



Website: www.susanforarlington.com
Email: info@susanforarlington.com
Facebook: susanforarlington
Instagram/Threads: susanforarlington
Twitter: Susan4Arlington
LinkedIn: susan-r-cunningham

August 28, 2023

Statement on the death of Abonesh Woldegeorges

I am deeply troubled by the latest death in the Arlington County jail. Unbelievably, this is the eighth death in just over eight years. Ms. Abonesh Woldegeorges was a 73-year-old Black woman being held in a supposedly safe and secure environment.

As speakers were gathering early Sunday morning at the Lincoln Memorial for the March on Washington to continue the fight against injustice and inequality, Ms. Woldegeorges was found unresponsive only two miles away at the Arlington County Jail.

Following the death of Paul Thompson in February 2022, the Arlington County Sheriff reportedly implemented health and medical care reforms to improve medical care, including medical devices to “track heart rates and alert workstations.” Were these precautions in use? Did they effectively ensure timely emergency aid? If not, why not?

We will learn more as the Arlington County Police Department completes a death investigation and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determines the cause and manner of Ms. Woldegeorges’ death. In the meantime, I call on our County Board to act swiftly to:

1. Convene a public work session to hear directly from the Sheriff on the steps his office has taken and intends to take to materially enhance the quality health care for individuals in County custody. NAACP and other community stakeholders should be invited to attend and present testimony.
2. Direct the County Manager to review the extent and result of medical, behavioral health and rehousing support provided, or not, to Ms. Woldegeorges by Arlington and other regional jurisdictions, to identify gaps and better serve every community member’s needs.

Every life is precious, whether my child’s or a community member held in custody. Our community expects and demands that our leaders demonstrate that care and commitment.