



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

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Mayor Bowser Is Moving Forward on Key Investments, But Other Approved Funding Remains Frozen

By Ed Lazere

As Mayor Bowser weighs the fate of additional investments in areas such as homeless services and child nutrition that have been put on hold, we hope that she will move forward with those that could make a big difference in the lives of DC residents.

Last week, Mayor Bowser gave a green light to several important housing, homeless services, and nutrition initiatives that had been put on hold by the outgoing Gray administration. Thanks to that move, more vulnerable families and youth will get help to get back on their feet and meet their basic needs. However, the mayor kept other critical investments on hold – or “frozen”– for now. The investments that remain on hold and have an uncertain future include:

- More case managers at the DC General shelter for homeless families;
- The “Healthy Tots” initiative to provide more nutritious food at child development centers and to help centers do more to engage children in physical activities; and
- Expansion of summer programs through the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Mayor Bowser indicated today that final decisions about whether to move forward with those initiatives will be made in late February or early March, after the next projection of the city’s revenue collections is released.

FUNDS RELEASED BY MAYOR BOWSER	
Rent vouchers (LRSP) tied to housing projects or sponsors	\$3 million
Rent vouchers (LRSP) for use with private market housing	\$3 million
Rent vouchers (LRSP) for low-income Seniors	\$1 million
Youth homelessness services	\$1.3 million
Enhancement in SNAP benefits to \$30 monthly minimum	\$1.3 million
FUNDS THAT REMAIN FROZEN	
10 case managers for DC General family homeless shelter	\$600,000
Healthy Tots Program	\$3.1 million
Reduced funding for charter schools based on lower-than-projected enrollment	\$12.6 million
Facilities planning grants to DC Public Charter Schools	\$4 million
Animal care and control facilities	\$5 million
DC Film Incentive Fund	\$1.5 million
Improvements at Kenilworth Parkside Community Park	\$250,000
Commission on Arts and Humanities Grants	\$1 million
Summer programs at DC Parks and Recreation	\$1.5 million

While there is some logic to that caution, because the city’s tax collections this year are running below initial projections, the mayor should move forward on the initiatives that would most help DC residents – particularly the new staffing at DC General Shelter and the nutrition and exercise supports for child care centers – while looking more broadly at the entire DC budget to identify

efficiencies or other savings to keep the city's finances in balance. Funding these two initiatives would cost less than \$4 million and would not dramatically worsen the city's budget challenges.

Here is the history of the frozen funding: In late December, then-Mayor Gray froze \$39 million for a variety of new initiatives to create affordable housing, improve nutrition, expand summer recreation options for DC children, and more. The mayor noted that because the city's revenue collections were coming in lower than expected, he wanted to put new efforts on hold so that the new mayor could decide what to do.

Last week, Mayor Bowser made a smart move to release funding for three initiatives: \$7 million for rental assistance, \$1.3 million to serve homeless youth, and \$1.3 million to ensure that all DC residents getting SNAP (formerly called food stamps) get at least \$30 a month in benefits. These expansions address some of the most pressing needs of DC residents.

But other critical needs remain, and we hope Mayor Bowser will take further steps toward meeting them.