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**Testimony of the Council for Court Excellence  
Before the Committee on Public Works & Operations  
of the Council of the District of Columbia**

**Performance Oversight Hearing for the  
Office of Contracting and Procurement**

**February 18, 2026**

Thank you, Chairperson Nadeau, for the opportunity to testify at today’s Performance Oversight Hearing for the Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP). My name is Katie McConville, and I am providing this testimony in my capacity as the Policy Counsel for the Council for Court Excellence (CCE). CCE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission to bring people together to conduct research, educate, and advocate to make D.C.’s unique legal systems more just, equitable, and accountable to the community. For nearly 40 years, CCE has worked to improve the administration of justice in the courts and related agencies in D.C. through research and policy analysis, convening diverse stakeholders, and creating educational resources for the public. Please note that in accordance with our policy, no judicial member of CCE participated in the formulation or approval of this testimony. This testimony does not reflect the specific views of, or endorsement by, any judicial member of CCE.

In summer of 2024, on behalf of the Office of the D.C. Auditor (ODCA), CCE supported an audit of two Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities that are collectively referred to as the “D.C. jail”, the Central Detention Facility (CDF) and Correctional Treatment Facility (CTF); we looked at conditions for a one-year period from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 utilizing official inspection and incident reports and an array of other sources. The report, entitled “*Urgent Need for a New DC Jail*,” was published this past May and reflected the urgent need to remedy poor conditions in the jail and to build a new facility so that people can be moved out of the dilapidated CDF as soon as feasibly possible.<sup>i</sup> While the audit provided us with deep knowledge of the jail, CCE has also closely monitored conditions inside the jail and efforts to replace it for many years. This work has included our facilitation of the District Task Force on Jails and Justice, an independent advisory body established in 2019 dedicated to redefining the District’s approach to incarceration; this work included developing recommendations for reducing the jail population and the characteristics necessary to meet the health, safety and reentry needs of jail residents.<sup>ii</sup>

My testimony today primarily concerns a contract related to the D.C. jail that we believe is slated to be solicited in CY 2026: a contract for food services in the D.C. jail. And I will briefly touch on our serious concerns regarding a possible contract for a new jail facility.

**2026 Contract for Food Services.**

First I will discuss food services in the D.C. jail—under the current food services offered by Aramark Correctional Services, residents have reported “that DOC does not provide adequate portions, variety, or sufficient fresh fruits and vegetables in its resident meals.”<sup>iii</sup>

Residents and staff alike have reported food contaminated with rotten or inedible materials, including bugs, rodents, and screws; as well as improperly heated or cold food being served during the current food contract period.<sup>iv</sup> A survey conducted in late 2023 by CGL, DOC's jail planning contractor, found that 62% of residents entering the jail ranked food quality as their top concern, and 58% of CTF residents identified food as the greatest issue in their facility.<sup>v</sup>

Despite consistent reporting about the poor quality and quantity of food offerings in the jail from multiple sources, efforts to improve food offerings have not come to fruition, underscoring the need for OCP to ensure that higher quality and nutritionally dense food offerings are required in the next iteration of a food services contract solicitation. Section 32 of the Secure D.C. legislation was adopted in June 2024 to improve food services in the D.C. jail by requiring DOC uphold nutritional standards by providing:

- a. Two (2) servings of dark green vegetables per day, at least one of which is served raw;
- b. Two (2) servings of additional colored vegetables per day, at least one of which is served raw;
- c. Two (2) servings of raw fruit per day; and
- d. Five (5) ounces of protein-rich foods, including meat, poultry, eggs, fish, nuts, seeds, or tofu, per day.<sup>vi</sup>

With the contract to provide food services in the jail up for solicitation this year, we urge DOC and OCP and Council to hold potential bidders to higher nutritional standards, and recommend that at a minimum, Council require the nutritional standards of Section 32 of Secure DC in the new food services solicitation. As a member of the DC Jail Food Working Group, we also call on Council to schedule a hearing to allow for meaningful consideration of the Food Policy Council Procurement Amendment Act of 2025, which would mandate that DC agencies, including DOC, use values-based procurement in their food service decisions beyond just DC public schools.<sup>vii</sup>

In addition, we also would like to see the Council explore measures that could encourage new vendors to apply for this food solicitation; this includes removing any threshold requirement that vendors have worked specifically in correctional facilities in the past. Aramark Correctional Services, the current vendor for food services in the D.C. jail, has been sued numerous times across the country for providing subpar food to incarcerated people; for example, there is currently a class action lawsuit in West Virginia brought by a group of prison residents alleging the vendor is denying adequately portioned meals that force their families to spend money on food items from the commissary and care packages that they must purchase from the same company.<sup>viii</sup> Notably, Aramark does not provide commissary in the DC jail, but just as in West Virginia, Aramark allows families to purchase care package meals for loved ones for \$12-\$15 through iCare, a company owned by Aramark Correctional Services LLC.<sup>ix</sup> While demonstrating capacity to handle the unique security requirements of a correctional facility is certainly an important and relevant factor, the solicitation should allow for new vendors to address their ability to meet the needs of our jail without necessarily having prior correctional experience.

