

**Testimony before the Committee on the Whole, Council Chair Phil Mendelson, Chair, Wed., April 15, 2015, 2:30 pm, Room 412
Budget Oversight Hearing – Executive Office of the Mayor**

Council Chair Mendelson, Council Members, Ladies and Gentlemen...

I am William Brown, President of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia. This year our organization is celebrating its sesquicentennial as the city's oldest civic organization. I am here today to express my organization's continued concern for the District of Columbia Archives and, in particular, the staffing and funding for the Office of Public Records.

While the membership of the AOI of DC remains resolute in its support for the design, construction and operation of a new facility to replace that on Naylor Court to serve as a new, state-of-the-art District of Columbia Archives, we are equally concerned that current budget proposals under consideration by the Council do not provide adequate staffing to fulfill the requirements of the D.C. Code to comply with public record retention. The pertinent Code sections include:

- DC Municipal Regulations and DC Register, Title I, Chapter 15
(maintenance of public records)
- The Public Records Management Act of 1985 (DC Law 6-19)
- DC Code 2-1709 (relinquishment of public records to successors)

- DC Code, Title 2, Chapter 17 (Responsibilities of the Office of Public Records)

Our interest in these regulations is rooted in our continuing concern about the condition, maintenance and operation of the D.C. Archives located on Naylor Court. This has become even more critical that while the process of soliciting proposals for a new facility continues, the District does not have a full-time, professional Public Records Administrator and the Naylor Court facility is inadequately staffed. While the collections, documents and artifacts that are held in this repository represent more than 215 years of our city's history and require preservation, the lack of a Public Records Administrator puts at risk today's and all future records created by the District and its agencies.

Since 2005, the AOI of DC has called attention to the "plight of the District's historic records"... the Archives, the Washingtoniana Collection, the Historical Society's Kiplinger Library, the Sumner School Museum and Archives and the records of the Recorder of Deeds. Now, 10 years later these issues are still foremost on our minds as a large appropriation has been approved by the D.C. Council to invest more than \$40 million to build a new D.C. Archive facility. It also needs to staff and administer it to the highest standards required to meet 21st century accepted standards for document collection, control, retention, preservation and accessibility in all formats (paper, digital, electronic). We do not want this important capital project (and the

positive impact it will have with adherence to the aforementioned statutes) to be re-programmed to address some budget shortfall. This is a long-term investment on behalf of the District's residents.

The Friends of the DC Archives -- an organization that the AOI of DC is in partnership with -- has met with newly-elected Attorney General Racine to call to his attention these concerns and has met, too, with the newly appointed Secretary of the District Lauren Vaughn and her deputy Joy Holland.

We sincerely hope that you will ensure there is adequate funding to properly administer the Office of Public Records as required by the D.C. Code and that you require follow-up reports to the Committee of the Whole regarding the status of these issues.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William N. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "W".

William N. Brown, President