

Male Speaker 1: Michael Brice-Saddler

Male Speaker 2: Trayon White, Sr.

Male Speaker 3: Robert White, Jr.

Male Speaker 4: James Butler

Female Speaker 1: Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery

Female Speaker 2: Julie Zauzmer Weil

Female Speaker 3: Muriel E. Bowser

[O/V]: Overlapping Voices

[U/A]: Unintelligible audio

[START RECORDING DC Mayoral Primary Debate Hosted by the Office of Campaign Finance]

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Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery: 2018, the FEP is a voluntary public financing program operated by the Office of Campaign Finance to support candidates for local political office in the District of Columbia. All FEP candidates in city-wide contested races in the June 21st, 2022, primary election are required to take part in the debates. Candidates in the traditional Campaign Finance Program are also invited

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Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery: to participate in the debate. It is our hope that these debates will help the public to learn more about the candidates, their positions, and policy platforms. We want to take a moment to thank our partner organization and the candidates for participating in this process. Thank you for joining us in our mission to help inform DC voters about the candidates in the citywide contest and their positions.

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Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery: To learn more about the Office of Campaign Finance of the 2022 DC debates, please visit dcdebates.com. The debates will remain on the website through

primary day, Tuesday, June 21st, 2022, for those who could not watch or listen live this evening. Again, thank you for your support and with that, let's meet our candidates.

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: The candidates for tonight's debate are Muriel Bowser, DC mayor since 2014; Robert White, DC at-large council member since 2016; Trayon White, DC ward 8 council member since 2016; and James Butler, a former ward 5 advisory neighborhood commissioner.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Here are the ground rules for tonight's debate. Candidates will have one minute for an opening statement, one minute for a direct answer to a question, and 30 seconds for a rebuttal.

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Michael Brice-Saddler: Each candidate will then have one minute for closing statements.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: If candidates wish to respond to an opponent's answer, raise your hand and we will be sure to call on you as time permits.

Michael Brice-Saddler: And with that, we'll move to opening statements, starting with mayor Muriel Bowser. As a reminder, you have one minute.

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, good evening DC. Can you hear me okay? I'm happy to be with you and I want to thank the

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Muriel E. Bowser: Office of Campaign Finance for convening everybody tonight. I'm Muriel Bowser. I am proud to be the mayor of my hometown and I'm proud of our accomplishments working with DC residents over the last almost 8 years. I am born and raised in Washington DC. I'm the daughter of Joan and Joe Bowser and I'm Miranda

Bowser's mom. I have been an ANC commissioner. I have served at ward 4 on the council of the District of Columbia

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Muriel E. Bowser: for almost 8 years and with DC residents, we have made big changes and a big difference in neighborhoods across the District of Columbia. What's you're going to hear from me tonight is about my record. I'm proud of it and what we have been able to accomplish together and also we're going to be focused on and bringing the city back in the next 4 years. What I've been-

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Muriel Bowser, that'll be your time. Next up we have Trayon White, your opening statement.

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Michael Brice-Saddler: It looks like Trayon White may have lost connection. Why don't we move to Robert White, your opening statement. You have one minute.

Robert White, Jr.: Good evening. I'm Robert White. I'm a fifth generation Washingtonian, a husband, a father, and an at-large council member. Growing up. I was a failing student

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Robert White, Jr.: who most people counted out. To get to where I am today I had to learn to become a problem solver. For the past 15 years, I've worked in all three branches of government at the federal and local level and I have used those skills to deliver for the District of Columbia. I passed the most expansive early childhood education's legislation in the country and the only bill in the country restoring voting rights to all incarcerated people and I work every day to solve problems for communities,

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Robert White, Jr.: but we need a problem solver as mayor. Right now, we are facing a violent crime crisis. Over 60% of students of color are behind grade level and people can't afford to live in our city. We don't need another 4 years of the same. I am ready to lead our city. On day 1, I will begin implementing my public safety plan.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Robert White, thank you.

Robert White, Jr.: Make the district [O/V]

Michael Brice-Saddler: That was one minute. And we're going to get back to Trayon White for his opening statement, one minute.

Trayon White, Sr.: Thank you. Good evening Washington DC, my name is Trayon White and I'm excited to serve on a DC city council. I'm a candidate for mayor for Washington DC and I'm running simply because I grew up in the city that everyday people like myself didn't get an opportunity to have and reach their maximum potential. We're seeing every day that our city is growing economically [U/A].

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Trayon White, Sr.: People are not feeling that growth and as a result, as a counselor, I'm arguing back and forth with the administration about people being able to be included in the economic growth and just basic city service here in Washington DC. We have an opportunity to get it right now. We've had 8 years of leadership that hasn't worked for all people in the District of Columbia. So I'm running with a strong platform and strong solution to help bring an [U/A] more vibe in Washington DC that work for all people in the District of Columbia. Thank you.

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Trayon White, Sr.: Vote Trayon White for mayor 2022.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Trayon White and James Butler, your opening statement.

James Butler: Good evening, DC and thank you all for joining us. Those that are joining us live and those that will join us later on. Thank you Julie and Michael for moderating this debate and I want to thank the Office of Campaign Finance for agreeing to share this information to prove that [U/A] democracy. As what's mentioned, I'm James Butler, I'm running to DC's 8th mayor and I'm running because of the urgency of the time.

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James Butler: I am a proud Washingtonian. I'm a former civil rights lawyer and I'm also a former ANC. I have fought for fairness and equality for my entire adult life and I want to bring that experience to the office of mayor. What DC doesn't need now is another career politician. We have tried it before, recycling council members to the mayor's office or mayors repeatedly holding the office and every single metric

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James Butler: in this city has moved in the wrong direction. I have a solid plan on crime, affordable housing, homeless crises, and restoring our schools to making the grade. I am asking for your vote on June 21st.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mr. Butler, and let's jump into questions. Mayor Bowser, we'll start with you on the topic of education in DC public schools. You've significantly increased education funding during your tenure, but the achievement gap

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Michael Brice-Saddler: between low-income and wealthier students persists, what is this funding not fixing? And what would you do differently in a third term? You have one minute. Mayor Bowser you might be muted.

Muriel E. Bowser: Thank you. What you will hear unequivocally from me is that we're going to continue to invest in our students and we're going to continue to bring them back from the ravages of COVID.

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Muriel E. Bowser: Our kids have been negatively impacted by COVID in big ways. That is why I was very firm in our response to COVID and making sure that we could bring our kids back in person. Lots of people on the council, including my opponents really tried to stand in the way to make sure that we would have a persistent, virtual learning environment and I'm proud of the work that we have done to bring our kids back.

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Muriel E. Bowser: Our investments include high-dose tutoring. They include working with our partners to make sure that our kids have lots of enrichment moving forward in a focus on a new high school model.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thanks Mayor Bowser and Robert White I would now direct that question to you. What is the current funding for DC public schools not sufficiently addressing? You have one minute.

Robert White, Jr.: We're spending \$2 billion on public education right now.

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Robert White, Jr.: And again, 60% of students of color are behind grade level. The first thing we need is a mayor with a sense of urgency. That is the mayor that I will be. With that sense of urgency, I'm going to expand early childhood education to continue the work that I've done on the council. I'm going to expand trade and vocational education in our schools so

that we no longer have students who don't plan to go to college asking "Why I'm still here?" I'm going to retain our teachers. We lose over 20% of our teachers every

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Robert White, Jr.: single year. That is unsustainable for improving our public education system and I'm going to bring accountability that you have not seen in this administration through an independent, superintendent of education, who holds me accountable to the vision for public education and for improving schools for every student.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you Robert White and James Butler the same question for you.

James Butler: Thank you.

Michael Brice-Saddler: In your opinion what is current funding for DCPS

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Michael Brice-Saddler: not sufficiently addressing? you have one minute.

James Butler: It's very clear that we're spending a lot of money and not yielding the results that we must. We know that students of color are not making the grade. We must, when we're using the per pupil formula, we must sharpen our pin to ensure that those schools, predominantly east of the river, are having funds where the deficiencies lie. As mayor of this great city, I will ensure that funds are earmarked for those schools that are not making the grades.

