

Testimony of Allison Clausen
Judiciary and Public Safety Budget Oversight Hearing,
Fire & Emergency Medical Services
March 29, 2023

Good morning, My name is Allison Clausen. I was born in the District and now live on 20th St NE in Ward 5 with my husband and our 4 children. In addition to being a parent, I am pursuing a Masters in Sustainability and am a community representative on the Mayor's Urban Forestry Advisory Council. I would like to express my gratitude to our emergency responders, particularly as we personally benefited from amazing services when our family suffered a house fire in 2011.

My testimony today regards the planned relocation of the Engine 26 fire station in Ward 5. Based on emergency response time, FEMS has identified two possible sites for the project, one in Ft. Lincoln and one in Langdon. I ask that the funding for site selection, design and construction be provisioned on broader public health goals, namely aligning with the city's Vision Zero commitments and 40% Canopy goal.

As I live down the street from the Langdon location, I will focus my attention there. Many of these concerns also apply to the Ft. Lincoln site, however.

First, the Langdon site poses significant threats to pedestrian safety. For those unfamiliar, the proposed facility will share a site with a senior center and is directly across the street from Langdon Elementary. It is surrounded by homes and the road emergency vehicles would use to reach Rhode Island Ave bisects Langdon Park, where children cross from the playground to reach the rec center and pool on the other side. In other words, emergency vehicles on these roadways will encounter young and elderly pedestrians daily—whether seniors leaving an exercise class, children at dismissal from school or a team arriving for practice at the rec center. Inevitably, those encounters will have deleterious, if not tragic, health effects—either slowing emergency vehicle response times, or imperiling children and seniors in transit. This exact stretch of 20th St experienced a speed-related driver fatality just six weeks ago on February 3rd. We need to be proactively working to make our roadways slower, but emergency vehicle routing is a commonly cited reason by DDOT for not installing traffic calming mitigations.

The council should require that budget approval for the site selection, design and construction of FEMS Engine 26 be contingent on Vision Zero considerations.

Second, developing this location poses environmental health threats. The site is largely forested, part of a multi-acre wooded area that serves as a buffer between an industrial zone and the school, senior center and neighborhood. The forest absorbs air pollution, noise, and heat generated by the industries. It also filters and absorbs stormwater that would otherwise pollute

Hickey Run—an effort the city has already spent \$4 million to mitigate. Further, research demonstrates that forested areas increase learning outcomes for nearby schools and improve community mental and physical health outcomes. Removing canopy would compromise those benefits and jeopardize public health in various categories.

Ward 5 has the most industrial zones, the worst heat island effect, and the most canopy loss of any ward in the city. The Council should not approve funding for projects that result in canopy loss in Ward 5. Funding for FEMS Engine 26 should be approved provisionally with a guarantee that existing forest canopy remain intact.

I would like to conclude by sharing my frustration about the lack of transparency around the site selection process for FEMS Engine 26. I only learned about this project because of a Public Space Committee application. The school has not been consulted. The community this fire station will serve has not been informed. It has been very difficult to get information and the community has not been included. Thank you for your time and your service.