

Age-Friendly DC September 2024 Newsletter



AGE-FRIENDLY=DC



Quote of the Month: *“We know that in DC and across the country, medical debt has become a burden that follows too many families around and holds people back from ever getting their fair shot — especially people of color. Erasing medical debt just makes sense — this is a way for us to get life-changing financial help to a large number of people, in the most efficient way possible. We’re grateful for our partners who worked with us*

to relieve tens of thousands of Washingtonians from the burden of medical debt.” - Mayor Muriel Bowser

Medical Debt Relief in the District



April 16, 2024



XXXXXXXXXX

JONATHAN DOE
123 MAIN ST
Munchkin Land, OZ 37688



Dear JONATHAN DOE,

We are sending this letter to share the good news that you no longer owe the above referenced medical debt(s). Using funds provided by Mayor Muriel Bowser and the District of Columbia, Undue Medical Debt a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit, acquired and cancelled the debts associated with the above referenced accounts. You can learn more at www.UndueMedicalDebt.org.

The medical debt, listed above, has been canceled by Undue Medical Debt using funds provided by The District of Columbia. You no longer have any obligation to pay these specific accounts. There are no tax consequences from this debt cancellation, which was carried out under this partnership program with an investment from Mayor Muriel Bowser who identified the great return for health, cancelling medical debt would have.

On the reverse side of this letter you will find Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that will give you a more complete understanding of who Undue Medical Debt is and why this service has been provided. Here are the most immediate things you should know:

- The relief provided is for the medical debt account(s) referenced in this letter only. Undue Medical Debt is not currently erasing any other medical debt(s) you might owe.

Total debt abolished (Deuda abolida): \$1,234.56
Number of accounts (Número de cuentas): 3
Creditors (Acreedores): General Hospital
Account numbers (Números de cuenta): OZ-2738534, GH-2816841, OZ-0427392
Dates of service (Fechas de servicio): 04/19/2021, 05/28/2021, 06/02/2021
Balance now on accounts (Saldo actual en cuentas): \$0.00
Gift ID (ID del regalo): 3CD5-679DB4



Medical Debt
P.O. Box 19085
Long Island City, NY 11101-9085

Jonathan Doe
123 Main St.
Anytown, NY 11101-9085

In August, Mayor Bowser erased \$42 million of medical debt for 62,000 DC residents. Last year, the Mayor made a commitment to leverage surplus funds from Fiscal Year 2023 to support those burdened by medical debt. Medical debt is the [leading cause](#) of bankruptcy, and there's an estimated [\\$220 billion](#) of it burdening [100 million people](#) in the U.S. Working with [Undue Medical Debt](#), a national nonprofit that acquires medical debt in bulk from providers like hospitals and then erases it, D.C. government has provided the funding for this impactful effort.

Undue's criteria for relief are, those who are four times or below the federal poverty level (FPL) or those with medical debt that's 5% or more of their annual income. Medical debt is

a [social determinant of health](#) which can lead people to delaying or forgoing necessary care altogether. Medical debt is also an equity issue and disproportionately [affects communities of color](#). In the District, about 60 percent of the total debt relief will benefit 36,000 residents making \$25,000 or less, and 80 percent of residents receiving the relief live in D.C. zip codes that are majority Black or Latino.

Tzedek DC, a local nonprofit legal aid organization, is offering resources for residents who had their debt forgiven. If you get a letter in the mail from Undue Medical Debt, open it! If you need assistance, [contact Tzedek DC](#).

DC Meets 5-Year New Housing Goal



On July 29, Mayor Muriel Bowser announced that the District of Columbia achieved its goal of building 36,000 new housing units by 2025, a goal she set in 2019 to ease rising housing costs as DC's population grows. The added housing is a monumental success - in the 18 years prior to setting this goal, there were just 40,000 housing units built. It was estimated that of the additional housing units, a third of them were designated as affordable. Overall, this progress prevented rents from rising by 5.5 percent.

Affordable housing was among the top concerns in the 2023 Age-Friendly DC Evaluation report. This progress shows that the city is responding to community needs. However, many people still struggle to find housing that fits their budget. If you're looking for affordable housing, you might start with the website [DCHousingSearch.org](https://dchousingsearch.org), offered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which is a search engine that provides information on accessible and affordable units. You may also consider meeting with one of DHCD's partners through their counseling programs to learn what

options are available to you. Some community members will be eligible to be entered into [the lottery for affordable housing through the Inclusionary Zoning Affordable Housing Program](#), or receive money to use towards a down payment and closing costs through the [Home Purchase Assistance Program](#).