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James Butler: I will ensure that traits are brought back to the schools and I will ensure that teacher retention is a high priority. We will do this by bringing back the teachers [U/A] and ensuring that we bring from our own pool of resources, providing workforce housing for

our teachers, so that our schools can be competitive throughout the world and be best in America.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you. Trayon White, do we have the right number of schools in DC?

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: If not, what should we do to get to the right number?

Trayon White, Sr.: Well first I think that we have to create equitable seats that everyone has a quality seat closer to home. The right number depends upon the population. I think that we're building schools, especially with expansion of charter schools over the last two decades, but the problem is that we are not investing in those schools that have been neglected for far too long. As a mayor, my promise is to ensure that we have three

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Trayon White, Sr.: pathways to success. I want to have the course [U/A] as early as middle school.

Its not a problem with how many schools, its a problem of what's happening in the schools. You can have a number of schools, but we know there are a number of schools who are facing [U/A] of the 25 to 1 teacher to student ratio and as a result, I'll ensure we're not falling behind because we are running a narrative that we're growing as a city educationally, but in fact brown and black children are falling behind deep and deep every year because we're not putting the systems in place

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Trayon White, Sr.: to correct those metrics and we got to educate the whole child, not just teaching people how to take your test and be primitive with the teachers when they don't do well. As a result, we have a [U/A] of teachers who don't come back, who are not prepared coming in to teach out of schools.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Mayor Bowser I think I might've seen your hand up. I just want to make sure I got to you, if you had a rebuttal.

Muriel E. Bowser: Yeah. So I just wanted to respond because I think that everyone needs

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Muriel E. Bowser: to be reminded where we came from and where we started with those school reform back in 2007, where our black and brown children were really far behind compared to black and brown children in the United States of America and because of our steady focus on schools because of mayoral leadership and council accountability and taxpayer investment in teachers who are working super hard

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Muriel E. Bowser: with our students and families, we have managed to take our black children, who were like 13% behind the national average.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. I'm going to have to move on.

Muriel E. Bowser: Thank you.

Michael Brice-Saddler: I'm going to now actually transition to Robert White. As Coronavirus cases were climbing rapidly in January [O/V] you tried to introduce an emergency. Sorry, you tried to introduce an emergency [O/V]

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Robert White, Jr.: I had my hand up for rebuttal. Would that be okay?

Michael Brice-Saddler: Sure. Yes. 30 seconds.

Robert White, Jr.: I appreciate it. This is very important. The mayor is trying to convince us that we only have two options on education. The system 15 years ago that was failing students

or the system now that is failing students. As the father of two black girls, looking at a public school system where 60% of black and brown students are behind grade level. I'm hearing the mayor saying that we're doing good enough and I am insisting to you that we are not.

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Robert White, Jr.: That is why I will be a mayor who has a sense of urgency and only people with a sense of urgency will work in my administration on education.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Mayor Bowser. I see you have your hand up, 30 seconds, please, for a rebuttal.

Muriel E. Bowser: No, absolutely. No one ever said that we're doing good enough and that we're not going to be doing good enough until every child in every neighborhood, regardless of their zip code gets a fair shot in this city and we've come a long way from 2007 and we're going to go

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Muriel E. Bowser: a long way, but what we're not going to do is have a mayor who waffles when it comes to how we're going to lead our schools or move boxes around the board. You shouldn't even be strongly considered for this job if you don't want the responsibility of leading our schools.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Robert, I'll give you 30 seconds to respond and then we're going to move on to the next topic.

Robert White, Jr.: Thank you. I think the mayor's answer was unfortunate and also misinformed. I want the responsibility, but mayor,

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Robert White, Jr.: I also want the accountability. I don't want just the responsibility for schools. I want to do a good job of leading our schools. I've been clear on where I stand on mayoral control. When I see a system that is not working for all students, I call it out. We need a mayor who will call out this inequality. That is what I've done. I know it's made you uncomfortable because it calls attention to your record, but I'm going to take pride in my right on public education, because I'm going to roll up my sleeves and be serious and be active where you have not. Alice Deal for All was never an education policy.

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Robert White, Jr.: We have not seen it work. We need a mayor who want to go deep into policy and make real traction.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Robert White. We're going to move on to the next question to keep things moving. As Coronavirus cases were climbing-

Muriel E. Bowser: Excuse me.

Michael Brice-Saddler: As Coronavirus cases were climbing rapidly in January during the Omicron wave, you tried to introduce an emergency measure that among other things would have required local education agencies to establish a threshold COVID-19 case rate metric,

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Michael Brice-Saddler: which would have triggered their schools to shift to virtual learning. That bill was not considered because you did not file it by the deadline, but where do you stand now? Should schools have closed more often during the Omicron wave and how will you help the students who have fallen behind academically or developmentally because of school closures during the pandemic, you have one minute.

Robert White, Jr.: I was one of many parents who had young kids at home during COVID and I can tell you the task was impossible. All of us wanted

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Robert White, Jr.: them to get back in school, but we also wanted our children safe and our educators safe as well. What we had were families and teachers who were begging us to listen to them because the mayor would not. So what we wanted to do was make sure we got kids into school safely. A safer introduction into school would have been accurate reporting of COVID cases, which it did not happen under this administration using frequent testing, test to return, which did not happen in this administration

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Robert White, Jr.: and schools could have been a central point at which we caught COVID outbreaks to prevent them from spreading. So what I was trying to do was prevent missed opportunities that we saw under this administration.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you. And I want to give you 30 more seconds because there was a second half of that question. How will you help students who have fallen behind academically or developmentally because of school closures?

Robert White, Jr.: Unlike slogans like high dosage tutoring, which no one in our city can tell you what it actually means.

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Robert White, Jr.: I'm going to have real education opportunities for our students who fell behind. We're talking about afterschool programs. We're talking about enough slots during the summer to help people catch up and get our kids into enrichment programs. We need real programs, not slogans. That is what you will see from me as mayor.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you and Mayor Bowser, how would you respond? How would you help students that have fallen behind developmentally because of school closures? One minute.

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, first of all, I have to respond to

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Muriel E. Bowser: the counsel's attempt to slow us down in getting kids back to school, in the assertion that we didn't listen to parents. We listened to parents. Parents were begging us to open our schools 100% full time and make sure that children who needed to be at home had the ability to request an exemption and stay at home. We know how much our children suffered and I'm proud of the very robust

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Muriel E. Bowser: testing system that we put up in the District of Columbia, that we think is the best in the nation. We were the first in the region and in many places in the country to have free rapid testing available at our libraries across the District of Columbia, that let us make sure all of our families knew what they were dealing with. Not just going to school, but going about their lives. We have had allied health professionals in our school

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Muriel E. Bowser: from the time that we started. So parents have trusted our response to COVID and be back to school [O/V].

Michael Brice-Saddler: Mayor Bowser, thank you, that's our time. And James Butler, I saw you had your hand up for rebuttal.

James Butler: Yeah, thank you. And I just want to be clear, you see the constant back and forth between the mayor and the at-large council member. This is exactly why we do not need

career politicians. We've got vendettas that have been formed. [U/A] we know what's not as, you know,

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James Butler: friendly with the mayor and vice versa. We need to clean house. This is a prime example on why we need to clean house. Stop all the petty quibbling and I implore the voters watching this today to see it. If you do more of the same, you're going to get more of the same and no focus on you, the people.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, James Butler. Robert White, I have another question for you. As part of the budget process last week, you voted in

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Michael Brice-Saddler: favor of phasing police out of the city's public schools. Violent crime is rising in DC, including some crimes committed by juveniles and principals have said their staff has felt unsafe and want police in schools. Why do you think police don't belong in schools? You have one minute.

Robert White, Jr.: As someone who struggled a lot in school and got into my fair share of trouble I've got to tell you, if the police were the ones who could've corrected my actions, my life would have ended up in a better place. The reason the council acted to phase out

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Robert White, Jr.: over time police from schools is because that was the request that came from students. Now, what we are hearing from the mayor is that we need police in schools because schools are getting dangerous. Well, right now we still have police in schools, so clearly that is not the whole answer. What we need is a mayor who is going to take seriously

the requests of our students and do the planning we need. We're not talking about removing safety, we're talking about adding safety measures that will actually work.

