

2026

DC PUBLIC SAFETY POLICY AGENDA

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- PRIDE. PURPOSE. POWER. The Black Swan Academy**
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- Bold Yoga**

Executive Summary

True safety for everyone in DC is possible. Advocates, community members, and researchers have spent years making clear what it requires.

This Agenda begins with the premise that public safety is more than the absence of crime, and that people are truly safe only when their needs are met, structural inequities do not determine who lives free and healthy, and communities have real power over the systems that shape their lives. Developed by DC Justice Lab and informed by nearly 30 organizations working in DC, this document puts forward 70 recommendations across four priority areas.

Invest in Safe and Thriving Communities

Surviving violence is often the continuation or the beginning of a long encounter with systems that were designed to help but frequently fall short. The first priority area addresses what survivors actually need in the immediate aftermath of harm, and in the months and years that follow. It calls for direct, flexible cash assistance delivered through trusted community organizations; local control of DC's Crime Victims Compensation Program, which is currently run by a federal court with limited DC accountability; and increased, sustained funding across the District's victim services, justice grants, and access to justice portfolios.

Behavioral health, harm reduction, and economic stability are woven throughout this chapter as public safety priorities. DC leads the nation in overdose deaths per capita while offering insufficient safeguards to address these preventable deaths. TANF cuts set to take effect in October 2026 will reduce benefits for more than 16,000 families, disproportionately Black, women-led households. A reparations task force the DC Council unanimously voted to create and fund sits unfunded. Ward-level behavioral health clinics, 24/7 harm reduction centers, medical debt reform, and financial empowerment for residents navigating economic instability and reentry are among the recommendations this section advances.

Protect and Invest in DC's Young People

When the Youth Power and Safety Collective convened young people and asked what safety looks like to them, they did not define safety as juvenile curfews or police in schools. They asked for mental health support, safe spaces, year-round employment, and violence interruption programs. DC has too often responded to young people's presence in public life as a problem to be managed.

This chapter is built around what young people have said they need. It calls for reviving the Youth Advisory Council with real governing authority; removing police from schools and replacing them with behavioral health professionals and restorative justice practitioners; decriminalizing truancy; and protecting young people from local and federal law enforcement contact. For young people already in the justice system, it presses for an end to detention for technical violations, automatic and immediate juvenile record sealing, and continuous education access wherever a young person is in the system. Full implementation of the Youth Rehabilitation Act Strategic Plan would address the needs of young adults entrenched in the adult legal system.

Advance Community Safety

DC has produced plans to reduce gun violence. It has created commissions and entire offices. None have been fully implemented. This chapter presses for a funded, data-driven Districtwide violence reduction strategy that brings community violence intervention organizations, behavioral health providers, hospital-based violence intervention programs, and victim services into a coordinated ecosystem with stable multi-year funding and independent leadership.

On policing, the chapter urges limits on and protections when police contact occurs through mandatory citation and release, expanded pre-arrest diversion, non-police traffic enforcement alternatives, a ban on jump-out searches, and a staffing realignment supported by the DC Auditor's findings. On accountability, it calls for full funding and defense of the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act and for ending qualified immunity. On federal overreach, it calls on the next Mayor to rescind the order on cooperation with federal agencies, strengthen the Sanctuary Values Act, and build documentation processes that make accountability possible.

Reduce Incarceration, Improve Conditions, and Support Reentry

DC incarcerates too many people, for too long, in conditions that harm rather than rehabilitate, and then fails them when they come home. Despite being less than 45 percent of DC's population, Black residents make up roughly 90 percent of people in DC's correctional system. That is the result of policy choices, and it can be changed by policy.

The fourth priority area recommends repealing policies that have grown the jail population without improving public safety. It presses the District to address the dangerous conditions across all adult and youth detention facilities, including prohibiting solitary confinement; to improve care for pregnant women and new mothers in DOC and DYRS custody; and to improve support for DC residents in federal custody.

The longer-term work is a plan to return local control of the justice system to DC, while resisting efforts to expand federal control.

More than 2,000 DC residents return from incarceration each year to services that are too small, too short, and too fragmented to give them a real path forward. This chapter presses DC to implement and expand record relief, reform community supervision so it functions as support instead of a trap, protect returning citizens from discrimination, and fund reentry services at the scale and duration that produce positive outcomes. People with conviction histories need human rights protections in employment and housing.

Few of these recommendations are new. Community members have been pushing for them. DC is at the point of action, and the question before its elected leaders is whether they will meet it.

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The T.R.I.G.G.E.R. Project
Tzedek DC
The PROGRESS Initiative at the University of Maryland
Voices for a Second Chance
Volare
Zypher Consulting

Letter from DC Justice Lab's Chief Executive Officer

Dear Community,

The 2026 Public Safety Policy Agenda is a non-partisan, educational tool designed to equip community members with the knowledge and resources needed to hold current candidates and the future Mayor of DC accountable to evidence-based solutions that make our communities safer.

The 2026 Public Safety Policy Agenda reflects DC's strength. This document is a tool. Use it to educate. Use it to organize. Use it to hold policymakers accountable.

In the first quarter of 2026, DC Justice Lab convened nearly 30 organizations, including direct service providers and policy experts, to inform the Policy Agenda. These partners include groups representing crime survivors; experts in mental health treatment and crisis response; leaders in policing and public safety; former law enforcement; organizations serving young people; violence interrupters; and reentry providers supporting individuals returning from incarceration. Together, they advance solutions that create safety while dismantling policies that continue to produce inequities for DC's Black residents.

The development of the 2026 Public Safety Policy Agenda was grounded in a collaborative process, shaped by those with deep engagement in communities and in the field, and by those with demonstrated expertise in violence prevention, legal advocacy, research, youth engagement, and systems reform.

DCJL facilitated a series of structured meetings and iterative feedback sessions to co-create the agenda spanning more than 10 hours of discussion and review. Policy priorities were identified through a consensus-driven process, with a focus on advancing prevention and upstream solutions; addressing root causes of harm and strategies to repair the harm, particularly for the District's crime survivors; promoting racial equity and justice; centering impacted voices and the communities that are most impacted by DC's criminal legal system; ensuring accountability and transparency in public systems.

These policy priorities center on prevention and [upstream solutions that address root causes](#), because true safety is created long before harm occurs. The agenda also includes solutions that can protect DC residents from the impact of authoritarian overreach and federal interference.

We recognize that meaningful power lies in collaboration and community. We believe that those in positions of power are responsible to the people they serve and must be guided by those most impacted by their decisions.

Public safety can not be achieved through reliance on the same systems and ways of thinking that have inflicted harm for generations. The disproportionate rates of [arrests](#), [convictions](#), and [incarceration](#) among DC's Black residents are evidence of a system that is racist *and* ineffective. As the District's landscape continues to shift, we see this moment as an opportunity to stand up

for the community and set the record straight on what actually drives safety. DC residents know what works *and* what doesn't. The path forward must be rooted in solutions that are evidence-driven, community-rooted, and racially just. The residents of the District deserve it.

This Agenda is a living document that will evolve as community needs and challenges change.

This document is stronger because of the organizations and leaders who worked alongside us, and we are deeply grateful for their partnership, expertise, and commitment to shaping recommendations that benefit the community.

In solidarity,

Clinique Chapman

Clinique Chapman, CEO
DC Justice Lab

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(A) INVEST IN SAFE AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Introduction: The recommendations that follow assume an expansive definition of public safety. As the DC Police Reform Commission and many others have articulated, “public safety is far more than the absence of crime.” Rather, “people are truly safe only when we have the space and opportunities to thrive -- when our needs ... are met; and when none of us face structural inequities that keep us from living free and healthy lives.”

With this understanding of safety as a starting point, the recommendations that follow are common sense solutions. Investments in survivor services, behavioral health, and economic stability are critical to public safety.

(A1) ADDRESS SURVIVORS’ WIDE SPECTRUM OF NEEDS FULLY AND QUICKLY

Introduction: Surviving violence is often the beginning or the continuation of a long encounter with systems that were designed to help but frequently fall short. Survivors in DC face financial crises that existing programs don’t fully address, compensation processes that are slow and structurally limited, services that are underfunded relative to need, and legal gaps that leave them without recourse in housing, education, and court. Young people experiencing violence at home don’t have a sufficient legal mechanism to direct their own safety. Survivors burdened with coerced debt have no legal protection from it. The recommendations in this section address the full spectrum of what survivors need, not just in the immediate aftermath of violence, but in the weeks, months, and years that follow.

(1) ESTABLISH DIRECT AND FLEXIBLE CASH ASSISTANCE FOR CRIME SURVIVORS

The Problem: While [national surveys of crime survivors show nearly 8 out of 10 say their life has been affected by a crime](#), fewer than 1 in 3 receive the kind of help they need to recover and stabilize. When someone has been the victim of a violent crime, they can spend hours, days, and weeks waiting for the [Crime Victims Compensation Program](#) (CVCP) to reimburse them for the expenses they have incurred as a result of their victimization. That wait begins only after survivors have exhausted other financial remedies available to them, including insurance and social security, because the program is, by law, a payor of last resort. Even when survivors reach the program, DC Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (DCSAFE) notes that they [“frequently report negative experiences, citing issues with accessing services, understanding victims’ legal rights, and addressing systemic biases.”](#) Reform efforts have been stymied by a structural problem unique to DC. Unlike every state, which retains meaningful administrative authority over its compensation program, [DC’s CVCP is run by the DC Superior Court](#), which is a federal agency. This means the District has limited ability to make the program more responsive to survivor needs or to enforce the reforms DC has already enacted into law.

Recommendation: Provide direct cash assistance to crime survivors, disbursed through community organizations. The program should include the following features:

- Low-barrier eligibility that explicitly includes survivors who do not want to work with law enforcement, undocumented residents, and people with prior records
- Flexible, unrestricted cash for any survivor-identified need
- Rapid disbursement to meet survivor needs as immediately as possible (ideally hours or days rather than weeks)

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass and fund legislation creating a dedicated fund within the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG). OVSJG should delegate disbursement of cash assistance to trusted, culturally specific community-based organizations, mutual aid networks, and providers prioritizing low barrier eligibility models.

Models:

- [The City of Chicago's Emergency Supplemental Victims Fund \(ESVF\) Pilot](#): survivors or next of kin may access funding through grantee victim services organizations to address the impact of fatal and nonfatal shooting incidents.
- [California's Flexible Assistance for Survivors \(FAS\) Pilot Grant Program](#): survivors of violent crime and their loved ones are able to access cash assistance through grantee community-based organizations.
- [LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania](#): the organization provides flexible funds to LGBTQ survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

(2) ASSUME LOCAL CONTROL OF DC'S CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION PROGRAM

The Problem: See [Recommendation 1](#).

Recommendation: Transfer the crime victim compensation program to a DC agency, giving the District greater autonomy and oversight of decision-making and program operations, and enabling survivors and advocates to influence improvements to the program based on survivor experiences. Eligible victims of crime in DC are too often denied compensation, experience significant delays in processing application materials, and lack trauma-informed communication and process from the program.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pursue legislation and executive action to transfer administrative authority of the Crime Victims Compensation Program to a DC agency and establish pathways for ongoing survivor and advocate input into the program.

Models: [Maryland's General Assembly passed legislation establishing a guaranteed baseline funding floor for victim compensation](#), demonstrating that jurisdictions can act legislatively to address gaps even within a federal framework.

(3) INCREASE FUNDING FOR OVSJG'S VICTIM SERVICES, JUSTICE GRANTS, AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE PORTFOLIOS

The Problem: Survivors of violence, people returning from incarceration, and residents navigating civil legal crises do not arrive at service providers in neatly separate categories. The organizations doing this work know their client communities are connected and overlapping. Yet, too often, budget negotiations proceed on the assumption that one category of funding can grow only if another shrinks. The need across all three is significant, unmet, and directly tied to public safety.

Recommendation: The Mayor and DC Council should commit to increased, recurring funding across the full Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) portfolio.

Implementation: The Mayor and the DC Council should expand OVSJG appropriations across all three portfolios in the FY27 budget and reject framing that treats them as competing priorities. While the specific figures below reflect conservative FY27 budget needs, the principle that these portfolios must be funded as an interconnected whole rather than competing line items should guide OVSJG appropriations in every budget cycle.

In FY27, this means funding victim services at a level that meets the Victim Assistance Network's budget request of a \$59.6 million baseline to maintain critical services for victims of crime, and an additional [\\$1.9 million identified by the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) to fill critical gaps for culturally specific, LGBTQ+, unhoused, immigrant, and justice-involved survivors; restoring Justice Grants funding to at minimum COVID-era levels; and appropriating [\\$31.7 million for the Access to Justice Initiative](#).

OVSJG should also ensure that training, technical assistance, and other agency-administered resources are available equitably to organizations across all three portfolios.

(4) STRENGTHEN DC'S HOSPITAL-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The Problem: In addition to providing lifesaving medical care, hospitals with hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) provide life-changing resources that evidence shows [reduce the likelihood of hospital readmission and the likelihood that the survivor goes on to participate in violence](#). While they are still in the hospital, [HVIPs connect survivors with mental health support, trauma-informed care, and practical help with jobs, housing, and other life needs](#). DC was among the first cities in the country to recognize this, launching [Project CHANGE, a coordinated citywide HVIP model](#) ensuring that a patient seen at any trauma center gets the same type and level of service. [The NEAR Act of 2016](#) mandated that every District emergency department offer HVIP coverage whenever it accepts patients.

Though DC was once the model, it has fallen short of its full promise because of [underfunding](#) and administrative limitations. Individual hospitals are [underfunded](#), and there is not enough funding to cover weekend hours. There are also communication and coordination challenges that negatively impact the program.

Recommendations:

- The Mayor and DC Council should increase HVIP funding at the individual hospital level to allow weekend coverage.
- Establish the Project CHANGE Coordinator as an independent role to preserve the program’s capacity for innovation, cross-hospital coordination, and data sharing, free from political and administrative constraints.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should increase individual hospital funding to allow more coverage. The Mayor and DC Council should also ensure the Project CHANGE Coordinator’s independence with protected authority to coordinate across hospitals, manage data, and drive innovation.

Models: [Chicago established a city-wide Hospital Working Group coordinated by NORC at the University of Chicago](#), an independent research organization, to align HVIPs across trauma centers.

(5) IMPROVE FIREARM RELINQUISHMENT PROCESSES

The Problem: Firearms in an abusive home serve as an obstacle to leaving and increase the likelihood that a survivor will be killed. In 2023, 9 of DC’s 19 domestic violence fatalities involved a firearm. When a court issues a temporary or civil protection order, it may [order a respondent to relinquish all the firearms and ammunition](#) they possess, and it may order MPD to serve and enforce the order. There is no standardized compliance tracking or verification. In a three-month period in 2024, [DC SAFE screened 736 high-risk cases and found that nearly 25 percent involved respondents with reported access to a firearm](#). In its 2026 performance oversight responses, [MPD reported that it did not recover any firearms while serving TPOs in 2025](#).

