



Government of the District of Columbia Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B

By Electronic Mail

May 27, 2020

Kathleen Patterson
DC Auditor
717 14th Street NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Auditor Patterson:

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, at a duly noticed public meeting, with a quorum being the “majority of the total number of commissioner positions currently filled in Commission 4B,” at its May 26, 2020, meeting voted with 7 Yeas, 0 Nays, and 0 Abstentions to send this letter to the Office of the D.C. Auditor requesting an audit of the functions of the District’s Office of Unified Communications (Office or OUC).

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has repeatedly heard concerns from constituents and neighbors about the functioning of the Office both in emergency and non-emergency call-taking.

Now more than ever, the OUC is the primary face of the District government. We have concerns about reports that the Office continues to mishandle emergency calls in ways that could put both the public and emergency responders at risk. These concerns are not new and have occurred repeatedly in our Commission and surrounding area, but they are magnified both by the volume of calls and the high-stakes nature of accurate call-taking due to the public health emergency.

Along with other Commissions, we noted concerns about OUC’s performance in the wake of the fatal August 18, 2019, house fire at 708 Kennedy Street, NW. See [ANC 4B Resolution 4B-19-0904](#), “Request for Agency Changes following Deadly House Fire on August 18th at 708 Kennedy Street NW” ; ANC 4C Resolution, “[DC Agency Review of the House Fire on August 18th at 708 Kennedy Street](#)”; ANC 4D “Resolution Following Deadly House Fire”). Unfortunately, [the response](#) from the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure did not directly engage with the request from Commissions to benchmark their concerns against national performance standards, regardless of call type or origin. Additionally, [the independent investigation commissioned by the City Administrator](#) into the District’s government role did not include OUC’s role in the failed government response in its purview.

When Commissioners have attempted to advocate for constituents on specific call-taking concerns, OUC's responses have been inconsistent in the information they are willing to share. See OUC Letter to Commissioner Yeats (Oct. 3, 2019); OUC Letter to Commissioner Yeats (Jan. 24, 2019).

Dave Statter, former reporter and safety advocate, has [noted](#) ongoing issues with call-taking and dispatching within OUC. In addition, other Commissions have noted concerns about accurate and timely call-taking and dispatching in their Commission areas. See ANC 4C "[Letter to OUC on 911 Responses.](#)"

We are not the first to request that an audit be performed of OUC. On May 23, 2016, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), as part of its investigation into the January 2015 L'Enfant Plaza Metro fire, [recommended](#) that OUC "Audit your public service answering point (PSAP) to validate compliance with the standards published by the National Emergency Number Association or another similar standards organization." As of January 29, 2020, the NTSB confirmed that the recommended audit of OUC [has not been performed](#).

Due to ongoing issues with OUC's fidelity to high performance standards in emergency call-taking and dispatching, we ask that the Office of the D.C. Auditor conduct an independent audit of OUC's emergency call-taking and benchmark the performance of the agency against both national and international standards for public safety access points.

In addition to its emergency call-taking responsibilities, OUC also administers and dispatches non-emergency calls for service through the DC 311 program. This involves properly classifying calls that arrive through phone, app, social media, and Internet portals and routing them to the correct servicing agencies. Commissioners and constituents have repeatedly noted concerns with the 311 call-taking process revolving around four areas:

- Correct call classification and routing
- Overly long response windows for servicing agencies
- Case closures without requested work being completed
- Missing or incomplete service requests

While not as critical as emergency call-taking, the proper functioning of the OUC 311 single access point is critical to the efficient delivery of government services in the District of Columbia. Especially with constituents abiding by Mayor Bowser's Stay at Home Order and social distancing measures during the public health emergency, these services are the major point of access for District government services.

Due to ongoing issues with OUC's fidelity to high performance standards and the correct functioning of the 311 system, we ask that the Office of the D.C. Auditor conduct an independent audit of the OUC 311 system to determine if calls are correctly classified

and routed, if service times are appropriate, frequency of case closures without full completion, and the occurrence of missing and incomplete service requests.

The Commission also voted with 7 Yeas, 0 Nays, and 0 Abstentions to appoint the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B01, Evan Yeats, or any member of the Executive Committee in his absence, to be authorized to communicate this resolution and represent ANC 4B in communication with regards to this matter.

Sincerely,

Evan Yeats, ANC 4B01 Commissioner

cc: Members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Karima Holmes, Director, Office of Unified Communications
Lucinda M. Babers, Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure