



July 13, 2018

Transmitted via Email

Brianne K. Nadeau
Chairperson, Committee on Human Services
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Chairperson Nadeau:

I am writing in response to your July 13, 2018 letter following the joint public oversight roundtable convened by the Committee on Human Services and the Committee on Transportation and the Environment about the construction of Short-Term Family Housing (STFH) buildings and the closure of DC General Family Shelter. Please find the requested information below.

1. As the client agency, to what extent is DHS involved in the construction process of the short-term family housing facilities?

Throughout building design and construction, DHS meets weekly with the DGS project team. During the design phase, DHS is focused on ensuring that the building design and materials meet the needs of the STFH program. During construction, DGS provides regular updates on progress toward milestone, including permitting and site coordination. DGS also reviews potential changes with DHS, and DHS offers design suggestions when unforeseen conditions occur.

2. When did the agency first learn of the significant delays at the Wards 7 and 8 sites? In what format (i.e. internal email, meeting, etc.)?

In late May, during a STFH meeting with representatives from various offices within the Executive where I was present, Director Gillis shared that DGS was working to mitigate challenges that could have an impact on construction completion timelines in Wards 7 and 8. As I have communicated since we began the design process with DGS, my expectation is that DGS deliver high quality, durable buildings that serve our families well. I disagree with the inference that several weeks constitutes a “significant delay.” If several additional weeks are required for DGS to ensure the delivery of buildings that will serve families for many years to come, according to our expectations, I consider this acceptable. I would like to assure Council and the community that this will not impact our ability to effectively meet the emergency shelter needs of families in the interim.

3. Does DHS have an expectation that all delays will be shared with the agency as soon as practicable, or only to the extent the delivery date may be compromised?

For more than two years, DGS – at DHS’ request – has been working toward a Fall 2018 delivery schedule for buildings in Wards 4, 7, and 8. My expectation, which DGS met, is that they notify

the Agency if and when they become aware that any project is behind schedule and they are unable to mitigate those issues to bring it back on schedule. As Council is aware, the construction schedules for STFH in Wards 3, 5, and 6 were delayed significantly beyond the fall 2018 timeline by virtue of the changes that Council made to the locations of these sites.

4. If any of the short-term family housing facilities scheduled for substantial completion as of October 1 do not meet this deadline, will DHS move forward with its plan to close DC General in October?

Yes. DHS stopped placing new families at DC General in May 2018 in order to facilitate a safe, secure, and orderly closure of the old hospital as a family shelter. DHS and The Community Partnership have been focused on supporting families to exit DC General to permanent housing. And many families have made this transition. Our goal is for all families who currently reside at DC General to exit the shelter by October 2018, at which time we will close the shelter once and for all. The delivery of new STFH buildings will not impact the closure date of DC General. Since DHS stopped making new placements at DC General in May, and as families – with support from DHS and The Community Partnership – exit DC General to permanent housing, the census at DC General has declined. Today, 151 families reside at the shelter.

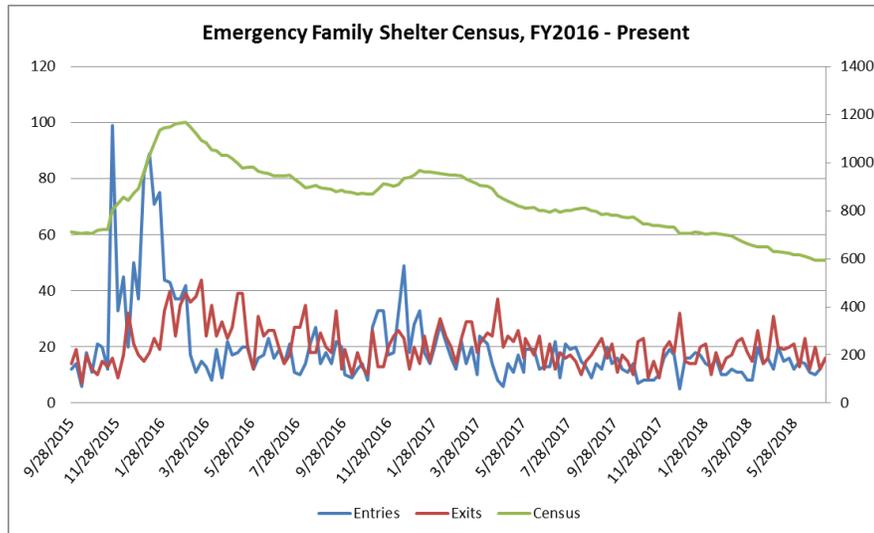
From day one, we have approached closing DC General with urgency because our conscience and values compel us to. Today, we are just months away from safely closing DC General forever. We are reforming the entire system of care for families by preventing homelessness more frequently, investing in the housing programs families need to exit shelter, and changing the way we deliver emergency shelter. Our efforts so far have yielded a 40 percent decrease in homelessness among families over the past two years while maintaining year-round access to shelter.

