

Committee on Aging and Community Affairs

Councilmember Marion Barry, Chairperson

FY2012 Performance Oversight Hearing

Office of Community Affairs

Testimony of Terese Lowery, Director

Office on Women's Policy

February 14, 2013

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee on Aging and Community Affairs and committee staff. Thank you for extending the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Terese Lowery, and I am honored to serve this Administration as Director of the Office on Women's Policy and Executive Director of the District of Columbia Commission for Women.

The Commission for Women was established in the late 1970's under your leadership, and was intended to represent and advance the interests of women and girls of all ages, from all walks of life, in every ward of the District of Columbia.

The Office on Women's Policy serves as the administrative and operational arm of the Commission. Together, they share a common mission – to facilitate an ongoing dialogue between community stakeholders and the Executive Office of the Mayor that leads to social and political reforms, constructive programs and services, and an exchange of information that empowers women and girls throughout the District of Columbia to reach their full potential.

Our mission goes further to advance the specific priorities of the Gray Administration by ensuring that community stakeholders remain aware of the Mayor's platform, of ongoing efforts to achieve related goals, and of opportunities to engage in the process.

In our short tenure, we have done quite a bit to advance this mission.

- We have presented to international delegations of women from China, Latin America and the Caribbean, sharing best practices on improving civic engagement among women and enhancing related programs and policies;
- We have brought non-profits in to brief District agencies on specific issues – serving as the liaison to ensure that our agencies are aware of resources available within the community;
- We have developed a comprehensive resource guide for homeless women and families, in recognition of the increasingly significant impact of this issue on our community;
- We've worked to defend the reproductive health rights of women against multiple policies proposed at the national level, that threatened equal access to critical services and the rights to self-determination and reproductive freedom for women across the District;

- We have hosted listening sessions on entrepreneurship for women – bringing in highly successful business women to share their wisdom and experience, and provide guidance to women hoping to create or expand their own business;
- We have hosted seminars for female college students called, “Start Smart”, teaching them how to determine their value in the labor market, and successfully negotiate their salaries as fair compensation for what they bring to the table;
- We have worked with the Mayor to celebrate ‘Equal Pay Day’, ‘Women’s Equality Day’, International Women’s Day’ and ‘Women’s History Month’ in the District; and
- We have successfully appointed twenty-one new members to the District of Columbia Commission for Women. New members bring diverse perspectives and expertise, and represent each of the District’s eight wards.

Since their appointment, both the full Commission and individual committees have met on a monthly basis to develop a strategic plan that will guide our work, and have worked hard to establish a host of exciting new partnerships with organizations that share common goals.

Through the remaining months of this fiscal year, we will continue to cultivate partnerships with other government agencies and non-government organizations, to highlight their work and assist in broadening their impact on the community.

We’ll maintain ongoing efforts to track legislation that impacts the lives of women, to review best practices and research, and call for action as advocates for effective policy and legislative change.

Both the Commission and the Office on Women’s Policy look forward to working with this Committee over the next few years, as well as our partners in other District agencies and external organizations, to effectuate significant improvement in the status of women and girls throughout the District of Columbia.