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## Statement of the Council for Court Excellence Before the Committee on Transportation and the Environment of the Council of the District of Columbia

### Budget Oversight Hearing for the District Department of Transportation

June 10, 2021

Good morning, Chairwoman Cheh and members of the committee. My name is Emily Tatro, and I am the Deputy Director for the Council for Court Excellence (CCE). CCE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission to enhance justice in the District of Columbia. 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, facilitating collaboration and convening diverse stakeholders, and creating educational resources for the public. Per our policy, no judicial member of CCE participated in the preparation of today's testimony.

CCE is here today to urge this Committee's support for the transfer of certain programs and funds from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), including the transfer of the Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) program and the conversion of 30 Traffic Safety Employees from part-time to full-time. We believe that this measure is a crucial step in decreasing racial disparities and improving public safety for all D.C. residents and visitors, and we wish to offer our expertise to provide DDOT with technical assistance in implementing this program if desired.

In FY21, CCE provided management, support, and technical assistance to the District Task Force on Jails & Justice (Task Force), a ten-year, three-stage plan to transform the D.C. justice landscape that we initiated in 2019 with our partners at the National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens. The Task Force released its [Phase II Report](#) (Report) in February 2021, providing 80 recommendations for investment in community safety, lower incarceration rates,

and an end to the over-criminalization of Black people in the District.<sup>1</sup> The Report comes at a critical time as the District grapples with long-standing issues within its criminal justice system that have been highlighted by the pandemic and protests for racial justice.

The Task Force aims to target the problem of ballooning police responsibilities by promoting investment in alternative means of maintaining public safety that are transparent, accountable to the public, and do not result in unnecessary incarceration. The transfer of funding and control of some of the District’s traffic operations from MPD to DDOT is a necessary step towards reaching that end,<sup>2</sup> and CCE is excited to see movement in that direction in the Mayor’s FY22 Budget Proposal for DDOT and other agencies.<sup>3</sup>

Based on past traffic violation data, we know that MPD traffic stops disproportionately affect Black people but do little to increase public safety.<sup>4</sup> For example, in the last five months of 2019, MPD conducted 31,386 “ticket stops” for moving violations, only 3% of which resulted in an arrest.<sup>5</sup> Further, 61.8% of the ticket stops in this period involved a Black person,<sup>6</sup> but Black people comprise only 46% of D.C.’s population.<sup>7</sup> With DDOT managing traffic stops instead of MPD, we expect to see a reduction in the total number of stops by MPD and in the proportion of Black people stopped and arrested.<sup>8</sup> Further, the proposed transfer will reduce police responsibilities and contact between law enforcement and citizens, both of which are vital to increasing racial justice in the District.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, CCE is grateful for the opportunity to express our support for this measure to the Committee and to offer our assistance in its implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> See generally District Task Force on Jails & Justice, *Our Transformation Starts Today: Phase II Findings and Implementation Plan* (Feb. 2021) <http://www.courtexcellence.org/uploads/publications/TransformationStartsToday.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> E.g., *Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Operating Budget, D.C. Department of Behavioral Health RM0* p. 15, Table RM0-5 (May 2021) [https://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/rm\\_dbh\\_chapter\\_2022m.pdf](https://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/rm_dbh_chapter_2022m.pdf) (allocating funds to DBH to implement a Crisis Response Team so that trained professionals respond to mental health crises rather than police officers)

<sup>4</sup> District Task Force on Jails & Justice *Our Transformation Starts Today: Phase II Findings and Implementation Plan* p. 35 (Feb. 2021) <http://www.courtexcellence.org/uploads/publications/TransformationStartsToday.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Quick Facts: District of Columbia* (2019) <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/DC/PST045219>

<sup>8</sup> District Task Force on Jails & Justice p. 35

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*