Ending chronic homelessness will take more than money.

Ending chronic homelessness is within reach.
DC can end chronic homelessness. To do so, Mayor Bowser must follow the recommendations laid out in her strategic plan to end homelessness, Homeward DC 2.0. However vital, funding is not the only obstacle to success. Policy changes are needed to ensure that the historic funding secured in the FY 22 budget, and any new funding allocated in FY23 is utilized as intended: to end homelessness.

In addition to our implementation recommendations for the Department of Human Services [link] and the DC Housing Authority [link], The Way Home Campaign calls on Mayor Bowser to implement the following policy changes. These recommendations are associated with our FY 2023 Budget Recommendations [link].

- **Ensure PSH clients can step up and step-down services based on their needs**
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) utilizing a Housing First approach ends chronic homelessness. Thanks to the success of DC’s adoption of this best practice, many residents who have been in PSH for years no longer need high levels of supportive services. Conversely, as clients age and needs change, some PSH residents might need extra support. Clients must be able to move up and down the scale of services based on their needs and desires. Levels of support and services must be determined by client choice and clinical experience, not by contract stipulations and reimbursement rates.

- **Ensure that short-term assistance is well targeted and does not exit people into homelessness**
Funding for 250 slots of short-term assistance must be well-targeted, preserve client choice, and only end when the client has enough income to sustain housing. In addition, the program should only be funded with one-time funding and recurring funding should be spent on PSH and other forms of long-term deeply affordable housing.

- **Expand Project Reconnect to encompass true homeless prevention, not just diversion**
Currently, Project Reconnect, DC’s program for homeless singles prevention, is used primarily to exit people from homelessness quickly. While this is an important but insufficient goal it does not prevent people from entering into homelessness in the first place. To move towards a prevention-focused mindset, DHS must retool Project Reconnect to ensure that people remain housed before they enter homelessness. Significant lessons and parallels can be drawn from the Family Homeless Prevention Program.