



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING**  
**1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004**

**David Grosso**  
Councilmember At-Large  
Chairperson, Committee on Education

**Committee Member**  
Health  
Human Services  
Judiciary and Public Safety

July 9, 2020

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20004

Mayor Bowser:

This is a pivotal moment in our city, our society, and our country as we grapple with the effects of historical and current structural anti-Black racism. Along with many other elected officials and community leaders, you and I are striving to respond to our residents as they demand change. I know that we share a mutual desire to better serve our communities and to work harder in our efforts to dismantle white supremacy in our city and country.

Unfortunately, it has become obvious that Metropolitan Police Chief Peter Newsham does not share these priorities. His public and private comments and posture over the past month have been at odds with what we all expect of a public servant when criticized. We need MPD leadership that understands the racist and deep-seated problems of law enforcement in our city. And we need someone who is willing to change that paradigm. However, since his appointment, instead of recognizing how we all can better serve our Black communities, Chief Newsham has continued a disturbing pattern of lashing out at Councilmembers and blaming everyone but himself.

In response to the Council passage of the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Emergency Amendment Act of 2020, the Chief insinuated that the bill would increase crime and police brutality. This was in-line with his past comments suggesting that Council actions lead to greater violence in the city and that any decrease in funds for MPD would result in more police misconduct, not less. A less generous reading of such comments could view them as threats. This behavior is only the latest in a pattern from Chief Newsham. He pushes an outdated 'tough on crime' approach to policing that results in disproportionate violence against and harassment of untold numbers of people, mostly Black, across our city. Yet crime keeps increasing.

Most recently, this week, we have seen credible evidence that Chief Newsham has not been truthful about MPD involvement with the June 1 police violence against protestors exercising their First Amendment rights. This is hardly surprising, considering his track record. He has

been responsible for thousands of illegal arrests and has cost our city millions in settlements. He has shown his contempt for protestors from Pershing Park to the 2017 Inauguration to Black Lives Matter Plaza, where he continues to direct police to attack demonstrators, using tear gas and violence in direct contradiction of the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform bill.

We hold our public officials to a high standard in the District of Columbia. The Chief of Police must be held to the highest standard of all, as the official uniquely allowed to deploy violence with the full weight of the government behind it. This Chief's actions and words are incompatible with community policing and with this moment. I ask that you immediately remove Chief Newsham from his position.

I do not make this suggestion lightly, nor am I under any delusion that this alone will solve our city's problems with policing. But tackling such pernicious challenges requires bold, creative and thoughtful leadership. The lack of that vision and resolve is apparent in our current Chief, and it is time for the District of Columbia to turn the page.

Sincerely,



David Grosso  
Council of the District of Columbia (At-Large)  
Chairperson, Committee on Education