

Government of the District of Columbia
Department of Aging and Community Living



Fiscal Year 2025-2026
Performance Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Charon P.W. Hines
Director

Before the
Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Anita Bonds, Chairperson

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9:30 AM

Good morning, Chairperson Bonds, members of the Committee on Executive Administration and Labor, committee staff, and members of the public. My name is Charon P.W. Hines, and I am the Director of the Department of Aging and Community Living, affectionately known as DACL. I am honored to testify before you today on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser regarding the Department's performance during Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026 to date. Joining me today is Melanie Johnson, DACL's Chief Program Officer, and Joan Williams, DACL's Clinical Services Officer.

I want to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to Mayor Bowser for her leadership and continued commitment to the District's seniors, adults with disabilities, and caregivers. Over the past decade, the Mayor has made clear that supporting older

adults is not a short-term effort, but a sustained priority for this Administration. From housing and nutrition to transportation and community-based supports, Mayor Bowser has consistently paired vision with meaningful investment to improve quality of life for older residents across all eight wards.

I also want to acknowledge the dedicated team at DACL, our trusted advisors, The Commission on Aging, and our Senior Service Network partners. Your professionalism, compassion, and commitment make this work possible every day. And most importantly, I want to thank the seniors of the District of Columbia. Your voices and lived experiences shape our priorities and hold us accountable. As you have heard me say year after year, **“without the seniors, there is no us.”** That principle remains at the heart of our work and guides how we serve, advocate, and lead each day.

The mission of the Department of Aging and Community Living is to **advocate, plan, implement, and monitor programs in health, education, and social services for older adults; to promote longevity, independence, dignity, and choice for aged District residents, District residents with disabilities regardless of age, and caregivers; to protect the rights of older adults and their families and prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation; to uphold the core values of service excellence, respect, compassion, integrity, and accountability; and to lead efforts that strengthen service delivery and capacity by engaging community stakeholders and partners to effectively leverage resources.**

Madam Chair, this mission is lived out every day through the work of DACL and our Senior Service Network, as we show up for seniors across all eight wards. As shared during our FY26 Budget Oversight Hearing, our work continues to be guided by **five core pillars** that reflect the lived experiences of the District's aging population and shape how we design, fund, and deliver services.

Those pillars

are **socialization, transportation, nutrition, helping older residents age safely in place, and delivering high-quality supports.**

Social isolation remains one of the most significant challenges facing older adults, with serious implications for physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.

In FY25 and FY26 to date, DACL hosted **more than 500 community engagement and outreach events** across all eight wards, reaching **close to 150,000 seniors and residents** through senior wellness events, educational forums, celebrations, parades, and neighborhood-based outreach. Citywide signature events included **Red, White, and You, Senior Fest, the Ms. Senior DC Pageant, the Centenarian Salute, and the Mayor’s Senior Holiday Celebration**—each designed to celebrate aging, elevate senior voices, and strengthen community.

In FY26, through targeted investments in the **DC Villages**, DACL partnered with the **DC Villages Collaborative** to support the launch of **three new Villages—one in Ward 5 and two in Ward 7**, expanding access to social connection, volunteer support, and aging-in-place services in communities where the Village model previously did not exist.

DACL also significantly expanded the Senior Ambassador Program, **training more than 100 older adults in FY25 to serve as trusted messengers and peer leaders in their communities.** This program received national recognition at the 2025 USAging Conference, where I, along with DACL's Chief of Staff Angela Richardson, served as workshop presenters, sharing best practices with peers from across the country at the premier conference for aging professionals. This recognition affirmed the District's leadership in centering seniors as partners in outreach and engagement.

Transportation access remains fundamental to independence, health, and engagement for older adults.

The **Connector Card Program** continues to be one of DACL's most impactful initiatives, providing seniors with flexible ground transportation options. Since its launch, **8,633 older adults** have utilized the Connector Card to access medical appointments, grocery stores, community events, and essential services.

This program was also highlighted at the 2025 USAging Conference, where I, Angela Richardson, and DACL's Chief Program Officer Melanie Johnson presented on best practices related to the Connector Card program to aging professionals from across the country. This national recognition reinforced the District's leadership in innovative, senior-centered transportation solutions.

Senior MedExpress remains a critical lifeline for older adults who require transportation to life-sustaining medical

appointments. Since its inception, **10,426 seniors** have relied on Senior MedExpress to access essential care, reducing missed appointments and supporting better health outcomes.

In FY26, DACL launched a **Returning Citizens Senior Transportation pilot**, supported by a **\$150,000 investment**, which will provide **more than 4,400 one-way trips** to senior returning citizens as they access medical care, parole and probation meetings, housing services, workforce programs, and community-based reentry supports.

Nutrition remains one of the most urgent needs for older adults, particularly those aging in place. In FY25 alone, DACL served **nearly 900,000 meals** through home-delivered meals,

community dining sites, and grocery-based programs. Over the course of Mayor Bowser's tenure, **44,515 seniors** have been served through the **Home Delivered Meals program**. And in the FY26 budget, the Mayor invested **\$425,000 in the Home Delivered Meals program**, allowing DACL to serve **an additional 150 homebound seniors**. This investment strengthens food security for some of our most vulnerable residents, supports aging in place, and ensures seniors receive not only nutritious meals but also regular wellness checks and human connection.

DACL also expanded access to community dining by opening **two new dining sites in Ward 7**, partnering with the faith community. **Zion Baptist of Eastland Gardens** and **Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church** now serve

as welcoming dining locations, expanding access to nutritious meals while strengthening community connection.

Helping seniors and adults with disabilities remain safe in their homes continues to be a defining focus of DACL's work. **Safe at Home**, Mayor Bowser's signature senior program, has supported **8,096 households** through essential home modifications such as grab bars, stair lifts, handrails, and bathroom adaptations. These investments help reduce fall risk and allow seniors and adults with disabilities to remain safely in the homes and communities they know and love.

In FY26, a **\$300,000 budget investment** allowed DACL to support **45 additional households**, extending the reach of this transformative program.

Delivering high-quality services requires strong leadership, skilled staff, and reliable data. In FY25, DACL hired its **first-ever Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) Coordinator**, strengthening the agency's capacity to oversee dementia services, support caregivers, and improve coordination across providers. We also enhanced data collection and performance reporting across the Senior Service Network, providing targeted technical assistance to the **DC Villages** to strengthen accountability and outcomes.

Chairperson Bonds and members of the Committee, the Department of Aging and Community Living entered FY26 with momentum, clarity, and purpose. Our performance reflects the dedication of our staff and partners and the Mayor's **long-**

standing commitment over the past decade to investing in older adults as a priority population. We remain focused on helping seniors **live boldly**, safely, and with dignity—today and for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions and continued partnership.