learn about DC's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) at www.doe.dc.gov/liheap or call (202) 535-2600
- ✓ **For mental health support:** Call DC's Mental Health Hotline anytime 24/7 for free support: 1-888-793-4357. Or dial 988 for the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

You can contact me and my staff at any time with thoughts, feedback, or requests for constituent services by phone at 202-724-8174 or via email.

For legislative concerns:

Legislative Director Katie Whitehouse at kwhitehouse@dccouncil.gov

For Housing Committee concerns:

Email housing@dccouncil.gov or call (202) 727-8270

For constituent services:

Constituent Services Director Andre Strickland at astrickland@dccouncil.gov

For scheduling:

Office Manager Sam Walden at swalden@dccouncil.gov



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

*Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.
meets with parent education advocates*



ROBERT C. WHITE, JR.
Councilmember At-Large
Council of the District of Columbia

X @CMRobertWhiteDC
@councilmember_robertwhite
f @RobertWhiteAtLarge
robertwhiteatlarge.com
202-724-8174