

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
MINORITY (202) 225-5074  
<https://oversight.house.gov>

October 1, 2021

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Mayor of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW #406  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

On Wednesday, September 15, 37-year-old Tarshaqua Chappell was shot and killed while driving in Southeast Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> Ms. Chappell's death is part of a larger trend in the District: Over the past several months, the city has deteriorated to a point reminiscent of the 1990s. As violent crime and homelessness have increased at an unchecked rate throughout the city, your administration seems to have given up trying to prevent the District from falling into a state of chaos. The message coming from your office regarding the future role of, and funding for, the city's police is contributing to the decline. As the committee of jurisdiction for all matters involving the District of Columbia, House Committee on Oversight and Reform Republicans request information regarding this dangerous trend in the nation's capital.

Violent crime plagues the city, and the number of homicides this year is expected to meet or exceed the 16-year high of 2020.<sup>2</sup> The violence is spread across all areas of the District, and scooter-related shootings are on the rise, as well. In May, a mother and her five-year-old daughter were both shot walking home from the park by someone riding a scooter.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the emergence of vast homeless communities—where drug use and violence often go unchecked<sup>4</sup>—will only exacerbate and add to the crime in the city. Earlier this year, residents of Mount Vernon Square wrote to the U.S. Park Police requesting homeless encampments be removed, pointing to various criminal and sanitary violations from the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Stabley, *Woman Shot and Killed While Driving in Southeast DC*, NBCWASHINGTON.COM (Sept. 15, 2021), available at <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/woman-shot-and-killed-while-driving-in-southeast-dc/2803456/>.

<sup>2</sup> Rachel Chason and Emily Davies, *In D.C., High-Profile Crimes Spur Hard Conversations: 'Walk a Mile in My Shoes,'* WASH. POST (Jul. 30, 2021), available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/dc-crime-increase-conversations/2021/07/30/2facd34c-f071-11eb-bf80-e3877d9c5f06\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/dc-crime-increase-conversations/2021/07/30/2facd34c-f071-11eb-bf80-e3877d9c5f06_story.html).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Hermann and Emily Davies, *D.C. police arrest suspect in shooting of mother, 5-year-old son*, WASH. POST (May 27, 2021), available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/shaw-shooting-scooter-washington/2021/05/27/becda1f8-bf0e-11eb-b26e-53663e6be6ff\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/shaw-shooting-scooter-washington/2021/05/27/becda1f8-bf0e-11eb-b26e-53663e6be6ff_story.html).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., *Substance Abuse and Homelessness*, Nat'l Coalition for the Homeless (2009), available at <https://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/addiction.pdf>.

inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> The request to remove the encampment was denied, and the District's homeless population grows. Tent cities are scattered throughout the District for any tourist or commuter to see. As the *Washington Post* reports:

There are tents on K Street and Virginia Avenue overpasses. There are tents near the Federal Reserve along the entrance to the E Street Expressway. There are tents in front of Gonzaga College High School on North Capitol Street. A tent city welcomes visitors to the Kennedy Center — dozens of temporary shelters are now a permanent part of the vista for those looking west across the Potomac.<sup>6</sup>

The number of chronically homeless in the District has risen over 20 percent from last year.<sup>7</sup> Tent communities are becoming more permanent, with some now outfitted with toilets, tables for donations, and trash receptacles littered with the city's logo on them.<sup>8</sup> The *Post* describes a future in which Washington will "reserv[e] acres of Rock Creek Park for encampments, segregating them from residential areas with chain-link fences."<sup>9</sup> By ignoring this growing issue, your administration is contributing to these people's suffering, not alleviating it.