Recommendations: Require respondents to surrender firearms and ammunition at the time that MPD serves a protection order or within 24 hours; grant amnesty from prosecution for respondents who voluntarily surrender their firearms, including illegal firearms; require MPD to check the gun registry before serving orders and document compliance; establish mandatory compliance hearings in firearms-involved cases; and create notification protocols so survivors receive updates at each stage of the process.

Implementation:

- The DC Council should amend the [Intrafamily Offenses Act](#) to clearly define “relinquish,” require surrender at the time of service or within 24 hours, and add [immunity provisions similar to those in the Extreme Risk Protection Order \(ERPO\) statute](#).
- The Domestic Violence Division of the DC Superior Court should require proof of compliance with relinquishment orders by creating or updating forms completed by respondents and police, holding compliance hearings in cases involving firearms, formally allowing petitioners to disclose the respondent’s access to firearms, and updating bench cards and training for judges and clerks on relinquishment procedures.

- MPD should update its general orders and training to include detailed instructions for relinquishing firearms in CPO cases, ensure officers have timely access to gun registry data before serving relinquishment orders, and create and require the completion of compliance forms at the time of service.

Models:

- [California law](#) requires respondents to relinquish firearms to police at the time of service or, if no police request is made, within 24 hours. The respondent must provide proof to the court within 48 hours of service or request a judicial exemption if they can show possession of a firearm is a job requirement. A court may also grant use immunity to a person who declines to relinquish their firearm based on their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. Courts require petitioners to describe any firearms they believe the respondent has, and must hold compliance hearings when there is reason to believe the respondent owns guns. California also authorizes search warrants when a respondent fails to relinquish their firearms.
- [Colorado law](#) requires mandatory compliance hearings within 8 to 12 business days of a protection order being issued; respondents must file a sworn affidavit listing all firearms in their possession within seven business days; information compelled in that process cannot be used against the respondent in any criminal case except for perjury.
- [King County, Washington](#) created a dedicated firearm relinquishment unit, which tripled the likelihood that respondents would turn in their firearms or other dangerous weapons.

(6) ESTABLISH A MINOR EMANCIPATION PROCESS IN DC

The Problem: DC lacks a formal process for a minor to petition for emancipation. Minors in DC lack the legal ability to make their own decisions; they remain under the legal control of their parents or a legal guardian. [DC residents report higher rates of domestic violence than nationally](#). Youth who experience domestic violence may face interruption in education access, restricted access to medical care, limited access to financial support, and may be prevented from accessing student loans, medical insurance, and other necessary services. Youth in these dangerous situations do not currently have a legal mechanism to escape, exercise their agency, and create a safe living situation short of entering the child welfare system (which is not safe and, critically, may require the youth to return home) or running away. [Forty percent of DC's homeless youth report having experienced domestic violence](#).

Recommendation: Establish an emancipation process allowing District teens to direct their own safety planning and assert autonomy.

Implementation: DC Council should amend the Code to create an emancipation process that is accessible to youth.

Models:

- In [Missouri, 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless or domestic violence survivors and are self-supporting can contract for housing, employment, medical care, and victim services with parental consent, which may be implied](#) by the act of forcing the youth out of the home, refusing financial support, or abuse and neglect.
- California has a structured 30-day process where minors as young as 14 can file for emancipation without requiring a court hearing if they meet all legal criteria.^{12,3} This streamlined process ensures accessibility and efficiency.
- [Alaska’s framework](#) provides additional flexibility, allowing courts to waive parental consent if necessary and offering transition services to support emancipated minors.

(7) ESTABLISH PROTECTIONS FOR SURVIVORS OF COERCED DEBT

The Problem: [Financial insecurity is a major obstacle to leaving an abusive relationship.](#) Coerced debt happens when a person causing harm opens accounts in a survivor’s name or forces them to take on debt through threats, manipulation, or physical force. Coerced debt deepens financial insecurity and can prolong the cycle of abuse. Damaged credit creates barriers to housing, employment, and new credit, leaving many survivors financially connected to the person who harmed them or unable to recover even after leaving.

Recommendation: Establish protections for survivors burdened with coerced debt. At minimum, protections should define coerced debt to include any debt incurred through identity theft, fraud, duress, intimidation, threat, force, coercion, or manipulation in the context of domestic or family violence; require creditors to stop collection of coerced debt and request deletion of adverse credit reporting upon receipt of a survivor’s statement; protect survivors from lawsuits, garnishment, and debt sales related to coerced debt; and provide civil remedies against creditors who fail to comply.

Implementation: The DC Council should pass a law to establish these protections.

Model: [National Consumer Law Center Model State Coerced Debt Law](#)

(8) PROTECT SURVIVORS FROM DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION SETTINGS

The Problem: The [DC Human Rights Act](#) fails to fulfill its stated obligation that “[e]very individual shall have an equal opportunity to participate fully in the economic, cultural and intellectual life of the District and to have an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of life, including, but not limited to, in employment, in places of public accommodation, resort or amusement, in educational institutions, in public service, and in housing and commercial space accommodations.” The law does not reach survivors of stalking or sexual and dating violence facing discrimination in educational institutions as a result of their status as a survivor.

A college student whose attendance suffers because of court appearances related to their victimization can be penalized or unenrolled with no legal recourse.

Recommendation: Amend the Human Rights Act to extend protection to stalking and sexual and dating violence survivors what it already guarantees for other protected identities. This fix

would prevent discrimination against students who are survivors by requiring schools to acknowledge and uphold the human rights of survivors of gender-based violence and to refrain from discriminating against them because of their survivorship.

Implementation: The DC Council should amend the Human Rights Act by adding “status as a victim or family member of a victim of domestic violence, a sexual offense, or stalking,” as a protected status.

Models: [New York State](#) expanded its Human Rights Law in 2022 to cover survivors of domestic violence in housing, education, and public accommodations.

(9) CLARIFY THAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR STATUS QUALIFIES FOR A TANF HARDSHIP WAIVER

The Problem: [People in households at or below the Federal Poverty Level experience violent crime at more than twice the rate of higher-income households](#) (39.8 per 1,000 compared to 16.9 per 1,000). Poverty concentrates the conditions that make victimization more likely, and victimization deepens poverty. Along with the other interventions described in this agenda, public benefits, including the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, can interrupt that cycle. Recognizing this in the context of domestic violence, [DC allows good cause waivers of TANF work requirements for domestic violence survivors](#).

However, when [DC’s DHS implemented the POWER program](#) for TANF recipients with a domestic violence waiver, it restricted all other TANF benefits and support from those survivors. Domestic violence survivors qualifying for TANF in DC must choose between standard TANF, which also includes childcare, education, employment, and transportation assistance with the opportunity to receive financial incentives, and the POWER program which includes only the computer TANF monthly amount. As a result, domestic violence survivors relying on TANF for their families in DC are being forced to forgo federally and locally recognized need for accommodation and support.

Recommendation: Survivors should not be required to cooperate with or participate in any specific District or court process or require any documentation. A TANF recipient that qualifies for a domestic violence hardship waiver should have full access to all of the same resources that are available to standard TANF participants.

Implementation: The DC Council should amend the DC Code to clarify that being a domestic violence survivor qualifies for a hardship waiver. DHS should coordinate with local domestic violence experts to implement a clear, trauma informed process to universally inform TANF applicants about the available domestic violence waiver, support the application for the waiver, and link the client with full TANF benefits and community-based domestic violence survivor support programs.

Model: DC is alone in its restriction of TANF support to recipients with a domestic violence waiver.

(A2) EXPAND AND OPTIMIZE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Introduction: Investment in behavioral health access in DC is treated as ancillary to traditional policing rather than as an essential public safety strategy.

[Routine outpatient treatment, including medication, reduces the likelihood of arrest among people with severe mental illness, and continuing community care for substance use following incarceration is linked to lower rates of recidivism and relapse.](#) DC has shown some commitment to expanding the continuum of services that divert people away from criminal legal system involvement and towards treatment and community support. That commitment is clear in [the amount of funding devoted to DC's current alternative crisis response model and in the development of programs that serve as a starting point for advancing public safety through behavioral health access and harm reduction.](#)

However, it's also clear that DC's current programs exist as the floor, not the ceiling of possibilities. The [programs currently in place are not designed for true diversion out of the criminal legal system, nor are they focused on harm reduction without law enforcement or court intervention.](#)

[DC is among the nation's leaders in overdose deaths per capita,](#) yet offers only fentanyl-checking strips to verify drug supply safety. [More advanced methods](#) are capable of detecting other synthetic adulterants such as [xylazine](#) and [medetomidine](#), both of which are increasingly contributing to overdose deaths. The recommendations in this section address the full continuum: mapping the system, expanding clinical infrastructure, improving crisis response, meeting people where they are through harm reduction, and creating space for healing outside of clinical and carceral settings.

(10) DEVELOP AN UPDATED SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MODEL MAP OF DC

The Problem: [Sequential Intercept Model](#) (SIM) Maps illustrate all points at which a person with behavioral health needs comes into contact with the criminal legal system. The SIM map is a critical planning tool for assessing available resources and identifying where investment can divert people with behavioral health needs away from incarceration. [The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council \(CJCC\) and the Department of Behavioral Health \(DBH\) conducted SIM mapping exercises in 2018 and 2020](#) to identify opportunities to improve services for people with substance use and mental health disorders in the justice system. The exercises addressed some gaps. [Challenges remain related to the absence of a formalized opioid use disorder screening process prior to arraignment, barriers to accessing diversion programs, and inadequate housing and wraparound support for people returning home from incarceration.](#) The post-COVID behavioral health landscape has shifted substantially, and a five-year-old map no longer reflects DC's current resources, gaps, or opportunities. Recognizing this, [CJCC and DBH have committed to conducting an updated SIM mapping exercise scheduled for Winter 2026.](#)

Recommendations: CJCC and DBH should ensure the updated SIM mapping exercise scheduled for Winter 2026 produces a comprehensive report that identifies and prioritizes behavioral health services and police alternatives at every intercept point. The exercise must go beyond a general landscape update and provide a concrete plan for implementation.

- [In alignment with CJCC’s annual report](#), the map and implementation plan should address gaps identified in prior mapping exercises and align with the Live.Long.DC Criminal Justice Opioid Strategy Group priorities.
- The updated map should also address two areas not currently reflected in CJCC’s plans for the exercise. First, the map should explicitly identify where community-based and civilian responses can serve as the primary or sole intervention rather than as a supplement to law enforcement responses. Second, the exercise should include a dedicated analysis of youth-specific behavioral health services and intercept points as reflected, or produce a separate youth-focused SIM map alongside the adult map as noted in the following recommendation.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should formally receive the updated map, respond to it, and subsequently commit to a public implementation plan, including dedicated funding in future years’ budgets. The mapping exercise should engage stakeholders from every intercept to ensure accuracy and actionable findings. This plan should be publicly released.

Models: [Maryland law](#) requires the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (through its Centers of Excellence) to lead Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) mapping workshops in jurisdictions across Maryland. These workshops, conducted by trained facilitators, bring together local stakeholders to examine how adults with mental health and substance use disorders interact with the criminal legal system, and to identify opportunities for intervention, diversion, and improved outcomes. [The Office has conducted 10 mapping exercises across the state in the last three years](#). The work supports local planning and budgeting to meet local behavioral health needs and reduce incarceration.

(11) DEVELOP A YOUTH-SPECIFIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLANNING TOOL AND ENSURE COMMUNITY VOICES IN ITS DEVELOPMENT

The Problem: While [DC is preparing to update its adult Sequential Intercept Model](#), no equivalent planning tool exists for children and young people. The [adult SIM has traditionally focused on the adult criminal justice system](#) and does not capture the distinct agencies, schools, family structures, and developmental realities that shape how children encounter DC’s systems. [Communities across the country have recognized this gap](#) and developed youth-specific SIM mapping processes grounded in the understanding that kids are different from adults.

[The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council’s \(CJCC\) Continuum of Care \(CoC\) project](#) is developing an implementation plan for at-risk and system-involved youth, but it is not clear whether it will identify and “map” where and how youth with behavioral health needs encounter DC’s systems. Critically, both existing frameworks start too late, focusing on youth who are already system-involved or identified as at-risk, rather than mapping what behavioral health supports exist for all DC children before any system contact occurs. A youth-specific SIM tool

would explicitly include Intercept 0, addressing basic needs, education, safe neighborhoods, and community-level supports and identifying gaps in prevention. Additionally, [DC's Continuum of Care Planning Council is composed almost entirely of government agencies](#) (twelve of fourteen) with no impacted youth, parents or caregivers, or community-based behavioral health providers at the table.

Recommendations: DC should develop a Sequential Intercept Model or equivalent behavioral health planning tool focused specifically on children and young people. This tool should document where youth with behavioral health needs encounter DC's systems, identify opportunities to divert them away from law enforcement contact and toward community-based care, and extend upstream through Intercept 0 to map what universal behavioral health supports exist for all DC children regardless of risk status or system involvement.

Implementation: The Mayor should fund and direct the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and the CJCC to convene an interdisciplinary stakeholder group to plan for and oversee the development of a youth SIM map or equivalent planning tool. The stakeholder group for this effort and the ongoing CoC project should include directly impacted youth and families, [reflecting the cross-system input that has made youth SIM mapping effective in other places](#).

Models:

- [Grayson County, Texas conducted a Youth SIM Mapping exercise](#) in 2024 through the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health, bringing together 70 stakeholders from mental health, schools, juvenile justice, courts, law enforcement, families, and peer support specialists to map resources, gaps, and opportunities across all intercepts. The exercise produced three concrete action priorities: family engagement and support, early intervention and cross-agency community support, and career skill development for youth in detention. The project also culminated in assigned teams and timelines for implementation.
- [Howard County, Maryland has developed a Youth Behavioral Health Road Map](#) that documents behavioral health supports across a continuum from wellness to crisis, designed specifically for youth and families navigating the local system.

(12) ESTABLISH AND FUND FULLY STAFFED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICS IN EVERY WARD

The Problem: [DC residents in need of behavioral health treatment face barriers](#), including provider shortages and geographic inequity in service access. DC has [nine federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas, including one specifically designated for mental health](#). A 2023 AARP survey of DC adults ages 40 and older found that [residents living east of the Anacostia River were more than three times as likely to lack access to care](#) as those living west of the river (25 percent versus 7 percent). A 2024 survey found that [while overall health care access had improved across the District, geographic disparities persisted](#). Without health resources distributed equitably across the District, the criminal legal system fills the gap by default: approximately [70 percent of DC jail residents have an identified mental health issue and about 40 percent have a substance use disorder](#).

Recommendation: Establish fully staffed and supported behavioral health clinics in each ward, accessible to youth and adults alike.

