

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

MAKING IMPACTFUL, SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN D.C.



DECEMBER 2021

Reports on D.C.'s Criminal Legal System's Present & Future

Understanding the criminal legal system has taken on a new sense of urgency this year as the District continues to grapple with how to best support justice-involved residents, survivors of crime, and public safety during the ongoing pandemic. This year, CCE published two reports offering information to better understand D.C.'s criminal legal system and a plan empowering residents to change it. The first, [Jails & Justice: Our Transformation Starts Today](#), is the Phase II report from the District Task Force on Jails & Justice. In this report, the Task Force details 80 recommendations to help D.C. invest in safe communities, lower incarceration rates by half, end the over-incarceration of Black people, regain local control over D.C.'s criminal legal system, and create one new non-traditional facility. The Task Force's work received considerable media attention throughout the year, including in [The New York Times](#) and an op-ed in [The Washington Post](#). Most importantly, several of the Task Force's recommendations have already been implemented, such as a pilot program for the D.C. Department of Transportation to enforce certain traffic violations instead of the police, with other recommendations spurring important conversations between advocates and D.C. lawmakers.

The second report, [D.C.'s Justice System Overview 2020](#), offers an annualized, data-forward snapshot of the significant challenges faced and innovations applied in the District's adult and youth criminal legal systems. This report, featuring artwork from young local artists from the ARTLAB program at the Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, analyzes trends, and identifies areas of progress in five areas of concern: Violence and Policing; Adult Prosecution and the Courts; Incarceration; Reentry; and Youth Justice.



Advocating for Improved Language Access for Legal Resources

STAY DC was a financial program for District residents who fell behind on rent or utility bills during the pandemic. Unfortunately, many people in need whose primary language is not English could not access that support due to the STAY DC website's poor translation functions. This summer, CCE advocated for better translations for the Limited English Proficiency and Non-English Proficiency (LEP/NEP) community, seeking to ensure that such an important resource to avoid eviction proceedings was available to all residents. CCE's sign-on letter to D.C.'s Department of Human Services (DHS) regarding the language access issues was endorsed by 20 organizations, received coverage from [The Washington Post](#), and spurred DHS to make the requested changes quickly. CCE also collaborated with Many Languages One Voice to gather volunteer translators – including CCE Board Directors – to assist LEP/NEP individuals at various clinics for STAY DC application assistance.

Sharing Our Expertise with Policymakers

CCE Board leaders and staff testified before D.C. Council **NINETEEN** times in 2021, providing evidence- and research-based arguments for budget, agency oversight, and legislative hearings. Additionally, we submitted formal comments on two rule change proposals to the D.C. Courts. For example, we testified in support of the "Redefinition of Child Amendment Act of 2021" and revising the D.C. Criminal Code; advocated for improved conditions at the D.C. Jail and establishing local control of parole; and commented on the importance of public access to court electronic records and a proposal to change initial filing fees for landlord-tenant actions. You can find all of CCE's 2021 testimony on [our website](#).

@cce_for_dc

@courtexcellence

www.courtexcellence.org

1111 14th St NW, Suite 500

Washington, DC 20005

202.785.5917

Facilitating Critical Conversations on Criminal and Youth Justice Issues



In partnership with the D.C. Auditor, CCE hosted a series of virtual forums on emerging justice issues in the District including the future of policing; local control of D.C.'s civil and criminal legal systems and the possibility of statehood; children who are involved in both the juvenile justice and foster care systems; and marijuana policy's impact on people with criminal records. Each of these lively forums featured experts, local stakeholders, and individuals affected by the law. Speakers addressed barriers to reform, explored how community perceptions and needs are being addressed, and dug into viable options for change. For example, when discussing the need for increased police accountability, one panelist said: "Police need to recognize how communities have been policed. When there is a long history of wrongdoing, we need to acknowledge it and it needs to be upfront. That is the only way to say, 'how do we move on from here?'" Recordings of all four forums are on CCE's [YouTube channel](#).

Celebrating D.C. Leaders

In May, CCE hosted the [24th Annual Justice Potter Stewart Award Gala](#) virtually. The event celebrated the contributions to justice made by our esteemed honorees: Kojo Nnamdi of WAMU/NPR, Patty Mullahy Fugere of the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, and the law firms of Akin Gump and Wiley Rein for their leadership with the D.C. Compassionate Release Project. Honorees were recognized for the ways that they helped our community "rise above" difficult challenges, by protecting affordable housing and fighting homelessness, facilitating critical conversations on race and educating the community on important justice issues, and representing incarcerated D.C. residents during the pandemic.

Legislative Wins: Compassionate Release, Good Time Credits, & Occupational Licensing

Following advocacy by CCE and other organizations, two new laws impacting incarcerated people and returning citizens were enacted in D.C. this year. First, eligibility was expanded for compassionate release and good time credits. These laws have already had meaningful impacts since the start of the pandemic. At least 34 of the over 80 compassionate release motions filed have been granted. Additionally, more than 440 people had their sentences recalculated under the good time credits law. Second, D.C.'s occupational licensing law was modernized to prevent discrimination against people with criminal records. CCE and the Howard Law Reentry Clinic created a [series of educational resources](#) to teach justice-involved people about their rights and options under the new occupational licensing law. CCE is proud to have been at the forefront of advocating for these changes, allowing D.C.'s justice-involved residents a more meaningful opportunity at a second chance.

CCE in the News

CCE leaders and publications were cited at least TWENTY-FOUR times by the media in 2021! Our reports and advocacy were covered in publications like *The Washington Post*, *The DCist*, *NPR*, *DC Line*, *Washington City Paper*, *Street Sense Media*, *The Appeal*, and more. From [an op-ed](#) by our Executive Director on the need to establish local control of parole in the District, to our Deputy Director being on [WHUR](#) to talk about criminal justice reform, to [an op-ed](#) co-authored by our Communications Manager on assisted decision-making tools in the District, CCE has worked hard to educate the public about justice issues that impact our community.

Coming Soon!

The Civil Justice Committee's report making recommendations for improving and simplifying the estate administration process in D.C. – developed in conjunction with the D.C. Access to Justice Commission – is slated for publication in January 2022. Stay tuned!