Public Roundtable on

Implementation of Law 23-269, The Department of Buildings Establishment Act of 2020

Testimony of
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Before the
Committee of the Whole
Chairman Phil Mendelson
Council of the District of Columbia

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Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson, members, and staff of the Committee of the Whole. I am Ernest Chrappah, the Director of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). My testimony today is about the implementation of Law 23-269, the “Department of Buildings Establishment Act of 2020” (Act). I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the implementation of this law with the Committee and the roundtable participants.

The Requirements of the Act

The Act was enacted on February 2, 2021, and became effective and applicable on October 1, 2021. The Act creates a new agency, the Department of Buildings (DOB) which will be responsible for the administration and enforcement of codes and regulations for construction, building and rental housing maintenance, and zoning. The Act also redesignates the remaining functions of DCRA as the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP). Specifically, DLCP will be charged with issuing business licenses, protecting the community against business fraud, registering corporations, issuing occupational and professional licenses to individuals, and regulating special events in the District.

The Act lays out several steps in the implementation process including the submission of a transition plan and timeline. The Act also sets forth reporting requirements. First, the law provides that 60 days after the applicability of the Act (October 1, 2021), the City Administrator (CA) must provide an organizational plan and chart to the Council. Second, 120 days after the applicability date of the Act, the law requires the CA to provide a strategic human capital plan and a communications strategy to the Council. Third, 180 days after applicability of the Act, the CA must provide a comprehensive document control inventory to the Council. Lastly, one year after applicability of the Act, the CA must provide the Council with a business process analysis and reengineering assessment, and an information technology needs assessment. In addition to
the Transition Plan, starting October 1, 2021, and every quarter thereafter, the Mayor must provide quarterly updates to the Council on the progress of developing the deliverables required by the Act. I will now provide an overview of our progress towards implementing the Act and next steps.

**Progress In Implementation of the Act**

The first deliverable under the Act was the submission of an organizational plan and chart. The organizational plans and charts for both the DOB and the DLCP were included in the first part of the Transition Plan (Version 1.0) which was transmitted to the Council on December 14, 2021. The organizational plans were developed after a thorough review of the functions and missions of each of the new agencies to ensure that both agencies have the appropriate staffing with the optimal mix of experience, training, and background to allow each agency to be operational on October 1, 2022. Under the organizational plans submitted to the Council, the DOB will consist of the Office of the Director; the Office of Construction and Buildings Standards, which is overseen by the Chief Building Official and includes permitting, green building and third-party inspections; Administrative Services; the Office of Strategic Code Enforcement, which is overseen by a Strategic Enforcement Administrator; the Office of Residential Inspection; and the Office of Zoning Administration. The DLCP will consist of the Office of the Director; the Business and Professional Licensing Administration, which will include business licensing and registration, the Business Service Center, the Corporations Division and Occupational and Professional Licensing; and the Office of Enforcement, which will include the Enforcement Unit, Consumer Protection and Special Events and Vending. This first installment of the Transition Plan also included organizational charts for both the DOB and DLCP.
The second version of the Transition Plan (Version 2.0) was submitted to the Council on February 15, 2022 and includes the strategic human capital plan and a communications strategy. The strategic human capital plan is designed to achieve the strategic human capital goals of aligning human capital with the DOB’s mission and strategic direction; supporting a culture of continuous learning and development; sustaining a productive and diverse workforce; maximizing employee talent; and monitoring and evaluating the implementation and results. The communications strategy outlines the objective of ensuring District residents and businesses are educated and informed as to the purview of each agency and establishes the overarching goal of introducing, and driving awareness of, the two new agencies to District residents and businesses. Additionally, the communications strategy also defines the target audiences and delineates how we will measure success.

The Act also requires the submission of quarterly updates to the Council. The first quarterly update was transmitted to the Council on January 11, 2022, and provided a summary of the steps that have been made, and are underway, towards implementing the Act.

Next Steps

Next, I will turn to the next steps in the implementation process. DCRA is on track to provide the next deliverable, a comprehensive document control inventory, by March 29, 2022. As required by the Act, the comprehensive document control inventory will identify all documents, collateral, and assets that must be revised to reflect the transfer of responsibilities to the two new departments. DCRA, working with the Executive Office of the Mayor, will prepare the next quarterly report which is expected to be transmitted to the Council in April. Regarding practical next steps towards a smooth transition, DCRA has over 80 standard operating procedures (SOP) and policies and approximately 30 software applications and 50 databases that
will be impacted by the transition to the two new agencies. DCRA will be reviewing current business processes and SOPs to determine what revisions are needed and is looking at how to port data systems and functionality to the successor agencies in a way that will be seamless and transparent to customers.

In closing, I want to stress my commitment to the implementation of the Department of Buildings Act. I hope my testimony has given insight into the implementation of the Act, and I thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. I am available for any questions that the Committee may have.