



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W., SUITE 102
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004
202.724.8028

ZACHARY PARKER
COUNCILMEMBER, WARD 5

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Facilities and Family Services
Health
Hospital and Health Equity
Housing
Transportation and the Environment

April 30, 2024

Dear Colleagues:

As the District prepares to host World Pride 2025, there are steps we must take to continue creating safe and nurturing spaces for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) residents while also increasing accountability for the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs. I am writing to highlight several opportunities before the DC Council to enhance the well-being of LGBTQ+ Washingtonians as we deliberate the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY 2025) Budget.

The District of Columbia boasts the largest number of LGBTQ+ residents per capita in the country, with roughly 10% of Washingtonians identifying as a member of this community¹. Indeed, our LGBTQ+ community is robust, diverse, and thriving. Yet, as you know, disparities persist in access to housing and affordable and reliable healthcare. For example, the 2023 Point in Time Count suggests that roughly 8% of all unhoused individuals and one-third of unhoused youth in the District identify as LGBTQ+. At the same time, LGBTQ+ individuals are disproportionately represented among new cases of sexually transmitted diseases which outpace access to PrEP and other preventative medications. While financial pressures constrain the FY25 budget and there are any number of worthy investments to make this year, there are three pressing issues I want to highlight for your consideration:

After years of support, there is now a need to make the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs a stand-alone entity outside of the Executive Office of the Mayor to allow for greater transparency and accountability that reflect its evolution over the years. Despite significant responsibilities and making up a significant portion of the Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM) budget with a Fiscal Year 24 approved budget of \$1.56 million and FY 25 proposed budget of \$1.69 million, the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs reports few metrics on its operating budget or FTEs for programs and activities as it is currently clustered under EOM. What is more, the Mayor is proposing to run millions of dollars through the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs to support World Pride 2025. With insufficient accountability metrics and reporting, the Council nor members of the LGBTQ+

¹ [LGBT Demographic Data Interactive](https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT&area=18#density), The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Jan. 2019, available at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT&area=18#density>.

community can judge how exactly funds are spent. What is more, smaller offices under the Mayor's purview, such as the Office of Veteran Affairs (VAO), have independent budget codes and books, which allows for a higher level of scrutiny and accountability from the Council and District residents. To be clear, I support the strong work and current leadership of the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs. This push for change is in recognition of the office's notable achievements and the significant demands being placed on it, which require a greater level of accountability. What is more, with this change, the Council and District residents will be able to better advocate for resources and programs that target persisting disparities vis-à-vis the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs. Fortunately, Councilmember Nadeau, whose committee has direct oversight of the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs, has signaled that she supports this transition, and I have shared with her my plan to offer an amendment to the FY25 Budget Support Act of 2024 (FY25 BSA) to make this change. I hope you will join Councilmember Nadeau and me as well as members of the ANC Rainbow Caucus, LGBTQ+ Budget Coalition, and countless others who are calling for greater independence for the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs.

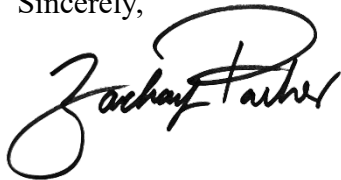
There is a need to infuse \$1.5 million in capital dollars for the completion of the DC LGBTQ+ Community Center and dedicate \$300,000 in reoccurring operating funds. How can a city with more LGBTQ+ residents per capita than any other jurisdiction not have a dedicated LGBTQ+ center? The good news is that the DC LGBTQ+ Community Center is about 70% complete and when finished will be a state-of-the-art space for members of the community to gather and receive an array of services. The vision is for the DC LGBTQ+ Community Center to be a one-stop shop for services and programs with critical social service partners consisting of the Wanda Alston Foundation, SMYAL, Mary's House, the Equality Chamber of Commerce, and more. In fact, the DC LGBTQ+ Community Center is a model for how we ought to cluster services and programs to accelerate getting residents into housing and connected to care. A one-time capital investment of \$1.5 million is needed in FY25 to complete the center to better serve the community and have it open in time for World Pride 2025. Additionally, there is an annual \$300,000 programming cost for the center. Please join me in ensuring we can fully fund the needs of the DC LGBTQ+ Community Center and provide this resource to the community.

Finally, there is a need to fund 20 dedicated LGBTQ+ Housing Vouchers amid the District's ongoing affordable housing crisis. The LGBTQ+ Adult Shelter at 400 50th Street SE is full and rates of youth and adult homelessness among LGBTQ+ individuals continue to grow. As you know, there were no new dedicated vouchers for LGBTQ+ residents in the FY24 or FY25 budgets, and there continues to be a backlog of general voucher processing at the Department of Human Services (DHS). In a recent conversation with DHS Director Zeilinger, she indicated the backlog should be cleared up in FY25. However, one effective strategy to getting LGBTQ+ residents into housing immediately is investing in dedicated vouchers, which the Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs can implement as it has in years past. The Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs currently manages about 90 vouchers across various programs and needs. Adding an additional 20 additional vouchers will cost roughly \$450,000. Dedicated vouchers play a crucial role in ensuring LGBTQ+ residents of the District can navigate the complex process of securing housing placements. Fortunately, Councilmember Robert White, whose committee has direct

oversight over DHS and our housing voucher systems, has expressed his support for dedicated vouchers and has agreed to help identify funding in the FY25 budget.

I am working with the Committee on Public Works and Operations and the Committee on Housing to advance these priorities during committee mark-ups, and I hope you will help secure these wins on behalf of the District's LGBTQ+ community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zachary Parker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "Z".

Zachary Parker
Councilmember, Ward 5
Council of the District of Columbia