Implementation: The DC Council should pass legislation establishing ward-level behavioral health clinics and requiring that they be fully staffed and accessible to youth and adults. The Mayor and DC Council should fund these clinics and provide pipeline initiatives for clinics' staffing, including training, education, and job creation for DC residents.

Models: In 2024, [Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson's "Treatment Not Trauma" initiative](#) reopened city-owned public mental health clinics in communities with the highest unmet needs as publicly operated facilities that accept all patients regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. The initiative was informed by recommendations from the Mental Health System Expansion Working Group, established in 2023 to leverage community expertise and develop a framework and budget for expanding neighborhood-level behavioral health services and non-police crisis response.

(13) EXPAND AND IMPROVE DC'S NON-LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSES TO PEOPLE IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISES

The Problem: In 2022, [MPD responded to more than 36,000 behavioral health crisis calls. In all of 2024, the Department of Behavioral Health's \(DBH\) Community Response Team \(DC's behavioral health crisis response unit\) handled just 5,671 calls.](#) A 2021 pilot to divert behavioral health calls from 911 to DBH rerouted only 657 calls in two years. Responsible for receiving and directing calls, [the Office of Unified Communication's \(OUC\) FY2025 data shows that fewer than half of mental and behavioral health calls it received were handled by DBH](#), with the rest presumably routed to law enforcement or emergency medical services. In 2025, the DC Council's Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety found that calls to [911 are frequently not diverted to DBH appropriately because of delays in the Access Helpline](#) (DBH's 24-hour entry point into the public behavioral health system), resulting in calls returning to OUC and the subsequent dispatch of MPD officers. Community Response Teams (CRT) are further limited by the structure of their funding. Because CRT operations rely heavily on Medicaid reimbursement, [teams have an operational incentive to prioritize calls that are billable over those that are not](#), leaving residents whose crises don't fit Medicaid criteria without a clinician-led alternative to police response.

Recommendations: Develop a comprehensive plan ensuring that District residents who call 911, the Access Helpline, or 988 (the national three-digit behavioral health crisis line) always get the response they need, when they need it. The plan should include:

- adequately funding and increasing awareness of 988;
- building real interoperability, or effective communication and call assignment between the different call points: 911, 988, and the Access Helpline. True interoperability allows each of these numbers to receive calls and seamlessly and reliably transfer each call to the proper response team;

- providing behavioral health training to ensure OUC's call takers and dispatchers are able to recognize and appropriately respond to people in a behavioral health crisis;
- expanding the use of alternative crisis response to cover quality of life calls, including welfare checks; and
- ensuring all CRT dispatches are completely free of police involvement (including during transport), timely, and available around the clock.

Implementation: The Mayor should direct DBH and OUC to develop an interagency plan with clear timelines, accountability metrics, and meaningful community input. OUC and DBH should track and publicly report behavioral health call routing and transfer outcomes. The Mayor and the Council should provide full transparency as to what portion of CRT's operating budget is funded by Medicaid dollars and how that impacts CRT's ability to respond quickly. In future implementation efforts, policymakers should look to community organizations, such as Georgetown's Center for Innovations in Community Safety, for guidance.

Models:

- [Albuquerque's Community Safety Department](#), launched 2021, is the nation's first cabinet-level civilian alternative response department. In the first year of ACS operations, police use-of-force incidents in Albuquerque declined by 53 percent. Within three years of its launch, [ACS had responded to more than 82,000 calls, with 85 percent successfully diverted from police](#) and ACS responders calling police for assistance in less than 1 percent of calls.
- [Durham, North Carolina's Community Safety Department](#) dispatches unarmed teams led by mental health professionals to behavioral health and quality-of-life emergencies. The Department also supports people experiencing housing insecurity, returning home after incarceration, dealing with behavioral health needs and other complex life challenges.
- Other cities with independent 911 call centers, officially termed Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) have had much more success at properly routing emergency calls to 988 and community responders. Both Albuquerque and Durham are positive models, as well as [Denver's STAR program](#). Each of those PSAPs have leadership that are committed and dedicated to community response.

(14) AUTHORIZE AND FUND EXISTING COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS THAT SERVE WASHINGTONIANS WHO USE DRUGS TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE DRUG CHECKING SERVICES.

The Problem: [DC is among the nation's leaders in overdose deaths per capita](#), yet offers only fentanyl-checking strips to verify drug supply safety. [More advanced methods](#) are capable of detecting other synthetic adulterants such as [xylazine](#) and [medetomidine](#), both of which are increasingly contributing to overdose deaths. [With community trust in traditional policing at all time lows](#), community-based organizations with trusted relationships among people who use drugs would be best positioned to close this gap.

Recommendations:

- Establish broad access to [Fourier-Transform Infrared Spectroscopy machines](#) (FTIR machines), which assess the quality of recreational drugs. This service is crucial to reduce the risk of overdose deaths in DC as a result of tainted drug supplies. FTIR machines are able to detect adulterants in recreational drugs other than fentanyl.
- Local DC organizations that already serve residents who use drugs can most effectively provide drug-checking services to the broadest population by providing drug-checking in a mobile format. Authorization should be provided for these organizations to operate mobile FTIR drug checking services.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should fund FTIR machines, staff training, and ongoing operations for community-based organizations already serving people who use drugs. The DC Council should ensure that provision of FTIR machines is lawful pursuant to [DC Code § 48-1103](#).

Models:

- [New York State deployed FTIR devices](#) across [eight community harm reduction sites](#) as part of a coordinated drug checking initiative.
- Coordinated through the University of Washington and Public Health–Seattle & King County, [the Washington State Community Drug Checking Network](#) is a partnership of organizations around the state that provide community-level drug checking and harm reduction services.

(15) AUTHORIZE AND FUND 24/7 HARM REDUCTION CENTERS

The Problem: [DC's stabilization center](#) is not a sufficient tool in preventing overdose deaths or increasing community safety. It lacks advanced drug checking, wrap-around services, and capacity to provide its services to the broad population of DC residents who need them.

Recommendation: DC should open and fund a harm reduction center with the following features.

- **Wrap-Around Services:** Harm reduction centers should include wrap-around services including general wellness needs such as access to showers, laundry, case management, professional development programs, and clinical care.
- **24/7 Access:** These harm reduction centers need to be accessible at all times to accommodate the highest number of participants.
- **Safe Consumption:** To the extent compatible with DC and federal law, harm reduction centers should provide safe consumption support to avoid recreational drug-related injuries or overdose deaths.
- **Drug Checking:** The harm reduction centers should offer free access to FTIR machines to help participants ensure that the substances they use are not contaminated.

Implementation:

- The DC Council should pass legislation authorizing harm reduction centers and overdose prevention programs within them.
- The Mayor should direct the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) to fund wraparound services (clinical care, drug checking, referrals, and basic needs support) at qualifying community-based organizations through the [Opioid Abatement Fund](#).
- To ensure [alignment with federal law](#), the centers should secure funding for the safe consumption activities through private and philanthropic sources rather than public dollars.

Models:

- New York City's [OnPoint NYC](#) program should be used as a model for effective practices, except that harm reduction centers should be available at all hours. The program [intervened in 683 fatal overdoses](#) in 2024. [Sixty four percent of participants at OnPoint received harm reduction and health promotion education](#). In 2023, its second year in operation, [New York City's OnPoint NYC prevented 683 fatal overdoses, provided wraparound services to 83 percent of participants, and offered harm reduction and other health education to 64.5 percent of participants](#). [The city funds wraparound services](#), while [supervision of consumption is covered through other sources](#).
- Opening in January 2025, [Project Weber/RENEW](#) in Providence, Rhode Island is a state-sanctioned, state-regulated, and state-licensed overdose prevention center, funded through opioid settlement dollars, private foundations, grants, and individual donors. It is co-located with comprehensive wraparound services.

(16) ESTABLISH HEALING HOUSES THROUGHOUT THE CITY

The Problem: People who have survived violence, substance use disorder, or are experiencing a mental health crisis are often presented with only two bad options: the hospital or jail. [As many as 80 percent of individuals with psychotic episodes considered their first hospitalization to be traumatic. Jails and prisons actively worsen behavioral health outcomes](#). DC lacks short-term residential spaces designed to help people heal outside of clinical or carceral environments. This gap falls hardest on Black DC residents, who experience [violence](#), [incarceration](#), and [unmet behavioral health needs](#) at disproportionate rates. Nationally, Black adults are less likely than others to be reached by [traditional victim services](#) and [mental health resources](#).

Recommendation: DC should fund short-term residential whole-person wellness homes (“healing houses”) where people can heal in a safe, supportive, and culturally appropriate environment. Healing houses should be operated by community-based organizations with deep roots in the communities they serve. Participation should be voluntary and self-directed. The healing houses should use alternative healing therapies that may not be offered in clinical settings.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should provide funding to the healing houses administered by the Department of Behavioral Health or the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants. Healing houses should develop evaluation frameworks that capture outcomes meaningful to participants, including safety, stability, connection to community, and self-reported wellbeing. Healing houses should be complementary to restorative and transformative justice work as described in [Recommendation 57](#).

Models:

- The community-based [Trauma Recovery Center](#) (TRC) model provides wraparound, trauma-informed care specifically designed for underserved survivors of violent crime who are least likely to access traditional victim services. Twice as many TRC clients used mental health services compared to victims who received usual care. PTSD symptoms decrease by as much as 38 percent, depression declines by more than half, and more than 9 in 10 clients report that treatment helped them feel emotionally better. Clients also report less physical pain, improved sleep, and increased quality of life. [New York City's fourth TRC](#), opened December 2025 and operated by the Center for Community Alternatives in Brooklyn, is the first in the nation specifically designed for people at the intersection of violence and criminal legal system involvement.
- [2nd Story](#) peer respite in Santa Cruz, California is staffed by people with lived experience of mental health crises and trauma. Voluntary and non-clinical, it offers guests up to 14 days of short-term residential support in a home-like environment with no diagnosis required and no medical model driving care. Peer support workers provide “an opportunity to experience what change feels like, and to learn new responses through relationships with each other,” with the expectation that guests inherently know what they need. After respite stays, [guests were more likely to report being able to “deal with crisis” and “deal effectively with daily problems” than before](#).

(A3) ADVANCE ECONOMIC JUSTICE & WEALTH-BUILDING

Introduction: Economic instability and public safety are not separate problems. Poverty concentrates the conditions that make victimization more likely, limits people’s ability to recover after harm, and follows people through every stage of contact with the justice system. The recommendations in this section address that connection directly. DC must reverse its cuts to TANF, which will reduce benefits for more than 16,000 families in 2026, disproportionately impacting Black, women-led households. It must pass the Medical Debt Mitigation Amendment Act to protect residents from a growing financial crisis that worsens health outcomes and deepens racial and economic disparities. It must expand financial empowerment resources for residents navigating economic instability and reentry. And it must follow through on its commitment to reparations by funding the work it has already authorized.

(17) PROTECT TANF AS A LIFELINE FOR DC’S MOST VULNERABLE FAMILIES

The Problem: [DC approved three cuts to TANF that will reduce or freeze benefits](#) for more than 16,000 families beginning October 1, 2026: eliminating cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs); reinstating time limits that step down benefits for families who have received assistance for more than 60 months; and increasing sanctions for families who do not meet work readiness requirements. The Mayor’s budget would have made these changes effective in FY26. [The DC Council stalled for one year the elimination of COLAs, the planned sanctions policy, and phasing out of families who have exceeded the federal 60-month limit on benefits.](#) The Council stalled but did not fully block these changes. DCFPI reports that [the greatest harm will fall on Black, women-led households](#) and on children.

[Punitive policies like time limits and sanctions increase hardship without improving employment outcomes.](#) Further, focus groups of DC TANF recipients conducted by the [DC Fiscal Policy Institute \(DCFPI\)](#) found that the program’s employment services are failing families not because of participants’ lack of effort, but because of shortcomings in program design and individual barriers to work. This includes [mental health challenges rooted in experiences of domestic violence and gun violence](#), which work requirements and time limits cannot resolve.

Federal law does not allow DC to extend the 5-year time limit on families’ receipt of TANF benefits using federal funds, but [DC may use local funds to do so](#). For several years, [DC has effectively eliminated the time limit](#), allowing some families to continue receiving assistance regardless of how long they had been on the rolls. [DC’s Department of Human Services convened a Hardship Policy Working Group](#), but limited its scope to developing a hardship exemption for the time limit only.

Recommendation: In alignment with [DCFPI’s recommendations](#):

- Reverse all three TANF cuts,
- Address shortcomings in the TANF Employment and Education Program,

- Expand access to child care for TANF recipients,
- Improve resources for TANF recipients, and
- Improve caseworkers' interactions with recipients.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should:

- Closely scrutinize the TANF Employment and Education Program, including evaluating the October 2024 program relaunch, assessing vendor performance, and improving data collection on participant work outcomes and barriers.
- Promote cross-agency collaboration with the Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to expand access to child care and prevent the implementation of a child care subsidy waitlist, which would harm mothers on TANF.
- Strengthen DHS' processes for connecting TANF recipients to available resources.
- Invest in trauma-informed training for caseworkers to improve service delivery.

(18) MEDICAL DEBT REFORM

The Problem: Nearly [20 percent of DC adults are burdened by unpaid medical bills](#) and that number could grow as federal Medicaid protections weaken. Medical debt drives financial hardship, worsens health outcomes, and deepens racial and economic disparities in the District, disproportionately impacting Black residents, individuals with disabilities, and mothers. Patients facing medical debt often delay necessary care, worsening chronic conditions and driving up long-term costs. [DC helped eliminate \\$42 million in medical debt for more than 62,000 District residents](#) through a 2024 initiative but without systemic reform, emergency relief is only a temporary fix.

Recommendation: DC should limit medical debt interest rates, ban medical debt from credit reports, require transparency from hospital financial assistance programs, and prohibit harmful collection tactics including wage garnishment and property liens.

Implementation: The DC Council should pass the [Medical Debt Mitigation Amendment Act of 2025](#).

Models:

- [Colorado](#) banned the inclusion of medical debt on credit reports.
- [New York](#) limits the amount of debt that a patient incurs by requiring hospitals to receive informed consent for patients before agreeing to a payment plan, preventing hospitals from mandating consent to pay before providing services, and prohibiting providers from requiring patients to have a credit card on file. New York limits payment plans provided by hospitals to plans that do not “exceed 5% of the patient’s gross monthly income and the rate of interest imposed on outstanding balances must not exceed 2%.”

(19) FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT FOR DC RESIDENTS

Problem: DC residents, including people returning from incarceration and those experiencing economic instability, face multiple financial barriers: damaged credit, predatory debt, limited access to mainstream banking, and inadequate financial literacy resources. These obstacles make stable reentry and long-term financial recovery difficult.

Recommendation: Expand access to financial education and counseling for DC residents, with particular focus on populations returning from incarceration and those experiencing economic instability.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should expand access to financial education and counseling for DC residents, with targeted investment in programs serving people returning from incarceration and those experiencing economic instability, including programs like [Tzedek DC's Financial Empowerment Program](#) that combine education, counseling, and direct financial tools.

