

Council of the District of Columbia
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004



BOARD OF ETHICS AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY
OFFICE OF OPEN GOVERNMENT

FISCAL YEAR 2018 BUDGET

Testimony of Traci L. Hughes, Esquire
Director, Office of Open Government

Thursday, April 27, 2018
9:30 AM
Room 123

Good morning, Chairman Allen and members of the Committee. I am Johnnie Barton, the Attorney Advisor for the Office of Open Government. Director Hughes regrets that she cannot be here to testify, but I will read her testimony as written.

Chairman Allen, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and to inform the Committee of the budgetary requirements of the office I lead with the stalwart assistance of my colleagues, Mr. Johnnie Barton and Mr. Waddah Kittab.

As this Committee is aware, I've not minced words regarding the financial inequities that plague the Office of Open Government. When the Council passed legislation in 2011 creating the Office of Open Government, it was created as an independent agency with its own budget authority.

However, when the OOG was moved to the Board of Ethics and Government Accountability (BEGA) in 2012, it retained its independent status, but its budget was used to fund the agency, rather than the Office of Open Government separately. BEGA holds the line item for a more than \$2 million budget that is to be shared between the ethics office and the Office of Open Government. The ethics side of our collective house absorbs the largest percentage of the shared budget.

In an attempt to begin lessen the imbalance, Council agreed to allow the OOG an FY 2017 allotment of existing BEGA Non-Personnel Service (NPS) funding in the amount of \$43,000 to be used solely for OOG. However, more than \$20,000 of that allotment must now be dedicated to the operating costs the ethics office has determined the OOG must cover.

Although the Mayor's Office has approved a \$15,000 enhancement to the FY 2018 proposed budget to help cover the operating charges that must come from NPS, it does not include the OOG's \$20,000 enhancement request to cover the salary increases given to personnel who are part of the Legal Service Schedule. The OOG has one Legal Service FTE. In addition to the insufficient PS funding, the proposed FY 2018 budget no longer includes the \$43,000 allotment from FY 2017. In FY 2017, the pro-rated share of OCTO costs for the three OOG FTE's is approximately \$6,000.

In sum, the proposed budget not only reduces the OOG budget by \$7,000, the NPS budget is reduced to \$22,700 from \$43,000.

The arduous budget constraints on such a small office like OOG, makes it increasingly difficult to fulfill the mission of the office. Although the OOG has managed to make significant headway in Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act compliance in the past four years, now that the OOG is better known -- and more consistently used as a resource for agencies and members of the public -- the OOG must keep pace with improving its own internal structures to meet demand. Most notably, this will come in the form of increasing the capacity of the public body central meeting calendar to support the increasing, and welcomed use, by public bodies who publish meeting dates and relevant meeting records, including audio and video files.

While fully recognizing that the \$43,000 allotment was allocated to the FY 2017, the OOG respectfully requests an additional \$25,000 NPS budget to support increase capacity needed for

the central calendar to upgrade to a full application, and for MOU advice data on Microsoft platform.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.