Stay Safe in the Heat: Join HSEMA Heat Preparedness Workshops



This summer, DC reported some of the hottest temperatures on record and had multiple official heat emergencies. Heat is considered "extreme" in DC if the heat index is over 95 degrees. Data from recent years shows that extreme heat is rising across the country, and climate projections show that summer temperatures will continue to increase. This

comes with an elevated risk of heat illnesses, especially for older adults, children under 2, and those with chronic conditions or disabilities.

Although the summer is coming to an end, August and September can be particularly hot months in DC. To help you stay safe, Age-Friendly DC is partnering with Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) and Department of Employment Services (DOES) through Ready DC to offer Heat Preparedness Workshops across the District.

“Extreme heat is a growing concern in DC, as well as all over the country, especially for older adults and people with disabilities or other access and functional needs. These workshops will be focused on enhancing heat preparedness and encouraging DC community members to strengthen their resilience to this type of hazard and others. By distributing 'Cool Kits' and other heat preparedness materials in the form of flyers and magnets, we will be promoting specific ways that older adults can beat the heat.” said Rosemary McDonnell, Senior Disability, Access, and Functional Needs Manager at HSEMA.

The workshops also offer a chance to ask questions about heat and other weather-related hazards. Workshops are scheduled throughout September at various senior centers across the city. Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your resilience and ensure your safety during extreme heat. For more information and to find a workshop near you, visit ready.dc.gov.

Stay safe and keep cool, DC!

Reduce Your Fall Risk



Falls are the leading cause of injury for older adults and sometimes lead to decreases in independence and quality of life. Many factors are present when it comes to the risk of falling, including the home environment, fear of falling, physical activity levels, and the presence of chronic diseases or other medical conditions.

There are many programs around the District aimed at reducing fall risk among older adults. Leading the way is the [Safe-at-Home program](#) offered through Home Care Partners in collaboration with the [Department for Aging and Community Living \(DACL\)](#) which provides services aimed at reducing falls among older adults and adults with disabilities. Safe-at-Home's main program focuses on home modifications, such as railings and chair lifts, which can create safer home environments. If there is a need for modifications, Safe-at-Home can cover up to \$7000 worth of modifications for those who qualify. Last year, Safe-at-Home 2.0 was introduced, which offers many additional services, including evidence-based classes, vision screenings and medication management. [Matter of Balance](#), part of Safe-at-Home 2.0, is an evidence-based class aimed to decrease fall risk in older adults by addressing a potential fear of falling while also increasing balance, strength and confidence. The class is eight to nine weeks and can be taken online through Home Care Partners, or in person at [Senior Wellness Centers](#) location in each ward.

For those looking to focus even more on the physical activity component of reducing fall risk, [Stay Active and Independent for Life \(SAIL\)](#) is another evidence-based program offered at various sites around DC, including the [Department of Parks and Recreation \(DPR\)'s recreation centers](#) and [DACL's Senior Wellness Centers](#). This program provides

participants with strength-building and balance exercises which have been proven to decrease incidence of falls when practiced regularly.

With programs like these around DC, you can create your own fall prevention toolkit to keep yourself safe and healthy!

Key Dates

September

- **Anytime in September:** [schedule your Covid-19 vaccine booster](#)
- **September 7:** [DC State Fair at Franklin Park](#)
- **September 19:** [Serve DC's 9/11 Day of Service at Union Market](#)
- **September 20:** Public Safety Job Fair- [register here](#)
- **September 25:** DACL's [7th Annual Brain Games at MLK Library](#)
- **September 30:** Washington Area Villages Exchange hosting a [virtual information session about Medicare enrollment](#)
- **Various dates in September:** [Jazz in the Park x Plays in the Park](#) - a fun mashup of live music, moon bounces, jumbo games, video games, bikes, + more!

October

- **2024 Age-Friendly Ecosystem Summit:** The George Washington University's Center for Aging, Health and Humanities is hosting the fourth annual Age-Friendly Ecosystem Summit virtually this fall.
 - October 8- **Shaping Tomorrow: Longevity, Age-Friendly, and Multisector Planning**
 - [Register here](#)
 - October 9- **Inclusive by Design: Strategies for Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly Businesses**
 - [Register here](#)
 - October 15- **Unlocking Potential: Lifelong Learning for a Thriving Society**
 - [Register here](#)
 - October 16- **Healthy Communities and Healthier Aging: Collaborative Solutions**

- [Register here](#)

Do you have an upcoming event in October or November to highlight?

Email rebecca.dooley@dc.gov.

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