Models:

- [Tzedek DC's Financial Empowerment Program](#), a free eight-week program offering financial education workshops, credit and financial counseling, and \$100 in investment seed funding, completed its pilot year in 2024. The pilot produced 56 graduates across four cohorts, with 98 percent reporting changes to their financial habits and 100 percent reporting satisfaction with the program.
- [NYC Financial Empowerment Centers](#) provide free, one-on-one professional financial counseling and coaching.

(20) LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR REPARATIONS IN DC

Problem: Researchers, government agencies, and elected officials have acknowledged that [slavery and discrimination led directly to health, housing, and racial wealth gaps](#). Researchers draw a direct line between the history of slavery in DC and the policy decisions that followed, including redlining, disinvestment in Black neighborhoods, and the War on Drugs, which paved the way for gentrification and deepened economic inequality.

DC has taken initial steps toward reparative justice: the [DC Council voted unanimously](#) in 2024 to establish a task force to study potential reparations for DC residents descended from enslaved people and budgeted \$1.5 million to pre-fund its implementation. But in May 2025, the Mayor's proposed budget did not include the funds initially allocated for the Task Force. The Task Force remains unfunded.

Recommendation: The Mayor and DC Council should commit to following through on addressing the enduring harms Black Washingtonians face.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should fund and fully implement the Insurance Database Amendment Act.

Models:

- [Evanston](#) became the first US city to administer reparations in 2021, providing cash payments for property purchase, housing repairs, and mortgage assistance, an approach recently expanded to include more recipients and increased direct cash benefits.
- [California](#) established a statewide task force to study and develop reparations proposals.
- [Asheville, North Carolina's Reparations Commission](#) was empowered in 2022 to make short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations that will make significant progress toward repairing the damage caused by public and private systemic racism, and will issue a report with recommendations. The work of the commission is ongoing.
- In 2024, [Detroit instituted the Detroit Reparations Task Force](#) to develop recommendations for housing and economic development programs that address historical discrimination against the Black community.
- In [Providence, Rhode Island, the Providence Municipal Reparations Commission was established in 2022 to address the injuries outlined in an information-gathering phase and provide clear recommendations](#) to the City on appropriate policies, programs, and projects to begin repairing harm. As part of the city's COVID relief funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, the city council has allocated \$10 million to organizations to "close the racial wealth and equity gap between Providence residents and neighborhoods." The reparations plan does not include any direct payments to residents but focuses on funding programs such as job training, scholarships, and education.
- The [Tulsa \(OK\) City Council of Tulsa passed a Resolution on the Tulsa Race Massacre, which required a community-driven engagement process that identifies concrete pathways to repair](#). As of June, 2025, the City of Tulsa was proposing to award its Black community a \$105 million reparations package, with funds raised by a private trust and publicly raised funds, that includes \$24 million for a housing fund, \$60 million for a cultural preservation fund focused on reducing blight, and \$21 million for land acquisition and development, small business grants, scholarships, and to continue identifying victims of the massacre who were buried in mass graves.
- Through a referendum in 2021, residents of [Greenbelt, Maryland](#) directed the City Council to create [a 21-person commission to review, discuss, and make recommendations related to reparations for African American and Native American residents of Greenbelt](#).

(B) PROTECT AND INVEST IN DC’S YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people in DC have been clear about what they need to be safe. When the Youth Power and Safety Collective convened more than one hundred young people and asked what safety looks like to them, they did not ask for juvenile curfews, civil citations on the Metro, or police in recreational centers. They asked for mental health and housing support, safe spaces at night and on weekends, out-of-school time programming, year-round employment, and stronger violence interruption and credible messenger programs. Youth-led organizations added investments in young people’s leadership and quality, affordable, family-sized housing to that list of safety priorities. DC has too often responded to young people’s presence in public life as a problem to be managed rather than a constituency to be served. This chapter takes the opposite approach, starting with what young people have said they need, and building a policy agenda around it.

(B1) INVEST IN YOUNG PEOPLE’S SAFETY AND OPPORTUNITY

Introduction: Young people in DC deserve to thrive. That means ensuring their voices shape the policies that affect them, starting with reviving the Youth Advisory Council and developing behavioral health planning tools that center their input. It means investing in the supports that keep young people safe and help them build the skills to resolve conflict. It means addressing the upstream drivers of instability, including the lack of quality, affordable, housing, and fully implementing what the DC Crossover Youth Study. And it means rethinking how the District engages young people and families in crisis: decriminalizing truancy, creating police-free schools with behavioral health and restorative justice resources, reducing young people’s contact with both local and federal law enforcement, and establishing a minor emancipation process for those who need it.

(21) REVIVE THE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Problem: Young people are too easily forgotten or taken for granted in the policy process because they have no voting power until they turn 18. DC law [established the Youth Advisory Council](#) to give young people a direct voice in policy by commenting on legislation, advising the Mayor and DC Council, and monitoring youth programs. The Council has been effectively dormant for years, with no public updates since 2020 and application materials last posted in 2015 and 2016. Young people in DC have no functioning mechanism to advise their government. A literature review of ten studies showed, [“civic engagement programs improve youth mental health outcomes, including reduced anxiety, reduced sadness, and increased resilience.”](#)

Recommendations: Revive and strengthen the Youth Advisory Council to create an ongoing, formalized space for youth representatives to advise and participate in DC government decisions on policies and practices that directly impact youth in the District.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should introduce, pass, and fund legislation amending the [District of Columbia Youth Advisory Council Establishment Act of 2002](#) to replace the existing advisory structure with a Youth Governing Council (YGC) with real governing authority.

Key changes should include: (1) establishing a YGC composed of members from each ward and representatives selected by community-based organizations serving low-income youth; (2) creating a YGC Coordinator position under the Committee on Youth Affairs to prepare Youth Impact Reports and support member participation; (3) granting YGC members the authority to attend Council hearings, question witnesses, and make statements on the record on designated legislation; (4) amending the District Charter to allow a YGC Representative to cast a 14th vote on the DC Council on legislation the YGC has designated for action; and (5) providing monthly stipends, volunteer hours certification, or academic credit to YGC members.

The application process should explicitly prohibit consideration of grades, test scores, discipline records, immigration status, and criminal history. The Mayor and DC Council should ensure future budgets include funds to support these requirements.

Models: DC's own Youth Advisory Council Act of 2002 established the legal framework for meaningful youth participation in governance. This recommendation restores and refreshes that commitment.

(22) STRENGTHEN YOUNG PEOPLES' CAPACITY TO SUPPORT CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND HEALTHY COPING MECHANISMS

The Problem: Young people want to develop the skills that will allow them to support and advocate for one another. Rather than relying on violence and coercion-based tactics, strengthening young people's skills to support one another supports them in becoming active and contributing members of their community. According to DC Action, [more than one in three \(36 percent\) high school students reported depression](#). In addition, according to the [DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education \(OSSE\)](#), *"[f]ighting remains, by far, the most common reason for exclusionary discipline and increased by 40 percent in the 2022-23 school year."* These youth would benefit more in the short and long-term from de-escalation, conflict resolution, and mediation, rather than suspension or expulsion from school.

Recommendation: Establish and fund community-led trainings to strengthen community members' skills and capacity to support de-escalation, conflict resolution, mediation, and healthy coping mechanisms.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass legislation creating and funding opportunities for young people to develop peer mediation and conflict resolution skills, and strengthen mental health literacy.

Models:

- In January 2025, [the NYC Council required the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to create student wellness club toolkits](#) to help guide middle and high school

students creating peer-led student wellness clubs. Such toolkits would include informational materials on youth mental health, best practices for facilitating group discussions on mental health, and guidance for mental health promoting activities.

- The [Youth Mental Health Corps](#) offers young people an opportunity to provide peer support and training to prepare them for careers in behavioral health.
- The [Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board](#) (VA) offers mini-grants for youth-led projects to reduce stigma around mental illness among their peers, with support from the [Suicide Prevention Alliance of Northern Virginia](#) and the [Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services](#).

(23) INCREASE FUNDING FOR PROGRAMS THAT ENHANCE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SAFETY

The Problem: DC spends upwards of a [billion dollars](#) on criminal legal system interventions that young people do not believe will advance their safety. When surveyed as part of the [Youth Power and Safety Collective](#), young people said the programs that they trust will enhance their safety should prioritize prevention, intervention, treatment, and opportunity. Young people are best positioned to identify what they need and they have been clear with DC's leaders about their priorities.

The [DC Police Reform Commission](#), responding directly to the voices of young people of color who described traumatizing interactions with police and feelings of being criminalized and unwelcome, recommended investing in violence interrupters and credible messengers in schools and communities, school-based and community mental health services, safe passage programs, and youth-centered behavioral health services. During the 2025 curfew debate, DC youth and advocates [consistently opposed](#) restrictions in favor of investment. Councilmember Pinto introduced the [Teen Center Establishment Amendment Act of 2025](#), which would require the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to establish teen centers in each quadrant; the [Expanding Community Access to Safe and Clean Recreational Space Act of 2025](#), which would open school recreational facilities on evenings and weekends; and the [Youth Villages Grant Establishment Amendment Act of 2025](#), which would fund neighborhood-based intergenerational networks for youth up to age 25 through the Child and Family Services Administration (CFSA). Notably, the Teen Center Establishment Act would require Youth Advisory Councils at each site, with members shaping design. That instinct is right, but also creating pathways and support for community-based organizations to provide and facilitate more of this programming will further remove barriers to young people's participation.

Recommendations: DC should have youth-driven programs that young people have requested to keep them safe, consistent with the Youth Power and Safety Collective agenda and other recommendations focused on addressing young people's needs that include:

- Mental health and housing support citywide, including requiring DYRS to provide wellness activities for youth.

- Access to safe spaces for youth at night and on weekends that are accessible and youth-led, as well as youth-centered drop-in spaces that provide environments for belonging and fellowship and do not include governmental agencies in their services or spaces (e.g., law enforcement and child welfare agencies).
- Strengthening [Out-of-School](#) Time programming.
- Increased support for violence interrupters and credible messengers programs.
- Year-round employment that pays a minimum wage and meets the demand for young people's employment.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should include funding in future years' budgets to bring these approaches to scale. Funding should support community-based organizations, rather than government agencies, to work directly with young people to develop and bring to life the programming this recommendation describes. Both the [Summer Youth Employment Program](#) and [High School Internship Program](#), and the organizations that work to provide paid employment to young people, must be able to meet the demand that exists for these positions.

Savings from removing police from schools as described in [Recommendation 27](#) can support these efforts.

Models:

- Chicago's [Choose to Change program](#) pairs behavioral science-informed programming with intensive mentorship delivered by community members from the same neighborhoods as the youth they serve. Evaluated through a randomized controlled trial, the program reduced the likelihood of violent crime arrest by 39 percent at 24 months and 28 percent at 36 months.
- Organizations like [Safe Space NOVA](#) and [SafeSpace](#) in California demonstrates youth-driven, community-based programming operating independently of government. These programs are peer-led, non-clinical, and designed around young people's own definitions of support and belonging.
- On safe spaces, DC has an opportunity to lead. Rather than a model that doesn't reflect what young people have asked for, the District should engage youth directly to design and develop a plan for community-led, youth-centered spaces that are free from law enforcement and child welfare agencies, building on the blueprint already established by the [Youth Power and Safety Agenda](#) and the [DC Police Reform Commission](#).

(24) INCREASE INVESTMENTS IN QUALITY, AFFORDABLE, FAMILY-SIZED HOUSING

The Problem: [Young people have identified safe, stable, and affordable housing as a priority](#) in the Black Youth Agenda, noting that not having a stable place to live makes it more likely for youth to experience depression, hopelessness, and thoughts of self-harm. A 2023 Urban Institute study found that [12 percent of DC residents \(about 82,000 people\) experience housing](#)

[insecurity, with children and youth making up 24 percent of that population](#). Black and Hispanic residents and Ward 7 and 8 residents are also disproportionately impacted.

A 2019 Urban Institute assessment found [a deficit of approximately 2,500 family-sized rental units affordable to the city's lowest-income households, with more than 11,600 large rental homes already occupied by cost-burdened families](#). According to the DC Fiscal Policy Institute (DCFPI), [69 percent of DC renters at the lowest income levels spend more than half their income on rent, inevitably](#) forcing them to make choices between housing and other basic needs.

Recommendation: Increase investments in quality, affordable, family-sized housing to meet the need on the scale that exists.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should establish as a policy goal that no DC resident pays more than 30 percent of their income on housing ([the standard for housing affordability](#)) and direct all housing investments toward closing the gap between that standard and the current reality for the District's lowest-income families. The Mayor and DC Council should direct more Housing Production Trust Fund resources toward the lowest-income families, including for family-sized units, addressing DCFPI's finding that [the DC Department of Housing and Community Development \(DHCD\) has struggled to meet its own statutory requirement to direct HPTF toward affordable housing](#). The Mayor and DC Council should also require that any new affordable housing development receiving a public subsidy include a minimum share of family-sized units, and should direct DHCD to produce updated ward-by-ward data on the family-sized unit gap to ensure equitable distribution across the District.

Models:

- Montgomery County, Maryland's [Housing Production Fund](#) finances mixed-income housing development while retaining majority public ownership. As a condition of funding, 30 percent of units must remain permanently affordable: 20 percent for lower-income households at or below 50 percent of the area median income (AMI), and 10 percent for moderate-income households at or below 65-70 percent AMI.
- Past legislative efforts to dramatically increase the number of quality, affordable family-sized housing units include the [Green New Deal of 2023](#).
- [Vital City](#) has a series of recommendations for cities facing shortfalls of high-quality, affordable family-sized homes.

(25) FULLY IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DC CROSSOVER YOUTH STUDY

The Problem: [Crossover youth](#), defined as young people who have been involved with both the child welfare and youth justice systems, are among the district's most vulnerable residents. They often require coordinated support from multiple agencies. There is fragmentation between the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. This systemic gap leads to poor communication between child welfare and juvenile justice agencies, deeper end system

penetration with higher rates of cross-over youth being placed in out-of-home, group, and correctional care, high levels of disproportionate representation of children of color, higher likelihoods of increased crimes, and a lack of tailored, coordinated care that increases instability. The Council for Court Excellence (CCE) reported that [sixty-eight percent of the Department of Youth and Rehabilitative Services \(DYRS\) and Child and Family Services Administration \(CFSA\) case management staff who were surveyed said they were unaware of any specific protocol for a crossover youth's case.](#)

The [Center on Youth Justice at Georgetown University is working with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council](#) and other District stakeholders to develop information sharing and case management structures aligned with tenets of the [Crossover Youth Practice Model](#) (CYPM) to improve the identification and support of dual system youth in the city.

