

Department of Human Resources

Response

Case # 25-0016-I

Baltimore City Department of Human Resources

Office of Recruitment

October 3, 2025

Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
100 North Holliday Street, Suite 635
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: Response to OIG Management Alert – Case #25-0016-I

Dear Inspector General Cumming,

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) acknowledges receipt of the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) Management Alert dated September 12, 2025. DHR appreciates your findings and agrees with the recommendations. As part of our corrective action, DHR will update the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to align with the revised prohibited items policy, review and update the candidate acknowledgment process, and review the disciplinary framework. Additionally, a structured communication strategy will be implemented to ensure that Baltimore City Fire Department Leadership (BCFD) leadership and the Union are informed of these updates prior to full implementation. This proactive outreach will include meeting with key stakeholders and distribution of updated SOPs with stakeholders to ensure clarity, alignment, and transparency. Below is an outline of each recommendation along with DHR's specific actions to ensure compliance and prevent recurrence.

OIG Recommendation 1: Establish a Comprehensive Prohibited Items List

Action Taken:

DHR has drafted a Prohibited Items Acknowledgment Form, which all candidates will be required to sign before testing.

- The updated list includes electronic devices (cell phones, smart watches, tablets, headphones, calculators), wearable or recording technology (smart glasses, glasses with video cameras, or similar devices), blank paper, bags, purses, and reference materials.
- Candidates will be required to surrender any such items before entry.

OIG Recommendation 2: Ensure Candidates Sign Acknowledgment of Testing Procedures

Action Taken:

The acknowledgment form will be mandatory at check-in for both written and oral exams.

- Proctors will verbally confirm compliance and direct candidates to secure any remaining items.
- Signed acknowledgment forms will be stored with exam records for accountability.

OIG Recommendation 3: Clarify Roles of DHR, Vendor, and BCFD Regarding Enforcement

Action Taken:

DHR will update its Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to clearly outline each party's responsibilities.

- DHR will serve as the final adjudicator of disciplinary outcomes related to exam integrity violations.
- Vendor and BCFD will continue to provide incident reports, but disciplinary determinations will be centralized under DHR.

OIG Recommendation 4: Standardize Testing Rules and Enforcement Procedures

Action Taken:

DHR will standardize its testing rules across written and oral exams to eliminate ambiguity.

- Rules will be shared in communications to schedule candidates for testing, posted at testing sites, read aloud by proctors, and reinforced during exam admittance notifications.
- Examples of violations that will trigger immediate action include:
 - A candidate's phone or smart watch rings during an exam.
 - A candidate is discovered with blank paper or unapproved notes.
 - A candidate attempts to bring wearable recording technology into the test environment or any other items listed on the list of prohibited items.

Collective Compliance and Governance Framework

Strengthened Compliance Oversight

- DHR will conduct periodic audits of test administration to ensure compliance.
- Random spot checks of proctor performance will be performed to verify consistency in enforcement.

Governance Role

- DHR will exercise a centralized governance role as the authority for test administration integrity.
- Any violation reports will be routed to DHR for review and final adjudication, ensuring uniformity in discipline.

Example of Future Testing Violation Scenarios and Responses

- **Scenario 1:** Cell Phone Rings During Exam
Action: Candidate's exam will be invalidated; candidate may be disqualified from eligibility list.
- **Scenario 2:** Smart Glasses or Wearable Recording Device Discovered
Action: Candidate will be removed from the exam room; disciplinary review initiated.
- **Scenario 3:** Use of Unauthorized Paper or Notes
Action: Materials confiscated, incident documented, and candidate referred for disciplinary adjudication.

DHR will meet with the Baltimore City Fire Department to review the draft SOPs and Prohibited Items list, obtain feedback, and make necessary updates prior to finalizing the documents and moving forward with implementation. By taking these measures, DHR is ensuring that the City's promotional process is fair, transparent, and defensible. We believe these actions directly address the OIG's concerns and establish a consistent framework that supports integrity in all future processes.

Thank you for your oversight and partnership. We remain committed to transparent, accountable, and equitable processes.