

**DISAGGREGATING DATA BY RACE AND PLACE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Statement of**

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**before the**

**Committee on Government Operations,**

**Council of the District of Columbia**

**GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS PUBLIC HEARING**

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\* The views expressed are my own and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

I thank Peter Tatian for helpful comments in preparing this testimony.

Chairman Todd, Councilmember McDuffie, and members of the Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on racial equity in the District of Columbia. My name is Leah Hendey, and I am a senior research associate at the Urban Institute. The views expressed here are my own and should not be attributed to any organization I am affiliated with, their trustees, or their funders.

My Urban colleagues and I have documented significant inequities in DC by race and place in two online data features.<sup>1</sup> Poor birth outcomes, inadequate incomes and education, and low-wage jobs create effects that accumulate and reinforce each other. But these inequitable outcomes are not just the way things are. They are the result of structural racism formed by decades of discrimination and deliberate policies and practices, many of which my colleague, Dr. Kijakazi, just named.<sup>2</sup> As she suggests, to reduce these inequities it is necessary to change our policies and practices today. They need to be crafted, operationalized, and monitored with a lens that assesses the intended and unintended outcomes and disproportionate effects for people of color.

Both our data features disaggregate data by race, ethnicity, and place, focusing on the number of people who would have the opportunity to reach their full potential in an equitable DC. Measuring these gaps is important to understand the scale of change required, evaluate whether existing efforts are sufficient, and frame discussion of how to make progress.

We can use wages as an example. With DC's high housing costs, a living wage for a single adult without children is more than \$35,000 annually.<sup>3</sup> At \$15.00 an hour or \$31,200 annually, DC's minimum wage is still not enough to ensure that full-time workers can cover their basic needs and find safe and decent housing. Nearly one in five adults, even working full time, earns less than this amount.

But this aggregated rate masks stark inequities: more than 30 percent of black and Hispanic adults working full time earn less than \$35,000, compared with only 8 percent of white adults. In an equitable DC, nearly 20,000 additional black workers and 7,000 additional Hispanic workers would earn more than \$35,000 annually for full-time work. In Ward 4 an equitable DC would mean almost 5,800 more full-time workers would earn over \$35,000, including 3,100 in Brightwood Park, Crestwood, and Petworth (see charts).

Disaggregated data like these can help elected officials, agency staff, service organizations, local philanthropy, and residents better understand the challenge of addressing inequities and think of innovative cross-sector solutions. In this case, training programs can help people obtain or improve

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<sup>1</sup> Those two features are "Closing Equity Gaps in DC's Wards and Neighborhoods," by myself, Peter Tatian, and Yipeng Su (Urban Institute, November 15, 2018), <https://apps.urban.org/features/dc-equity-indicators/>; and "A Vision for an Equitable DC," by myself and Serena Lei (Urban Institute, December 12, 2016), <https://www.urban.org/features/vision-equitable-dc>. Both features analyze DC's black, white, and Hispanic residents, meaning my colleagues and I studied the two most-populous races, ethnicity, and place. I use "race and place" here as a shorthand.

<sup>2</sup> Also see Kilolo Kijakazi, Rachel Marie Brooks Atkins, Mark Paul, Anne E. Price, Darrick Hamilton, and William A. Darity Jr., *The Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Per MIT's Living Wage Calculator, <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/11001>.

skills, but systemic barriers need addressing to raise the earnings of more than 20,000 full-time workers. Extending basic protections to all workers and eliminating hiring and wage discrimination are critical,<sup>4</sup> as is tackling barriers to obtaining postsecondary education.

Data can help diagnose the scale of the challenge and generate ideas on solutions. But it should also be used throughout the policy process. Disaggregated data should be a key part of assessing and adjusting policies after they are put in place to see what’s working and what needs to change to ensure progress toward equity is made.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

### Full-time workers earning a living wage, 2012–16

Ward 4

75%



Ward 4 in an equitable DC

92%



If this goal is met, 5,791 more full-time workers in Ward 4 would earn over \$35,000 a year.

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### Full-time workers earning a living wage, 2012–16

Brightwood Park, Crestwood, Petworth

73%



Brightwood Park, Crestwood, Petworth in an equitable DC

92%



If this goal is met, 3,171 more full-time workers in Brightwood Park, Crestwood, and Petworth would earn over \$35,000 a year.

<sup>4</sup> See Lawrence Katz, Arjen Poo, and Elaine Waxman, *Imagining a Future of Work That Fosters Mobility for All* (Washington, DC: US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty, 2018) and Rebecca Knight, “7 Practical Ways to Reduce Bias in Your Hiring Process,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 12, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/06/7-practical-ways-to-reduce-bias-in-your-hiring-process>.

**Source:** Leah Hendey, Peter Tatian, and Yipeng Su, "Closing Equity Gaps in DC's Wards and Neighborhoods," Urban Institute, November 15, 2018, <https://apps.urban.org/features/dc-equity-indicators/>.