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Treat homicide surge as public health crisis

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the District Council Committee on the Judiciary to act promptly and favorably on Bill B21-0360, the “Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results Act of 2015”, implementing measures that treat the current spike in homicides as a public health crisis.

Why: The recent homicide in Mount Pleasant illustrates the nature of the current surge in homicides: two young men involved in some personal dispute, of no significance until one pulls out a gun and makes the petty dispute a homicide. Neither man was, to our knowledge, a known criminal, nor were they engaged in criminal activity. Conventional approaches to crime reduction will fail to address this syndrome of ordinary, non-criminal individuals bringing guns to personal disputes.

The statistics of robberies and homicides show that the current large increase in homicides is not correlated with any increase in other violent crimes. In the District, year to date, homicides have increased by 45% over last year, whereas robberies have increased only 3%. In the 7th Police District, the area most afflicted by homicides, homicides are up by 91%, while robberies have in fact decreased by 8%. It's a mistake to suggest that the increase in homicides is due to an increase in crime in general. On the contrary, the homicide count has increased drastically with no increase in robberies, or even despite a decrease in robberies. The increase is solely in homicides, and those homicides are frequently the result of ordinary personal disputes, not associated with any criminal activity.

Such homicides can be addressed by the measures proposed in this bill, specifically an Office of Neighborhood Engagement and Safety, tasked to engage individuals determined to be at high risk of engaging in violence, and to steer them away from that violence – especially gun violence.

Clearly we cannot prevent people from obtaining guns. We must identify individuals who might be inclined to use guns in their personal disputes and persuade them, before that use, that such an act will only bring them far greater trouble.

Passed by 5 to 0 vote at the legally noticed, public meeting of ANC1D on October 20, 2015, with a quorum present. Voting “yes”: Commissioners Hoey, McKay, Agbro, Griffiths, Rivas. A quorum for this commission is three; five commissioners were present.