



## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

December 4, 2025

**CONTACT:**

Ellie Sung (OHR) – 202-727-6407; [ellie.sung1@dc.gov](mailto:ellie.sung1@dc.gov)

# OHR to Celebrate Human Rights Champions at Annual Awards Ceremony

*Honoring Progress in Children's and Women's Rights and the Legacy of Chief Judge Erika L. Pierson*

**(WASHINGTON, DC)** – The DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) and the DC Commission on Human Rights (Commission), in partnership with the Georgetown Street Law Program, will host their annual Human Rights Awards Ceremony this evening.

Each year, the Commission recognizes individuals and organizations that demonstrate exceptional commitment to preventing discrimination, promoting equal opportunity, and advancing justice for all who live or work in the District of Columbia. This year's theme, "Continuing Advocacy for Women and Children in the District," honors the ongoing work of local leaders and organizations dedicated to protecting and uplifting the rights of women and children through advocacy, education, legal reform, and community service.

This year's ceremony will also honor the legacy of OHR's late Chief Administrative Law Judge Erika L. Pierson, who passed away in 2024. In her memory, the Commission has established the Erika L. Pierson Award to recognize excellence in promoting the rights of women and children.

OHR and the Commission will be honoring the following awardees for their outstanding contributions to human rights in the District:

- **Fatima Goss Graves – The Cornelius R. "Neil" Alexander Humanitarian Award.** Named in honor of the Commission's first Chief Administrative Judge, this award is presented to an individual whose lifetime of achievements has significantly advanced

human rights for residents, workers, and visitors in DC.

Ms. Graves is a nationally recognized leader in gender justice and a powerful voice for equity. As President and CEO of the National Women's Law Center and co-founder of the TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund, she has led transformative efforts across income security, childcare, equal pay, reproductive rights, education access, and workplace justice, especially for women and girls of color.

- **Brittany Mobley - The Erika L. Pierson Award.** Newly established to honor the legacy of OHR's late Chief Judge Erika L. Pierson, this award recognizes an individual with a demonstrated track record of protecting the rights and well-being of women and children in the District.

Ms. Mobley serves as Deputy Chief of the Juvenile Services Program at the Public Defender Service (PDS). Her career spans advocacy for youth in the family regulation system, leadership in national juvenile justice reform, and service on multiple boards and committees, including the ABA's Juvenile Justice Task Force and the Black Public Defender Association. Ms. Mobley is also a certified trainer with the Youth Defender Advocacy Program and a 2021 Ambassador for Racial Justice.

- **Verenize Tejada, Mecca Bey, and Maia Burkhardt - The Emerging Leader Award.** Given to new emerging leaders who have shown exceptional leadership in raising awareness of human rights through advocacy, education, outreach, and creative engagement within the District of Columbia.

These three high school students led the inaugural DC Youth Human Rights Ambassador Program in 2024, under the guidance of OHR's Youth Bullying Prevention Program. The awardees created a youth resource guide to connect peers with human rights protections across DC.

- Ms. Tejada-Flores is a senior at St. John's College High School and a member of the Cadet Corps Leadership Program. She has led outreach efforts educating DC residents about civil rights laws.
  - Ms. Bey organized outreach events in Northwest DC and co-developed an educational pamphlet on human rights for DC Public School students.
  - Ms. Burkhardt is a junior whose passion for human rights was sparked by her involvement in Model UN. She co-founded a middle school Model UN club.
- **The Zonta Club of Washington, D.C. - The Community Service Award.** Given to a distinguished organization based in the District that provides outstanding services to uphold and advance the human rights of DC residents, workers, and visitors.

Founded in 1922, the Zonta Club of Washington, D.C. has spent over a century advancing the rights of women and girls through scholarships, advocacy, and service. The club supports survivors of domestic violence, formerly incarcerated women, and unhoused women seeking safe housing. Recent efforts include promoting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), testifying before

the DC Council to end child marriage, and backing related legislation in Maryland and Virginia.

Motoko Aizawa, Chair of the Commission, said, ***“We’re proud to celebrate these champions whose work reflects the values of the DC Human Rights Act. Their dedication strengthens our community and inspires continued progress.”***

Elizabeth Fox-Solomon, Interim Director of OHR, added, ***“This year’s honorees remind us that protecting and advancing human rights requires persistence, action, and deep commitment. We are honored to recognize their contributions and reaffirm our dedication to a more just and inclusive District.”***

The award ceremony will be held in recognition of International Human Rights Day, observed on December 10, 2025. This annual occasion, established by the United Nations, commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and underscores the international effort to protect and defend human rights.

For more information, please visit [the DC Office of Human Rights \(OHR\)](#) and [the DC Commission on Human Rights](#).

###

#### Social Media

