

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**



FY25-26 Performance Oversight Hearing

**Office of Human Rights (OHR)**

Testimony of  
**Elizabeth Fox-Solomon**  
**Interim Director, OHR**

Before the  
Committee on Public Works and Operations  
Council of the District of Columbia  
The Honorable Brianne Nadeau, Chairperson

February 18, 2026  
9:30 am  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Room 123  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Good morning, Chairperson Nadeau, members of the Committee, and staff. I am Elizabeth Fox-Solomon, Interim Director of the Office of Human Rights (OHR). Thank you for the opportunity to testify about OHR's performance and priorities for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026 to date.

This is a pivotal time for civil rights in the District. Across the country, we are witnessing the rollback of protections that generations fought to secure. As federal agencies retreat from civil rights enforcement, more residents are turning to OHR for help.

The D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977—one of the most comprehensive civil rights laws in the nation—protects against discrimination in workplaces, housing, schools, public accommodations, and government services based on 23 traits. OHR enforces the Human Rights Act and 14 other local laws. Our mission is to eradicate discrimination, advance equal opportunity, and protect human rights through enforcement, outreach, and proactive compliance.

Despite a challenging year, OHR delivered measurable results for the District. We strengthened operations by onboarding 14 new staff in FY 25 and FY 26 to date, including key leadership and enforcement roles, and we are on track to fill all approved vacancies by April. We invested nearly \$400,000 in goods and services from small and local businesses, surpassing our Certified Business Enterprise (CBE) goal. And we secured both monetary and public interest relief through our enforcement work.

Education, outreach, and compliance are central to our mission. In FY 25, OHR engaged residents in all eight wards, deepened partnerships with trusted community organizations, and developed resources to help people understand their rights, including a source of income housing poster, an employment toolkit, and a campaign to highlight protections for our unhoused neighbors. Our Creating Safer Spaces team educated residents and trained more than 3,000 long-

term care staff on inclusive practices for LGBTQ+ seniors and seniors living with HIV. We also reinforced workplace protections in the tipped wage industry, delivering training to over 350 businesses and thousands of workers on preventing sexual harassment. The Language Access Program advanced equity for residents with limited English proficiency by expanding multilingual phone access, providing guidance to agencies adopting AI-powered language tools, and increasing engagement with ANCs. Finally, the Youth Bullying Prevention Program reached tens of thousands of students, parents, and teachers, contributing to safer learning environments for our children.

OHR's Returning Citizens Program partnered with the Corrections Information Council (CIC) to inspect the District's Central Detention Facility (CDF) following an auditor's report on resident treatment. The review focused on language access compliance, environmental health concerns, and conditions within the central cell block. OHR met with CDF staff and residents to evaluate practices, identify compliance gaps, and drive accountability and system improvements.

Enforcement remains the core of OHR's work. Last fiscal year, we secured more than \$1.1 million for victims of discrimination through mediation, conciliation, hearings, and enforcement actions. We initiated 15 Director's Inquiries to investigate source-of-income discrimination in housing. The agency exceeded its case resolution goals, resolving more than 80% of FY 23 and older cases and 58% of FY 24 cases. OHR also conducted a record number of mediations in FY 25, recovering over \$700,000 for complainants.

OHR's public interest litigation continued to drive systemic change across the District. OGC attorneys litigated 23 probable cause cases before the Commission in FY 25 and FY 26 to date, and negotiated 12 Voluntary Compliance Agreements, recovering over \$425,000 for

complainants and securing remedies such as training, notice posting, monitoring, and policy changes.

Sustaining these successes will require continued investment. Demand for OHR's services is surging. Last fiscal year, we received over 1,300 complaints and docketed 430 new cases. So far in FY 26, we are averaging 100 new complaints each month and have more than 1,000 open cases, including over 400 awaiting mediation. This workload is managed by just five intake officers, two mediators, and eight investigators. These aren't just numbers. Behind every case is a D.C. resident, student, worker, or visitor seeking help, and our staff are stretched beyond capacity. We are grateful to Mayor Bowser and Council for funding additional Enforcement Unit positions. Last week, we welcomed two new investigators and an intake officer, and a new assistant will join the ADR unit later this month.

I am pleased to report that OHR's Hearing Unit, which supports the Commission on Human Rights, is on track to be fully staffed by the end of this quarter. We recently welcomed a Chief Administrative Judge and will be onboarding a second judge and a permanent legal assistant soon, thanks to the Council's FY 26 budget enhancement.

Looking ahead, OHR's FY 26 priorities center on four areas. First, we will strengthen operational capacity through targeted hiring and retention strategies. Second, we will improve service delivery by refining intake, investigation, and ADR processes to manage rising case volumes. Third, we will deepen engagement with communities most impacted by discrimination. Finally, we will continue modernizing our technology by implementing a new Case Management System (CMS) to improve data integrity, reduce administrative burdens, and deliver better service to the public.

In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation to OHR's dedicated staff for their professionalism, commitment to public service, and resilience under extraordinary pressure. I also extend my sincere thanks to Mayor Bowser, Deputy Mayor Appiah, Chair Nadeau, the Committee, and the Council for your continued support. Together, we can ensure the District remains a national leader in protecting and advancing human rights.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome your questions.