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D.C. BUDGET CONTINUES TO UNDERFUND VITAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

Following last minute changes, the D.C. Council finalized its FY2021 budget which continues to provide inadequate support for vulnerable residents.

Washington, D.C. (July 23, 2020) – Today, the D.C. Council finalized its budget for Fiscal Year 2021. This budget will end chronic homelessness for nearly 320 households; and restore cuts to homelessness prevention, outreach, and eviction prevention. However, it remains wholly inadequate. This budget does little to alter the status quo for vulnerable D.C. residents as we consider the nation’s experience during a pandemic that disproportionately harms Black and Brown people; historic unrest regarding racial justice, and a global recession.

On Tuesday, the Council made a last-minute decision to undo a media ad tax increase they had already passed, and then scrambled to fill the \$18 million funding gap it created. Shockingly, critical investments – that had already been approved – in programs like D.C. libraries, rental assistance, and assistance for excluded workers were suddenly on the chopping block.

Today, the Council passed a budget that preserves investments in some of those programs, while cutting the equivalent of \$8.7 million to behavioral health programs. Additionally, by converting multi-year funding into one-time funding, this budget puts portions of D.C.’s homeless street outreach program and the Emergency Rental Assistance Programs back at risk in 2021.

[Miriam’s Kitchen](#), along with a wide range of community advocates, are disappointed that so many Councilmembers squandered the opportunity to put their recent commitments to racial justice into action. This budget means that over 1,400 households, most of whom are Black, will experience homelessness for another year, and that tens of thousands of households will remain one missed paycheck or accident away from losing their housing.

During the past 6 months, we have worked with our partners to propose alternative revenue ideas including a minimal tax increase for our wealthy residents; moving a small portion of funding from the street car; and defunding the police to invest in human services programs. The Council declined these ideas, and instead, approved a budget that will further deepen socioeconomic racial divides.

“By finding \$18 million in just two days, the Council reminds us that corporate interests are worthy of resources while people experiencing homelessness must be satisfied with crumbs. Instead of using this \$18 million to fix a manufactured crisis, the Council could have used these \$18 million to end chronic

homelessness for more than 650 additional individuals,” says Miriam’s Kitchen Advocacy and Campaign Manager Jesse Rabinowitz.

[Miriam’s Kitchen](#) is deeply grateful to Councilmember Brianne Nadeau who has stood alongside us to realize our shared vision of ending chronic homelessness in the District. We look forward to meeting with all D.C. Councilmembers over the summer to discuss how the District can make meaningful change to end chronic homelessness in our neighborhoods. In addition, we are particularly committed to holding our leaders accountable to their verbal commitments to racial justice and urging them to take concrete actions to upend systemic racism.

Our team also thanks Councilmembers Allen, Robert White, and Trayon White for their work to find increased revenue to fund the Just Recovery initiative. While most of the Council voted against progressive revenue ideas to fund communities in need, we appreciate their willingness to take important positions.

[Miriam’s Kitchen](#) encourages advocates across the District to join [The Way Home Campaign](#) to stay up-to-date with key initiatives dedicated to ending chronic homelessness.

About Miriam’s Kitchen

Founded in 1983 as a soup kitchen, Miriam’s Kitchen has evolved over the years to provide more than meals. Today, Miriam’s Kitchen is a critical player in the fight to end chronic homelessness in D.C. On the direct services level, we serve more than 3,000 men and women experiencing homelessness—helping them to improve their health, increase their income and obtain housing through a range of programs and partnerships. And at the systems level, we work with leaders across the city to make instances of homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. For more information, please visit miriamskitchen.org.

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