

Dear Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Garcia, and Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability:

I respectfully request a coordinated federal oversight review of the District of Columbia's use of funds provided under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP).

Under Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 of the Constitution, Congress retains ultimate legislative and fiscal authority over the District of Columbia. With that authority comes the responsibility to ensure federal funds are administered lawfully, transparently, and consistent with congressional intent. The American Rescue Plan Act was enacted as a \$1.9 trillion emergency measure to address the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19, with the District receiving approximately \$3.3 billion intended to respond to pandemic-related public health and economic challenges. Moreover, these funds were structured as temporary emergency relief, not as a vehicle for establishing permanent programs or long-term fiscal obligations unrelated to pandemic recovery.

In the District, substantial ARP funds, at least \$59 million, have been used to create and fund Building Blocks DC (BBDC) youth safety and gun violence prevention initiatives. BBDC is not a single program but a comprehensive framework designed to coordinate gun violence prevention efforts across Washington, DC. As noted on the Executive Office of the Mayor's website, BBDC data indicates that approximately **41% of gun-related crimes occur within just 2%** of the District's blocks. The initiative emphasizes "restorative justice" and "root cause" strategies to address gun violence, which the Mayor has characterized as a "public health crisis." However, following the allocation of ARP funds to BBDC, publicly available records indicate that youth crime and gun violence continued to increase until subsequent policy shifts emphasizing enforcement and prosecutorial accountability were implemented. As stated by the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Judge Jeanine Pirro:

"When President Trump assigned me to this Office in May of last year [2025], we knew there was a lot of work to do in fighting crime here in DC... Because of the President's push and my Office's intentional efforts, we have now seen a huge downturn in the crime statistics in just a short period of time."

Reported outcomes associated with the 2025 public safety initiative include 8,406 arrests and the removal of 856 illegal firearms from District streets. Following the tough on crime enforcement surge beginning in August 2025, homicides reportedly declined by 60%, robberies by 49%, carjackings by 68%, and overall crime by 32% compared to the same period in 2024.

Therefore, it is reasonable to question whether at least \$53 million in ARP funds allocated to BBDC and related youth safety initiatives aligned with congressional intent or achieved measurable reductions in youth crime. Additionally, these programs appear to have created ongoing fiscal obligations for District taxpayers without corresponding improvements in public safety outcomes. These concerns raise broader oversight and accountability questions not only regarding BBDC, but also the Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP), which is tasked with coordinating interagency efforts and ensuring accountability across District government agencies. OGVP's stated priorities include resource allocation, program accountability, and program evaluation.

While ARP expenditures are subject to reporting requirements through District entities such as the Office of the DC Auditor (ODCA), the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), these local oversight agencies may lack sufficient independence when reviewing programs advanced by the same local leadership responsible for their implementation. This dynamic raises legitimate questions regarding the effectiveness of local oversight alone.

To address these concerns, I have advanced the concept of "DC DOGE," a framework intended to coordinate **existing federal oversight authorities without creating new agencies**. Entities positioned to support coordination include the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, the Department of Justice Office of Inspector General, and the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, among others. **Accordingly, I respectfully request that the Committee consider initiating a coordinated federal review of the District's use of American Rescue Plan funds to ensure compliance with congressional intent, fiscal accountability, and measurable public benefit.**

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources.

Respectfully,
Lori Furstenberg