



American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
District Council 20, Local 2401 • 100 M Street, SE, Suite 205 • Washington, DC 20003
www.afscme2401.org

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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
March 1, 2019**

**Oversight Hearing:
Department of Human Services**

**Wayne L. Enoch, LGSW
President
AFSCME Local 2401**

Madame Chairperson and the Committee on Human Services, thank you for allowing to submit testimony for the Performance Oversight Hearing of the Department of Human Services (DHS).

I am Wayne L. Enoch, President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Local 2401. I have been an employee of the District of Columbia Child & Family Services Agency (CFSA) for twenty six (26) years. I am also a long time District of Columbia resident.

AFSCME Local 2401 is the Collective Bargaining Unit of over 1800 employees from various agencies within the government. Our members are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of the District's most vulnerable citizens. AFSCME Local 2401 has members at 10 agencies, including the Department of Human Services, Child and Family Services Agency, Office of the Attorney General, Department of Health Care Finance, Department of Disability Services and Office of Contracts & Procurement. At DHS, AFSCME Local 2401 is responsible for the Collective Bargaining of a number of positions; which includes Social Service Representative, Social Worker and many more.

I am unable to be present for the Oversight Hearing; however, I wanted to provide insight for the working conditions of the employees that this Local represents. This testimony is sent to inform you that there are some good things going on at DHS but as with any workplace, there are areas that could be enhanced. As the union president, I am fully aware of several areas that could use improvement as well as areas where the agency surpasses the mark.

During last year's Budget Hearing, I testified about employees being Not to Exceed (NTE)/Term. Since that time, DHS has partnered with the DC Department of Human Resources (DCHR) to properly convert eligible staff to Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees. The vast majority of the employees can now get a sense of belonging to the agency. They no longer have to worry about management's ability to retaliate against them for unwarranted and unnecessary reasons. There were only 3-5 employees who were not converted. I am told that those employees were not converted because of documented performance reasons. If there are other NTE employees in the agency, they are reportedly working in positions that are temporarily funded. That is the proper usage of the NTE status.

Currently in the agency, we are continuing to deal with incidents that involve managers who are vindictive against our members. There are growing incidents where we feel they are being retaliated against, simply because they are exercising their rights for union representation. We are currently in the process of assessing grievance procedures because a manager placed an employee on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) after we successfully advocated against her

receiving an inappropriate, excessive and unnecessary *Verbal Warning*. Actions like this create a Hostile Work Environment and we want to avoid this at all costs. Not only do our members suffer, but the residents do as well.

I was also informed of an incident where a manager was communicating inappropriately in front of the public. They have also been known to chastise our members in front of the public as well. Although this is not how the majority of the managers operate, even these isolated incidents are relevant because this is not the image that we want District employees to be portrayed. To the best of my knowledge, nothing has been done to the specific managers and it is too rare that their disturbing behavior and inappropriate management skills are corrected. Since my last testimony, the agency has indicated improved training is now in place and they expect us to notice some changes. The senior level management seems committed to improvements; however, it is unfortunate that this commitment is indicative of some of the lower level managers.

Of concern now, is the promotion potential of Social Service Representatives (SSR). I am excited to report that in December, all SSRs were promoted from Grade 7 to Grade 9. This was done because they were performing the duties of a Grade 9 (not Grade 7). The agency has agreed that the duties of the Grade 7 are actually the performance level that is needed for the services that the agency provides. Local 2401 has been advocating for this change and is glad that it is now in place. Now we must ensure the agency creates a fair process that follows Career Ladder Progression, as stipulated in our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). This discussion has begun and I hopeful that we will be able to amicably make this process work as it works in other agencies, such as CFSA.

I am also concerned about the conditions of the facilities that our members work; specifically, the Anacostia Service Center. I have not done so, but it may be necessary for us to also testify before the Committee of Facilities and Procurement, which oversees the Department of General Services (DGS). The service center is riddled with problems. From ceiling tiles that are missing to HVAC issues. This winter, I have not gotten as many complaints as last winter, but over the summer, the building did not have air conditioning that functioned properly. In extreme heat or cold, the system does not function.

Over Summer 2018, due to the heat, staff were forced to work with the lights off and operating their personal fans. On one occasion, after numerous complaints, Local 2401 walked with management throughout the building, conducting temperature checks. Some staff had to be relocated to different areas and some were allowed to leave. Unfortunately, staff and citizens that wanted services had to endure the extreme temperatures in waiting area. The building is slated for renovations but I am not aware of when the Department of General Services (DGS) will make the landlord make the necessary, major needed improvements.

It is this Local's belief that staff should be relocated to a more appropriate location. Again, we are concerned about the safety of our members, but we are also concerned about the staff of the public. No one should have to endure these conditions or the potential conditions that would exist during renovations.

Withn the last few days, I was informed that our members continue to experience problems with the DCAS system. I am looking for more information in order to have an effective discussion with the agency. It is our goal to make sure staff are using an appropriately functioning system. We do not want our members held accountable at standards that are not appropriate with the tools they are provided.

On a positive note, recently, I was able to have a one on one meeting with the agency director, Laura Zeilinger. This meeting was very important because we were able to discuss some of the issues that I have mentioned furthermore, Ms. Zeilinger communicated her commitment to improving the relationship between management and the union. After experiencing several months without functioning properly as a Labor Management Partnership Council (LMPC), she has ensured that our meetings are scheduled for the remainder of 2019. If we are able to get the LMPC to function as it is designed, I firmly believe that we can improve on issues such as Health & Safety as well as Well Being and Morale. I have been in communication with the agency's Labor Relations and we plan to contact an authority on partnerships in order to get ideas and potential trainings.

Thank you for hearing from me today. I also look forward to more conversations, collaborating and sharing of information about DHS as well as other agencies associated with AFSCME Local 2401 and this Committee. This Local is very receptive to hearing from you and providing any feedback you would like from our members.