

Good morning Chairman and Councilmembers,

This is a message from Mayor Bowser:

Thank you for your commitment and work regarding policing in the District. The murder of George Floyd, and the subsequent peaceful protests that have occurred in the District and across the Nation have demonstrated the need for discussion, review, and in some cases reforms in policing.

I have heard and understand the calls for police reform; however it is important to note that the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) has over the past 18 years instituted many of the reforms that other jurisdictions are now starting to consider.

As we move to consider policing and potential reforms, I urge the Council to allow a process where these issues can receive robust public discourse, which I believe will only help to increase community buy-in on any proposed reforms.

I am especially concerned that the “Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Emergency Amendment Act of 2020,” and the proposed amendments that I have been made aware of, amend laws related to issues like Body-worn cameras, laws which received significant consideration and public input when they were crafted, and now would be significantly changed by emergency legislation. Moreover, during today’s discussion I would surmise that there may even be further amendments that have not been noticed, and that the public has not had an opportunity to weigh-in on.

Allowing for community input and vetting by our residents can only serve to refine and strengthen changes to policing in the District. As I have indicated previously, I support the emergency legislation, but I ask that the Council delay consideration of the temporary measure until public hearings can be held.

Thank you.