



# Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

*“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”*

April 28, 2025

Brooke Pinto, Ward 2  
Chair, Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Suite 106  
Washington DC, 20004

## **RE: Performance Oversight on the Office of Unified Communications (OUC)**

At its regular meeting on April 15, 2025, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A (“ANC 2A” or “Commission”) considered the above-referenced matter. With all six commissioners present, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission, after a motion made by Commissioner Patel and seconded by Commissioner DiCapo, adopted the following resolution by 3-0-3:

**WHEREAS** ANC 2A has grave and growing concerns about the performance and dependability of the Office of Unified Communications’ (OUC) 911 emergency call-taking, text-to-911, and dispatch functions;

**WHEREAS** An all Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (ANCs), letter,<sup>1</sup> sent on September 5, 2023, was signed by 126 current and former (ANCs) from all eight wards who collectively represent an estimated 200,000 District residents—nearly 30 percent of the 712,000 people who reside in Washington, D.C—to express our deepening worry about chronic understaffing, procedural dysfunction, and fatal errors by the Office of Unified Communications (OUC)’s 911 call center;

**WHEREAS** On August 2, 2024, a five-month-old boy died after going into cardiac arrest<sup>2</sup>. At the time of the incident, OUC’s 911 system had crashed<sup>3</sup>—reportedly the fifth time since May

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Commissioners Costello, Imtiaz, and Kwan, et al., to Mayor Muriel Bowser et al., Sept. 5, 2023, *Grave concerns about performance and reliability at the Office of Unified Communications*, available at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/19nRR4\\_c5JfZz52ofScpoyN3od2ixzcZPa-DqIjRte58/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/19nRR4_c5JfZz52ofScpoyN3od2ixzcZPa-DqIjRte58/edit?usp=sharing).

<sup>2</sup> [Baby dies during outage of DC 911 computer system – NBC4 Washington \(nbcwashington.com\)](https://www.nbc4washington.com/news/baby-dies-during-outage-of-dc-911-computer-system/2024/08/02/baby-dies-during-outage-of-dc-911-computer-system/)

<sup>3</sup> While this very real and tragic crisis was unfolding in D.C., OUC Director Heather McGaffin was attending a conference in Orlando, Florida, alongside her predecessor, former OUC Director Karima Holmes, to teach other 911 directors how to manage “Crisis Level Incidents.” Considering that D.C.’s 911 call center is itself unable to perform even basic functions, let alone “crisis level incidents,” the Council should consider restricting OUC’s travel for speaking engagements until the agency’s Director demonstrates competence in correcting the failing agency’s performance.



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2024. (OUC experienced a sixth outage a week later on August 9.) Reports indicate that the family of the baby boy were unable to get through to anyone at the 911 call center for more than 10 minutes. When a caller was finally able to get through, public reporting indicates that the call was likely mishandled by OUC;

**WHEREAS** This incident triggered an OUC follow-up letter<sup>4</sup> sent on August 15, 2024 that has been signed by 132 current and former ANCs and ANC candidates, including 86 current Commissioners from all eight wards who collectively represent nearly a quarter of District residents;

**WHEREAS** OUC's performance has rapidly deteriorated: the agency continues to dispatch FEMS teams to the wrong locations<sup>5</sup>; the agency still inadequately prioritizes calls<sup>6</sup>; residents report (and OUC's own data confirms<sup>7</sup>) worsening call answering times<sup>8</sup> and dropped calls<sup>9</sup>; and, since OUC inexplicably launched its new call answering program, PowerPhone, in February 2024 amid these ongoing failures, the call center has experienced multiple system crashes<sup>10</sup>.

**WHEREAS** compounding these failures is OUC's historical disinclination to release detailed information about the causes of these failures;

**WHEREAS** the lack of transparency hampers OUC's ability to remedy persistent failures, and it also frustrates the Council's obligation to conduct effective oversight and ensure OUC has the resources it needs to truly be a "lifeline" to residents;

**WHEREAS** the Auditor's 2021 report and recommendations District's 911 System: Reforms Needed to Meet Safety Needs<sup>11</sup> provided an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) Operations Division against national standards, a review of a sample of 911 call recording and data, an evaluation of OUC culture and training, along with a review of OUC's technological capabilities and OUC's internal investigations of past incidents;

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<sup>4</sup> [OUC follow up - Aug 2024 - Google Docs](#)

