



April 30, 2016

Via Email: [mcheh@dccouncil.us](mailto:mcheh@dccouncil.us)

Chairperson Mary Cheh  
Committee on Transportation and the Environment  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20004

**RE: DCEN Budget Recommendations for a Sustainable District of Columbia**

Dear Chairperson Cheh:

The DC Environmental Network (DCEN) is writing the Committee on Transportation and the Environment to share our thoughts on Mayor Bowser's FY17 budget.

Since 1996, DCEN has been promoting sustainability, which we feel should involve serious advocacy for the needs of ALL District residents. This includes the 40% of District school children who rely on the healthy food they receive at school for the majority of their nutrition, the many District neighborhoods that continue to suffer from double-digit unemployment, and the overall widening wealth gap that is leaving too many District residents with too little to live their lives with.

Spearheaded by Global Green USA, the DC Environmental Network (DCEN), founded in 1996 — is working, in a coalition environment, towards a vision of rebuilding Washington, DC's neighborhoods and communities for long-term economic stability — accomplishing this by protecting and restoring the Capital City's urban environment.

For a number of years, the DC Environmental Network and DC Fiscal Policy Institute, have been co-sponsoring budget briefings with a number of District agencies in order to give sustainability advocates, organizations, and District residents, an opportunity to learn about the District's budget priorities, and

to collect the information necessary to take individual, organizational, action, in support of good, well designed and developed, sustainability programs.

After consulting with a number of sustainability organizations, and holding two budget briefings in 2016, DCEN has prepared some final comments and recommendations in preparation for your committee's April 4<sup>th</sup> budget mark-up.

- **District Department of the Environment:**

**FULLY FUND THE LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE (LIHEAP) PROGRAM:**

As the District of Columbia continues to experience problems stabilizing poor neighborhoods, and coming up with meaningful programs to deal with poverty in DC, it is important to fully fund the many proven programs that make up our social safety net. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program is one of these initiatives. Additionally, a number of budgets, in recent years, have decreased funding for this important need, this year to the tune of \$1.2 million dollars. Even with more funding, DOEE barely makes it through half a year before funds are depleted. DCEN asks the committee to fully fund LIHEAP so that the program can help District residents throughout the entire fiscal year. The need is that great.

- **Department of Public Works:**

**RESTORE FTE's TO DPW'S OFFICE OF WASTE DIVERSION (DPW OWD):**

As you know, when the Office of Waste Diversion (OWD) was established, it was determined that DPW would need 6 FTEs to cover the functions of this office. Mayor Bowser has done a great job of filling 3 of the 6 positions, but in her FY17 budget, proposes eliminating the remaining three unfilled positions. We asked DPW Director Shorter about this at our budget briefing and he shared that the elimination of these positions would not hurt current and future initiatives. After participating in the DPW budget hearing and consulting with a number of zero waste organizations and advocates, DCEN is asking the committee to try and restore as many of the 3 positions as possible. We believe the Office of Waste Diversion has a lot on their plate, and need more staffing, if they are ever going to be able to move the District up from last place for waste diversion (recycling) rates in the Washington Metro Region.



- **Department of Transportation:**

**INCLUDE COSTS OF TREE PLANTING PROGRAM IN THE “6-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGET PROJECTION”:**

The Mayor’s budget decimates the tree planting budget for the Urban Forestry Administration by over 80%, and tree maintenance and personnel expenditures by 25%. The reasons given for this action are that DDOT will soon be changing how it accounts for its operating and capital expenditures. While this explanation in part has some sense to it, tree planting is a clear capital expenditure, therefore the costs for this critical program should be included in the 6-year capital budget projection – but it is not.

These are our priority issues for Mayor Bowser’s FY17 budget.

Sincerely,



Chris Weiss  
Executive Director  
**DC Environmental Network**

Director, Washington, DC Office  
**Global Green USA**

Cc: DC Council, DPW, DDOE, DDOT