Recommendation: DC should adopt all recommendations made in the [Georgetown Crossover Youth Practice Model](#) to ensure consistent, evidence-based care for youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare system.

Implementation: The Mayor should direct CFSA and DYRS to implement the recommendations of [A Broken Web](#), CCE's 2024 audit of DC's crossover youth system, including: reestablishing the Crossover Youth Steering Committee, fixing tracking methodology so agencies count all youth with any past or present involvement in both systems rather than only those with simultaneously open cases, developing joint data systems, and training CFSA and DYRS staff on the unique needs of crossover youth. The Mayor should also ensure the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has sufficient authority and funding to analyze and report on crossover youth annually.

Building on these operational adjustments, the Mayor and CJCC should fully resource the [Georgetown Center for Youth Justice's active partnership with CJCC](#), responsible for implementing the CYPM framework in DC. Given that half of DC foster care placements are in Maryland, Maryland agencies must be included in both efforts.

Models: Key sites with documented implementation include [New York City](#), [King County \(Seattle\)](#), [Washington](#), and [Harris County \(Houston\), Texas](#).

(11*) DEVELOP A YOUTH-SPECIFIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLANNING TOOL AND ENSURE COMMUNITY VOICE GUIDES ITS DEVELOPMENT

The Problem: While [DC is preparing to update its adult Sequential Intercept Model](#), no equivalent planning tool exists for children and young people. The [adult SIM has traditionally focused on the adult criminal justice system](#) and does not capture the distinct agencies, schools, family structures, and developmental realities that shape how children encounter DC's systems. [Communities across the country have recognized this gap](#) and developed youth-specific SIM mapping processes grounded in the understanding that kids are different from adults.

The [Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's \(CJCC\) Continuum of Care \(CoC\) project](#) is developing an implementation plan for at-risk and system-involved youth, but it is not clear whether it will identify and "map" where and how youth with behavioral health needs encounter

DC's systems. Critically, both existing frameworks start too late, focusing on youth who are already system-involved or identified as at-risk, rather than mapping what behavioral health supports exist for all DC children before any system contact occurs. A youth-specific SIM tool would explicitly include Intercept 0, addressing basic needs, education, safe neighborhoods, and community-level supports and identifying gaps in prevention. Additionally, [DC's Continuum of Care Planning Council, is composed almost entirely of government agencies](#) (twelve of fourteen) with no impacted youth, parents or caregivers, or community-based behavioral health providers at the table.

Recommendations: DC should develop a SIM or equivalent behavioral health planning tool focused specifically on children and young people. This tool should document where youth with behavioral health needs encounter DC's systems, identify opportunities to divert them away from law enforcement contact and toward community-based care, and extend upstream through Intercept 0 to map what universal behavioral health supports exist for all DC children regardless of risk status or system involvement.

Implementation: The Mayor should fund and direct the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and the CJCC to convene an interdisciplinary stakeholder group to plan for and oversee the development of a youth SIM map or equivalent planning tool. The stakeholder group for this effort and the ongoing CoC project should include directly impacted youth and families, [reflecting the cross-system input that has made youth SIM mapping effective in other places.](#)

Models:

- [Grayson County, Texas conducted a Youth SIM Mapping exercise](#) in 2024 through the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health, bringing together 70 stakeholders from mental health, schools, juvenile justice, courts, law enforcement, families, and peer support specialists to map resources, gaps, and opportunities across all intercepts. The exercise produced three concrete action priorities: family engagement and support, early intervention and cross-agency community support, and career skill development for youth in detention. The project also culminated in assigned teams and timelines for implementation.
- [Howard County, Maryland has developed a Youth Behavioral Health Road Map](#) that documents behavioral health supports across a continuum from wellness to crisis, designed specifically for youth and families navigating the local system.

(26) REDUCE YOUNG PEOPLE'S AND THEIR FAMILIES' CONTACT WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Problem: [Young people interacting with law enforcement experience psychological strain](#) and heightened emotional distress, and such negative emotional experiences can [worsen depending on where the police stop occurs](#). Direct contact with law enforcement and exposure to aggressive policing tactics are associated with [negative education outcomes](#), such as reduced test scores for Black children and youth and lower grade point averages in teenagers. DC's current approach exposes youth to multiple categories of harmful contact simultaneously. The DC Police

Reform Commission found that “racial disparities in school-based policing are pervasive and the harmful effects of police contact for school-aged children are significant.”

- There is [no evidence that juvenile curfews work](#), but targeting the presence of youth in public spaces (schools, public transportation, outdoor spaces, places of worship, medical offices, child care and recreation centers) provides opportunity for escalation – especially with the added presence of federal officers – and in practice perpetuates the narrative of Black and Brown youth as criminals. Furthermore, when young people encounter law enforcement, as many District youth do multiple times in a day, the interactions are fraught and unsafe. Research shows that nearly [90 percent](#) of youth waive their rights during police interrogations, largely due to developmental differences, vulnerabilities to coercion, and difficulties understanding the legal consequences of their words. Schools should have a clear and unified approach to interacting with law enforcement and protecting students and their families.
- Schools, places of worship, medical offices, child care centers and recreation centers present critical opportunities for young people to connect with each other, mentors, or a resource. A police officer’s presence in that space can deter a young person from accessing it.
- While DC is currently implementing a “bell-to-bell” cellphone ban policy, right now, it is particularly important for immigrant youth or youth in mixed-status families to access their phones for timely updates from family members who have been detained or when there is imminent risk of detention.

Recommendations:

- Require schools to adopt and enforce safety protocols in response to the federal law enforcement surge, and educate students, families, staff, and leadership about their rights in various scenarios.
- Ban the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) from conducting non-emergency operations in spaces explicitly designated as places of safety for children and youth, such as schools, churches, medical offices, childcare centers, recreational centers, and libraries.
- Require MPD to document, record on body-worn cameras, and report any interactions they have with a minor.
- Temporarily lift the cell phone ban in DC schools to allow young people more regular communication with their families during this time.
- Eliminate the civil offense for fair evasion for people under 18, and make [Kids Ride Free](#) available to older young people who are still attending school.
- Allow the expanded juvenile curfew to expire permanently.
- Establish a [“Mature Miranda”](#) or a “juvenile Miranda” warning.

Implementation:

- The DC Council should amend the [Fare Evasion Decriminalization Amendment Act of 2018](#) to eliminate the civil offense for fare evasion for people under 18.
- The DC Council should pass legislation prohibiting MPD from conducting non-emergency operations in spaces explicitly designated as places of safety for children and youth, such as schools, churches, medical offices, childcare centers, recreational centers, and libraries. See also [Recommendation 27](#) on police-free schools.
- The Mayor and DC Council should establish and fund additional free transportation options for young people.
- The Mayor could immediately order that the [Juvenile Curfew Second Temporary Amendment Act of 2025](#) not be enforced by MPD, and the DC Council could let the law lapse after April 15, 2026.
- The Mayor should lift the cellphone ban until federal law enforcement presence in DC abates.

Models:

- [Richmond, Virginia](#), and [Los Angeles, California](#), have offered guidance to schools, as has the [National Immigration Law Center](#).
- [Maryland](#) requires that before any custodial interrogation of a minor, police make good faith efforts to notify a parent or guardian and ensure the youth consults with an attorney by phone, video, or in person, prior to questioning.

See also [Recommendation 43](#) on police interactions with youth, people with disabilities, and non-English speakers.

(27) ESTABLISH POLICE-FREE SCHOOLS AND INCREASE INVESTMENTS IN SCHOOL-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The Problem: According to a 2020 report from the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [92 percent of school-based arrests in DC are of Black students](#). The DC Police Reform Commission concluded in 2021 that [“racial disparities in school-based policing are pervasive and the harmful effects of police contact for school-aged children are significant.”](#) and recommended that the roughly \$14 million spent annually on School Resource Officers (SROs) be redirected to non-police safety staff better suited to fostering youth development and healthy school environments. Research on the effects of police in schools shows that [removing officers does not make schools less safe and, in many cases, improves school environments](#).

The [DC Council passed legislation in 2021 to phase out SROs entirely by 2025](#). In 2023, facing pressure from administrators and amid rising concerns about juvenile crime, the [Council quietly](#)

[reversed course and repealed the phase-out](#) without building the non-police alternatives that would have laid the groundwork for this transition.

Recommendations:

- Recommit to a phased, planned removal of SROs from DC public and charter schools, with a binding timeline and dedicated funding for building non-police safety infrastructure before and during the transition.
- Invest the resources currently spent on SROs into school-based mental health professionals, restorative justice practitioners, counselors, and trained non-police safety staff.
- Require that any transition plan be developed with direct input from students, particularly Black and brown students who have been most harmed by school-based policing.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should develop a transition plan within the first year of the new administration, with clear milestones, and dedicated funding for alternatives.

Models:

- In February 2024, the [Chicago Board of Education voted to remove all remaining SROs starting in 2024-25](#), and established a [Whole School Safety Policy](#) focused on physical safety, emotional safety, and relational trust. When CPS began removing SROs, [schools that fully removed officers did not see increases in high-level discipline infractions, and student and teacher perceptions of safety were unchanged](#).
- A study examining [60 schools across 6 California districts that removed police between 2019-2021](#), found that students reported stronger caring relationships with staff and more meaningful participation in school, while violence, harassment, bullying, substance use, delinquency, and suspension rates did not increase. Successful transitions shared common elements: alternatives in place before removal, restorative justice practices, partnerships with community-based organizations, and clear protocols for when police involvement is appropriate.

(28) DECRIMINALIZE TRUANCY

The Problem: Under [DC law](#), parents and guardians can face fines or imprisonment for failing to ensure a child's school attendance. No parent should have to choose between their child's safety and their education. In an environment where parents no longer feel safe taking their young people to school due to fear of federal law enforcement, some are being forced to make this choice. The Marshall Project reports that [nationally, 150,000 charges are annually laid for truancy](#).

Recommendation: Parents and guardians should not be criminally liable if their child is truant. Decriminalization should be paired with investment in school-based interventions and wraparound services as the primary response to chronic absence. Also, missing the first two

periods of the school day should not result in an absence.

Implementation:

- The DC Council should amend [DC Code § 38-203](#) to remove criminal penalties for parents and guardians when a child is truant, replacing prosecution with school-based and wraparound intervention.
- As youth surveyed on this topic noted, this change should be paired with adjustments to how absences are counted, specifically addressing policies where missing the first two periods results in a full-day absence.

Models: In 2025, [California](#) eliminated jail time and fines for parents of truant children.

(6*) ESTABLISH A MINOR EMANCIPATION PROCESS IN DC

The Problem: DC lacks a formal process for a minor to petition for emancipation. Minors in DC lack the legal ability to make their own decisions; they remain under the legal control of their parents or a legal guardian. [DC residents report higher rates of domestic violence than nationally](#). Youth who experience domestic violence may experience interruption in education access, restricted access to medical care, limited access to financial support, and may be prevented from accessing student loans, medical insurance, and other necessary services. Youth in these dangerous situations do not currently have a legal mechanism to escape, exercise their agency, and create a safe living situation short of entering the child welfare system (which is not safe and, critically, may require the youth to return home) or running away. [Forty percent of DC's homeless youth report having experienced domestic violence](#).

Recommendation: Establish an emancipation process allowing District teens to direct their own safety planning and assert autonomy.

Implementation: DC Council should amend the Code to create an emancipation process that is accessible to youth.

Models:

- In [Missouri](#), [16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless or domestic violence survivors and are self-supporting can contract for housing, employment, medical care, and victim services with parental consent, which may be implied](#) by the act of forcing the youth out of the home, refusing financial support, or abuse and neglect.
- [California](#) has a structured 30-day process where minors as young as 14 can file for emancipation without requiring a court hearing if they meet all legal criteria. This streamlined process ensures accessibility and efficiency.
- [Alaska's framework](#) provides additional flexibility, allowing courts to waive parental consent if necessary and offering transition services to support emancipated minors.

(B2) PROTECT YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

When a young person does enter the justice system, DC must ensure that contact is limited and humane. That means expanding community-based alternatives to pretrial detention and secure confinement, and making community rather than incarceration the default. It means ensuring that young people can access quality education wherever they are in the system, and that their records and accomplishments follow them home when they leave. It means building genuine reentry infrastructure (housing, employment, aftercare, record sealing) that gives young people and young adults a real path forward. And it means recognizing that young adults, whose brains and circumstances are developmentally distinct from older adults, require approaches tailored to their age.

(29) GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE OUT OF PRETRIAL DETENTION OR POST-ADJUDICATION CONFINEMENT

The Problem: In DC, young people adjudicated delinquent and committed to the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) can be [placed in a variety of settings away from home](#), including group homes, therapeutic placements, or secure facilities. While waiting for DYRS to assign them to one of these placements, [youth are housed at the Youth Services Center \(YSC\)](#), which is intended as a short-term facility. In practice, [young people can wait for months](#).

DC uses YSC to address problems that detention cannot solve: service gaps, placement shortages, slow court processes, and a lack of community-based options. Youth end up confined not because they present an unmanageable risk, but because the system has nowhere else to put them, there are insufficient services to support them in the community, and no urgency to find alternatives. Young people [may wait months for a placement, receiving minimal services, missing school credits, and losing community ties](#) while DYRS searches for a bed that may not exist locally. According to the Council on Court Excellence, [committed youth awaiting placements at YSC more than doubled over a two-year period, and their average length of stay grew to 91 days, up 20 percent from two years ago](#). This prolonged detention without services leads to high recidivism rates.

In DC, young people are also confined for non-criminal supervision failures like missing curfew, failing to charge a GPS monitor, or missing an appointment. This behavior may reflect instability, not danger. Developmental science confirms that [impulse control and future orientation continue maturing into the mid-20s](#). Nationally, [nine percent of young people committed to a juvenile facility were committed for a technical violation, and thirteen percent of detained young people were detained for one. Black young people are detained for technical violations at six times the rate of white young people](#).

Finally, [when DYRS does release a young person to the community, it often does so under a Community Placement Agreement](#) that imposes boilerplate restrictions, including social media bans, broad geographic exclusions, and blanket curfews without individualized findings that these restrictions serve any rehabilitative or safety purpose.

Recommendation:

- Prioritize community-based services and placements over detention.
- End incarceration for technical violations for young people.
- Repeal and do not renew the expanded pretrial detention for juvenile court in [Secure DC](#).
- DYRS community placement agreements should be reconfigured and redeveloped so they are individualized to the strengths and needs of each young person.

Implementation: The Mayor should direct DYRS and encourage Court Social Services to align their approach with national best practices, such as those offered by the [Council for Juvenile Court Administrators](#), and recommendations from the Council for Court Excellence on strategies to reduce the number of young people detained who could be in the community. They should also follow the [Council of State Governments and the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform](#)'s recommendation to *“eliminate the practice of filing technical violations for young people on probation.”*

Models:

- [Colorado](#) developed a set of guardrails, such as lowering the cap on the number of detention beds available, and improved processes for detention decision-making to reduce its use.
- Although the Maryland General Assembly [subsequently rolled back some of its provisions](#), [Maryland's Juvenile Justice Reform Act](#) (as passed in 2022) significantly reformed youth justice by prohibiting the use of secure detention for technical violations of probation, misdemeanor offenses, and non-gun offenses.

