

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY
MEDIA ALERT



OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
AND COMMUNICATIONS

1133 North Capitol St., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Phone: (202) 535-1000
DCHousing.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Rachel Molly Joseph (202) 251-8825

Statement from DCHA Director Brenda Donald

We are here to make public housing better. We take ALL allegations very seriously, and I have acted on every single issue brought to my attention. We have taken all actions recommended by the internal auditor and referred these incidents to the DC Office of the Inspector General. Our internal reports which Councilmember White released today should be a warning to anyone thinking of trying to defraud District taxpayers. We have a zero-tolerance policy for fraud, waste and abuse.

While I fail to see how today's press event advances our charge to make public housing better, I welcome the chance to talk about the essential progress we are making at DCHA. In February and continuing into March we have seen the first net gain in occupancy in multiple years. With our Urgent Needs Campaign, we have inspected more than 1000 units and are on track to complete inspections of our entire portfolio by the end of June. We are working to make our units safe and habitable for our current residents while simultaneously turning units in order to bring in new residents – 500 last year and we are on track to turn an additional 500 this year. Importantly, after several years of inherited budget deficits, DCHA is now strong and healthy with an operating surplus, which we will continue to invest in our residents.

It is not only unfair, but wildly unhelpful to the progress we must make together, to cast a shadow over the hundreds of dedicated DCHA employees who show up every single day to make the lives of District residents better. DCHA has over 800 employees. The actions of a small handful should not and do not define this agency.

Councilmember White joined nine other Councilmembers to support the Mayor's plan to create the Stabilization and Reform (STAR) Board with a mission to advance the progress of this agency. Advancing agency progress is exactly what I am working with the Board to do.

There is hard work to be done. We are making progress. We don't fix these problems through press events or gotcha moments. We fix them by working together with urgency and good faith.

There is work to do and I intend to keep my focus there.