5. Does the agency have any concerns related to closing DC General on the verge of hypothermia season? If so, how are the concerns being addressed?

No, we do not have concerns about closing DC General in advance of hypothermia season. Closing and replacing DC General is only one part of our system reform. The first step in reforming our system was creating year-round access to shelter – ensuring that families have access to the services they need, regardless of the weather – which occurred in 2015. The second reform was the creation of the Homeless Prevention Program, which has prevented more than 5,700 families from experiencing homelessness since it began in September 2015. Due to these changes, as well as historic investments in housing solutions, our 2018 Point in Time count showed a 40 percent decrease in homelessness among families over the past two years. As is shown below, last year, for the first time in many years and because of year round access to shelter, we did not see a spike in entries during hypothermia season. We expect this trend to continue.

Still, DHS regularly reviews actual and projected entries and exits. We do this to ensure that we have sufficient emergency shelter capacity, but also so we are good stewards of public resources, contracting our supply as necessary to align with projected need. At this time, we are confident that we have access to sufficient capacity to meet the need for family shelter during the 2018/2019 hypothermia season.

Finally, each year the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH), of which DHS is a part, uses a data-driven process to develop a Winter Plan that describes how those who are experiencing homelessness will be protected from cold weather injury and how the District will meet the shelter capacity needs of both families and individuals. This process will begin in the coming months.



6. Are there any circumstances under which DHS might consider keeping DC General open past October? Please elaborate.

We do not foresee any circumstances under which DHS might consider keeping DC General open past October at this time.

- 7. Beginning Friday, July 13, and each Friday thereafter until the closure of DC General, please provide a weekly report detailing the following:**
- a. The current number of families residing at DC General
 - b. The number of exits, detailed by program
 - c. The number of lease-ups scheduled, detailed by program
 - d. The number of families making significant progress to lease-up, providing as much detail as possible for each family, including the projected lease-up dates
 - e. The number of families confronting significant barriers to lease-up, providing as much detail as possible for each family, including how the agency is working with families to overcome such barriers

Please see the attached report.

- 8. Beginning July 13, and each second Friday of the month thereafter until the short-term family housing facilities in Wards 4, 7, and 8 are available for occupancy, please provide a written plan that includes the following:**
- a. The projected need of contracted units of emergency family shelter or hotels
 - b. The available number of contracted units of emergency family shelter or hotels, including locations

- c. **The total projected cost for contracted units, detailing whether currently funded in the Fiscal Year 2019 budget and financial plan**

Please see the attached report.

9. **Upon the closure of DC General, please provide a report detailing the following:**
 - a. **The date of closure**
 - b. **The number of families that remained upon closure, necessitating a swift exit**
 - c. **The status of remaining families upon closure (significant progress to lease-up, significant barriers to lease-up, etc.)**
 - d. **A breakdown of where the families were exited to (program, hotel, short-term family housing facility, etc.)**

We are committed to completing this report directly following the closure of DC General Family Shelter.

We share your commitment to transparency and to ensuring that our most vulnerable residents have access to safe emergency shelter at the time that they need it. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,



Laura Green Zeilinger
Director

Cc: Mayor Muriel Bowser
Chairman Phil Mendelson, At-Large
Councilmember David Grosso, At-Large
Councilmember Brandon T. Todd, Ward 4
Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr., At-Large
Councilmember Trayon White, Sr., Ward 8
Councilmember Vincent C. Gray, Ward 7
Councilmember Mary M. Cheh, Chair, Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Greer Johnson Gillis, Director, Department of General Services