(30) REDUCE THE USE OF GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS) MONITORING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The Problem: The juvenile justice system has made [zealous use of GPS monitoring](#) (like ankle monitors) when youth are released to the community. GPS ankle monitors are currently imposed on youth with no published eligibility criteria, no maximum duration, and no meaningful review. These monitors can stigmatize youth at school, exclude young people from extracurricular activities, and disrupt sleep. A [Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services \(DYRS\) annual report from 2014](#) showed that the percentage of young people under DYRS supervision in the community monitored by GPS grew from 1 percent to 60 percent.

Recommendation: DYRS must publish a policy on how it uses GPS monitoring to increase oversight over the practice and DYRS should reduce the use of GPS whenever possible.

Implementation: The DC Council, leveraging its oversight power, and the Mayor should ensure that a policy exists, make the policy clear and publicly available, and oversee how GPS is used for young people post-adjudication. The DC Council and Mayor should monitor development and implementation of the policy to ensure that reduced GPS use does not result in

young people being detained or incarcerated. The DC Council and the Mayor should also study the use of GPS monitoring ordered by the courts.

Models:

- In October 2025, [Citizens for Juvenile Justice](#) (CFJJ) analyzed the use of GPS in Massachusetts, finding that it is akin to incarceration, overused, frequently results in technical violations due to malfunctions, restricts access to care, and harms youth's socioemotional wellbeing. CFJJ offered recommendations to reduce GPS use in the adult and juvenile justice system.
- A 2025 Philadelphia Inquirer review of city and state records, along with interviews of people involved in the criminal legal system, found that [Philadelphia's "GPS monitoring has quietly evolved into an aggressive surveillance program through which location data are turned over to law enforcement agencies without a warrant and used in investigations unrelated to the teens' juvenile cases."](#) Testimony from [Children First](#) affirmed those findings and [recommended statewide standards for GPS use, prohibiting the sharing of GPS data with law enforcement, and increasing transparency to ensure the tool supports rather than expands system involvement.](#)
- In 2020, the Samuelson Law, Technology & Public Policy Clinic at UC Berkeley, School of Law, [examined electronic monitoring in California's juvenile system, finding it widespread, unrealistically burdensome, and lacking transparency and support in evidence.](#)

(31) SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THEIR SCHOOLING WHEREVER THEY ARE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND AFTER THEY LEAVE THE SYSTEM

The Problem: For court-involved young people, continuity of education is critical. Yet [DC's system routinely fails to preserve that continuity](#). Court-involved students frequently [do not receive credit](#) for work completed in correctional facilities, have records lost in transition, and are placed in courses that do not count toward graduation. Students at the Youth Services Center (YSC) cannot be dual-enrolled, meaning short detentions can result in withdrawal, re-enrollment delays, and the loss of a lottery and potentially a charter school seat for the student.

The problem is severe for incarcerated students with disabilities. The School Justice Project reports that [80 to 90 percent of DC's juvenile justice population has special education needs](#). In DC, [students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate public education through age 22](#). However, unless they have a pre-existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP), [young people aged 18 to 22 who are detained at DC Jail cannot access the special education evaluation process](#), despite being entitled to it in the community. Students in restrictive housing units receive inconsistent or no special education services. A [class action lawsuit](#) resulted in a 2023 settlement requiring DC to fulfill its IDEA obligations at the jail, but gaps remain.

Recommendation:

- Fix academic credit accrual and transfer for court-involved students.
- Designate the Department of Corrections as the public agency responsible for ensuring students in its custody receive appropriate educational services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- DC should build a centralized statewide educational records system. The system should allow community schools and facility schools to collaborate on course loads for detained students, and ensure grades and work completed at YSC automatically transfer to the community school.

Implementation:

The Mayor and DC Council should pass:

- The [Credits Continuity for Students in the Care of DC Amendment Act of 2025](#), legislation that would facilitate educational continuity and require DC education agencies to accept all credits students earn while attending schools during periods of incarceration and detention.
- The [Leading Education Access for Reentry and Necessary Success \(LEARNS\) Amendment Act of 2025](#), codifying the Department of Corrections as the public agency responsible for providing Free Appropriate Public Education (the legal right of individuals to appropriate educational services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and enabling initial special education evaluations at the Jail. The LEARNS Act framework should cover students under DOC custody at St. Elizabeth's Hospital and require DOC to ensure students in restrictive housing receive full special education services.
- Implementation of these policies could include changing DC Public Schools (DCPS) and charter school policies to count partial credits consistently, transfer records timely, and place students in graduation-track courses, requiring all schools to offer “completer courses” so students can finish partially earned credit, and enforcing existing Memorandums of Agreement between the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), DCPS, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), and DOC on credit generation responsibilities. An amended LEARNS Act presumes increased interagency collaboration between OSSE, DCPS, DOC, and other stakeholders. There may also be a need for updated technology to address the barriers that prevent multiple LEAs from simultaneously accessing a student's records.

Models: [Nebraska enacted a law in March 2025, requiring the State Department of Education to create a statewide, centralized education record system for court-involved students](#), employ registrars to maintain accurate student records, and award credits to any high school student who is or was under the juvenile court if their records demonstrate they completed the required academic work. The law also allows students under juvenile court jurisdiction residing in out-of-home placements to request a high school diploma. The cost to implement the law was under \$300,000.

(32) EXPAND YOUNG ADULT PRE-RELEASE INTEGRATION SERVICES

The Problem: Individuals returning to DC from the Bureau of Prisons under the [Incarceration Amendment Reduction Act](#) (a law that allows individuals who committed crimes before age 25 to petition for sentence reduction after serving 15 years) do not receive the type of reentry planning that a person would need to connect to treatment, housing, employment, family and community support upon release from a federal prison far from their community. A 2020 Justice Policy Institute community assessment found that [IRAA petitioners, many of whom were incarcerated as teenagers and have never lived as adults in free society, encounter significant gaps in DC's reentry services](#), including in housing, employment, and specialized support for people returning after decades of incarceration. A [2019 Corrections Information Council \(CIC\) report](#) found that among IRAA petitioners awaiting hearings at DOC, the majority reported that DOC staff had not discussed a reentry plan with them or what programs they should take to meet the factors the court considers under IRAA. Respondents reported “CDF doesn't have adequate programs ... Too much idle time. There's simply not enough programs ... While being housed in the BOP, I participated in various types of programs, even prior to my arrival here. I want and wish to do more with my time.”

Recommendation: Develop a plan to bring IRAA applicants and individuals nearing the end of their sentences back to a wing of the DC Jail or another facility for an integration period before release. The program would be modeled after the [Young Men's Emerging Unit](#) at the DC Jail, which provides appropriate programming to young adults who will be returning to the community, which includes mentoring and services provided by peers in the facility.

Implementation: With the current [overcrowding](#) and [dangerous conditions](#) at the DC Jail, this program model would be paired with efforts to reduce the population in the facility, change DC's pretrial statute, enact programs to serve current residents in the community, and strengthen community oversight. DC would need to work with the U.S. Congress and federal government if a new facility were imagined for people who are currently sentenced from the District and serving a sentence in the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Models: DC's Young Men Emerging program is a successful model but cannot reach everyone. In Massachusetts, [UTEK offers “Behind the Walls” programming](#) where UTEK staff work with incarcerated young adults to support their mental health and reentry planning. Upon release, UTEK staff may pick up the young adults from the facility, take them to do things like get new clothes, or enroll in UTEK job programs.

(33) NARROW OR ELIMINATE THE PATHWAYS THAT SEE YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSFERRED TO THE ADULT JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Problem: When young people are transferred to adult court, they are more likely to [commit a crime](#) in the future. Young people who are transferred to the adult court are held pretrial at the Youth Services Center, and stay in the facility longer, contributing to overcrowding and deteriorating conditions. Once convicted in adult court, a young person can be sentenced and incarcerated in a Federal Bureau of Prisons facility and forced to face all the safety and reentry challenges that incarcerated adults experience more acutely. On any given day, as many as [20 percent of young people detained at the Youth Service Center were](#)

[transferred to adult court via direct file](#). The current United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, who is authorized to prosecute youth for certain crimes, has encouraged DC lawmakers to change the law so that [more young people](#) can be transferred to the adult system through direct filing of cases, and the [House of Representatives](#) has passed legislation that would allow more DC young people to be tried as adults.

Recommendation: Narrow or eliminate the pathways that result in a young person being transferred to the adult court, which could include: allowing for a reverse waiver back to a juvenile court, changing the law so that once someone is tried as an adult they are not always tried for future crimes as an adult, and ending the practice of direct file, where a prosecutor can automatically try a young person as an adult if they charge a young person with certain crimes.

Implementation: DC Council should amend [Title 16](#) to reduce the pathways that allow young people to be tried as adults, including [parts of the statute that allow the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia to directly file a case in adult court](#) if a young person is charged with certain offenses. Because this change would be subject to Congressional review and would likely face strong opposition, the Mayor and DC Council should lobby members of Congress for their support.

Models: Through a citizen-led ballot initiative, [California](#) voters effectively eliminated direct file, and Vermont and [Virginia](#) lawmakers narrowed their direct file statutes. Virginia does not allow people under age 16 to start their cases in adult court under any circumstance.

(34) IMPLEMENT THE YOUTH REHABILITATION ACT STRATEGIC PLAN

The Problem: Local criminal legal reforms such as the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act (2016), Omnibus Public Safety and Justice Act (2018), and Second Look Amendment Act (2019) were intended to account for the needs of emerging adults as well as the need for public safety. To build out a continuum of services for young adults upon release, the DC Council commissioned a strategic plan to provide a comprehensive approach to addressing young adults' needs in the community. The strategic plan has not been implemented. An analysis by the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform showed that, [some of the most pressing public safety needs could be addressed by stepping up the focus on young adults](#): approximately 60 percent of homicide victims and suspects and 59 percent of nonfatal shooting victims and suspects were between the ages of 18 to 34, with a mean age of 31.7 and 28.9, respectively. More than nine out of ten of these victims and suspects are Black.

Recommendations: DC should implement the key provisions of the [Youth Rehabilitation Act Strategic Plan](#), including: 1) create an Office of Emerging Adult Services, 2) step up investments and strengthen DC's Credible Messengers and Violence Interrupters programs, 3) provide safe and stable housing to young adults, 4) build education and workforce pathways for young adults, 5) offer robust diversion and restorative justice options for young adults, and 6) invest in families, communities, and health in support of young adults. While DC should invest in a meaningful, transformative justice program for all young adults that focuses on diversion, alternatives to incarceration, specialty courts, and post-conviction circles for community healing, DC should start by building out these options for Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act and Second Look beneficiaries.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass and fund a law creating the Office of Emerging Adults. The Office’s purview should include leading the development and implementation of plans to expand housing, educational and workforce opportunities, restorative justice and diversion programs, and behavioral health supports for DC’s young adults.

The Mayor should pursue private philanthropic funding to supplement this work, including through the [Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Emerging Adult Justice Project at Columbia University’s Justice Lab, which already designated DC as an innovation site for the emerging adult developmental framework](#). The Thrive Under 25 Coalition, which has led DC’s participation in that initiative, should be a central partner in implementation of the YRA Strategic Plan.

Models: The Justice Policy Institute outlined [the model](#). DC must update and operationalize it immediately.

(35) FIX THE JUVENILE RECORD SEALING SYSTEM BY MAKING IT AUTOMATIC AND IMMEDIATE

The Problem: DC law provides for juvenile record sealing, but the law isn’t being implemented in a way that all young people can benefit. Sealing is not automatic, waiting periods are long, agencies sometimes ignore sealing orders, and there is no reliable verification process. A scoring system used by the [Juvenile Law Center](#) to rank jurisdictions on their adherence to a model approach to juvenile record sealing placed DC among the 12 worst.

Recommendation: DC should make juvenile record expungement automatic and immediate one year after disposition if the child has not been re-adjudicated or re-convicted. The Superior Court needs to expunge the records and send notice to other public safety institutions holding the records, such as MPD.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should amend [DC Code 16-2335](#) in accordance with [best practices](#), or work with the relevant agencies on developing a technological fix that would allow the entities to notify a young person when they are eligible to seal their record and connect them to a legal service entity that can help them with the process. An entity would need to be responsible for the notification, which is used in places with automatic adult criminal record sealing and expungement.

Models: The [Juvenile Law Center has developed a set of model guidelines](#) for jurisdictions for juvenile record sealing. JLC’s model standard calls for juvenile records to be sealed while a case is open, and automatically expunged when the case closes or the youth reaches the age of majority, with no petition required from the young person.

(36) PROVIDE HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE TRANSITIONING OUT OF DYRS

The Problem: [The Urban Institute](#) notes that young people incarcerated before age 25 are more likely to experience homelessness at significantly younger ages and for longer periods of

time. Among those incarcerated as adolescents, people incarcerated at age 15 are especially vulnerable: they spend a significantly longer time in literal homelessness than those incarcerated at age 16 and age 17. According to [The Urban Institute](#), “adolescents incarcerated before they’re 18 years old experience literal homelessness for the first time 9.8 years earlier than those incarcerated after age 24. Transitional age youth incarcerated between the ages of 18 and 24 experience literal homelessness for the first time 5.1 years earlier.”

Recommendation: Provide housing for young people as they transition out of the care and custody of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, even after their commitment to the agency has closed.

Implementation: The approach could resemble CFSA children, who, after their transition, have a window of care that connects them to housing. [The Urban Institute](#) recommends, “aid agencies should conduct risk assessments that include early experiences of incarceration and provide substantive housing, education, resources, and health support services.”

Models: [Impact Justice’s Homecoming Project](#), currently operating in Alameda, West Contra Costa, Los Angeles, and San Francisco counties in California, matches people returning from incarceration with community homeowners who open a spare room in exchange for a monthly stipend, while community navigators provide wraparound coaching and connections to services. [Since its 2018 launch, more than 200 participants have completed the program; 98 percent secured employment or educational opportunities and none have returned to prison.](#)

See [Recommendation 24](#) on increasing investments in quality, affordable, family-sized housing

(37) CSOSA SHOULD HAVE COMMUNITY SUPERVISION OFFICERS WHO ARE TRAINED TO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUNG ADULTS

The Problem: Young people and young adults are developmentally different from older adults. If a Community Supervision Officer (CSO) does not understand the developmental differences of the individuals on their case load, they may not be able to direct them to the type of treatment, housing support, employment or other services that a person needs to succeed. This is particularly important for young people who have been tried as adults under Title 16.

Recommendation: The Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) should have CSOs that are trained to work with young people and young adults.

