

## PUNISHMENT

The current draft of the bill relies on increasing sentence lengths in a number of ways, a measure that does not significantly contribute to public safety, but instead exacerbates mass incarceration and recidivism. [Research](#) consistently shows that incarceration, in general, contributes to, rather than reduces, reoffending. Imprisonment is especially ineffective and counterproductive in the District of Columbia.

- Individuals sentenced to prison are placed in facilities [far from their home](#) communities, in some cases hundreds of miles from the District of Columbia.
- The facilities run by the District of Columbia are known for their [dangerous conditions](#).
- There are significant and well-documented barriers to reintegration, hindering individuals from connecting with housing, employment, and treatment upon release.

Increasing the number of individuals exposed to this system, as well as the duration of their exposure, ultimately diminishes rather than enhances our safety.

**The FRESH STARTS Act** was intended to transform the provision of food in DC's jails, ensuring that residents receive proper nutrition rather than [experiencing frequent hunger](#). These reforms are urgently needed, but the omnibus package removes the bill's most critical components and undermines its original intent. These include nutrition standards and analysis, unannounced inspections, resident feedback, reporting, and the transition to self-operated kitchens.

**Sentencing enhancements** can [increase recidivism](#), needlessly [consume justice system](#) resources, and offer [no deterrent effect](#). In D.C., young, Black men are [disproportionately impacted](#). According to an exhaustive study by the [National Academy of Arts and Sciences](#), "[long sentences] are an inefficient approach to preventing crime by incapacitation." (Sec. 25(d); Sec. 37.)

**Consecutive sentencing** is [already the default](#) for all sentences in D.C. The consecutive sentencing provisions will frustrate a sentencing court's ability to comply with its [statutory obligation](#) to fashion an individualized sentence. In every case, the court must impose a sentence that:

- 1) Reflects the seriousness of the offense and the criminal history of the offender;
- 2) Provides for just punishment and affords adequate deterrence to potential criminal conduct of the offender and others; and
- 3) Provides the offender with needed educational or vocational training, medical care, and other correctional treatment.

(Sec. 17(c); Sec. 31(e).)

**Expanding pretrial detention** is likely to increase recidivism rates, making D.C. less safe. [A study](#) that looked at the impact of pretrial detention on 1.4 million people booked through a jail system over a decade found just one day in jail increases a person's likelihood of being arrested in the future. Judges should be afforded ample discretion to impose the detention or release conditions that they find are most likely to serve the public good.