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Robert White, Jr.: as mayor. I will understand that safety requires more than just police. It requires mental health services. It requires counselling. It does require security in our school, but we have to have a holistic plan. The mayor has refused to start working on a plan, even though the council [O/V].

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Robert White. I appreciate the response. Mayor Bowser, you support police in schools and you've objected to the council's plan to phase them out. Why and what do you say to students

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Michael Brice-Saddler: who feel unsafe around police or who have had negative interactions with them in schools? one minute.

Muriel E. Bowser: So this is what I say, you have to have a mayor who's willing to make tough calls, and not just go along with trendy words of the day and it is very important that our children, our administrators, and our teachers get to know the public safety officials in their buildings

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Muriel E. Bowser: and what we've heard from the principals, is that having an officer that they know and that they can rely on is the public safety official that they need and so we're going to keep working with the council. We're going to keep pressing this issue, because parents are not going to be happy with just relying on the security guards who don't have the same type of training as MPD officials and quite frankly, can't get in the middle,

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Muriel E. Bowser: if there's a real problem there and we know that schools will call on the police.

So do you want a beat officer, who doesn't know your building, doesn't know your children

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser.

Muriel E. Bowser: [O/V] or do you want a police officers who does know them?

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. Trayon White, Sr., I saw you have your hand up for rebuttal.

Trayon White, Sr.: Yes, I voted in favor to keep the Metropolitan Police Department in our schools and I've been one of the toughest people in the police department,

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Trayon White, Sr.: on the council, one is because I see that schools have become more and more dangerous. We've seen house violence in DC we haven't seen in 20 years and as a result, it's spinning over into the schools. I also think that police is not the end solution to crime, that we need to have balance [U/A] schools, counsellors, mental health crisis therapists, wraparound [O/V].

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Trayon, that's 30 seconds. I saw James Butler had his hand up as well. 30 seconds.

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James Butler: I just wanted to mention a good mayor of this city will be proactive. We know that school shootings have happened all over the country. We have to prepare for it if it does and I believe that it will at some point. That's the unfortunate truth. As a mayor of this city, a good mayor will be proactive. A good mayor will also answer your questions directly. A good mayor won't be evasive when he or she is asked why they didn't file a bill on time

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James Butler: and they just simply skirt the question.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, James Butler, that's time. [O/V]

James Butler: - to see that very important.

Michael Brice-Saddler: And Robert White, I saw you had your hand up as well for a 30 second rebuttal.

Robert White, Jr.: I appreciate it. I just want to make something clear. I am concerned about trends as Mayor Bowser mentioned. I'm concerned about the trend of the school to prison pipeline. I'm concerned about the trend where 98% of people in DC jail are African-American and I'm concerned about the trend of a mayor who sees these things and doesn't see anything wrong and

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Robert White, Jr.: thinks we shouldn't do anything different. I fundamentally believe that we can do better. I fundamentally believe that we can keep more young people of color out of prison if we take different approaches, but taking different approaches will require us to do some hard work.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, council member, Robert White. Trayon White. I have a question for you. Oh, sorry, Mayor Bowser, I see you have your hands up, 30 seconds for a rebuttal.

Muriel E. Bowser: Yes. Thank you. I find it interesting that when I asked about new

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Muriel E. Bowser: approaches for doing things differently, the council member didn't mention a big proposal he made to create boarding schools in the District of Columbia. If this is his

idea of doing something different, we think this is a radical idea that has no place in the district. We have worked hard over the years to get our children out of boarding schools, to make sure they could go to school close to home, close to trusted adults and so this is the type of thinking laid in the campaign when I say that these trendy

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Muriel E. Bowser: ideas for her [O/V]

Michael Brice-Saddler: Mayor Bowser, thank you, that's time.

Muriel E. Bowser: - never heard council member talk about fears [O/V] now.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Robert White, 30 seconds for a response.

Robert White, Jr.: I'm going to mention again, the need for urgency. As the mayor, I understand that one size fits all does not work for education. I understand that I'm listening to parents who say they work uncommon hours and need a place to educate their kids where they can get more help in the evening. I'm hearing from students, like the students from Washington Met

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Robert White, Jr.: a school that Mayor Bowser closed. These students are telling us that we need different options, where the Mayor Bowser has taken away those options, trying to give [O/V]. These schools will beat in their community. Are they trendy? No. Are they radical? No. They're happening right now.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, that's your time.

Robert White, Jr.: [O/V] drastically higher graduation [O/V].

Michael Brice-Saddler: We are going to move on the next question. Thank you, Robert White.

Robert White, Jr.: I wish the mayor wouldn't look at new [O/V]

Michael Brice-Saddler: We need to move on to the next question. Thank you, Robert White. This next question's for Trayon White. DC has many programs designed to prevent violence without involving police,

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Michael Brice-Saddler: but even with millions of dollars spent annually on these programs, violent crime is rising. How would you respond to criticism that there needs to be better coordination among the city's violence, interruption and prevention programs, or that the city is in the words of one youth organizer resource rich but coordination poor? How would you fix or improve these programs as mayor? You have one minute.

Trayon White, Sr.: First I must go on record to say that we've neglected violence in DC for at least 7 years with \$0 in the budget

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Trayon White, Sr.: for prevention. When I came onto the council, I met with all members of set 1 with a 33-page docent for violence prevention. That is a triangle and one approach, in the community, in juvenile detention facilities, and in the schools. This system has not yet been implemented and as a result, we're seeing fragmented work in the community and what I gather all the violence interrupters together from the both different organizations or different grants to make sure they're communicating,

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Trayon White, Sr.: because if you have [U/A] abrupt the work in one community, you know, who is and whereas in another community at [U/A] beefing, because this administration haven't seen this as a priority in the city, we're seeing the violence, perpetuated on youth and young adults, on women and kids and record numbers that we never seen before and so under my

leadership it is imperative that we have everybody communicating, including the nonprofit and government sectors each and every morning, each and every night [O/V]

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Trayon White. I'd like to open up that question if there are others

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Michael Brice-Saddler: who would like to respond about the city's violence prevention programs and if they should be better coordinated. James Butler, we'll start with you.

James Butler: Yeah, I've said before and I'll say it again. I will restore hope to the city. The voters have a choice. They have a choice of a mayor who has seen crime after 8 years go to a 20-year high and then they have a choice of two council members who have voted repeatedly to Defund the Police, to strip our public safety budget, and who are not pro-police.

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James Butler: I believe this city deserves a mayor where the police force knows that the mayor has their back, where we can lift the morale of our police force that we know are overworked, understaffed and I've said it before, 700 additional police officers within my first 4 years, an additional interdiction unit. A review of our local and federal courts for the [U/A] that goes on in our city and working with our local and federal partners

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James Butler: to ensure that ghost guns are a thing of the past. I will make DC one of the safest cities in America.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you James Butler and Robert White did you have you hand up?

Robert White, Jr.: I did. And so we know that police are an important part of our public safety strategy, but by the time the police show up, it is too late for too many people. That is why

we need to be serious about violence intervention than violence interrupters. We have seen this program work phenomenally well

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Robert White, Jr.: in other jurisdictions where they have the full backing of the chief executives.

Look at Houston, look at New York where there have been 40% less injuries since this program has begun, but the mayor has not fully supported violence intervention. So we have been treating what should be a robust violence prevention program as a pilot project and as mayor, I'm going to be serious about preventing violence because I'm tired of seeing bullets flying across our city and having a mayor with the only answer, talking about

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Robert White, Jr.: what we need to do after those bullets have flown. We have got to get in front of violent crime. That is why I have developed a comprehensive public safety strategy and I encourage folks to go to my website, robertfordc.com/safety to read a full public safety plan.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you. We have a question now for the mayor submitted by a member of our audience tonight. Rose Brunesh from the DC National Organization for Women. Rose asks Mayor Bowser,

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: in what way do you intend to reduce sexual violence against women and girls in the district?

