



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

JANESE LEWIS GEORGE

Ward 4 Councilmember
Chair of the Committee on
Facilities and Family Services

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
Committee on Public Works and Operations

August 11, 2023

Dear Interim Director Jenkins, Interim Director Pierre, Acting Director Hanlon, and Attorney General Schwalb,

I am writing to request your urgent assistance in addressing serious issues impacting residents at two residential properties in Ward 4 owned and managed by Petra Management Group: 5616 13th Street NW and 5601 13th Street NW. Residents at these properties have been experiencing serious security breaches and housing conditions that violate their right to live in safe, dignified homes. I have worked extensively with both the Office of the Attorney General and the Metropolitan Police Department to address the security concerns and crime at these properties, but this problem is bigger than just those two agencies. We must all work collaboratively and urgently to improve the unacceptable conditions that residents face at these properties.

I appreciate the DC Housing Authority, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Building's work to facilitate housing for residents across the District. The experiences of residents at these two properties warrant stronger interventions from DC government as a whole, and I am here to work with you to make this happen. **I am writing today to request several specific actions from DCHA, DHS, DOB, and OAG as key stakeholders in addressing these urgent safety issues:**

- 1. Hold the housing provider accountable for building conditions.** Residents have experienced significant concerns at these two properties, including broken entrances that allow non-residents to come and go as they please, a lack of security staff, urine along the stairwells, and broken appliances. From what I have personally seen, the current conditions violated both HUD's Housing Quality Standards and DC Code. I know DOB inspectors visited the properties this week and issued multiple Notices of Violations. That is a positive step forward, but more needs to be done. DOB, DCHA, and OAG all have a role to play in monitoring conditions at these properties and holding the property owner accountable. I am asking that you work together to ensure there are regular building-wide and unit inspections, and then take appropriate corrective measures to protect residents' safety and quality of life.
- 2. Fairly and quickly process Recommendations for Termination of voucher subsidies for residents who are creating situations that threaten the safety**



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of other residents. DCHA has standard operating procedures for responding to residents who breach their lease obligations by conducting criminal activity in their units. It is critical for DCHA to follow these procedures and move quickly to address the small number of residents who are compromising the safety of other residents by conducting human trafficking and selling illegal drugs, which has led to repeated trespassing, overdoses, and assaults on the property. While the housing provider can pursue concurrent eviction proceedings for residents who are violating their leases by committing criminal acts, if those residents benefit from a housing subsidy, DCHA can use the same evidence of criminal behavior to terminate the voucher. I am not asking for DCHA to be unfairly aggressive with these voucher terminations or to apply different standards for voucher holders. I do believe, however, that simply having a voucher should not be a free pass to conducting criminal activity in your community.

3. **Facilitate improved support services to meet the needs of residents.** Some residents at these properties require additional support services to meet their needs, including case work, addiction counseling, mental health support, employment assistance, and health care. I am asking DHS and DCHA to work together to ensure all eligible residents are receiving the case management and support services they need. If additional services are needed, I am ready to work with my colleagues to provide the resources you need to make this happen.
4. **Use the existing nuisance property statute to hold the property owner accountable for ongoing neglect of the property.** In November of 2022, I visited the property with a representative of the Office of the Attorney General, who witnessed the unacceptable conditions there firsthand and met with residents begging for assistance. At the time, we were told that the conditions did not yet meet the statutory definition of a nuisance property. Since then, the conditions have continued to deteriorate and crimes at the property have escalated. Now that MPD has provided ample evidence of ongoing criminal activity, I am urging OAG to move swiftly to file a nuisance property lawsuit.
5. **Convene a multi-agency meeting to share information about each agency's efforts, improve coordination, and develop a plan to solve this problem permanently.** If additional resources are needed, identify them and I will work with my colleagues to secure them. If other assistance or coordination is needed, I will do all that I can to make it happen. I am willing to facilitate this meeting to bring our agencies together.



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DCHA, DHS, DOB, and OAG are only four of the important stakeholders who play a critical role in addressing the issues that residents face at these two properties and residential buildings across the District. My office is also coordinating with the Metropolitan Police Department, Petra Management Group, 4E01 Commissioner Vanessa Rubio, residents, and the broader community to bring improvements. I am looking forward to continued partnership with all relevant agencies to do right by our residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janeese Lewis George". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Janeese Lewis George
Ward 4 Councilmember

Cc: 4E01 Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Vanessa Rubio
Pamela A. Smith, Chief of Police of the Metropolitan Police Department