

# #SAFEANDFREEDC

Too often, people use the phrase “public safety” to describe a governmental approach to reported street crimes. This narrow view fails to address the high percentage of crime that [goes unreported](#) and, more importantly, excludes the central aspects of building “safe” communities. [“Safety” means more than the absence of harm](#); it means having one’s basic needs of food, shelter, and healthcare met, opportunities to earn a sustainable living, access to affordable high-quality childcare and education, and support from trusted sources prior to crises or emergencies arising. Safety is belonging to a community in which each person is valued and cared for and where people are helped to feel they belong. And it is only by broadening our understanding of safety that we will make noticeable and sustainable progress toward a District in which fewer people experience and then perpetrate harm.

Despite being ranked one of the [most progressive](#) jurisdictions in America, **the District of Columbia has one of the biggest, Blackest, and most expensive criminal legal systems anywhere.** Although huge numbers of Black people have been [forced out](#) of the city through gentrification, nearly all of the people convicted and jailed here are Black—roughly the same numbers as when the District was Chocolate City.

Black Washingtonians have long recognized that **community violence cannot be solved through state violence** and have asked for meaningful investment in solutions that are proven to work. Although this document focuses on legislative solutions, we want to acknowledge and explicitly state that a meaningful and ongoing investment in community resources will be essential to the success of any serious public safety agenda. A well-funded, preventative, and evidence-based approach that is tailored to the needs of our community will tangibly and sustainably improve the lives of all of our neighbors.

## We need new laws.

In 2021, the D.C. Council received three comprehensive blueprints for transforming [policing](#), [prosecution](#), and [punishment](#).

Join us,  
DC Justice Lab  
National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens  
Harriet’s Wildest Dreams



*Signing on does not obligate you to anything, but you will be added to a listserv to receive updates about the campaign.*



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