

February 12, 2026  
RE: Performance Oversight Hearing  
Department of Public Works



To Councilmember Nadeau and members of the Department of Public Works:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to testify for the Department of Public Works (DPW) oversight hearing. My name is Jamoni Overby, and I am the District of Columbia Conservation Advocate for Nature Forward, an organization of more than 28,000 members and supporters, that has been helping residents of the DMV enjoy, learn about, and protect nature for 126 years. Our Conservation priorities are human health & access to nature; biodiversity & habitat; fighting the climate crisis; and sustainable land use. The urgency of the climate crisis is evident across our country today, and that urgency underscores the importance of hearings like this one.

I want to begin by thanking Councilmember Nadeau and the 11 out of 13 Councilmembers for co-introducing the Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Amendment Act of 2025. This legislation represents a crucial step toward reducing waste all over the city, specifically in our wonderful green spaces.

### **Support for a Strong and Equitable Bottle Bill**

Nature Forward is proud to be a founding member of 3RC, The (Return, Refund, and Recycle) Coalition, and we fully support the Bottle Bill. This bill will require a 10-cent deposit on beverage containers, which consumers can reclaim upon returning their bottles. The benefits of this policy are undeniable:

- Plastic bottles currently account for 60% of the trash polluting the Anacostia River. Similar laws in other states have reduced bottle litter by 69-84%.
- Bottle return programs create up to 38 times more jobs than traditional curbside recycling, fostering new economic opportunities for DC residents.
- Decreasing litter in our communities is not just an environmental necessity but also an issue of public and mental health. More than a thousand District



residents have voiced their support for this bill through petitions and postcards.

- There is no safe level of lead exposure. The bottle bill will provide financial solutions to ensuring all DC residents have clean drinking water. Through any unclaimed deposits, lead water filters will be supplied to families still suffering the consequences of lead service lines.
- I have led recent community workshops in neighborhoods, and residents share, they would be more likely to properly dispose of their bottles and pick up bottles with a bottle bill.

Although no longer in this committee, we urge Council to pass this bill as written to ensure DC residents have a strong and equitable bottle bill that will also address layers of issues in the city.

### **Expanding Public Restroom Access - Throne Bathrooms**

Another key issue is access to clean, safe public restrooms. The current DC pilot program for public “Throne” restrooms has already shown promise. Nature Forward supported expanding this initiative into 2025 and continue to address its expansion particularly in Wards 7 and 8. After speaking with unhoused residents on a flood walk in Ward 7, we found that their lack of access to public restrooms forced them to use a tarp to create privacy to use Watts Branch as a toilet. This is an area that is often impacted by flooding. In times of heavy rainfall, human waste in the water overflows on the streets and in the homes of residents living in 100- and 500-year floodplains. Increased access to public restrooms is essential for reducing E. coli pollution in DC’s rivers, including the Anacostia River, where both human and dog waste contribute to unsafe water conditions. Today, no rivers or streams in DC are safe for fishing or swimming due to high levels of bacterial contamination. Providing more public restrooms that remain open 24hours in high-traffic areas and near waterways will help mitigate this public health issue while supporting the dignity and well-being of all residents.

Expanding the Compost Pilot Program and Save As You Throw Pilot: DC has set an ambitious and commendable goal of diverting 80% of its waste from landfills and incinerators by 2032. The ongoing curbside compost pilot program for 12,000 single-family homes is a step in the right direction, but we must expand this initiative. Currently, our curbside composting program serves 9,000 homes at the cost of \$3



million a year. The number of customers is expected to rise to 12,000 during FY2026. Over the next 10 years, DOW estimates it will need about \$55 million to fully expand this program to cover the District and to transition to union labor and DC government jobs. For FY2027, a \$6.6 million dollar investment will continue to drive this progress. Composting is a proven tool in the fight against climate change, reducing methane emissions from landfills and enhancing soil health. The food waste collected in DC is already being processed in Prince George's County, where it replaces synthetic fertilizers for farmers. Nature Forward asks for your support in the expansion of this program and the institution of the Save as You Throw Pilot program to include more DC residents to see the impact a program like this can have to bring us closer to our environmental goals and reduce our reliance on harmful waste disposal methods.

### **New Benning Road Transfer Station**

The Department of Public Works (DPW) plays a critical role in our community's well-being through regular trash/recycling collection and supporting neighborhood cleanup initiatives. Nature Forward eagerly anticipates the opening of the New Benning Road Transfer Station, which updates an old facility in Ward 7 that is no longer efficient, with a modern one that will provide a clean and accessible space for residents, and an on-site educational center to teach the community about the district's sustainability and zero waste goals. We look forward to meeting with DPW this year to learn more about how the new facility will impact the environment and neighboring communities.

### **Conclusion**

Environmental justice means ensuring that all residents, regardless of their zip code, benefit from policies that create cleaner neighborhoods, healthier communities, and economic opportunities. Passing an equitable Bottle Bill, expanding the Throne Bathroom initiative, and scaling up the composting program as well as other effective ways of waste disposal are essential steps toward a more sustainable and equitable DC.

I urge the Council and DPW to act swiftly on these initiatives and ensure that environmental justice remains at the forefront of our city's public works agenda. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.



Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If you need any additional information or have questions, please contact me at [jamoni.overby@natureforward.org](mailto:jamoni.overby@natureforward.org).

With appreciation,

Jamoni Overby

DC Conservation Advocate, Nature Forward



Second page

Kayla - here is some language in the bill Five years after the effective date of the Environmental Justice Amendment

22 Act of 2023 (introduced on November 6, 2023) and every 5 years thereafter, DOEE may issue

23 regulations adjusting the definition of an overburdened community, providing that DOEE

24 considers the social vulnerability of residents, including racial or ethnic minority status and

25 socioeconomic status; environmental burdens, including air pollution, potentially hazardous and

26 toxic sites, built environment, transportation infrastructure, water pollution, and urban heat island

27 effect; and health vulnerability, including the incidence of pre-existing chronic diseases, food

28 access, and health care access .