GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Public Roundtable on
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Lindsey Parker Confirmation Resolution of 2019"

Testimony of
Lindsey Parker
Acting Chief Technology Officer

Before
The Honorable Brandon Todd, Chairman
Committee on Government Operations

The Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
Room 123
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairman Todd, and members and staff of the Committee on Government Operations. I am Lindsey Parker, Acting Chief Technology Officer.

As a proud resident of Ward 1, I am honored to have been nominated by Mayor Muriel Bowser to lead the Office of the Chief Technology Officer. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my background, experience, and vision for the agency.

Background and Experience

I'm proud to be joined today by my parents, Bill and Carol Parker. It is because of them – and my father's career as a U.S. diplomat – that I was able to grow up in six international cities before turning 16, including attending Kindergarten at Stoddert Elementary School. Dinner table discussions revolved around how the interplay of politics, diplomacy, and trade shaped geopolitical stability around the globe.

I was in high school in New Delhi, India when the world wide web first became a thing. I remember using my school Softhome account to send emails to my aunt in the U.S. after she snail mailed me her address. It was almost as instantaneous as me pressing send on that email that a complete shift occurred in the country. With internet came options. And with technology came room for new ideas and small towns became new cities. In just four years, a complete shift had occurred and my family and I witnessed a technology-empowered middle class grow and grow rapidly.

I had a front row seat to the creation of pathways to the middle class for many who were held back for generations. I always remember a section of Thomas Friedman's book where Jerry Yang, the cofounder of Yahoo!, quoted a senior Chinese government official as saying, "Where people have hope, you have a middle class." Technology provided that hope.

After graduating with a political science degree from Yale, emboldened with the hope that trade policy was going to be the key to breaking the cycle of poverty, I started my career in DC. As a government affairs consultant, I worked on bettering labor standards and wages in trade agreements with the International Labor Organization, lobbied for STEM appropriations for Math for America, and helped craft campaigns to reverse the negative associations middle class Americans associated with "trade."

It was through this work that I realized the technology revolution that has taken place over the course of my lifetime has led to innovation policy being my work ***and*** my passion – as I believe it is key to retaining American competitiveness. And, more specifically, it is innovation policy in our urban centers that will help break the cycle of poverty so we can remain competitive, and cities like ours can continue to grow and prosper.

It's because of this interest that I jumped at the chance to join DC government during the Fenty Administration to help push forward an economic development policy that would allow

Washington to be at the forefront of the innovation economy. I had the opportunity to work with and learn from Dan Tangerlini, Neil Albert, Bryan Sivak at OCTO, and others about the levers we have at the local level. These levers create pathways to the middle class by being intentional about growing innovation engines – attracting major employers, building great neighborhoods, and reforming public education.

In the pursuit of understanding all the levers that could be pulled to spur innovation, I wanted to better understand the tech world from the perspective of a private company. I was offered the opportunity to join Symantec – one of the first cyber security software companies - in Mountain View, California. There I had the opportunity to reshape how the company conversed with the C-suite of Symantec's major resellers, including little understood online merchant Amazon. Translating engineer speak to CEO speak was a challenge that allowed me to work closely with Symantec's CTO, engineering team, and product management team to better understand customer needs, market forces, and software development.

When then-Councilmember Muriel Bowser decided to run for mayor, I was thrilled at the chance to join her team – bringing my experience in federal lobbying, cyber security software development, and local policy work to help her craft and achieve an exciting vision for DC. For the past four years I've been grateful and humbled to have had the chance to serve as Mayor Bowser's Deputy Chief of Staff. I've been able to help stand up a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to track constituent concerns, an ANC portal to help centralize communication, and an online budget tool to help residents understand the trade-offs involved with building a budget. As Deputy Chief of Staff I was able to leverage my interest in technology and innovation policy to connect residents and stakeholders to DC government while supporting Mayor Bowser's ambitious agenda.

OCTO has a critical responsibility to prepare DC for the technological change that is at our doorstep - meeting the diverse demands of our residents, businesses and visitors. I'm excited to have the opportunity to bring what I know about resident desires and expectations, agency operations, strategic communications, and the levers at our avail, throughout DC Government, to OCTO. And if given the opportunity, I would very much like to set a new record of the longest serving CTO.

