



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Commission Statement on Mayor Bowser's Proposed FY24 Budget**

Today Mayor Bowser proposed a \$18.67M cut to the Access to Justice Initiative to pre-pandemic levels. The proposed funding of \$13.018M is a 60% cut from FY23 funding of \$31.69M.

**This will have catastrophic consequences for District residents who receive life-changing civil legal services from District non-profits through the program on issues that matter – safety, health, housing, and economic stability.**

- **Housing instability among District residents will certainly grow.** Over 50% of FY23 Initiative funding supports eviction-prevention efforts that have been proven to be effective at a time when the current number of evictions, calls for help among tenants, and open cases in court is rising at rates upwards of 250-450% from prior years.
- **District residents will be less safe.** Reduced funding puts programs that offer help to victims of domestic- and gender-based violence and combat recidivism at risk.
- **The District community's economic stability will be impacted.** Services that combat economic risk and inopportunity, address employment-related problems, and help District residents access vital benefit programs are also in jeopardy.
- **This will increase the vulnerability of thousands of District residents.** District children, elders, individuals with disabilities, the immigrant community, and other special populations will lose access to programs targeted at serving their unique needs.

We now turn to the D.C. Council for its support in restoring necessary funding to this vital program. The D.C. Council created and has long recognized the value and impact of civil legal services on the safety, economic stability, and community health of the District community. The Chairman has already highlighted this reduction in his budget statement.

The Access to Justice Initiative is a lifeline for the thousands of District residents who rely on it for legal help. We cannot backslide in our efforts to ensure these residents have the access to civil justice that they deserve in our nation's capital.

Peter B. Edelman, Chair

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