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Statement of the Council for Court Excellence

**Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety
And the Committee of the Whole**

Council of the District of Columbia

**Regarding the Proposed FY2027 Budget for the
Criminal Justice Coordinating Council**

Chairperson Pinto, other Committee Members and Council Members, the Council for Court Excellence (CCE) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the FY2027 budget for the Corrections Information Council (CIC). CCE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission to enhance justice in the District of Columbia. For more than 40 years, CCE has worked to improve the administration of justice 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.

The mission of CIC is to monitor, inspect, and report on the conditions found within the D.C. Department of Corrections (DOC), the Federal Bureau of Prisons, private contractors' facilities, and any other facilities that house individuals who have been convicted of D.C. Code offenses. This prior year we asked Council to ensure that CIC had the necessary investments in Fiscal Year 2026 to fulfill all its statutory oversight responsibilities, by funding the Agency's portion of the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022* (the Act). We have been disheartened to see this funding was not included in the Mayor's or the final budget last year or in the Mayor's budget this year.

At their most recent Performance Oversight Hearing, CIC's testimony and written responses to this committee's questions showed their strong commitment to and focus on ensuring that every District resident is treated with humanity and dignity while at a carceral facility. The passage of the Act was meant to give CIC additional resources and increased authority to carry out their mission effectively. However, Section 7 of the Act has still not been funded.

Since it began operations, the data, explanations, and inspection findings in CIC's reports have been important sources of information for this Council, the

Executive Branch, and the public about incarceration – one of the core components of D.C.'s criminal legal system. While their independent work has always been valuable and educational, improved transparency and oversight are more important than ever as our 2025 report “*Urgent Need for New D.C. Jail*” made clear.ⁱ And there are ongoing, pervasive safety concerns throughout the BOP network.ⁱⁱ Having additional staff capacity, as mandated by the 2022 Act, would make CIC’s findings timelier and more actionable for decisionmakers. We have also continued to hear growing concerns about individuals in the Baltimore Residential Reentry Center and the Northern Neck Regional Jail in Virginia as well as concerns with other carceral facilities across the United States. We hope with additional funding CIC will be able to inspect these facilities regularly.

We also urge the Council to remove from Section 7 those portions of the Act that do **not** have a significant fiscal impact, and pass clarifying language so that these could be implemented independently. These include:

- CIC’s Executive Director must review all deaths of people held in DOC facilities and prepare a report on the death to be made public within 30 days of the death.
- CIC’s Executive Director is to be appointed by its Board, rather than the Mayor.
- The CIC Board must meet at least quarterly.
- CIC’s oversight and required reporting is expanded to any state or local prison or jail incarcerating someone convicted under the D.C. Code.
- CIC must review any complaints it receives from detained and incarcerated District residents and individuals convicted of D.C. Code violations in those facilities.
- CIC’s inspection reports must be made available to the public with 60 days of an inspection, and the reports must be followed within 180 days by a report detailing any subsequent actions taken or not taken by the facility.

If necessary, the Council could use the Budget Support Act to stage, streamline or eliminate some of the specific reports contemplated as annual reviews; additionally, funds for the DOC in Section 7 could be removed and added in a future budget, or DOC could be directed to reallocate and add an FTE for this position.

The funding and implementation of the relevant portions of the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022* is necessary to ensure that the CIC has the personnel, resources, and support sufficient to meet the standards of the law and to act as an effective and independent agency that provides responsive and transparent oversight to all of the many facilities where D.C. men and women are housed. CCE policy staff would be happy to discuss these recommendations further. Thank you.

ⁱ “Urgent Need for New D.C. Jail,” *Council for Court Excellence on behalf of the Office of the D.C. Auditor (ODCA)*, May 28, 2025. https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/659c0df344c9c8325dd821ca/6837197775af1c53f8f34cf0_JailUpdate_Web_v5.pdf.

ⁱⁱ Keri Blakinger, “Democrats Demand Answers for Federal Prison Staffing Shortage After Corrections Officers Flee ofr ICE Jobs”, *ProPublica*, February 25, 2026. <https://www.propublica.org/article/bop-prison-staffing-shortages-ice-democrats-william-marshall>