In the 2025 audit, D.C. jail residents also reported relying on commissary as their meals were too small; this is an insufficient and inequitable solution as the D.C. jail commissary does not carry fresh produce, has high prices, and is strictly limited based on housing classification.<sup>x</sup> We also found that the cost per diem for food services during the audit period was \$6.56—including labor to prepare and serve food—

reflecting the financial constraints that likely contribute to the lack of variety and fresh options under the current vendor.<sup>xi</sup> With the average length of stay for men in the D.C. jail being 271 days,<sup>xii</sup> and over 2,100 people residing in the jail, it is crucial that OCP require that any future food services vendor to provide healthy, adequately portioned meals through mandatory nutritional requirements in the upcoming solicitation.

### ***RFQ and RFP for Construction of a New Jail.***

I would be remiss if I didn't also briefly mention CCE's concern with the lack of transparency around the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and potential Request for Proposals (RFP) that are anticipated to be solicited in 2026 for replacement of the D.C. jail's Central Detention Facility, and the lack of community input into the process.

In the Department of Corrections (DOC) Performance Oversight Hearing, my colleague Tracy Velázquez highlighted the need for a Community Advisory Board to be included as a deliverable in any new contracts or contract renewals around planning, construction, and management of a new jail facility. We hope you will ensure this happens.

We also highlighted in earlier testimony that the DOC indicated last year that their jail design provided no access to the outdoors for jail residents. We believe this denies a basic human need for those who are incarcerated, sometimes for months or years. We hope you will not approve any contract for the new jail facility that denies residents the opportunity to recreate and relax outdoors.

I would be happy to discuss our concerns about both these issues at any time. Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Kathleen Patterson, "Urgent Need for a New D.C. Jail," Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, May 28, 2025, <https://dcauditor.org/report/dc-jail-report-update-report-5-28-25/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Council for Court Excellence, "District Task Force on Jails and Justice," accessed January 22, 2026, <https://www.courtexcellence.org/featured-reports/task-force>.

<sup>iii</sup> Kathleen Patterson, "Urgent Need for a New D.C. Jail," Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, May 28, 2025, <https://dcauditor.org/report/dc-jail-report-update-report-5-28-25/>.

<sup>iv</sup> Kathleen Patterson, "Urgent Need for a New D.C. Jail," Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, May 28, 2025, <https://dcauditor.org/report/dc-jail-report-update-report-5-28-25/>.

<sup>v</sup> Kathleen Patterson, "Urgent Need for a New D.C. Jail," Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, May 28, 2025, <https://dcauditor.org/report/dc-jail-report-update-report-5-28-25/>.

<sup>vi</sup> Secure DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2024, DC Law 25-175, § 32, (2024) <https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/laws/25-175>.

<sup>vii</sup> B26-0444, Food Policy Council Procurement Amendment Act of 2025, (proposed October 25, 2025) <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B26-0444>.

<sup>viii</sup> *Smith v. Aramark Corp.*, No. 2:25-cv-00710 (S.D.W.V 2025), Complaint, <https://www.nclc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Aramark-complaint.pdf>.

<sup>ix</sup> iCare, "iCare Terms and Conditions," Aramark, (2025), <https://www.icaregifts.com/terms-conditions.html>.

<sup>x</sup> Kathleen Patterson, "Urgent Need for a New D.C. Jail," Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, May 28, 2025, <https://dcauditor.org/report/dc-jail-report-update-report-5-28-25/>.

<sup>xi</sup> Kathleen Patterson, "Urgent Need for a New D.C. Jail," Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, May 28, 2025, <https://dcauditor.org/report/dc-jail-report-update-report-5-28-25/>.

<sup>xii</sup> D.C. Department of Corrections, "DC Department of Corrections Facts and Figures April 2025," April 2025, <https://doc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doc/publication/attachments/DC%20Department%20of%20Corrections%20Fact%20and%20Figures%20April%202025.pdf>.