

The NEAR Act:

An Evidence-Based Program to Promote PUBLIC SAFETY in the District
And Why the DC Council Must Act By TUESDAY, May 30th,
to Not Roadblock the Act's Effectiveness

What is the NEAR Act?

The Neighborhood Engagement Achieve Results (NEAR) Act was passed unanimously by the DC Council in 2016. It provides a comprehensive framework to promote public safety and reduce crime in the District.

The NEAR Act redefines how the District approaches public safety by focusing on community-based solutions that treat the root causes of crime. For too long, issues in our community that are better addressed through public health interventions have been criminalized, leading to high rates of incarceration, the breakdown of communities, and no discernible end to the cycle of crime.

The Act consists of several different tools, all of which must work together to achieve the long-standing results of smart criminal justice reform we seek as a community.

What is the Stipend-Based Intervention Program in the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and Why is It So Critical?

The creation of the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) is at the heart of the Act. This soon-to-be-established office will identify DC residents at the highest risk of committing or being victims of violent crimes and invite them to participate in a stipend-based intervention program that includes life planning, trauma-informed therapy, and mentorship. The program requires participants to create and execute a successful life plan that moves them away from the pitfalls of violent crime.

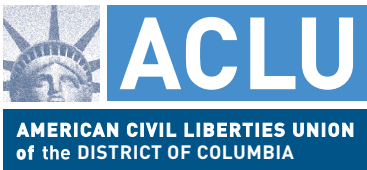
ONSE is modeled on a successful program in Richmond, Calif. After implementing this stipend-based program, Richmond experienced a 76 percent reduction in firearms-related homicides between 2007 and 2014, and similar violence interruption programs in other jurisdictions have had comparably impressive results.

How Could the Mayor's 2018 Budget Impede the Effectiveness of the NEAR Act?

Mayor Muriel Bowser's proposed Budget Support Act for Fiscal Year 2018 removes language in the law establishing the stipend-based intervention program within ONSE, and instead has the office manage already-existing DC government programs.

Although the ONSE office would still be tasked with coordinating the District's overall violence prevention strategy, this change essentially *eliminates* the evidence-based program that has led to significant reductions in violent crime in other jurisdictions.

Unfortunately, The DC Council's Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety approved this change at its Budget Markup on May 18, even while acknowledging that doing so does not allow this key provision of the NEAR Act to move forward "entirely with the legislative intent with which it was passed."



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How Can the DC Council Retain the Effectiveness of the NEAR Act?

We urge the Council to change course and add the stipend-based intervention program back into the law before it votes on the District's Budget for FY18 on Tuesday, May 30. The Council *should not* approve the Budget Support Act amendment to the NEAR Act without the stipend-based intervention program.

Removing the stipend-based intervention program and implementing the NEAR Act only in part undermines both the intent of the comprehensive approach that the Council unanimously approved in 2016, and the ability of ONSE to effectively reduce violent crime in the District.

If the Mayor or the DC Council want to amend the NEAR Act to change the nature of the ONSE office, they should do so independently of the budget process so as to allow DC residents a meaningful opportunity to weigh in. DC residents deserve a chance to give input if the law is going to be significantly altered, and the budget process does not allow enough time or opportunity for this.

What is at Stake?

If funded and implemented faithfully, the NEAR Act proposes significant improvements to the District's criminal justice, public health, and public safety programs and policies. Restoring the stipend-based intervention program in ONSE is critical to the success of the Near Act and to effectively addressing violence in the District.