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, that's a great question, Rose, and I want to thank you for it and part of what we have seen in COVID with people going back, staying in their homes, we have

been and continue to be very concerned that women may face more violence. We use our office of

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Muriel E. Bowser: Victim Services and Justice Grants to work with partner organizations and make sure that we have the funding that we need to make sure that women are getting services, that women have additional housing when they need it and we've also updated SAVRA, which is a law that has modernized how we treat women or victims of sexual assault. So we will continue to work on that.

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Muriel E. Bowser: We are also working across all of communities to make sure that we're supporting people who need those services across all of the wards.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you Mayor Bowser. Mr. Butler, what would you do to prevent sexual violence?

James Butler: I think we need a mayor that listens. We need a mayor that will talk with these demographics, that one, those persons that have experienced sexual violence,

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James Butler: they need to work with our city organizations to ensure that there's adequate oversight. Just because we have these organizations does not mean that they're making the grade and so for me as mayor, that is one of my top priorities to ensure that every agent is working as it should. When we talk with these demographics, we need to ensure that those victims of sexual violence, these cases are properly prosecuted by the US attorney's office.

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James Butler: That there's adequate resources for them when it comes to housing and getting themselves out of those situations. We will ensure that there's a full, robust apparatus to ensure that victims of sexual violence never become victims again.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you very much. Robert White, DC has the goal of reducing the number of trips that residents make in cars to reduce our impact on climate and our traffic.

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: What would you do to cut down on the number of car trips in DC?

Robert White, Jr.: As the district has grown over the years, it has become increasingly clear that we need to be serious about being a multimodal city. To do that it ensures that people have safe and reliable ways to get around other than driving. A safe way to get around is biking, but only if we have dedicated in, in as many places as possible protected bike lanes. Right now, I can't take my girls to school by bike

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Robert White, Jr.: because it is not safe, but we also need to get more people on mass transportation. That means that our buses have to be reliable. This is something I was working on even before COVID to accelerate the creation of dedicated bus lane. Look at things like rear boarding access to make sure people know if they get on that bus, they can get to school on time because too many people can't risk it. So we have to create a network across our city so that people can take the bus, they can walk, they can bike and they can get there reliably.

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you, Mr. Butler. I see that you'd like to respond to Mr. White's statements about safety.

James Butler: Thank you [O/V] directly Julie, but I do want to say that noteworthy to the viewers.

I am the only candidate here as far as I know and maybe one of the only candidates running for mayor of a major city that has proposed an entirely free Metro transit system, this includes land bus and this includes the rail.

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James Butler: In addition to that, we would extend the street car from ward 7 to downtown K Street to ensure that those demographics that are most effected by not being able to afford transit can get to work and get to school, can get to daycare. Again, this is important if you call yourself progressive

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you.

James Butler: it's important that you have progressive ideas.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Butler. Trayon White, I believe you'd raised her hand as well, would you like to tell

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: us how you would cut down on car trips?

Trayon White, Sr.: Well, I think DC has put in an enormous amount of money in is showing that people have options as related to transportation. We have [U/A], which is, you know, the bus and rail, we have bikes. We have scooters, we have Uber, we have Lyft, we have the street car, we have the circulator and so it's really a matter of public safety and creating a mechanism of travel for all people. I do not think that

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Trayon White, Sr.: DDOT is doing an efficient job of making sure we have safe streets. The mayor has this vision, plan that has been one of the worst in the last, I guess, 5 years, we hit record

numbers in 2020, talking about we want to eradicate vehicular accidents in 2024, unless some miraculous happen in 2 years, I'm not sure [U/A] is simply not the [O/V].

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you very much. Thank you. And let's round it out with going to Mayor Bowser to tell us how you would reduce car trips in the district.

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Muriel E. Bowser: Well, thank you, Julie. We have, done a lot of work in making sure people have great options like, Trayon just mentioned. We have been very invested in bus ways, and I'm very proud to say that the 16th street bus way, for example, that we've worked with communities on for a number of years is now up and operational and taking people out of their single occupant vehicles. We unstuck the street car, and we're going to make sure that it continues to serve

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Muriel E. Bowser: the residents of ward 7 by getting to the Benning, Metro, we're going to do a hundred miles of bicycle lanes. I am proud that I started kids ride free on a Metro bus and Metro rail, which has taken thousands of kids and their parents off the roads and put up to \$300 every year back in their pockets. So I'm very proud of that we have a huge number of people who don't ride in their cars

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Muriel E. Bowser: to work, but we know that we can do a lot more.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you very much. Trayon White, you've proposed wiping out some of the tickets that drivers owe. Even people who might have received thousands of dollars in tickets because of repeat violations, should people who have repeatedly driven dangerously really get out of paying?

Trayon White, Sr.: Well, we don't know for a fact that people who drove and got tickets driven dangerously, that's an overstatement for a broad issue. What I do know is that DC has

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Trayon White, Sr.: several mechanisms of [U/A] resources or money to get tickets back, right. If you get a ticket, you don't pay it, it doubles. If you don't pay that, you get a boot. If you don't pay it, you got to pay for the boot. When you get told you got to pay for the tow, when he goes to the tow yard, you got to pay \$25 a day including Saturday and Sunday [U/A] and then the government can sell your car and recuperate money, but you still have to pay and the government can take it out of your taxes. So we know that's not an effective way to increase public safety

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Trayon White, Sr.: has become predatory in our city and so we have to figure out other routes to ensure public safety and being punitive and greedy is what it is and the city has not been a solution as we've seen accidents skyrocket in the last 10 years, we had an all-time high in 2021.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you. I believe I saw both Mayor Bowser and Mr. Butler raising their hands to respond to your plan of wiping out many of these tickets. So let's go to Mayor Bowser first and then Mr. Butler.

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Muriel E. Bowser: I actually didn't raise my hand, but I'm happy to respond. I do believe that effective enforcement is a part of making our streets safer and actually we have seen nationally during COVID and continuing, increase in vehicular fatalities all across the

United States of America and we know that speed and aggressive driving, is driving a lot of that.

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Muriel E. Bowser: So enforcement is one part of our strategies to keep our streets safer.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you. Mr. Butler.

James Butler: So I believe that enforcement is a strong component of keeping our streets safe while I do also believe that there needs to be a reprieve with regards to the parking tickets, what we must do is ensure and I will do this. beginning day 1, I will work on getting reciprocity with Maryland and Virginia to ensure that we can punish

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James Butler: those reckless drivers that rack up thousands and thousands of speeding tickets and moving violations without any fear of repercussions. We need to punish this egregious behavior so it can stop, lives depend on it and as mayor I will make those difficult decisions to do that, in addition to elevate it, pedestrian walks. bump-outs, you know, protected bike lanes. We will have one of the most robust safety apparatus

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James Butler: and we will fully fund vision one.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you, Mr. Butler. I want to go back to wrap up this topic to Trayon White to respond. How would you respond to your opponent saying that traffic enforcement is important?

Trayon White, Sr.: Well, we've had predatory fines ever since I can remember, I get calls from residents every day saying this last week a resident said he has a \$300 ticket that doubled and never got the first ticket and you hear that quite often in the district.

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Trayon White, Sr.: And I don't know about you, but average family in Washington, DC, don't have an extra 600 to a \$1000 to give a government that's thriving and the streets are still [U/A] up, every which way you turn and this administration has not done a good job because we haven't even had consistent leadership, indeed to have a strong vision to increase public safety. In addition, we have 3 directors and [U/A] in 5 years.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you, Mr. White. At the risk of being wrong again I think this time I did see mayor Bowser's hand.

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Muriel E. Bowser: You did see my hand and I want to acknowledge what council member Trayon White is saying in making sure that we work with our residents to help to not turn what is a ticket situation, especially if it involves parking tickets into someone's inability to drive their car and work and that's why actually with council member Trayvon White, we worked together during the pandemic on a ticket amnesty program where

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Muriel E. Bowser: millions of dollars were collected, lots of people cleared their balance with the DMV and I'm happy to think about other ways that we can make sure that we have an enforcement regime, but also let people get financially right with the district.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: All right. Thank you very much. Before we take a break, I want to ask a question about housing. let's start with Robert White. What barriers would you get rid of

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: to building more housing in the district?

