



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

JANESE LEWIS GEORGE
Councilmember, Ward 4

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Human Services
Labor and Workforce Development
Recreation, Libraries and Youth Affairs
Transportation and the Environment
Special Committee, COVID-19 Recovery

September 15, 2021

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

Dear Mayor Bowser:

Last weekend three lives were ripped away from our community: Keenan, Donnetta, and Johnny. This weekend, yet another life lost: Delonte. Over the past three years, communities surrounding Kennedy Street, NW have suffered at least 37 recorded incidents of gun violence. The Ward you and I both call home needs solutions. I write to again ask you and your administration to include Kennedy Street in the Building Blocks Initiative and bring the whole of our government services to bear in Ward 4 to help prevent the gun violence epidemic from claiming another life.

I appreciate that it will take time to scale up the entire Kennedy Street corridor for a multi-agency, comprehensive Building Blocks approach to public safety. Right now, the immediate services we need the city to provide to the Ward 4 community include:

- **Mental and behavioral health services, including trauma-informed healing and care.** Department of Behavioral Health and community-based mental health care partners are needed for day-to-day outreach in the community with intensive foci on individuals struggling with mental illness, substance abuse, and addiction. Specifically, we urgently need more street teams working with individuals along Kennedy Street, at Georgia and Rittenhouse, and around 14th and Spring Road. Further, the family and friends of gun violence victims deserve additional trauma, grief, and restorative justice supports *and* the neighbors and larger community impacted by gun violence also need sustained trauma-informed mental health care services to heal, rebuild safety and trust, and prevent further trauma spread.
- **More resources for crew intervention and investigation task forces.** We know many shootings are related to crew activity; we need more credible messengers, violence interrupters, and professional counselors focused on disrupting and deescalating conflicts before they become lethal. We also need conflict resolution skills-building programs and anti-gang education to be happening in schools, through recreation spaces, with faith communities, and in other spaces where we can reach youth and young adults to provide positive alternatives to violence.
- **Increase staffing for the existing violence interruption program on Kennedy Street.** Our current Ward 4 team is doing important work building trusting relationships and proactively intervening where and how they should. Their necessary but difficult work could be even more impactful with additional staffing and resources. As more resources become available in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget this October, please prioritize expanding

their contract as a part of the violence intervention budget enhancements. Ward 4 would also benefit from new violence intervention teams operating around Kansas Avenue and Delafield Place (the 300-800 blocks of Delafield) and separately along Crittenden Street near Sherman Circle (the 600-800 blocks of Crittenden), as well as in other neighborhoods impacted by gun violence.

- **Job opportunities and career coaching.** We need DOES's job search and career training programs, Project Empowerment, Pathways, and other employment services physically out in our communities on a weekly basis actively connecting people with meaningful employment and continuing education opportunities.
- **Direct assistance for Ward 4 seniors and other homeowners requesting security cameras.** Our seniors are on fixed incomes and many lack the technological skills to apply for the camera voucher or rebate programs. Many seniors have requested a return to the camera program operations that installed security cameras for free. If that change cannot happen, then the camera rebate program should be providing direct proactive outreach and one-on-one assistance to local seniors to ensure they can apply for and install cameras in ways that are more accessible.
- **Property management and community cleaning resources.** The Kennedy Street area is riddled with vacant buildings, blighted properties, abandoned vehicles, overgrown landscapes, damaged public property and other general maintenance needs that are exacerbating public safety concerns. These issues have been reported by community members and ANC Commissioners on several occasions but largely remain unaddressed. Please help address community safety concerns by ensuring timely and accurate resolutions for these issues along Kennedy Street and take more proactive steps to remedy these matters across the whole Ward.

These requests reflect the calls and needs of countless Ward 4 residents who have contacted me this year and, more recently, of our local Ward 4 ANC commissioners and neighborhood association leaders who attended a public safety briefing my office convened last week with Deputy Mayor Geldart, MPD representatives, ONSE Director McFadden, and Building Blocks Director Harlee-Harper. I want to thank members of your administration for making time to attend this community leader forum. This was helpful and clarifying conversation for many of us. But now it is time to turn words into action. And that starts with urgently increasing our city services on and around Kennedy Street.

Now is the time to act to make transformative investments to improve public safety and prevent the escalation of gun violence. And I look forward to working with you further to ensure Kennedy Street is included in the Building Blocks initiative.

In Service,



Janeese Lewis George
Councilmember, Ward 4