Vision for OCTO

OCTO has a unique position in this city, in this region, and in the world. We truly have the chance to design, build, maintain, and constantly improve an *infrastructure for opportunity*. As we see global urbanization becoming a reality, we have a unique moment to make DC a shining example of how technology helps shape the future of a mobile, inclusive, resilient, and equitable city. One where, through efficient and thoughtful technology adoption, everyone has the ability to live, learn, grow, and thrive.

I am excited to bring this vision to fruition through four main goals:

1. **Retain and Attract Innovative Civic Technologists:** We need to show designers, engineers, technologists that OCTO is a place where they want to come at the beginning of their careers, the middle, and the end - because we have big challenges and have big opportunities to find unique solutions. Not only are we able to help create career pathways, but by accepting a job on one of DC Government's many innovation teams, the projects to work on are so relevant and interesting, that this stop on a career journey should be globally accepted as the civic innovation Mecca. We can do this by building career pipelines with our high schools and universities, by recognizing and publicly showcasing our top talent wherever it exists within our organizations, and by celebrating employees who come and go to other sectors in our DC innovation eco-system. I plan to do this in a more intentional way moving forward.

2. **Focus on User Experience:** We need to work on customer experience. It's not enough anymore to say - "here, I've come up with a solution and now, Agency X, you have to implement it." As Steve Jobs repeatedly encouraged his design team – we, at OCTO, need to learn how to get better at "staying beginners." Cluing into the emotional momentum that will ensure our new product, our new solution, our new process, is actually used and is helpful to all users, even the most resistant. The only way we can do that is by sharing lessons learned and best practices - and we can only do that by being intentional about how we are rolling out these new ways of working for our workforce and residents. We must have a continually updated "how to" playbook on successful training modules, communications plans, and continuous quality controls. And work together to create a government website that is user friendly, not agency driven. Boston recently launched a government website that has created a new gold standard. I joked with the team last week that we can call our website overhaul Project Better Than Boston - or Project BTB.

3. **Bolster Innovation:** OCTO needs to be in a position to provide the best technology available to our partner agencies at a ***competitive rate***, to help them achieve their goals and serve the residents of Washington, DC. We need to ensure our systems and processes are prepared for the innovation solutions we will need to meet the challenges of tomorrow; and let's face it, today, too. Together we need to work on the way that major technology vendors interact with public sector enterprises, specifically ours. For so long they've been leading the charge, and yet it's our purchasing power that should be. Part of that solution will be to ensure that our inclusive innovation ecosystem in DC has a seat at the table to grow and innovate. Step 1 will be to create a better way for us to hold these major vendors accountable through performance standards that we test, track, and constantly reevaluate. Step 2 will be to share that information so we don't continuously step on the same land mines when we implement a project plan. In parallel, we will create an ever-improving procurement playbook for all DC agencies that is responsive to the technology needs of our customers and residents.

4. **Secure Our Infrastructure:** We must protect the information assets of the DC Government and provide a safe digital environment. Given our seat in the nation's capital, we are an easy target for the same forces interested in targeting the federal government. We know what we need to do to harden our security posture to bring us up to industry standards to protect the information our residents have faith in us to use and secure. That said, in order to do so, we all must work together to ensure our workforce understands the threats and the process improvements we are implementing to protect us all. OCTO continues implementing NIST standards across our network, but I have already started and hope to continue to leverage my cyber industry experience to help better explain the approach and rationale to further that work. As a team, alongside agency CIOs, OCTO will work to utilize enterprise IT governance frameworks, like ITIL and COBIT, that will enable our IT services to be managed throughout our network on an ongoing basis, while mitigating risks and optimizing resources.

In retaining and attracting great people, hardening our infrastructure and focusing on the end user, OCTO will enable our partner agencies to securely leverage world class technology to better serve the residents of the District of Columbia. If given the opportunity to lead the agency, I will work to put in place the strategic plan and governance structure to do just that.

Conclusion

I am excited about the opportunity to lead OCTO and am grateful to Mayor Bowser for nominating me. I believe my extensive public service management and leadership experience, coupled with my private sector experience and work on technology will enable me to effectively lead Washington, DC's technology agency. I understand the opportunities and challenges the agency faces and look forward to tackling them alongside the Executive, this Committee, and the Council as a whole.

I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to thank and acknowledge the entire OCTO team. I am proud to work alongside some of the finest professionals in government who come to work each and every day with passion and enthusiasm for serving this city.

Chairman Todd, thank you for this opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering any questions.