



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

Charles Allen
Councilmember, Ward 6
Chairperson
Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Committee Member
Business and Economic Development
Health
The Judiciary & Public Safety

October 5, 2023

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Secretary Smith:

Today, along with Councilmembers Matthew Frumin, Christina Henderson, Janeese Lewis George, Brianne K. Nadeau, Zachary Parker, Brooke Pinto, and Robert C. White, Jr., I am introducing the ***“Home Purchase Assistance for 911/311 Call-Takers and Dispatchers Amendment Act of 2023”***.

The Office of Unified Communications (“OUC”), which runs the District’s 911 call center, is experiencing urgent staffing challenges that are contributing to increased overtime demands, short-staffing of shifts, burnout, and most concerning, delayed call-taking and dispatching response times. As of September 1, 2023, OUC had a vacancy rate of 19.2% and reported that approximately 40% of work shifts in August were short-staffed. In the month of September, OUC was only able to meet the national standard of 90 percent of 911 calls answered within 15 seconds on one day. OUC is a critical component of the District’s public safety response and must have the necessary resources – including personnel – to meet these challenges. In the Fiscal Year 2023 budget, I identified funding for recruitment and retention bonuses for OUC personnel, but we must do more to mitigate the staffing crisis, and in turn, improve 911 call times to get first responders to the scene quickly.

One strategy for both increasing recruitment and retention is to expand the District’s popular Employer-Assisted Housing Program (“EAHP”) for District government employees. Currently, eligible employees can receive a deferred payment loan up to \$20,000 and a \$5,000 matching funds grant to help toward a down payment or closing costs on their first home in the District. As part of the Fiscal Year 2018 budget, I expanded EAHP to increase the amount of the matching funds grant to \$15,000 and provide an additional grant of up to \$10,000 to first responders if they sign a five-year service commitment. The term “first responder” is defined as a “police officer, correctional officer, firefighter, paramedic, emergency medical technician, or an

individual who has accepted an offer” for any of those positions, but it does not include OUC employees.


This legislation would expand the definition of “first responder” to include OUC call-takers and dispatchers. Expanding the definition would make current and prospective call-takers and dispatchers looking to purchase their first home eligible for the expanded funds and require them to commit to staying with the District government for at least five years. Ensuring that we have the adequate staffing for OUC is critical to improving public safety.

Please feel free to reach out to me or my Legislative Director, Antonio Nunes, with any questions or for additional information.

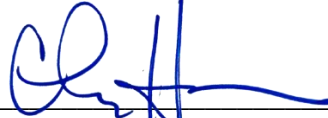
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles Allen".

Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6
Chairperson, Committee on Transportation & the Environment
Vice Chair, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

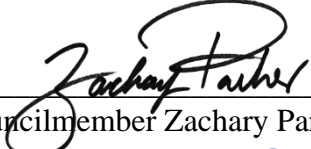
1 
2 Councilmember Matthew Frumin


Councilmember Charles Allen


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6 Councilmember Christina Henderson


Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

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10 Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau


Councilmember Zachary Parker

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14 Councilmember Brooke Pinto


Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.

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19 A BILL
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24 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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29 To amend the Government Employer-Assisted Housing Amendment Act of 1999 to improve the
30 recruitment and retention of 911 and 311 call-takers by providing them with a \$10,000
31 home purchase assistance grant in return for a 5-year service obligation.
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33 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
34 act may be cited as the “Home Purchase Assistance for 911/311 Call-Takers and Dispatchers
35 Amendment Act of 2023”.

36 Sec. 2. Section 2(4B) of the Government Employer-Assisted Housing Amendment Act of
37 1999, effective May 9, 2000 (D.C. Law 13-96; D.C. Official Code § 42-2501(4B)), is amended
38 by striking the phrase “or emergency medical technician” both times it appears and inserting the
39 phrase “emergency medical technician, or 911 or 311 call-taker or dispatcher” in its place.

40 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

41 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
42 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
43 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

44 Sec. 4. Effective date.

45 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
46 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as
47 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
48 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
49 Columbia Register.