Implementation: The Mayor should encourage CSOSA leadership to reinstate specialized training for CSOs working with young people.

Models: [Multnomah County’s Department of Community Justice](#), a probation, parole, and juvenile justice agency, has a young adult caseload with a specialized unit trained to work with young people, including those tried as adults.

(38) INCREASE TRANSPARENCY ON HOW DYRS MAKES DECISIONS AND IMPLEMENTS POLICY

The Problem: In 2024, [at the request of the DC Office of the Attorney General](#), the DC Council introduced and passed [the ROAD Act](#). Among other things, the law mandates permanent, independent oversight of DYRS. [This policy remains unfunded](#).

At a 2025 DC Council hearing, [Councilmember Zachary Parker addressed the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services \(DYRS\)](#) saying “DYRS is not actually rehabilitating ... You come to hearings to say we’re going to do our best to implement it, but the subtext of that is we’re not going to follow the law ... I hear from you we have these protocols and we’re doing it ... I hear from parents that it’s not happening. The natural question is then how we prove, because I want to believe it’s happening. We need some type of documentation.” Councilmember after Councilmember [raised serious concerns about the lack of transparency at DYRS](#) and obstacles to providing young people the support they need. DYRS does not publicly publish policies governing critical issues such as GPS monitoring, use of force, room confinement, searches, grievance procedures, the use of its risk assessment tools, and enrollment of young people in Medicaid or educational institutions. This makes oversight impossible and leaves youth and families without knowledge of the rules or when they’ve been violated.

Recommendation:

- DYRS should review all of its practices and ensure that there is a written policy, that the policies are published and able to be reviewed publicly, and report on its adherence to these policies.
- Fund and sustain permanent, independent oversight of DYRS as authorized under the ROAD Act.

Implementation: The Mayor must ensure that DYRS has clear policies and publishes its policies. The Mayor and DC’s adherence to policies should be reported on a quarterly basis on DYRS’ website, and should be reported on in budget and oversight hearings. The Mayor and DC Council should fully fund and implement the permanent and independent oversight of DYRS authorized under the ROAD Act.

(39) REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PREGNANT YOUTH AND NEW MOMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES, AND IMPROVE THEIR CARE WHILE THERE

The Problem: When an individual is pregnant and gives birth, they [need](#) a proper diet, prenatal vitamins, regular medical check-ups, exercise, emotional support, a birth plan, and continuing connections to their child to nurture a new life. Instead, some women in the custody of the Department of Corrections (DOC) have [experienced inconsistent prenatal and postpartum care, been handcuffed late in their pregnancies, had DOC officers in the delivery room after doctors asked them to leave, and been subjected to forced separation from their newborns](#). These conditions make it more challenging for someone to navigate a high-risk pregnancy and increase the risk for Black women who already face [higher rates of maternal mortality](#).

The DC Council passed the [Safe and Supported Pregnancy and Delivery for Incarcerated Individuals Amendment Act of 2024](#) to address these challenges. [The law is not fully funded](#) and does not address pregnant youth and mothers in the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services' (DYRS) custody. Introduced in 2025, the [Safe Pregnancy, Delivery, and Postpartum Care for Youth at DYRS Amendment Act of 2025](#) takes steps to address that gap.

See also [Recommendation 60](#) on pregnant women and new mothers in DOC custody.

Recommendation: Reduce the number of pregnant youth and new moms in secure DYRS facilities and improve their care while there. Create additional community alternatives to detention for youth navigating childbirth and pregnancy.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass and fully fund the [Safe Pregnancy, Delivery, and Postpartum Care for Youth at DYRS Amendment Act of 2025](#). The Mayor and DC Council should legislate and fund expanded alternatives to incarceration for pregnant youth and new mothers at DYRS, and include the best interest of young children in sentencing decisions. The Mayor should ensure DYRS uses its existing discretion to place more people in alternatives to incarceration.

(C) ADVANCE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Public safety in DC has long been defined by what police do. This chapter argues for an approach grounded in what communities need. That means investing in the violence intervention workers, hospital-based programs, and coordinated strategies that evidence shows actually reduce gun violence. It means narrowing the conditions under which police contact occurs. And it means building the accountability and oversight structures that ensure when police do act, they do so lawfully, transparently, and answerable to the people they serve.

(C1) INVEST IN COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES TO SAFETY

Introduction: DC knows what drives gun violence, and it knows what can interrupt it. The research is not the problem. The problem is that DC has produced plans, commissions, reports, and offices without implementing any of them fully. Community violence intervention organizations are doing hard work in the city’s most affected neighborhoods, but they operate without stable funding, clear standards, or a voice when the District makes decisions about how to respond to shootings. Hospital-based violence intervention programs were once a national model; they are now underfunded and unable to cover weekends. The recommendations in this section advance a coordinated, well-resourced, community-led violence reduction ecosystem with the infrastructure, accountability, and sustained investment it requires.

(40) CHAMPION A COMPREHENSIVE GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY

The Problem: DC has produced plans to reduce gun violence. It has created [commissions](#) and [entire offices](#), and has commissioned or received white papers, research-backed recommendations, including reports from the [DC Auditor](#) and the [National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform](#). None have been fully implemented.

There is a lack of a collaborative, multidisciplinary response that brings together the full continuum of public safety stakeholders: community-based organizations, ONSE, behavioral health providers, hospital-based violence intervention programs, victim services, and District agencies. Right now, each operates largely on its own.

The District has tried to address that fragmentation. In 2022, [the Mayor created an Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#), but since the 2023 passing of its inaugural Director, it is unclear whether and how the Office operates. Additionally, [DC operated two parallel CVI programs for years](#) (ONSE’s Violence Intervention Initiative and OAG’s Cure the Streets) without appropriate coordination. Ultimately, over the Attorney General’s opposition, [the DC Council consolidated the programs under ONSE, effectively eliminating Cure the Streets](#).

These challenges are not unique to DC. A [2024 National Community Violence Intervention Action Plan](#), developed by more than 300 CVI leaders and practitioners, identified unstable funding structures and fragmentation between CVI strategies as the two most critical obstacles facing the field.

Recommendations:

- Commit to developing and implementing a single, fully funded, data-driven citywide gun violence reduction plan that integrates prevention, intervention, deterrence, trauma healing, victims services, and restorative justice into a coherent, multidisciplinary framework drawing on, but not necessarily bound to, existing reports and strategies.
- Designate empowered leadership to drive implementation, outside of the public safety and law enforcement cluster, and charge that office with convening CBOs, ONSE, behavioral health providers, HVIPs, victims services organizations, and other stakeholders as co-equal partners.
- Establish multi-year funding for community violence intervention organizations; year-to-year grant structures destabilize the workforce and make the sustained community relationships this work requires impossible to build.

Implementation: The Mayor’s office should convene an interdisciplinary planning process within the first 90 days of the new administration, with a mandate to produce a unified plan within one year. The planning process should draw on existing analyses, including reports from the DC Auditor and NICJR, as well as the 2024 national CVI Action Plan, which provides a comprehensive framework for building a coordinated, professionalized, and sustainably funded CVI ecosystem. The Mayor and the DC Council should fund this work. One potential solution would be to revive the Office of Gun Violence Prevention with the necessary independence and access to lead a truly coordinated and effective districtwide prevention strategy.

Models:

- **Allegheny County, Pennsylvania** committed [\\$50 million over five years to implement a comprehensive, public health-driven Community Violence Reduction Initiative](#), coordinated at the county level through its Department of Human Services, rather than law enforcement. The initiative funds violence interrupters, rapid-response teams, hospital-based intervention programs, and transitional employment across ten high-priority communities. [Combined homicide and nonfatal shooting victims fell from 353 in 2023 to 288 in 2025. Pittsburgh recorded 35 homicides in 2025, its lowest total since 1989.](#)
- In 2014, **Newark, New Jersey**, declared gun violence a public health crisis and reoriented the city’s approach around community-centered intervention. In 2020, Newark [created the Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery, funded by reallocating five percent of the public safety budget](#), and built a public safety ecosystem of more than 50 organizations coordinated through the [Brick City Peace Collective](#). By 2022, homicides were at a 60-year low and have since fallen an additional 30 percent through December 2024.

(41) ESTABLISH CLEAR STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PRACTICE

The Problem: DC has not established the standards, oversight, or accountability structures to ensure violence intervention and prevention programs are operating effectively. The DC Auditor’s 2022 review of the NEAR Act found that ONSE was not effectively tracking post-program employment or victimization outcomes, that violence interrupters were spread too thin with many priority communities served by a single part-time worker, and that [progress toward the NEAR Act’s core goal “cannot be demonstrated by existing evidence, which largely touches on program activities, outputs and intermediate outcomes.”](#) Two years later, little had changed. In its 2024 summary of four years of audits, the DC Auditor concluded that [“the District ha\[d\] multiple efforts underway to interrupt violence but agencies are not measuring those efforts in a meaningful way to know what is working, what can be improved, and how.”](#) Without clear standards and measurable outcomes, DC cannot invest and scale these programs to meet the need.

Recommendations:

- Establish transparent, publicly available standards for CVI.
- Develop and fund [advanced, high-quality training for the CVI workforce](#) that goes beyond basic credentialing.
- Ensure District employees supporting CVI receive a livable wage and benefits like other government employees.

Implementation: The Mayor and the DC Council must establish an empowered leadership entity to steward the District’s violence prevention and intervention efforts. Informed by insights from a cross-sector, interdisciplinary group of stakeholders working to reduce violence, that body should establish standards and accountability measures.

Models:

- Allegheny County, Pennsylvania’s \$50 million Community Violence Reduction Initiative [built accountability and coordination into its model](#), including standardized data collection.

(4*) STRENGTHEN DC’S HOSPITAL-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The Problem: In addition to providing lifesaving medical care, hospitals with hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) provide life-changing resources that evidence shows [reduce the likelihood of hospital readmission and the likelihood that the survivor goes on to participate in violence](#). While they are still in the hospital, [HVIPs connect survivors with mental health support, trauma-informed care, and practical help with jobs, housing, and other life needs](#). DC was among the first cities in the country to recognize this, launching [Project CHANGE, a coordinated citywide HVIP model](#) ensuring a patient seen at any trauma center gets

the same type and level of service. [The NEAR Act of 2016](#) mandated that every District emergency department offer HVIP coverage whenever it accepts patients.

Though DC was once the model, it has fallen short of its full promise because of [underfunding](#) and administrative limitations. Individual hospitals are [underfunded](#) and there is not enough funding to cover weekend hours. There are also communication and coordination challenges that negatively impact the program.

Recommendations:

- The Mayor and DC Council should increase HVIP funding at the individual hospital level to allow weekend coverage.
- Establish the Project CHANGE Coordinator as an independent role to preserve the program's capacity for innovation, cross-hospital coordination, and data sharing, free from political and administrative constraints.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should increase individual hospital funding to allow more coverage, and should ensure the Project CHANGE Coordinator's independence with protected authority to coordinate across hospitals, manage data, and drive innovation.

Models: [Chicago established a city-wide Hospital Working Group coordinated by NORC at the University of Chicago](#), an independent research organization, to align HVIPs across trauma centers.

(42) ESTABLISH INTERDISCIPLINARY SHOOTING REVIEWS

The Problem: Nonfatal shootings are an indicator of future violence and merit a systematic, community-centered response. The National Institute of Criminal Justice Reform's 2023 Gun Violence Problem Analysis [recommended that DC create a dedicated Nonfatal Shootings Investigations Unit and establish regular shooting reviews that connect people at risk to services and interrupt retaliatory cycles](#). There are reports that DC [currently holds weekly shooting reviews involving law enforcement agencies](#), but these reviews are not structured to center community-based interventions. In line with the recommendations in this section, DC needs further coordination across agencies and disciplines, including leadership from non-law-enforcement sectors.

Recommendations:

- Restructure the existing weekly shooting reviews to include community-based violence intervention organizations as full participants, with the review process designed to produce a coordinated community intervention plan for each incident.
- Ensure that the preventative and intervention response emerging from shooting reviews is led by CVI organizations.

- Design the review process to protect the credibility and independence of CVI practitioners, who depend on community trust that cannot be sustained if they are perceived as extensions of law enforcement.

Implementation: The Mayor’s office should restructure the existing shooting review process within the first 90 days of the new administration. The Mayor and the DC Council should ensure this work is sufficiently funded.

Models:

- In **Allegheny County, Pennsylvania**, [Social Contract, an independent organization contracted by the Department of Human Services, convenes and facilitates shooting review boards, bringing together community partners, service providers, and public safety stakeholders](#) to assess why each shooting occurred and to coordinate a prevention response.

(C2) NARROW POLICE SCOPE AND ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY CIVILIAN CONTACT

Introduction: DC residents, disproportionately Black residents, encounter police through an expanding set of mechanisms: surveillance systems, jump-out units, traffic stops that escalate into arrests, federal agents operating without identification or accountability, and low-level charges that funnel people into the criminal legal system. Each of these contact points carries great and life-altering risk. And each is a place where DC has chosen enforcement over alternatives, or failed to constrain police power. The recommendations in this section would narrow the conditions under which police contact occurs, ensuring that when it does it is conducted lawfully, and build the non-police alternatives that reduce the need for it in the first place.

(27*) ESTABLISH POLICE-FREE SCHOOLS AND INCREASE INVESTMENTS IN SCHOOL-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The Problem: According to a 2020 report from the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [92 percent of school-based arrests in DC are of Black students](#). The DC Police Reform Commission concluded in 2021 that [“racial disparities in school-based policing are pervasive and the harmful effects of police contact for school-aged children are significant.”](#) and recommended that the roughly \$14 million spent annually on SROs be redirected to non-police safety staff better suited to fostering youth development and healthy school environments. Research on the effects of police in schools shows that [removing officers does not make schools less safe and, in many cases, improves school](#) environments.

The [DC Council passed legislation in 2021 to phase out SROs entirely by 2025](#). In 2023, facing pressure from administrators and amid rising concerns about juvenile crime, the [Council quietly reversed course and repealed the phase-out](#) without building the non-police alternatives that would have laid the groundwork for this transition.

Recommendations:

- Recommit to a phased, planned removal of SROs from DC public and charter schools, with a binding timeline and dedicated funding for building non-police safety infrastructure before and during the transition.
- Invest the resources currently spent on SROs into school-based mental health professionals, restorative justice practitioners, counselors, and trained non-police safety staff.
- Require that any transition plan be developed with direct input from students, particularly Black and brown students who have been most harmed by school-based policing

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should develop a transition plan within the first year of the new administration, with clear milestones and dedicated funding for alternatives.

