

**Councilmember Anita Bonds, Chairwoman
Committee on Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization**

Julia O'Connor
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Support for increased funding in FY2021 budget to end chronic homelessness

As a Ward 6 resident and the NoMa/H Street Civic Association's Communications Task Force Chair, I am calling on the D.C. Council to increase funding in the FY2021 budget for resources and programs to address D.C.'s homelessness crisis. I support a dramatic increase and investment in Permanent Supportive Housing; Local Rent Supplement Programs (LRSPs), including but not limited to tenant-based rent vouchers, project-based rental assistance, and sponsor-based rental assistance; funding for the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF); increased affordable housing; and funding to expand other programs that help meet the needs of those working at the lowest income levels.

Homelessness in D.C. has been a human rights crisis long before COVID-19 struck the health and well-being of our D.C. neighborhoods, however, this pandemic has exacerbated and highlighted the fatal consequences of the growing inequities in housing. During COVID-19, the homeless have been disproportionately impacted and the desperate need for housing during this time has highlighted the ongoing issues the homeless face including unequal access to healthcare, barriers to employment, and shorter life expectancies than those with safe and secure housing. As of early May, ten neighbors experiencing homelessness have died, 237 living in shelters have tested positive for the virus, and 276 were held in remote quarantine.¹ Increasing and investing in programs for the homeless could drastically improve these outcomes, save lives, and end chronic homelessness across the city for over 1,000 individuals and nearly 250 families while preventing over 2,000 individuals from entering homelessness.²

While homelessness is a citywide concern, the NoMa area is arguably where homelessness is the most visible, particularly because of the encampments and underpasses that remain a hotspot for the homeless. The encampments have specific dangers to both the community members residing in them and the community at-large, especially during the pandemic. There needs to be an investment from the city in our NoMa neighbors who need safe and secure housing, healthcare, and community resources. We must prioritize opportunities for the homeless and increase opportunities to aid our community members.

A city's budget reflects its priorities and highlights how it will treat its most vulnerable populations. I call on D.C.'s council to act now and increase funding in the FY2021 budget for resources and programs to address D.C.'s homelessness crisis. I thank you for your commitment to addressing homelessness with dignity, respect, and smart programs like the LRSPs, HPTF, affordable housing, and more.

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/hundreds-of-dcs-homeless-have-tested-positive-for-coronavirus-as-shelters-try-to-avoid-spread/2020/05/08/2bcfc03c-8fb4-11ea-8df0-ee33c3f5b0d6_story.html

² <http://www.thewayhomedc.org/FY2021>