



**Testimony from DC Families for Safe Streets
for the public hearing from the Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety
held on Wednesday, October 5, 2023**

To the Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety:

Thank you for holding this public hearing on the operations for the Office of Unified Communications' 911 call center and on the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) Transparency and Accuracy Amendment Act of 2023 (B25-0344).

DC Families for Safe Streets is a group of survivors of traffic violence and families who lost loved ones who were killed or severely injured on our streets. **We submit this testimony with tender acknowledgement that DC's traffic fatalities for this calendar year have already surpassed the total number of fatalities from last year.**

OUC's failures are known to the members of this Committee; we will not enumerate them here. Rather, as survivors of traffic crashes and family members of people tragically killed on our city's streets, we remind Council Members that every caller to OUC is a human being. Every call is an instance in which someone in our city was in danger or hurt or concerned for another's well-being. Every call could be a frantic parent, child, spouse, or friend trying to access emergency care.

In traffic crashes, response time matters. In [April 2023](#), emergency responders were sent to the wrong location after a 911 caller reported a car crashed into the Anacostia River; the error caused a 16-minute delay in locating the victims. While it is unclear whether the three people inside died as a result of the delay, the point remains: three families will have empty chairs at Thanksgiving this year. Accuracy and speed matter.

As our city fails to make streets safe for *all* users, and as the number of victims of traffic violence grows, it is urgent that OUC's failures are swiftly corrected. Every person in the District of Columbia deserves to have confidence in the District's response to 911 calls.

DC Families for Safe Streets supports OUC Transparency and Accuracy Act of 2023 but urges the Council consider the following changes:

1. The bill leads with changes to 311 services. This placement suggests that 311 has a higher urgency than 911 emergency calls. We urge the Council to reevaluate the order of priorities in the bill.
2. Transparency is essential to understanding the cause of OUC's 911 call center errors, but transparency without action is meaningless. We urge the Council to set public benchmarks for improvement in 911 dispatch accuracy, and to use its oversight power to take appropriate action when those benchmarks are not met.

We also support the changes as identified by the more than 100 current and former ANC Commissioners in their [September 5, 2023 letter](#). We cannot underscore enough that District residents need to trust that they will reliably and swiftly receive care when they need it the most.

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*This testimony is submitted in dedication to the **40 people who died** due to traffic violence in the District this year. These names do not include the **5,100+ crash survivors** whose lives have been forever changed. 2023 is on track to be the deadliest year since Vision Zero by 2024 was announced. There have been 297 traffic fatalities since Mayor Bowser announced Vision Zero in 2015.*

- Carlos Enrique Christian, 24, from Northwest DC
- Andy Carino, 22, from Severna Park, MD
- James Timothy Tarrants, 66, from Northwest DC
- Eric Lyons, 49, from Northwest DC
- Wayne Brown Savoy, 63, from Southeast DC
- Mohammed Islam, 21, from Dorchester, MA
- Mohamed Kamara, 42, from Burtonsville, MD
- Jonathan Cabrera Mendez, 23, from Arlington, VA
- Olvin Torres Velasquez, 22, from Arlington, VA
- Brandon Johnson, 38
- Samuel Kesselman, 22, from Northwest DC
- Chantice Cole, 35, from Southeast DC
- Joshua Richmond, 27
- Rico Knight, 45, from Clinton, MD
- Tim Juan Mundell, 46, from Southeast DC
- Unidentified person
- Jin Park, 32
- William Lamont Walker, 50, from Southeast DC
- Rhyes Patrick-James Harris, 30, from Alexandria, VA
- Chad Nieboer, 49, from Northwest DC
- Carlos Aguiar, 43, from Northwest DC
- Milosha Stephens, 49, from Southeast DC
- Van Thomas Lee, 28, from Pittsburgh, PA

- Madison Jones, 19, from Northwest DC
- Dejuan George, 29, from Northeast DC
- Samuel Walker, 60, from Northeast DC
- Robert Hall, 49, from Northeast DC
- Unidentified person
- Bing Wong, 75, from Philadelphia, PA
- Jewel Regina Bazilio-Bellegarde, 68, from Silver Spring, MD
- Gatarua Stephen Gitu, 39, from Clinton, MD
- Unidentified person
- Marcus Hearn, 39, from Southwest DC
- Johnny Lee Harrington, 66, from Northeast DC
- Victor Serrano, 32, from Suitland, MD
- Unidentified person
- John Gibson, 34, from Greenbelt, MD
- Unidentified person
- Don Antonio Coleman, 59, from Southwest DC
- Wilmer Rosali Canales Ventura, 42, from Northwest DC