



SURVIVORS AND ADVOCATES FOR EMPOWERMENT

Supporting and Empowering Domestic Violence Survivors since 1997
Apoyando a Víctimas de Violencia Doméstica desde 1997

Testimony of Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (DC SAFE)

Performance Oversight Hearing - Metropolitan Police Department

Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary - DC Council

February 13, 2024

Thank you Chairperson Pinto and members of the committee. My name is Kylie Hogan and I'm the Crisis Intervention Team Director at DC SAFE. DC SAFE is an integral part of the city's public safety infrastructure, providing 24/7 crisis intervention for domestic violence survivors in the District. This role is perhaps nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in our partnership with MPD. Beginning in 2006, in recognition of a need for after hours access to critical safety planning resources, we have grown from humble beginnings with a handful of volunteers answering pages overnight to receiving over 13,000 referrals from MPD 24/7 in 2023.

We have worked hard to build our relationship with officers and leadership within MPD over the past 18 years as the research into domestic violence has shown that intervention at the time of police involvement is critical to reducing fatalities. While connecting to our crisis response line is certainly the most obvious and tangible connection we have with officers, our work with MPD is so much more. In 2023, we worked closely with MPD to provide comprehensive training to over 2200 officers through their in service training. Despite a lack of distinct fiscal support, we embraced the opportunity which required 3 days of in person training every week from February to December because we knew the objective was so critical. We provided an in-depth review of the critical changes made to the Intrafamily Offense Statute in 2021, reviewed Temporary Protections Orders, Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and Anti-Stalking Orders, as well as revisions to MPD's own general order to help streamline and focus MPD's referrals to our Crisis Response Line.

In this training, we received vital feedback from officers around service and enforcement of Orders of Protection, particularly in light of changes brought by COVID, and concerns for high call volume households. In 2024, we will continue working with MPD and the court to create clear access to information on the current status of orders, and ensure officers are comfortable with the process of serving and enforcement of orders. We also are working with MPD leadership and the unit responsible for regular service to identify and prioritize service of life saving orders for survivors at high risk in the community.

I want to highlight here that while we are doing direct work in engaging MPD at all levels, additional collaboration and broader community support are key. I recently provided training for new recruits at the police academy and an officer shared that while MPD teaches and talks about many community resources, he always lets trainees know that DC SAFE is legit. I was proud to receive that feedback but also saddened because it reflects what I often see - that the broader scope of resources needed by officers and District residents are still lacking. We know that successful partnership is possible, but more needs to be done to establish and exalt the innovative approach that the District champions.

As we seek to co-apply with MPD for federal funding to continue to offer robust services for DV survivors in new and innovative ways, we see a real need for investment in similar programs from within and without MPD. As new programs are proposed and boots hit the ground to shape new services for District residents, it's critical that there is time, support, and funding for the critical behind the scenes work required to build relationships for both community partners and MPD. The District fully recognizes that there is a shortage of officers but often I find the focus to be on new recruits and patrol capacity. However, my experience is that frequently MPD leadership is being asked to innovate, collaborate, analyze, and act on an ever expanding portfolio of concerns. The bandwidth to successfully create and sustain innovations and partnerships that would take the pressure off of the patrol response becomes near impossible as changes in leadership and focus seem to be continuous.

The same can be said for the many creative and forward thinking community organizations that have emerged in the past several years as the District rethinks its approach to combating crime and alternatives to policing. The political will for innovative approaches is apparent but often practical support to create the administrative depth and longevity needed to create success seems to be lacking. In a survey SAFE completed several years ago, one of the most common descriptors of our agency was that we were scrappy. A description we recognize as accurate because we have always been fiercely committed to our goal of community partnerships and system reform even when the broader community's focus and funding was slim. This moniker also feels accurate for many of the MPD officers and district leadership I have worked with over my years at SAFE. Despite the always growing responsibilities, they saw a problem, were willing to partner and created time and energy to address it. While I appreciate their commitment and am proud of the work we have done, I deeply feel like we can do better. New organizations and initiatives can benefit from our experience and the city as a whole

must recognize that funding for the administrative, behind the scenes work of collaboration is key to success.

Critical to this success is not only maintaining our individual partnerships but also building coalitions across service providers. Survivors do not exist in a vacuum and we must recognize their needs as a whole person not just to forward their goals and provide safety but also for the wellbeing and efficiency of those agencies themselves. DC SAFE is part of the District's High Risk Domestic Violence Initiative and part of our goals in 2024 is strengthening participation in the Domestic Violence System Review that is a key part of this initiative. We see MPD as an integral participant of this review.

MPD has critical information on when and where violence may be escalating and we look forward to working with them to reinvision how they consider their high call volume data, shifting from considering addresses which may include large apartment buildings or other community spaces to looking at individual relationships or families where calls to the police or incidents may be increasing in frequency and severity. This is an ongoing conversation with MPD leadership and though there have been many changes in their internal structure and members in leadership positions over the past year, we have high hopes that we will continue to maintain our positive working relationship with new leadership as we move forward on this goal.

Ultimately, we know that no individual agency can "solve" domestic violence despite the focus on policing the issue. In working with both survivors and officers themselves, we know that a collaborative approach is necessary and we hope to continue our work with MPD to both strengthen their response and build the depth of access to collaborative efforts. In addition, as the council considers broad ranging testimony for many city agencies and programs, we hope you consider the interconnected nature of various initiatives. We know that with forward planning, sufficient funding, robust training and cross training, and institutional and bureaucratic support that MPD, DC SAFE, and many others can make a huge impact on creating opportunities for safety for survivors in the District.

We deeply appreciate the open communication, collaborative approach, and flexibility of MPD's leadership. It's critical to MPD that, as they continue to be asked to do so much in our community, they have accessible and robust forums of community support to call upon to help them meet the needs of District residents. It is our hope that the Council continues to recognize the essential nature of this work through its ideological and fiscal investments. Thank you so much for your time. I look forward to any questions.



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