

Government of the District of Columbia



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Testimony of the
Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions
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Before the
Committee on Housing
Robert C. White, Jr., Chairperson

Council of the District of Columbia
Council Chamber, Room 500
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Budget Oversight Hearing on the "Fiscal Year 2027 Local Budget Act of 2026"

April 23, 2026, 3:00 p.m.

Good afternoon Chairperson White and members of the Committee on Housing. Thank you for your continued support of the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (OANC) and the work we do in support of the various Commissions and elected Commissioners across the District who represent their neighbors at the grassroots level, often as the most accessible and only elected officials many residents may know in person. Through your support, we continue to expand shared services, both technologically and professionally, resulting in Commissioners who are better prepared to meet the needs of their neighbors.

Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) are composed of residents elected from the District's various neighborhoods. The Commissions are independent bodies that advise District government on policy issues affecting their particular neighborhoods. Currently, there are 46 ANCs, divided into 345 sub-areas called Single Member Districts (SMDs), with about 2,000 residents in each SMD.

In this difficult budget year, I am pleased to see that the Mayor's proposed budget for the OANC and ANCs is funded in FY 2027 at the same level as FY 2026, and that the annual allotments to the ANCs are \$916,000. In accordance with the Home Rule Charter, funding to ANCs is distributed on a per capita basis. Based on the last census, ANCs received \$1.33 per neighborhood resident. The proposed FY 2027 funding amount is in alignment with the funding amount of \$915,688 that the OANC has requested dating back to FY 2023.

The OANC is responsible for providing technical, administrative, and analytical support to ANCs and ANC Commissioners. During the past year, we have continued to invest in filling our vacant staffing positions, realigning vacant positions to better align with our long-term goals, and investing in services for our ANCs. At present, we have just hired a Business Operations Specialist, resulting in the OANC being fully staffed. This position, in part, expands our support and assistance to ANCs' treasurers as it relates to the ANC quarterly financial reports (QFRs). This is not the only investment the OANC is making to improve the ANC QFR process. We are also working with OCTO to develop a new QFR Portal which will be easier for all to use, and which will have reporting capabilities and automate functions currently only available manually. Our investment in improving ANC operations also has a strong focus on developing a suite of websites to replace the legacy sites ANCs are currently using. This provides for economies of scale, standardization of navigation for an improved user experience, and an increased ability for residents to access public documents. This project is a joint OANC-OCTO collaboration, and while we are still working through some development logistics, five new websites have launched for ANCs 4A, 3F, 3/4G, 8A, and 8E. In this first cohort, I note that ANCs 8A and 8E did not have websites, and the sites for 4A and 3/4G were deployed quickly in response to legacy websites dying. Two websites – one each for ANC 1E and 4D – are ready to launch when we can coordinate with the Commission, and we have instructed OCTO to move forward with creating the basic sites for the next 10 ANCs.

I recognize that we are currently in a difficult budget cycle and that the Council, in reviewing the Mayor's budget proposal, will need to make difficult decisions. Based on the Mayor's proposal, I am happy to report that the OANC can continue to carry out the projects we have initiated within the funding level proposed by the Mayor, should the Council agree with that level of support.

I do, however, want to point out three challenges we have identified for discussion and long-term consideration:

- Staff Cost of Living Increases (COLA): While COLAs should never be expected on an annual basis, pay equity is important when recruiting and retaining talented staff. I understand that COLAs authorized by the Mayor do not apply to the OANC staff, nor apparently do staff pay adjustments within the legislative branch. ODCA has not seen a COLA in at least four years and the last pay adjustment for OANC staff was in 2022. Staff most affected across the District are non-union employees, and that applies to all OANC staff. I would like the Committee to consider this and work with the OANC and other affected offices to ensure that our staff are included in COLA discussions and decisions moving forward.
- Ongoing direct deposit of ANC allotments: When the District upgraded its DIFS and PASS financial systems several years ago, they did not recognize ANCs as ongoing independent bodies. Rather, as each ANC has a bank account outside the District's financial system and receive quarterly allotments by direct deposit, the OFRM set up ANCs in their systems as vendors. What this means is that ANC "vendor" accounts expire every three years and need to be reauthorized. While the OANC has offered to perform this work on behalf of ANCs – with their approval – not every ANC has agreed to authorize the OANC to do this. Despite the OANC's best efforts, OFRM refuses to adjust ANC profiles, resulting in potential lapses in service. The OANC continues to monitor and offer support, but a more sustainable solution would be appreciated.
- Replacement of the ANC Resolution Portal: An ANC Resolution Portal was established in 2017 and assigned as a Mayoral responsibility. The portal has never had widespread ANC buy-in, largely due to its very limited functionality. By statute, the portal is intended to be a communication tool between ANCs and agencies that tracks communication and actions in a very public manner. If built properly, it could also provide opportunities to allow Commissioners and the public to proactively receive updates on the issues that are important to them.

Despite years of advocacy, it is clear that the Mayor does not intend to make development of the ANC Portal a priority. In 2017, the OANC had an office of three FTEs. Today we have 10 FTEs. Based on the OANC's commitment to document management and shared services for ANCs, the OANC would support having the responsibility of the ANC Portal transferred to us, provided that funding to develop the portal is also provided. We are confident that the OANC has the resources and is the right office to maintain the Portal moving forward.

As always, we continue to review our internal processes, our statutory obligations, and the evolving needs of ANCs as we set our funding priorities. Our goal continues to be to improve these processes with minimal burden to Commissions, while safeguarding public funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions from the Committee at this time.