

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



**Fiscal Year 2024-2025  
Budget 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

Monday, April 22, 2024

9:00 AM

Good morning, Chairperson Bonds, members of the Committee on Executive Administration and Labor, committee staff, and members of the community. My name is Charon P.W. Hines, and I am the Director for the Department of Aging and Community Living, affectionately known as DACL. Today, I am pleased to testify on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser on the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) proposed budget for the agency. With me today are Angela Richardson, DACL's Chief of Staff, and Regat Hagos, DACL's Chief Operating Officer.

I want to start by expressing my gratitude to Mayor Bowser. While we all know that this budget season has been particularly difficult the state of our District is strong. And that's because we have a Mayor who is committed to making strategic investments that will not only accelerate our city's comeback, but also increase our capacity to make big investments in the years to come. Her leadership is truly commendable, and I am honored to be a part of her Administration.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the incredible staff at DACL and our entire Senior Service Network. The team's commitment to our seniors, adults with disabilities, and caregivers is paramount to the agency's success and our ability to ensure District seniors can **live boldly**. And just as I did at our FY2024 Performance Oversight Hearing three months ago, I want to thank our seniors. I am pretty sure everyone knows my motto by now – “for without the seniors, there is no us.” And I will continue to remind everyone of this especially as we embark on recommitting ourselves and our agency to continue providing core services that sustain our residents and our city. Seniors, thank you for holding us accountable and sticking beside us, in the great times and the not-so-great times.

Earlier this month, the Mayor presented her proposed FY25 budget and financial plan – A Fair Shot: Strategic Investments and Shared Sacrifice – to the Council. This budget is one that invests in a safer, stronger DC right now, and it looks ahead three, four, and five years. As the Mayor shared just a few weeks ago, this budget requires us to be smart. It requires us to be strategic. It requires us to value each of our investments, moving us closer to the DC that we want to be five years from now. And, most importantly, it requires us to stick together.

Madam Chair, the Mayor’s proposed FY25 budget includes a set of guiding principles that we at DACL are wholeheartedly committed to:

- Maintaining and enhancing the core services of city government and preserving programs and services that protect the health and safety of our community.
- Prioritizing programs with track records of success that focus on equity.
- Resetting our spending so that it aligns with our resources.

And while the city continues to focus on setting a path forward for all Washingtonians, including our oldest residents, DACL also remains focused on leaning in and maintaining core services for our seniors, adults with disabilities, and those who care for them. Under my tenure, I am extremely proud of our agency’s unwavering commitment to those we serve. Over the past year, we stayed laser-focused on five core areas that are necessary in supporting older residents: socialization, transportation, nutrition, keeping seniors in their homes and communities, and providing high-quality services.

And, our commitment in Fiscal Year 2025 will be no different than previous years. Despite the challenges our city has seen, we will continue to prioritize what matters most to our seniors.

Madam Chair, I would like to now take a moment to highlight some of the Mayor's strategic investments for seniors and the core services we will continue to maintain.

Last year, the Council allocated \$250,000 as a one-time investment to support Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) efforts in the District. During my Performance Oversight Hearing, I announced Iona Senior Services and the Genevieve N. Johnson Senior Day Care Program as recipients of the ADRD grant. In the Mayor's proposed FY25 budget, this commitment to our ADRD community remains with a \$450,000 investment. This funding will sustain programs that connect older adults with dementia to community resources, offer education, and manage behavioral symptoms. With this continued investment, we will continue to make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and caregivers impacted by ADRD.

Just as she has continually done, the Mayor has sustained her investment in her signature program, Safe at Home. Madam Chair, since the inception of this program in 2016, DACL has made more than 6,500 households safer through the installation of safety adaptations such as grab bars, hand railings, stair lifts, and bathtub cutouts. By prioritizing a program with a proven track record of success, we are ensuring seniors can age in the communities they know and love, fostering independence and choice. It is a commitment to equity, empowering them to age on their terms.

Madam Chair, as highlighted earlier in my testimony, the Mayor's priority remains firmly on ensuring that DC Government agencies uphold and improve essential services that safeguard the well-being of our community, particularly our seniors. At DACL, we are wholeheartedly dedicated to this mission. Throughout this budget cycle and beyond, we are steadfast in our efforts to sustain programs crucial to our seniors' well-being. Take, for instance, the Connector Card, benefiting over 4,000 seniors by providing access to any destination within the city. Similarly, Senior MedExpress helps over 4,500 seniors in reaching vital medical appointments and appointments related to public benefits. Moreover, initiatives like Food4Choice, alongside our array of meal programs, offer access to healthy, nutritious food to more than 13,000 older adults, regardless of their circumstances. These programs reflect our unwavering commitment to preserving vital services, regardless of challenges.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, while navigating the challenges of our city's economic landscape, we are steadfast in making difficult decisions without compromising the quality of service we provide to our seniors. Our focus remains on investing in the needs of our older residents, while preserving and maintaining the programs that matter to them the most.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and Happy Birthday! I look forward to answering any questions you may have.