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Joint Statement from DC Justice Lab and NAACP DC on the Confirmation Hearing for MPD Acting Chief Pamela Smith

The appointment of Pamela Smith as the Acting Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department provides an opportunity to reevaluate and redefine our approach to public safety. As we step into this new chapter, we must take a hard look at the successes and failures of the MPD so that we may consider ways to bring about meaningful and lasting changes.

In recent years, MPD has over-relied on police to solve a wide range of challenges, developed harsh policing tactics without being transparent on the impact and outcomes, and failed to adopt evidence-based and expert drafted public safety recommendations to replace crime with thriving, sustainable communities.

In this regard, we offer the Acting Chief three strategies that are critical for strengthening public safety:

- **Not every situation requires an armed response.** Aggressive police tactics often lead to distrust and negative outcomes that could be avoided. Instead of placing the entirety of societal responses upon the police, we must channel resources into public health, employment, housing, and community-led safety initiatives that are desperately needed to improve the public safety and long term success of our most vulnerable neighborhoods.
- **Community collaboration and accountability builds positive outcomes.** Data intransparency and obfuscation have become a normal standard for MPD. The MPD has failed to provide data and what if any positive impact its Focused Patrol initiative has had, yet it continues to be a core law enforcement strategy. Fact checks on recent MPD claims of crime reduction have also been left unanswered. Community trust is built from communication, collaboration and accountability. We must have all three to strengthen public safety in DC.
- **Utilize evidence-based policy solutions to make DC safer.** The DC Police Reform Commission, the District Task Force on Jails and Justice and the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group listened to residents' priorities for policing and justice and made thorough expert policy recommendations to make DC safer. While it's up to the Mayor and the Council to review and pass legislative recommendations, the reports offer a wealth of community-rooted solutions that the Acting Chief can adopt and implement.

The DC Justice Lab and the NAACP DC Branch look forward to supporting Acting Chief Smith and the entire MPD in advancing these long-needed reforms. Our organizations are committed to serving as a resource for your work and our shared goal of a safer District for all.