Robert White, Jr.: The issue is less one of barriers. The issue is needing a mayor who is going to stand up to developers and insist that we don't need a single more luxury one-bedroom condo in this city. What we need in our city is housing for the CVS clerk that makes \$40,000, housing for government employees that make \$50,000 to \$90,000,

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Robert White, Jr.: housing for families, and housing for seniors. What we need to do is protect the affordable housing that we have now, because we have slumlords who are running amuck with no enforcement in this administration and pushing people into homelessness and we are seeing development of housing on public lands that looks unfortunately almost the same as development of housing on private lands. So what we need is a mayor like me, who is going to take an innovative approach to developing housing on public land

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Robert White, Jr.: looking at things like community land trust and social housing. We can move the ball forward on affordability, but only with a mayor like me, who will stand up to developers and set a clear vision for a city.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you.

Robert White, Jr.: So that they are not dictating the vision for our city.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: All right. Thank you, Mr. White. mayor Bowser I'd like to hear your response to that. Do you agree that in the current housing crunch in DC, we don't need a single new luxury one-bedroom condo as Mr. White just said?

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, Julie, this is what I know.

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Muriel E. Bowser: We spent seven years and we have kept our promises as it relates to building affordable housing. When I became mayor, we were spending just about 50 or \$60 million out of our housing production trust fund. now we do \$100 million a year. This year, \$500 million. They get us to 36,000 units. We have set not just a city goal for affordable housing, but a neighborhood by neighborhood goal. I actually challenged the region to do the same at the

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Muriel E. Bowser: regional council of government, as so far the council of governments has been unable to get a regional commitment. So I know that, there is a great anxiety about affordability and that's why we have to continue to build more units across the entire city, so DC residents can avail themselves of what's available, but we also have to make sure that DC residents are getting good paying jobs and that

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Muriel E. Bowser: we're creating those jobs, so that the housing that we're creating is matched with their residents.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you. Well, I see that everyone wants to respond to this one. So let's go to Robert White, followed by James Butler followed by Trayon White. Mr. White.

Robert White, Jr.: [U/A] [O/V]

Julie Zauzmer Weil: You will be 1, 2, 3.

Robert White, Jr.: The metrics can't be the amount that we spend. It has to be the amount of risk that we, I think the mayor has a

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Robert White, Jr.: different definition of affordable housing than the rest of us. That is the only way I can comprehend why she thinks that we're doing such a good job when nobody I'm meeting this city thinks that we are. What we are seeing is a massive displacement and a mayor who defines affordable housing at levels above what the average black and brown family make in our city. That is why we are seeing massive displacement of people like my dad and families across our city that are being pushed out of our city day after day. I'm going to be a mayor who understands what affordable housing

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Robert White, Jr.: is and why we need to prioritize it and why we need a mayor who will stand up to developers and make sure we are building a city for all people.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you very much, Mr. Butler.

James Butler: I just want to say that we're hearing a lot of talk from people that have had a lot of time to do what they're talking about, all 3, and I want the voters to really consider that. What I will do, from day 1, I will focus on changing how we calculate affordable housing. We're using HUD's formula, the AMI,

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James Butler: that's problematic because it's a regional formula and we're surrounded by some of the richest counties in America, nothing in the law compels us to use that formula. I will abort that formula and adopt our own localized formula for AMI or also interchangeably with MFI. I will also bring deep rent control that's applicable to places built post 1976, changing the existing law, and we will also make sure that we stop relying on private developers

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James Butler: for the bulk of our affordable housing and go into our city housing stock to provide deeply affordable housing in addition to provide housing that's supportive for unhoused or homeless population.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you very much.

James Butler: [O/V] your politician will do for you.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you, Mr. Butler.

Trayon White, Sr.: Thank you. First, we have to acknowledge that we are in a serious housing crisis in DC and contrary to Mr. Butler's belief

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Trayon White, Sr.: it is my job to do something about it and I have, and in fact I rewrote the law to make the house of production trust fund more affordable for lower income residents and we have to go a step further. What we know is that this pot of money, we're talking about a hundred million dollars, now \$500 million, has become a slush fund for developers in DC and when they build, we only found a few units in the development project for affordable housing. While we empower richer people to get rich, the poor residents or working class families are not part of the

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Trayon White, Sr.: equation. You don't understand how many calls I get a weekly about [U/A] inclusionary zoning class and I still can't find where these units are or I got approved to move, but housing has not done an inspection. We have to be creative. We have been through and what we want to implement across the city through the Douglas Community Land Trust, not just showing that people can rent, but everyday people can own homes

throughout the district. We want to expand that program with programs like displacement
[U/A] [O/V]

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you very much, Trayon White.

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Trayon White, Sr.: development. We have to admit we are in a housing crises and do something
about it.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: All right. That's time. Thank you. We are going to have to take a five-minute
break. Thank you very much [O/V]

James Butler: I want to mention directly, I want to mention directly, Julie, may I respond?

Julie Zauzmer Weil: We will back to this after the break. Now we will come back in five minutes.

I'll see you all soon. Thank you.

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: Welcome back. I'd like to resume this great discussion we're having with a question from Mayor Bowser. Ms. Bowser, you ran against Vince Gray in 2014 promising to be a more ethical mayor, but I think we have a sound issue. All right.

Muriel E. Bowser: I can hear you now but I didn't hear you at first.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Okay, I will try that again, mayor.

Muriel E. Bowser: Okay.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: You ran against Vince gray in 2014

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: promising to be a more ethical mayor, but several of your appointees have had their own ethical troubles, including Courtney Snowden, using city employees as babysitters, Neil Albert giving contracts to girlfriend's company, which is now the subject of a federal investigation and Rashad young negotiating with Howard while he sought a job there. How can you reassure voters that you remain the ethical choice?

Muriel E. Bowser: Well Julie, what I'm very proud of is as a council member I created a new framework

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Muriel E. Bowser: for DC government, when DC government was rocked by ethical scandals and that framework included training. It included an ethics pledge that all government officials are bound to and it also included a mechanism for the government to remove officials who don't follow the law and so that is what I have also required of all of my appointees and if anybody falls short of my expectations, they are first,

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Muriel E. Bowser: dealt with by me and any other, authorities including our board of ethics and government affairs and so I hold our officials to the highest standard and if they fall short, they will have consequences.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you. Robert White, I have a question for you. Your plan to reduce
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Muriel E. Bowser: crime entails a jobs guarantee program that would include hiring 10,000 people to work for the city in green jobs, like solar panel installation and planting trees. Who exactly is this plan specifically targeted toward? And what evidence do you have that the people who commit violent crime or plan to, turn down that opportunity to do green jobs instead.

Robert White, Jr.: I appreciate the question. Here's what we know about people who commit violent crime. The vast majority of people with good paying careers
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Robert White, Jr.: are not committing violent crimes, but here's also what I hear in our city every single day where I'm in homeless encampments or knocking on doors or talking to young people. people in our city want to work. We have a higher unemployment rate than any other state and we face a climate crisis like the rest of the nation. I want to make something clear about the jobs guarantee program. This is not all in government employees. Many of these folks will work with our unions and with private contractors

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Robert White, Jr.: that do work on behalf of the government. So think about our storm water retention basins that we're building now. This is a government funded project, but it is not done by the government and so these are our network of jobs that will be across the city

that have different entry points based on the skillset. When we get people employed, we're going to see less violence in our city, less dependence on social services and

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you. [O/V] Thank you, council member that's time.

Robert White, Jr.: This is ambitious, but I saw

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Robert White, Jr.: [O/V]

Michael Brice-Saddler: James Butler, I saw that you had your hand up for a 30-second rebuttal.

James Butler: Thank you. I just want to say this for the voters, please understand, you're getting a lot of plans being introduced that has some attenuated nexus to crime or the reduction of crime, but you need to ask yourself, will these things make you safer in the here and now.

We can focus and I will, as mayor focus on a root cause of issues like with our rec centers,

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James Butler: be 24-hour resource type centers and extending the Marion Barry Summer youth program to being a year round program, but I will also bring a safety [O/V] apparatus to keep you safe in the here and now.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, James Butler. And I'd like to take a moment to thank all of our viewers for submitting questions. Please continue to do so via dcdebates.com or Twitter using the hashtags #DCdebates2022 or #DCision22.