Further, the District is compounding the crime and homelessness issues with mixed messages coming from the D.C. government and the groups influencing it. In July, the D.C. Council announced it would hold a roundtable on gun violence. But Black Lives Matter D.C. accused the Council of using "the community's righteous anger" to "gain momentum for an arbitrary number of new police and a bigger budget."<sup>10</sup> You expressed a desire to decrease funding for the police only a few weeks ago,<sup>11</sup> and your budget allows the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to hire only 170 new officers<sup>12</sup> instead of the normal 280 to keep up with attrition.<sup>13</sup> This has led to "the smallest police force [the District] has had in more than two decades."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Derrick Ward, *Homeless People Worry Police Will Sweep Camps in NW DC After Resident Complaints*, NBCWASHINGTON.COM (Jul. 6, 2021), available at <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/homeless-residents-worry-police-will-soon-sweep-encampments-after-residents-complaints/2721870/>.

<sup>6</sup> Justin Wm. Moyer, *D.C.'s 'Skid Row-Type Thing': Homeless Encampments Grow Amid Pandemic*, WASH. POST (Aug. 16, 2021), available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-skid-row-homeless-encampment/2021/08/16/11eda0d8-fc39-11eb-b8dd-0e376fba55f2\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-skid-row-homeless-encampment/2021/08/16/11eda0d8-fc39-11eb-b8dd-0e376fba55f2_story.html).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Chason and Davies, *supra* n. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Hermann, *D.C. Council Weighs Smaller Police Budget and More Funding for Alternative Justice Programs*, WASH. POST (Jun. 11, 2021), available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/dc-police-budget-bowser/2021/06/11/50b6ede2-ca2f-11eb-afd0-9726f7ec0ba6\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/dc-police-budget-bowser/2021/06/11/50b6ede2-ca2f-11eb-afd0-9726f7ec0ba6_story.html).

<sup>12</sup> Government of the District of Columbia, Mayor Muriel Bowser, "Mayor Bowser Presents Plan to Add 170 Officers to the Metropolitan Police Department," Press Release (Jul. 28, 2021), available at <https://mayor.dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-presents-plan-add-170-officers-metropolitan-police-department>.

<sup>13</sup> Hermann, *supra* n. 13.

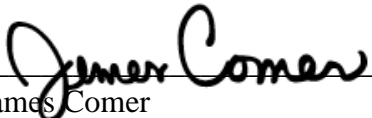
<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

In order to better understand the dire conditions of the District of Columbia, please provide a briefing to Committee staff regarding the status of the funding of the MPD no later than October 8, 2021. To arrange the briefing or ask any questions about this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5074.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

Thank you for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform



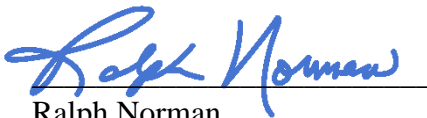
Jody Hice  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Government  
Operations



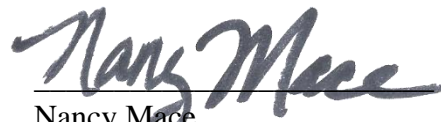
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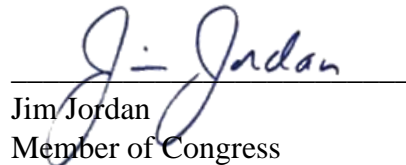
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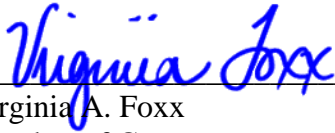


Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress

Mayor Muriel Bowser

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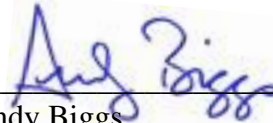
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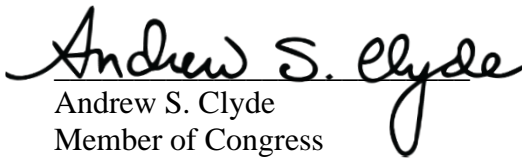
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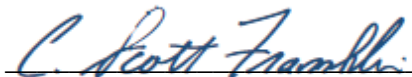
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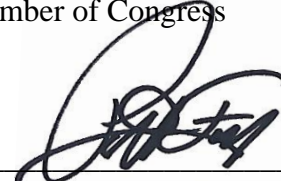
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Pat Fallon  
Member of Congress



Yvette Herrell  
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman  
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The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman  
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