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**Statement of the Council for Court Excellence  
Before the Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety  
Council of the District of Columbia**

**Performance Oversight Hearing for the  
Department of Corrections**

*March 1, 2023*

Good afternoon, Councilmember Pinto and members of the Committee.

My name is Casey Anderson, and I am the Council for Court Excellence's Policy & Communications Manager. CCE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission to enhance justice in the District of Columbia. For over 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.

CCE stands ready to continue supporting Department of Corrections (DOC) Director Faust, the Mayor, and the D.C. Council in finalizing a shared vision and executing plans for change. Today, I am here to discuss two key topics: 1) ensuring permanent, empowered oversight at the DOC, and 2) prioritizing the construction of a new facility. Before I begin, I would also like to take a moment to thank Director Faust for his willingness to engage with both

CCE, the District Task Force on Jails & Justice (Task Force), and the community. We appreciate his collaboration and receptivity to hear from the community, and look forward to continued collaboration moving forward.

### **1) Ensuring Permanent, Empowered Oversight of DOC**

As DOC itself has said, transparency and accountability go hand-in-hand. As the District navigates transforming its criminal legal system, including fixing the systemic issues within the D.C. Jail, there must be permanent, empowered, independent oversight of the DOC. CCE worked closely with partners to advocate successfully for the passage of the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022*. This legislation makes several key, and important, changes to the Corrections Information Council (CIC). These changes include: allowing unannounced inspections of all areas accessible to or providing services to incarcerated people; having the right to photograph, video, and audio record all areas of the facility that are accessible to incarcerated people; requiring onsite investigations at the DOC every 120 days; and requiring the DOC to notify the CIC of any death within 24 hours, among other things.

CCE urges the DOC, as well as the CIC, to comply with and support the changes made by the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022*. However, it is important to note that the CIC Board, which is supposed to have five members, only has three right now. Presently, there are two vacant seats that can only be filled by Mayoral appointment. The Executive must move quickly to fill those two vacant seats, ideally with individuals who have lived experience in the DOC facilities. Improving oversight at the DOC will require cross-agency collaboration, including the DOC, CIC, and Executive Office of the Mayor.

### **2) Prioritizing the Construction of a New Facility**

Reducing D.C.'s incarcerated population allows the District to implement the [Task Force's plan](#) to demolish the D.C. Jail in 2027 and build a new, smaller, secure facility in 2030 that would hold both D.C.'s pretrial and sentenced populations. CCE was heartened to see the FY23 budget include dedicated funding for this new, non-traditional facility – and to see that the Request for Proposal for the pre-designing planning phase for the new facility was released in January. A new facility would house individuals in an environment that is essentially unrecognizable to the current one at the D.C. Jail, utilizing innovative, promising, and evidence-based practices to create a safer, healthier facility that supports personal growth. CCE, along with Neighbors for Justice, DC Justice Lab, and the District Task Force on Jails & Justice hosted and facilitated a series of five community conversations during summer 2022. The goals of these conversations were to 1) amplify and build on the prior recommendations from the Task Force, and 2) collect residents' feedback on the features of a new facility that would re-envision the purpose, approach, space, facilities, services, staffing, and use of a jail facility. We heard from roughly 200 D.C. residents, including those most directly impacted. Our [Synthesis and Analysis of Community Feedback on a New Correctional Annex in D.C.](#) was sent to D.C. government leaders, including Mayor Muriel Bowser, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice, the Director of the D.C. Department of Corrections, and all members of the D.C. Council on October 20, 2022. Additionally, we sent [an advocacy letter](#) signed by residents and organizations based in the District of Columbia. In conversations with Director Faust, he has expressed his support of ensuring community feedback is incorporated into the plans for the new correctional facility and was appreciative of the community feedback that has been done to-date.

These changes, and more, will not happen at DOC without bold leadership. CCE appreciates Director Faust's leadership and willingness to work collaboratively to help ensure the safety, health, and dignity of our incarcerated neighbors and the larger D.C. community.

However, CCE acknowledges that the systemic issues within DOC will not just go away and will

instead take continued, dedicated, and focused leadership from all government officials, including Director Faust, Deputy Mayor Appiah, the Council, and the Mayor.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.