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Michael Brice-Saddler: And I'd actually like to return to James Butler to give you the opportunity to ask one of your opponents a question. They will have one minute to respond.

James Butler: Yeah. I'd like to ask this to Robert White. He has been a council member for 6 years and I want to ask him what does he think he can do more effectively as a mayor that he couldn't do already as a council member?

Robert White, Jr.: Thank you for the question Mr. Butler. What I can do is implement the programs that we've laid out.

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Robert White, Jr.: When I got to the council, I pushed forward a program to have the government convert older office buildings into workforce and affordable housing. The mayor has not been able to do that and we desperately needed it done. A year ago, I created a pilot program that allows the city to purchase existing housing units and create affordable housing by limiting the rents on those units. So we can create affordable housing as quickly as we can sign contracts. The mayor hasn't been able to implement that. Before I got to the council, the council passed the near act.

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Robert White, Jr.: This has been an implementation issue. So Mr. Butler, it's not that I haven't been doing the work. The problem is that we need a mayor who can get these programs done.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you and council member Robert White, I'd like to give you the opportunity to ask one of your opponents a question.

Robert White, Jr.: Yes. Mayor Bowser, would you commit that people who donate to your

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Robert White, Jr.: opponents' campaigns that do business with the city or have grants with the city will have no consequences to their contracts or grants?

Michael Brice-Saddler: Mayor Bowser might be muted.

Muriel E. Bowser: Thanks. How we respond to the council members in this way? The first time I had an opportunity to participate in the Fair Elections Campaign I did so. The first time he had the opportunity to participate

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Muriel E. Bowser: in fair elections when he ran for at-large council member, he decided to go the traditional route and accept contributions from DC contractors. So what you're going to get with me is to follow all of the rules and to work with the thousands of DC residents who have contributed to my campaign and that thousands who have not.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Robert White, would you like a 30-second rebuttal?

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Robert White, Jr.: Lesser rebuttal, more just restating the question. Mayor Bowser, would you commit that people who do business with the city or get grants from the city who donate to my campaign will not suffer any consequences or have their funding threatened?

Muriel E. Bowser: I haven't been elected mayor two times in the District of Columbia, I wasn't elected 3 times as the ward 4 council member, I wasn't elected 2 times as an advisory neighborhood commissioner, because I go around threatening people.

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Michael Brice-Saddler: Mayor Bowser, I'm going to give you an opportunity to ask one of your opponents a question.

Muriel E. Bowser: This question is for council member Trayon White. Council member, we have been able to work together on a lot of big projects in ward 8, including opening a new

hospital, including the 801 men's East a new homeless shelter including [U/A] grocers to ward 8. What would be the first thing, that you would like

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Muriel E. Bowser: us to focus on additional big projects that need to get unstuck or moved in ward 9?

Trayon White, Sr.: Well thank you, Mayor Bowser. I think I agree with you that we've moved the needle on ward 8 in regards to construction projects. I would ask that we focus more on education. As you know, education is the foundation of any strong community and quite frankly black and brown boys and girls are not thriving in our city,

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Trayon White, Sr.: not going to workforce in large numbers and not getting government jobs, not going into the private sector. A small percentage are actually finishing college on time and so I would just ask that we have a stronger, a more well robust approach to educating our children, ensuring they can have not just jobs, but careers and business ownership in the District of Columbia.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you Trayon White. And lastly, I'd like to give you the opportunity to ask one of your opponents a question, they would have one minute to respond.

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Trayon White, Sr.: Thank you. , I would like to ask Mayor Bowser, in respect to public safety, we have not got a return on our investment as released to us some of your new initiatives. let's take example for building blocks. We said it was going to cover what 152 blocks in a certain amount of time. I don't know where we are with that. it seems to be dismantled

[U/A] office you created, where they are now and where are the workers and what's the progress?

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Muriel E. Bowser: Absolutely. So building blocks as you know, council member, we're about a year into building blocks and the fundamental premise of building blocks is to identify the people and the places where most crime happens and who's committing most of the gun crimes, especially. This winter into spring, we have identified the people and the blocks that we have been working on, with building blocks,

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Muriel E. Bowser: for intent services, for people, job training, mental health supports, and a number of our housing initiatives and for the places, really focusing on the environment to make sure that it is conducive for safe neighborhoods.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. Thank you all for those very thoughtful questions. I'm going to go to James Butler first for a 30-second rebuttal followed by Trayon White for a 30-second rebuttal.

James Butler: Thank you Michael. I just want to say, I think the mayor is

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James Butler: selling you a ruse with regards to a crime being concentrated to a certain number of individuals. I want the residents of the district and voters to know crime is rampant in this city. If we give her another 4 years, we're likely to see crime at a 30-year high. It can happen anywhere in the city, any quadrant, and it is. you need to clean the house and get responsible leadership with passion and a plan to turn this thing around.

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James Butler: If you do more of the same,

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you.

James Butler: you will get more of the same and that's rising crime.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, James Butler. Trayon White, you had your hand up for a 30-second rebuttal.

Trayon White, Sr.: Yes. Thank you. it is my understanding that though a lot of those workers, it was probably about 20 at the time, has been dismantled to other government agencies. I want to know from your explanation about this Mayor Bowser, how are the measurable outcomes coming along in a year's time and is director Linda Harlee harper

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Trayon White, Sr.: still in place to continue this work.

Muriel E. Bowser: May I?

Michael Brice-Saddler: Mayor Bowser, 30 seconds.

Muriel E. Bowser: Thank you. So yes, council member we stood up an emergency operation center, much like our COVID response emergency operation center, where officials from across the government were detailed. I've made that office permanent and it is in the office of the city administrator, our first ever gun violence prevention director and her job is to

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Muriel E. Bowser: coordinate across all agencies, public safety agencies, human services, agencies, education agencies, to make sure that our response to gun violence [O/V].

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. Thank you, Mayor Bowser. And now I would like to ask a submitted question from online from the user atmoneybylisa on Twitter. I'm

going to paraphrase the question a bit, but she asks as much as been discussed about the proposal to bring the Washington Football Team back to the district

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Michael Brice-Saddler: at the current RFK stadium site. Do you support that effort? And what would you say to those who live near the stadium who don't want an NFL team as a neighbor? And I'm going to open this up to every candidate. Let's start with Trayon White.

Trayon White, Sr.: Absolutely I support that effort and I think that, as you know, the stadium is not used every day, most stadiums throughout the country, but I think it's an opportunity for us to spur economic impact involving jobs to raise, to support local businesses in that community.

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Trayon White, Sr.: And I think that if you talk to those Washington football teams and Washington Commanders fans, they'll say the same thing and so we have to invest into our local teams to ensure that you can keep our teams here and have the DC [U/A].

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you. James Butler, for you, same question, one minute.

James Butler: Yes. Thank you. I do support bringing the commanders back to DC, but I will say this, I do not support paying for the stadium. I believe that the NFL and their owners

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James Butler: have sufficient money to do that and only a small fraction of the preparation of the land would be subsidized by the city. in addition, I will say this to the neighbors in the surrounding neighborhoods we will listen. As mayor of this city I will always listen to your concerns and we will find and focus on ways for noise reduction, traffic calming measures, to make sure that they too can enjoy living in their neighborhood,

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James Butler: but also enjoy the return of the commanders.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, James Butler for reminding me that it's the commanders and no longer the Washington football team. Robert White, I would pitch the same question to you.

Robert White, Jr.: Thanks for the question. I'm a lifelong fan of our team and love going to games, but I'm also Washingtonian and wanting to be a mayor who understands that the most urgent need in our city is for housing. So when we have large parcels of land, the best use for that land is not a professional football

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Robert White, Jr.: stadium for teams that play eight home games a year. If you look at the current stadium FedEx field, what you will see is that it has not resulted in massive economic development and jobs for residents. So it will take up a lot of space, but we need that space as a landlocked city. So I will push for more and more housing, focused on workforce housing and affordable housing and recreation space for our young people who don't have enough recreation space in our city.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Robert. And to be clear,

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Michael Brice-Saddler: you're saying you are against bringing the team to DC.

