



OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER ANITA BONDS
CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION AND LABOR
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

December 1, 2023

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Smith,

Today, along with Councilmembers Charles Allen, Vincent C. Gray, Zachary Parker, and Brianne K. Nadeau, and I am introducing the **“Wellness and Health Optimize Lively Existence (WHOLE) Amendment Act of 2023.”** Please find enclosed a signed copy of the legislation amending the Workplace Wellness Act of 2014 to require the Mayor to provide mental health access to all District employees and a reporting requirement for the Mayor and Council to assess any changes in mental health trends or ongoing demands so we may utilize a data-driven approach in our evaluations, including the annual budget allocation process.

Mental illnesses are common in our communities, and according to the National Institute of Mental Health, one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness.¹ For example, the American Psychological Association’s research shows that 78% of adults say the COVID-19 pandemic is a significant source of stress in their life, while 59% report that police violence against minorities is a significant source of stress in their lives, and 33% shared that discrimination is a significant source of their stress.² Mental illness or mental health may include anxiety disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), bipolar disorder, depression, eating disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychosis, panic disorder, stress, suicide, traumatic events, social anxiety disorder, and many more.³ Although the cause of mental illness is often not simple to identify, the impact of the pandemic continues and the demand for mental health treatment is increasing. More than 84% of psychologists who treat anxiety disorders have seen an increase since the start of the pandemic. Additionally, psychologists who treat depressive disorders have also seen an increase compared to 2020.⁴

Currently, the District Government through its Department of Human Resources (DCHR) offers The Innova Employee Assistance Program (EAP). However, EAP’s Confidential Counseling program is a third-party provider that only provides short-term counseling services to find solutions pertaining to an individual’s family or work frustrations. Sometimes life’s problems are

not exclusively limited to family or work frustrations, and a licensed professional is necessary to provide the required help or intervention.

Further, although the District Government currently has a workplace wellness policy that includes improving nutrition in the workplace by expanding opportunities for employees to store foods in District buildings and promoting water consumption throughout the day, opportunities for physical fitness, and promoting physical activity, healthy eating, and disease prevention---all of which are mainly focused only on physical wellness. This bill also builds upon any current employee wellness programs and services that exist in various agencies across the District so they may also improve wellness to extend beyond agency or staff retreats, yoga, massages, team buildings, and similar programs and services, because absent healthy minds and emotions, our bodies can only go so far.

Many of us acknowledge that mental health is an extremely important issue to address, and individuals' WHOLE health impacts other aspects of livelihood, including education, public safety, family dynamics, workplace culture, and other social issues that we are challenged with in modern times. To ensure that the District Government is a safe and healthy workplace, we need to adopt a comprehensive approach that incorporates mental wellness into the current statute that only speaks to physical wellness. This will encourage our District Government employees to be a "WHOLE" healthy person in mind, body, and spirit.

Should you have any questions about this legislation, please contact Aimellia Siemson at asiemson@dccouncil.gov or (202) 322-0442.

Thank you,



Anita Bonds

¹ National Institute of Mental Health statistics for 2021: [NIMH » Mental Illness \(nih.gov\)](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness)

² American Psychological Association national trends: [The national mental health crisis \(apa.org\)](https://www.apa.org/news/press-releases/2021/04/29/mental-health-crisis)

³ National Institute of Mental Health list of mental illnesses: [NIMH » Brochures and Fact Sheets \(nih.gov\)](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets)

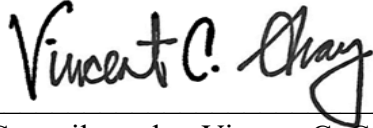
⁴ American Psychological Association demand for treatment: [Demand for mental health treatment continues to increase, say psychologists \(apa.org\)](https://www.apa.org/news/press-releases/2021/04/29/demand-mental-health-treatment)

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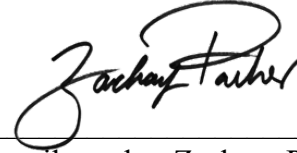
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4 Councilmember Charles Allen



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7 Councilmember Anita Bonds

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9 Councilmember Vincent C. Gray



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12 Councilmember Zachary Parker

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16 Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau

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19 A BILL

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24 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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30 To amend the Workplace Wellness Act of 2014 to require the Mayor to provide Mental Health
31 access to all District employees.
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33 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,

34 That this act may be cited as the “Wellness and Health Optimize Lively Existence (WHOLE)
35 Amendment Act of 2023”.

36 Sec. 2. Section 1092 of the Workplace Wellness Act of 2014, effective February 26, 2015
37 (D.C. Law 20-155; D.C. Official Code § 1-541.01), is amended as follows:

38 (a) A new subsection (c-1) is added to read as follows:

39 “(c-1) By 2025, the workplace wellness policy required by subsection (a) of this section
40 shall incorporate mental wellness initiatives, including:

41 “(1) A mental health hotline for all District employees to access, including agencies
42 under the Mayor’s jurisdiction and independent agencies pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 1-
43 603.01, Office of the Attorney General, Council of the District of Columbia, Advisory
44 Neighborhood Commission, and agencies and offices subordinate to them; and

45 “(2) At least one mental health practitioner within each Deputy Mayor cluster to be
46 shared between agencies within such cluster.

47 “(3) Within 90 days after publication of the workplace wellness policy that
48 incorporates mental wellness initiatives, the Department of Human Resources shall provide
49 outreach to ensure all District employees are aware of the mental wellness initiatives.

50 (b) A new subsection (f) is added to read as follows:

51 “(f) The Mayor shall collect and retain data on the participation in mental wellness
52 initiatives offered pursuant to subsection (c-1) of this section and submit an annual report to the
53 Council Committee with oversight jurisdiction over the District government’s workforce, which
54 shall include the:

55 “(1) Number of participants in mental wellness initiatives per quarter;

56 “(2) Number of complaints broken down by types of mental illness or disorder;

57 “(3) Number of hours expended for each participant;

58 “(4) Cost of each initiative per agency;

59 “(5) Annually updated statistics and trends on mental wellness needs in the region

60 by age groups and gender; and

61 “(6) Recommendations to improve mental health wellness for District government

62 employees.”.

63 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

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

67 Sec. 4. Effective date.

68 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
69 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as
70 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
71 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
72 Columbia Register.

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