



**Testimony to the Committee on the Whole
Budget Oversight for the Office of Planning
April 24, 2024**

Fay Armstrong on Behalf of the DC Preservation League

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson and Councilmembers. My name is Fay Armstrong. I serve as President of the Board of Trustees of the DC Preservation League, Washington's citywide nonprofit dedicated to preserving and protecting the historic and built environment of our nation's capital. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Mayor's Budget for the Historic Preservation Office.

DCPL works closely with the Historic Preservation Office and its parent agency, the Office of Planning, in pursuit of its own mission and, in doing so, supports DC-led initiatives that utilize historic preservation to further economic growth and vitality in the city.

We thank the Council for expanding the Historic Homeowner Grant Program to all city neighborhoods and for increasing the maximum grant amount per household to \$50,000. There is no need for a geographic restriction when program eligibility is limited by income. The increased maximum per grant will help low and moderate-income homeowners meet their rehabilitation goals in the face of ongoing inflation. Expansion of the program is also consistent with the goals of the 2025 Historic Preservation Plan and the Mayor's Fair Shot initiatives. Toward those ends, DCPL requests that the Council increase the funding proposed in the Mayor's Budget from \$250,000 to the statutorily authorized maximum of \$500,000, which will enable more homeowners to access what may be for them critical funding needed to maintain their historic properties.

The District of Columbia has a wealth of historic resources that play a significant role in supporting economic and cultural diversity, housing goals, property values, heritage tourism, tax revenues, jobs, and incomes. Protecting and investing in historic buildings is an investment in the future growth and financial health of Washington, DC. Nevertheless, many question the value that historic preservation brings to city. An independent analysis of these issues, as has been done in other jurisdictions, thus seems warranted. Accordingly, DCPL requests the Council include \$250,000 in the FY2025 budget for the Historic Preservation Office to hire a consultant to analyze and report on the impact of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. This report should cover economic impact, neighborhood demographic changes, housing and affordability, jobs, and heritage tourism. A study like this would provide much-needed data and analysis to inform future historic preservation activities and other planning and economic development efforts in the city.

We look forward to our continued work with OP and HPO, and thank you for your time and attention to these requests.

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