Robert White, Jr.: That's right.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you. And Mayor Bowser, lastly the question for you.

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, thank you. I am for bringing the team to DC. I have experience developing a parcel of land for major league team called DC United. I did so when I was on the council and we delivered the stadium as mayor. our model to that was

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Muriel E. Bowser: to have the team pay for their own stadium, but the district who acquire the land and prepare the land, and that's what I'd be willing to do at RFK. The truth is RFK is 100 acres. We can have housing, recreation space. I want to thank the council for their preliminary approval of my proposal to add an indoor sports complex for DC residents, that's indoor track, that is swimming, that's gymnastics, that is missing in our current portfolio.

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Muriel E. Bowser: We can also have a fantastic connection with the Anacostia river. My current budget also proposes building bridges to the heritage islands.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser.

Muriel E. Bowser: So are planning a comprehensive plan that includes a stadium.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you very much. Robert White, as you know, there is currently a tax revision commission looking at DC's tax code. What's one change that you would like to make to the taxes in DC?

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Robert White, Jr.: I think that we want to see the work of the tax revision commission. We want to continue to have the most progressive tax structure in the nation and so my expectation from the Tax Revision Commission is that they are going to send us back recommendations

that are in line with that, but also recommendations that make us an attractive place for businesses that will employ our residents with the jobs. So this is a very delicate balance.

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Robert White, Jr.: I think we have good people at the table and I want to see what they come back with.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Mayor Bowser is there a change that you would like to make to the taxes in DC? [O/V] thank you.

Muriel E. Bowser: I've said to people since I was a council member, if I ever need to raise your taxes, I will come to you and explain why. I've done so one time on sales taxes and some commercial property taxes to pay for our dedicated Metro Funding Solution.

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Muriel E. Bowser: In those cases, too, especially on the commercial property tax, I built in a sunset provision. I want to focus on how we can make sure residents can afford to stay here and one thing I want the tax revision commission to take off the table is raising our property taxes and I'm concerned that some of the high proposals that you've heard here, like guaranteeing jobs, 10,000 jobs, and how I heard it reported,

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Muriel E. Bowser: was that those would be government jobs and it would cost \$1.4 billion and the only way a plan like that could be paid for is to go to our residential property taxes.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you. Let's go to Robert White for a response about his jobs plan.

Robert White, Jr.: Thank you. I appreciate, I wish we weren't doing fear-mongering and actually what the mayor could do is actually just read my plan instead of reading the headlines and

she would see that it is not a proposal to create 10,000 government jobs. So, I think we can put that one to bed,

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Robert White, Jr.: but here's how we do that without raising taxes. We get a mayor like me, who will focus on government efficiency. This is a wildly inefficient government and anybody who has dealt with DCRA or DDOT among many other agencies sees that. The amount of money that we spend settling lawsuits is out of control. This is a management issue. The amount of money we have to put in the office of unified command because of issues that we've seen there.

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Robert White, Jr.: The amount of money and resources that we have to put into our crime lab because of inefficiencies there.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you.

Robert White, Jr.: The list can go on and so with a more efficient government that is forward looking, you do not need to raise taxes to implement this.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: That that is time, but I do want to try to clarify, you announced your plan to hire about 10,000 DC residents to guarantee everyone a job a few weeks ago and tonight you're saying it's not 10,000 government jobs. Can you explain?

Robert White, Jr.: 10,000 residents, not 10,000 government jobs. At the press conference I said, some of these would be union jobs, some of them would be with non-profits.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: All right. We have a question from the audience again for Trayon White. From Elijah Dowdy asks, [U/A] has been plagued with problems and it seems to be only getting worse. What would you do to help alleviate these problems?

Trayon White, Sr.: One of the things we need to do is put ownership on all our local jurisdictions including the federal government. DC is one

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Trayon White, Sr.: of three partners in this. DC [U/A] is dumping enormous amount of money into especially our subway system. We have to lean more on federal government. DC brings a lot of people here to come to work who are federal government employees who also use this transit system and they have not did their fair share. So we must sit down with all our partners to ensure we can get this fixed. As you know, we have a one track subway system that's crippled us and enabling without any of us to fix our track system. So we, have to have

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Trayon White, Sr.: stronger and longer-term vision to ensure that we can have a table where everyone participate and put their money in the path, not just crossing the DC.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Mr. Butler, I know you've spoken earlier tonight about making Metro free for DC residents. How would you make Metro free while also taking care of the problems with Metro and the money needed to solve those problems?

James Butler: Yeah. It's a very good question, Julie. I spoke of this before at the transportation [U/A] and I'll share it with you now. There's a strain on our infrastructure

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James Butler: by people coming from Maryland, Virginia, and quite frankly, from all over the country to see our munes and enjoy our city in other ways. I believe that we can raise our fair by partnering one, with our sister states, then the federal government, of course, we

would need to get an agreement to raise the fares, you know, 50 cents to a dollar on those people that are non-DC residents, while DC residents would ride for free,

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James Butler: instead of dispensing vouchers, \$100 vouchers to whatever residents or a certain amount of residents. We can do it, but because we were not able to tax folks on our streets, but there's a heavy burden on our infrastructure and I think that's the way to do it and that's what we will move for to make it entirely free. That's progressive thinking.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Okay, thank you. Robert White, you helped pass a law the birth to Three law that was meant to subsidize the cost of childcare for middle-income families,

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: but the expanded subsidies were never funded. What would you do as mayor to make childcare more affordable?

Robert White, Jr.: Just as I've worked with my colleagues over the past couple of fiscal years to fund birth to Three, in very large pieces, I'm going to continue this work, both on the council and next as mayor. it is important that we get early childhood education opportunities for all of our children, understanding that in ages from birth to 3-year-old is

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Robert White, Jr.: when 80% of core brain functions develop. It is the most pivotal educational opportunity for our young people. But this bill also provides stability for our early educators who make barely above minimum wage right now when cannot afford to support their families. So it is an unstable field. birth to Three stabilizes the field and creates early childhood education opportunities for children who otherwise wouldn't have it.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Mayor Bowser, what would you do to make childcare more affordable?

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Muriel E. Bowser: Well, Julie, we have worked very hard to increase the number of childcare opportunities in the District of Columbia. We set a goal early on to add 1000 seats and that's exactly what we did. We also have a focus on quality. For us it's not enough to just create new seats, they have to be quality seats. So for every dollar that the district invests in early childcare, we want that to translate into our children

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Muriel E. Bowser: showing up or pre-K3, which is free in the District of Columbia, a well-prepared and ready to learn. We also created a new model for their early grades, a Pre-K center, if you will. We've opened 2 so far at the [U/A] School also the military [U/A] school. We have another coming to Fort Lincoln at the old Thurgood Marshall one in ward 6 at minor and one at ward 7 at old Randle Highlands. We know having more opportunities

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Muriel E. Bowser: all across the city that are high quality is going to deal with one of the impacts of this pandemic and that is getting and helping women get back to the workforce.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. Now I have a question for Trayon White. The city's downtown corridor was hit hard by the pandemic and many businesses have struggled. What's your plan to revitalize downtown?

Trayon White, Sr.: Well, I think we have to double down on investment. I think that DC has

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Trayon White, Sr.: grown significantly in the last 5 years, since I've been on the council, from 14.5 billion to over 19 billion because our businesses have been thriving, so it's our turn to make sure they be stable in our community. What I do find that there are lot of small

businesses that didn't survive and we have to ensure that we leverage our relationship with our banks. We have over \$20 billion in Wells Fargo and other banks in this jurisdiction that we're not pushing to become partners ensuring

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Trayon White, Sr.: that our local businesses can stay here because those are jobs, especially for the frontline workers. We've seen them lose their job because those businesses are out of places. So my plan is to subsidize those businesses and keep those businesses in DC, who in turn pays taxes, going to [U/A] from the community. I want to try and keep our economy thriving.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you. And Michael Havelin in the audience asks, do you support extending the DC streetcar? Mayor Bowser I'll start with you.