<sup>5</sup> [DC man says 911 sent help to wrong address for apartment fire | wusa9.com](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Lawsuit alleges botched 911 response led to man's drowning death - The Washington Post](#)

<sup>7</sup> [911 Performance Dashboard BETA | OUC \(dc.gov\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Neighbors question DC's 911 response following deadly crash | wusa9.com](#)

<sup>9</sup> ["This is literally life or death": DC council member expresses frustration with 911 call center problems - WTOP News](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Dave Statter on X: "NEW: The computer system at DC911/@OUC\\_DC has, once again, crashed. This is about the third or fourth time \(separate from the global CrowdStrike incident\) in recent months that this has occurred. Having this many crashes of your computer-aided dispatch system is a significant https://t.co/f4SuvTFztH" / X](#)

<sup>11</sup> [District's 911 System: Reforms Needed to Meet Safety Needs - Office of the DC Auditor](#)



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**WHEREAS** according to the Office of the D.C. Auditor’s March 2023 implementation status report<sup>12</sup>, OUC had “overstated” the actions it had taken to implement the Auditor’s recommendations, and the Auditor’s report noted that OUC had not been “accurate” or “transparent” in describing some of its after action reviews;

**WHEREAS**, ANC 2A has been adversely impacted by the Office of Unified Communications’ (OUC) performance, particularly in delayed emergency response times for incidents such as stalking and domestic disturbances between March and July 2024;

**WHEREAS**, on Saturday, February 8, 2025, at approximately 10:00 p.m., 911 was called to respond to a fire alarm at 950 25th Street NW;

**WHEREAS**, the building concierge called 911 at approximately 10:00 p.m. and was placed on hold for 15 minutes, with the call connecting at 10:17 p.m.; nine minutes later, at 10:26 p.m., Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS) were dispatched<sup>13</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, FEMS arrived on site at 10:31 p.m., while over 200 residents evacuated the building and stood outside in freezing temperatures for approximately one hour and fifteen minutes, until they were allowed back inside around 11:15 p.m.<sup>14</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, the mission of OUC—to provide accurate, professional, and expedited service to the citizens and visitors of the District of Columbia—has failed the residents of ANC 2A, as ongoing issues at the agency remain unaddressed despite numerous high-profile incidents resulting in preventable loss of property and life;

**WHEREAS**, these chronic issues have eroded residents’ trust in the city’s emergency response system, which is meant to serve as a critical lifeline for police, fire, and medical emergencies in the District of Columbia;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that ANC 2A advises the Council of the District of Columbia to reintroduce the *Transparency in Emergency Response Amendment Act*, which would direct the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) to conduct an after-action conference and issue a public report following any alleged failure of emergency response;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that ANC 2A requests a formal after-action conference and a publicly accessible report concerning the response failure at 950 25th Street

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<sup>12</sup> [OUC Roadmap - March 2023.pdf \(dc.gov\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Claridge evacuation fuels community concerns over 911 dispatch delays – The GW Hatchet](#)

<sup>14</sup> [F250024931\\_950\\_25th\\_St.\\_NW](#)



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N.W. This report should include the release of relevant call transcripts and recordings in order to ensure that the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) remains open, honest, and transparent about both its shortcomings and its progress toward improvement.

Commissioner Trupti Patel ([2A03@anc.dc.gov](mailto:2A03@anc.dc.gov)) is the Commission's representative in this matter

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,

Chairperson Trupti J Patel (she/her)  
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A  
Historic Foggy Bottom  
Single Member District 2A03

CC:

Heather McGaffin, Director, Office of Unified Communications  
Chairman Phil Mendelson  
Councilmember Kenyan R. McDuffie, At-Large, and Chair Pro Tempore  
Councilmember Anita Bonds, At-Large  
Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr., At-Large  
Councilmember Christina Henderson, At-Large  
Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau, Ward 1  
Councilmember Brooke Pinto, Ward 2  
Councilmember Matthew Frumin, Ward 3  
Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, Ward 4  
Councilmember Zachary Parker, Ward 5  
Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6  
Councilmember Wendell Felder Ward 7  
Pamela Smith, DC Chief of Police  
Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice  
Kathy Patterson, D.C. Auditor



# **Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A**

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Kevin Donahue, City Administrator

Tadai Abilla, Ward 2 Manager, Mayor's Office of Community Relations