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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**

**Budget Oversight Hearing for the
Corrections Information Council**

April 12, 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 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.

I am here today to discuss the budgetary investments necessary to ensure responsive, accountable, independent, and transparent oversight at the D.C. Department of Corrections (DOC). As you know, the Revitalization Act of 1997 established the Corrections Information Council (CIC), an independent monitoring body tasked with inspecting, monitoring, and reporting on conditions of confinement at DOC facilities, Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facilities

housing people convicted of D.C. Code offenses, and private contractors' facilities.

The mission of the CIC is a big one, and until the passage of the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022* in December 2022, its authority and responsibilities were much more limited than one would expect for an agency overseeing both the DOC and select facilities in the BOP. Increased authority and responsibilities necessitate increased budgetary investments into the CIC. In order to ensure full implementation of the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022*, the District must allocate at least \$353,000 to the Corrections Information Council (CIC) to hire two Program Specialists (\$243,000, two new Full-Time Employees), for non-personnel spending (\$10,000), and a contract for national policy experts (\$100,000). As with the DOC, this funding must be recurring, with additional budgetary investments to sustain these positions and contractors, adjusted for cost of living increases and inflation. The remaining \$222,000 should go to the DOC. Additional information about the investment needed to fully implement this legislation can be found in the bill's [Fiscal Impact Statement](#).

Now, I would like to talk about why fully funding and implementing this legislation is critical to the health and safety of D.C.'s incarcerated residents, the majority of whom are Black, and to the broader community. First, this legislation, for the first time, grants the CIC the right to photograph or video and audio record all areas of the facility that are accessible to incarcerated people, and requires the DOC notify the agency of any death within 24 hours. Expanding the CIC's access to the DOC and allowing the agency to more meaningfully inspect the facilities will increase the quality of information the CIC is able to provide to this Committee and to the public.

Second, the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022* will also improve transparency of the CIC by increasing the reporting requirements of the agency from two reports a year to eight. Report topics include contracting for and provisions of food

services in DOC facilities, use of force by DOC personnel, use of safe cells and segregation in DOC facilities, career readiness and educational programming, prevalence of contraband and strategies for reduction, and conditions of confinement, among other things. Increasing transparency and information sharing about what is, or is not, happening at the DOC will allow advocates, community members, and policymakers to better understand the needs of D.C.'s incarcerated residents and those preparing to return home to the community, as well as the needs of the DOC and its staff. We will be better equipped to respond to crisis and make investments to ensure the health and safety of those incarcerated in and working at the DOC.

Finally, the legislation also makes several changes that will help the CIC do its work more effectively, something advocates have long wanted to see. The CIC's original governing statute notes that the CIC will meet "as necessary," while the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022* requires the CIC meet quarterly. Additionally, the legislation requires onsite investigations into DOC facilities every 120 days, with the investigation report due within 120 days of the initiation of each investigation. Previously there were not any visitation requirements to DOC facilities.

The full funding and implementation of the *Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022* is a necessary first step to ensuring that the CIC has the personnel and support necessary to act as an effective and independent agency that provides responsive and transparent oversight at the DOC. While facing a lean budget year, this small investment of \$353,000 to the CIC and \$222,000 to the DOC has the ability to improve the lives of thousands of D.C. residents, as well as improve community safety. This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.