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Muriel E. Bowser: I do support extending the DC streetcar. We are already working on the eastward extension and we will continue to work on the best way to extend it west or the most logical west terminus point. We are examining, I have proposed and is funded and is on the way a K-street transit way, that will totally redo K street, make it better for buses, have a protected bike corridor

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Muriel E. Bowser: and get rid of those service lanes that no longer make sense. So as we're developing and designing that plan, we will continue to look for how we can get the streetcar over the hopscotch Bridge, which we will be replacing and have a logical westward terminus.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. James Butler same question for you. Do you support extending the DC streetcar?

James Butler: Thank you Michael and thank you for joining us. I think Michael,

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James Butler: you probably know my position on this already, but for all of our viewers, I absolutely do. I will bring it from ward 7, the [U/A] metro stop and I will move it to, as I've said it before, downtown, K-Street. I think it's important because those demographics predominantly in ward 7, they rely on that economically. We're dealing with east of the river where there's not sufficient grocery stores and we know the economic corridor is not as

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James Butler: robust as it is west of the river. What we can do by providing this mechanism of people transversing freely is to actually embolden our city's economy and I will do that.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, James. And one question for Robert White, how would you grade the city's ongoing response to the Coronavirus pandemic? Why? one minute.

Robert White, Jr.: I think, across the city we've done a very good

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Robert White, Jr.: job of responding to the Coronavirus from the mayor, to the council, to our agencies, to our frontline workers, who have moved our city forward, to the teachers who have kept our classrooms going. I think as a city we showed what we can do when we come together and I think we've got to be proud of how we responded to the Coronavirus and we know we've got to stay vigilant.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you. And Mayor Bowser I ask you that same question. How would you grade the city's response to the Coronavirus pandemic?

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Muriel E. Bowser: I typically don't give myself a grade, but I will tell you what people tell me when I go around the city. They say, thank you Mayor Bowser for keeping us safe. I hear that every part of the city, from people who are appreciated, that we had a strong emergency response appreciated our constant communication, appreciated that we were able to get billions of dollars of assistance out, billions of dollars

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Muriel E. Bowser: and unemployment assistance, and that we set up a first rate testing and vaccine apparatus. So I'm grateful to people for following public health advice. I'm grateful to people for sticking with us, and I'm grateful to my team, our Department of health, Homeland Security, our communication staff, everybody stuck together to deliver important information to the residents. I'm also very proud

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Muriel E. Bowser: that we were able to reopen schools for in-person learning the first in the region to do so.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you. James Butler, I see you had your hand up for a 30-second rebuttal.

James Butler: Thank you. I just want to be clear, for any leader or responding to COVID would have been difficult. I do want to say this when Omicron surged the second time, it was extremely important, leaders of the city were urging the

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James Butler: mayor to close things down and it took over a week and a number of people getting sick. So let's not forget that where the letter from the chairman of the council and I believe two members that are here today wrote letters urging her, but I believe we need a mayor [O/V]

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you James Butler. Trayon White did I see your hand up for a 30-second rebuttal?

Trayon White, Sr.: Yes, but my hand was

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Trayon White, Sr.: in response to, the street car. I never got a chance to answer that question if I may.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Sure. 30 seconds.

Trayon White, Sr.: Thank you and so answer at this moment will be no. partly because I would like to get a study done about the usability of the streetcar. [U/A] several times I watched people crowded on the bus. I think it was the X2 and I saw about 10 people or less every single time on the streetcar

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Trayon White, Sr.: and so I'm not sure if the \$300 million investment was worth our dollars and I'm interested in creating a study to figure out where viewers and where residents are [U/A] use that a transportation method.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you very much to you and to all of our candidates for taking on so many different issues tonight. We've come to the end of our time and we'd like to ask each of you to make a closing statement, starting with Mayor Bowser. Mayor Bowser, you're on mute.

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Muriel E. Bowser: Sorry. I want to thank you for your great questions and [U/A] on the district and I want to thank DC residents for trusting me to lead the city. It is the honor of my life to be the mayor of my hometown, only second to being Miranda's mom and I have to wish her a happy birthday, today is her birthday, and I also want to say this, I am proud of the work that we've done on COVID,

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Muriel E. Bowser: and I think operating in an emergency when times are tough, showing up in person to get the job done when people's lives or on the line has really demonstrated what I can do as a mayor. I'm also proud that when a tyrant threatened our city and our values and to take over our streets, we didn't run and hide. We stood up and we took back 16 Street to make it black lives matter Plaza. I'm also proud that I've been a strong voice for DC

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Muriel E. Bowser: on the national stage in front of the Congress, on CNN, on meeting the press, I speak up and represent and make DC residents proud. So I'm asking for your vote again.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. Thank you. Happy Birthday, Miranda. Thanks for taking the time on her birthday to be here with us. James Butler, you're closing statement.

James Butler: Thank you to all the district residents watching this and thank you. This is a very, very crucial time in DC's history and that's why I'm asking for your vote

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James Butler: because of urgency. You've heard from people that have served on DC government for a combined total of over 30 years, but ask yourself what have you gotten out of that with our current mayor? You have gotten crying at nearly a 20-year high. We need someone with the plan. We need someone that's not a deep on the police democrat. We need someone that can turn this city around. Folks if you continue to do more of the same, you will get more of the same.

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James Butler: My appeal to you today is don't let the summer months come and the warmer weather starts and crime starts creeping up to a 30-year high and you have elected a mayor that has shown she couldn't do it over 8 years or you're stuck with someone who has shown that they will defund the police. I will make DC one of the safest cities in America, make it affordable, with our homeless issues [O/V]

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you, Mr. Butler.

James Butler: And make our schools make the grade. That is why I'm asking for your vote on June 21st.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you.

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Julie Zauzmer Weil: Okay, thank you, Mr. Butler. Trayon White, your closing statement please, one minute.

Trayon White, Sr.: First, I want to thank you all for hosting us tonight to give us the opportunity for the residents to hear what we are standing up for issues and [U/A] most. I'm happy that I'm here in the office as a council member. What I do know that the executive's job is to implement and make the government work for the people and right now it's not happening

in efficient way for everyone and so I know under my leadership and running for a council member,

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Trayon White, Sr.: I committed to creating more affordable housing. So I had to change the law to do that. We talked about living in a food desert, so we opened up two grocery [U/A] community garden for over 8 acres. We talked about, addressing the recreation issue with building 4 new recreation centers in our ward. We talked about the disparities in education. I had to put the money back in the budget for 15 schools to ensure we had our black and brown children [U/A] education. So that's the type of leadership that I bring to the table

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Trayon White, Sr.: and I've been doing the same thing of 19 years, putting people over politics. It was our job to make sure that the \$20 billion budget is working for all residents throughout the district, you know, right now it is not. So if you want something to change

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you.

Trayon White, Sr.: go to the ballot on June 21st. So [U/A] tomorrow for Trayon White [O/V] [U/A].
Thank you.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you and Robert White.

Robert White, Jr.: Thank you, Julie and Michael. I will stand up to developers

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Robert White, Jr.: and I will take on the tough issues as mayor, public safety, improving schools for all families and making our city affordable. The mayor is out of touch. You've heard no sense of urgency tonight on any of the issues and that is what we would expect from a third term. I am ready on day 1 to move our city forward. Our campaign has incredible

momentum. The vast majority of local organizations that have endorsed in this race are supporting me and most

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Robert White, Jr.: recent fundraising report, we had more than doubled the number of donors as the mayor and our volunteers are out across this city every single week [U/A] every day, because of them, because of everyday people like you, we are going to move our city forward and I'm asking for your vote on June 22nd, get ready for the things that we can do together.

Michael Brice-Saddler: Thank you, council member Robert White. And that concludes our debate.

To learn more about how to vote in this election

01:30:30

Michael Brice-Saddler: Visit dcboe.org and remember to visit dcdebates.com to watch this debate and others in their entirety.

Julie Zauzmer Weil: Thank you to all our candidates, our community partners, and the Office of Campaign Finance for hosting tonight's debate. Good night.

[END RECORDING DC Mayoral Primary Debate Hosted by the Office of Campaign Finance]