ODCA Office of the District of Columbia Auditor

For immediate release
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DC Health Commits to Improving Routine Inspections of D.C.'s Restaurants

New audit finds insufficient staffing and an ineffective fine process

November 19, 2026 — DC Health – the agency that protects the District's food supply and inspects its roughly 6,500 food establishments – agrees with all 14 recommendations in a new audit of restaurant inspections and compliance with the D.C. Code.

The audit recommendations from the Office of the D.C. Auditor (ODCA) relate to staffing, technology, consistent enforcement, and sustainable restaurant inspection frequencies that will allow DC Health to fulfill its role in protecting public health. The agency expects the improvements to be complete by late-2027.

"We found a real mismatch between how often DC Health intends to inspect restaurants and the staff available for that task which poses a real challenge in difficult budget times," D.C. Auditor Kathy Patterson said. "We applaud the agency for accepting our recommendations and hope they are able to meet the deadlines they've set to make improvements."

The report found that DC Health:

- Conducted inspections in FY25 at nearly twice the rate of inspections per person recommended by the Food and Drug Administration
- Completed only 22% of the routine inspections required by its risk-based schedule at restaurants in FY 2025.
- Did not consistently enforce all Food Code violations in FY 2025. In a sample of restaurant inspections with violations, only 55% resulted in either corrective action or additional enforcement action.
- Lacks a reliable and consistent process for managing Notice of Infractions, rendering them an ineffective enforcement mechanism.

At the same time ODCA found that DC Health generally completes inspection reports accurately and quickly responded to most restaurant-related complaints.

The ODCA report recommends that DC Health:

- Should create and implement a staffing plan that identifies the personnel levels needed to complete timely routine inspection requirements in accordance with the risk-based restaurant inspection schedule.

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- Should develop and implement changes to the Division of Food Operations and Procedures Manual for the timeframes to conduct follow-up inspections and when to issue Notice of Infractions for restaurants that fail to comply with the food safety requirements.
- Should update the Division of Food's Operations and Procedures Manual with policies and procedures for the Notice of Infraction process.

The DC Health inspections website is searchable by restaurant name and type as well as by ward, quadrant, inspection type, license number, ZIP code, and/or date.

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