Models:

- In February 2024, the [Chicago Board of Education](#) voted to remove all remaining SROs starting in 2024-25, and established a [Whole School Safety Policy](#) focused on physical safety, emotional safety, and relational trust. When CPS began removing SROs, [schools that fully removed officers did not see increases in high-level discipline infractions, and student and teacher perceptions of safety were unchanged.](#)
- A study examining [60 schools across 6 California districts that removed police between 2019-2021](#), found that students reported stronger caring relationships with staff and more meaningful participation in school, while violence, harassment, bullying, substance use, delinquency, and suspension rates did not increase. Successful transitions shared common elements: alternatives in place before removal, restorative justice practices, partnerships with community-based organizations, and clear protocols for when police involvement is appropriate.

(43) PROTECT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS, AND YOUTH DURING POLICE CONTACT

The Problem: Police contact does not carry the same risk for everyone. For people with disabilities, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, non-English speakers, and young people, an encounter with MPD carries risks of miscommunication, escalation, and harm.

DC's Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) convened a community and policing working group that documented these concerns directly from affected residents and [submitted eleven recommendations to the DC Police Reform Commission in 2020](#). The DDC affirmed those recommendations in a [formal 2022 position paper](#), urging MPD to develop Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities specific guidance and training co-designed with the disability community.

Youth encounters with police are similarly fraught. [Adolescent behavior, including apparent defiance and impulsivity, is developmentally normal](#), but often [conflicts with officers' expectations of obedience](#). The DC Police Reform Commission found that “racial disparities in school-based policing are pervasive and the harmful effects of police contact for school-aged children are significant.” MPD updated its youth interaction policy in 2022, but policy change without training and accountability infrastructure produces limited results.

The [District Task Force on Jails & Justice](#) identified language access as a specific gap. Officers interact with non-English speakers without reliable interpretation tools, with no documentation requirement when language barriers are present. DC is a multilingual city. The absence of systematic language access protocols is a safety issue.

MPD has a crisis intervention training and officer program. According to [the District Task Force on Jails and Justice](#), MPD reported offering additional trainings on cognitive communicative disorders, autism and police interactions, Alzheimer’s and dementia, social isolation and mental health among juveniles. In October 2020, MPD launched a mobile app that provides a direct link to video American Sign Language interpretation services.

Recommendations:

- People with disabilities and disability rights advocates should develop and deliver training for MPD, addressing recognition of presentations, de-escalation approaches, and alternatives to physical force and custody.
- Youth and people with disabilities should be connected to non-police resources in all cases where there is not an imminent threat to public safety.
- MPD must be able to engage with people in their language.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass and fund legislation:

- Requiring training developed and delivered by impacted communities on interacting with people with disabilities.
- Supporting non-police alternatives to incidents involving youth and people with disabilities.
- Improving MPD’s ability to communicate with people in their native languages.

For a comprehensive set of recommendations on reducing young people’s contact with law enforcement, see [Recommendation 26](#).

(44) LEGISLATE MANDATORY CITATION AND RELEASE

The Problem: [An arrest record, even without a conviction, creates barriers to employment, housing, and public benefits](#). It costs the city money and officer time, and for a person who was going to be released, it produces harm with no corresponding safety benefit.

In some jurisdictions, and to a limited extent in DC, a police officer can resolve an encounter by issuing a legally binding form. This form requires the individual to commit to attending their scheduled court date, and upon signing, the person is released. This avoids formal processing and functions similarly to a traffic ticket. Research shows that [this approach reduces unnecessary arrests without increasing public safety risk](#).

DC law authorizes MPD officers to issue a citation in lieu of arrest for a [range of qualifying offenses](#). The current statute is discretionary. Officers can use it, but are not required to. In March 2020, the [DC Superior Court issued an emergency order](#) encouraging MPD to make much broader use of citation in lieu of release by making more offenses eligible for release after arrest, and not automatically excluding people who had a prior arrest or conviction. That order was [rescinded](#) in 2022.

Recommendations:

- Enact legislation establishing mandatory citation and release for qualifying offenses, removing officer discretion for those qualifying categories.
- Expand the list of offenses eligible for field citation beyond the current narrow categories, consistent with the COVID-era emergency expansion and the evidence produced during that period.
- Require that supervisors review and document any decision not to issue a citation in a qualifying case, creating an accountability mechanism for deviation from the statutory standard.

Implementation: The DC Council should amend [D.C. Code § 23-584](#) to establish mandatory citation and release for qualifying offenses. The Mayor should direct MPD to update its general order in alignment with an expanded cite and release policy.

Models: [Denver, Colorado](#), [Portland, Oregon](#), and [San Marcos, Texas](#), developed citation policies that avoided the booking process altogether.

Other states, including Louisiana, Kentucky, and Nebraska enforce a [presumption that officers will use a citation instead of an arrest for certain offenses](#).

(45) EXPAND PRE-ARREST DIVERSION (PAD)

The Problem: People with [unmet behavioral health needs](#) are far more likely than others to be unsheltered, arrested, and jailed repeatedly. According to the District Task Force on Jails and Justice, “[\[i\]n 2018, 6,228 people, 62 percent of all bookings at the Department of Corrections, had a recorded serious mental health issue, a substance use disorder, or both](#). In eight of the ten most common charge categories, it was more likely for a person to have a recorded behavioral health need than not.”

DC knows this is a problem. The [NEAR Act](#) required MPD to coordinate with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to pair behavioral health clinicians and outreach specialists with officers to identify and divert people with mental

illness, substance use disorders, or homelessness from arrest. In 2018, DBH, DHS, and MPD piloted [a pre-arrest diversion program wherein certain officers in certain districts were trained and authorized to divert individuals facing chronic mental illness and substance use disorders to treatment instead of arrest](#). According to MPD's 2023 performance oversight responses to the DC Council, [that program no longer exists](#). The Secure DC Omnibus Amendment Act established [a new Prearrest Diversion Task Force](#) within the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The Task Force has been meeting since June 2025, [hosted a community roundtable](#) in January 2026, and is required to submit its report and recommendations by July 2026.

Recommendations: The Mayor and DC Council must commit to acting on the Task Force's July 2026 report and should implement a fully funded pre-arrest diversion program. At minimum, DC should:

- Restore and expand the PAD program, broadening eligibility criteria, formalizing referral pathways to treatment and services, and requiring officers to document when diversion was considered and why it was or was not used. The District Task Force on Jails and Justice has recommended specifically increasing the PAD training rate from 2 percent to 20 percent of MPD officers and reducing MPD arrests for eligible offenses by 60 percent.
- Establish a dedicated physical hub where diverted individuals can access case management, basic needs, Medicaid and SNAP enrollment, and ID assistance. This is a “no wrong door” identified during the Task Force's January 2026 roundtable.
- Require DBH to contract with community-based organizations to make initial contact with individuals through CRT, so that the first responder to a behavioral health crisis is not a uniformed officer.
- Establish a 24/7 pre-arrest charging decision hotline with prosecutors.
- Prioritize long-term service connections of at least six months, rather than short-term program completion, to address the root causes of behavioral health crises.
- Track and publicly report pre-arrest diversion rates, referral outcomes, and demographic data by ward, officer unit, and offense type.
- Assess and expand post-plea diversion opportunities.

Implementation: The Mayor should direct MPD, DHS, and DBH to begin planning for the program to resume ahead of the Task Force's July 2026 report to avoid implementation delays. The Mayor and DC Council should pass legislation to expand eligibility for diversion and dedicate funding for the program in future budgets.

Models: [Harris County, Texas](#), operates the Judge Ed Emmett Mental Health Diversion Center, a pre-arrest, pre-charge diversion program for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, or neurocognitive disorders who are detained for low-level nonviolent misdemeanors. Officers contact the DA's office before making an arrest so that a prosecutor can review the circumstances and make a charging decision. If diversion is appropriate, the officer transports the person to the Diversion Center rather than booking them,

and the case is handed off entirely to service providers with no arrest or charges filed. The program operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Since the broader Harris County jail diversion strategy launched, public intoxication jail admissions declined 98.7 percent between 2012 and 2021. [Vermont](#) and [Colorado](#) have amended laws to allow more crimes to be eligible for diversion.

(46) ESTABLISH NON-POLICE AND NON-ENFORCEMENT ALTERNATIVES TO TRAFFIC SAFETY

The Problem: Police traffic stops are among the [most common](#) and [most dangerous points of contact between law enforcement and civilians](#). [Most police chases begin with a traffic violation](#). Traffic stops [disproportionately result in searches and arrests of Black drivers](#).

Recommendations:

- Create civilian traffic-enforcement alternatives for routine violations that do not pose an imminent threat to public safety.
- Invest in road design and “road diet” interventions (speed tables, traffic calming infrastructure, lane narrowing, protected pedestrian crossings) that reduce dangerous driving.
- Prohibit MPD from using traffic stops as a pretext for searches absent independent reasonable suspicion of criminal activity unrelated to the traffic violation.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) should develop a road safety plan within the first year of the new administration that includes specific investments in road design, with a binding timeline and dedicated funding. The DC Council should legislate civilian traffic enforcement authority, limitations for MPD’s involvement in traffic enforcement, limitations on MPD’s reliance on traffic stops to conduct pretext searches, and appropriate funding for non-police alternatives.

Models:

- The [Federal Highway Administration](#) has documented that road diet interventions reduce crashes by 19 to 47 percent on average, and that traffic calming infrastructure produces sustained reductions in speeding.
- In 2013, [Fayetteville, NC, focused police-led traffic enforcement on safety-related violations](#). Outcomes included a 28 percent decrease in traffic fatalities, an increase in the share of safety-focused stops from 30 to 80 percent of all police stops, a 21 percent drop in racial disparities in traffic enforcement, and decreases in uses of force, officer injuries, and civilian complaints.

(47) REASSESS AND REALIGN MPD’S BUDGET AND STAFFING

The Problem: DC’s approach to MPD budget growth has been driven by alarmism and political pressure rather than evidence. In September 2024, the Office of the DC Auditor

released a 459-page staffing study commissioned by the DC Council. Its findings were clear and specific: [patrol is adequately staffed at its current level of approximately 1,340 officers; officers are deployed at the wrong times, with a third of patrol assigned to the midnight shift despite only a quarter of 911 calls coming in during that period; MPD needs 65 additional detectives, not more patrol officers; and the civilian workforce lags significantly behind peer agencies.](#) The study also found that MPD's own data was incomplete and too unreliable to support a staffing analysis.

MPD rejected the findings. [The department called the central conclusion “at odds with reality,” and the Bowser administration’s FY2026 budget proposal included \\$30 million to hire more officers, create a new horse-mounted unit, and buy new equipment.](#)

The pattern extends to overtime. [Actual FY2024 overtime spending was \\$89 million, nearly four times the approved amount.](#) The FY2026 proposed budget includes \$39 million for overtime plus an additional \$15 million one-time enhancement.

In its 2021 report, the [DC Police Reform Commission called for “realigning and reducing the size, responsibilities, and budget of MPD in line with a narrower scope of work for police.”](#) arguing that over-reliance on DC police prevents investments in other public safety tools that would be more effective at revitalizing neighborhoods and preventing harm. The Commission noted the shift must occur strategically, as a smaller MPD does not by itself guarantee a more community-responsive or less harmful department.

What DC has instead is a department with a budget that continues to increase, seldom subjected to the same scrutiny applied to community violence intervention programs, behavioral health, housing, or education spending, and rarely required to demonstrate that the investment is producing outcomes proportionate to its cost.

Recommendations: Develop a multi-year plan, informed by both the Office of the DC Auditor staffing study and the DC Police Reform Commission’s recommendations, to realign public safety spending away from patrol expansion and toward the community investments that evidence shows produce safety outcomes that MPD alone cannot deliver.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council must develop a budget that prioritizes investments in evidence-informed and community-driven approaches and drastically reduce spending on policing activities.

Model: In 2021, [Newark, NJ](#) reallocated \$11.4 million (approximately 5 percent of the police budget) to create the Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery, replacing a police precinct with a community center housing social workers, violence prevention programs, a trauma center, and workforce development services. The reallocation did not involve layoffs. Newark subsequently saw a 60-year low in violent crime, a documented year with zero police firearm discharges, and the termination of a nine-year federal consent decree in November 2025 after the city achieved its reform objectives.

(48) LIMIT SURVEILLANCE AND INCREASE OVERSIGHT

The Problem: MPD operates an expanding surveillance infrastructure (CCTV cameras, license plate readers, Flock Safety systems, drones, social media monitoring software, facial recognition technology, predictive policing platforms, and a gang database) without public policies governing their use, independent audits of their impact, or meaningful community input into their deployment. Data collected through these systems is shared with federal agencies, including the FBI, DHS, and ICE, through multi-agency platforms, without public notification or any opt-out process for residents.

Recommendations:

- DC must meaningfully partner with DC residents and advocates to evaluate DC's use of surveillance technology, establish limits and parameters around its use, and establish protections for people in DC.
- At minimum this should include: abolishing the Gang Tracking and Analysis System and banning the use of Flock Safety license plate readers or equivalent mass-surveillance vehicle tracking systems.
- Prohibit MPD from sharing surveillance data, including license plate data, facial recognition results, and social media monitoring outputs, with federal agencies, including ICE, without a court order.
- Require MPD to publish a complete, public inventory of all surveillance tools currently in use, the legal authority for each, and any data-sharing agreements with external agencies.
- Fund and empower the DC Office of Police Complaints or another independent body to conduct regular audits of MPD's surveillance practices and report findings publicly.

Implementation: The Mayor should require MPD to publish a full surveillance inventory within 90 days of the new administration taking office. The Mayor and DC Council should pass legislation and fund the creation of an independent, community-led commission modeled on the DC Police Reform Commission. The recommended commission will conduct a comprehensive review of MPD's use of surveillance technology. The commission should document every technology that has been deployed by MPD and other DC agencies, examine what data is shared with federal agencies and how often, and assess the impact of these technologies on communities disproportionately affected by overpolicing and oversurveillance. People with lived experience of these technologies should lead and be central to the commission's work. The Mayor and DC Council should commit to implementing the commission's recommendations

(49) BAN JUMP-OUT SEARCHES AND DISBAND TACTICAL UNITS THAT CONDUCT THEM

The Problem: Jump-outs, when plainclothes officers in unmarked cars rapidly surround individuals and conduct waistband searches without legal justification, are DC's version of

stop-and-frisk. While [MPD has stated that it does not engage in jump-outs, federal court rulings as recently as 2024 have confirmed that this harmful tactic continues.](#)

The problem is not just the tactic, but also the units conducting jump-outs. Plainclothes and tactical units like MPD's Violent Crime Impact Team (formerly the Gun Recovery Unit (GRU)) [operate with limited transparency, unclear rules of engagement, and documented patterns of racially concentrated, unconstitutional conduct.](#) The National Police Foundation found that [94 percent of people searched by MPD's specialized units were Black, and in roughly two-thirds of those searches, no contraband was recovered.](#) Lawsuits documented [a pattern of sexually invasive searches by GRU officers,](#) and testimony in one case revealed that MPD was actively training officers to conduct them. The [DC Police Reform Commission recommended suspending the unit.](#)

DC's response has been to rename the units. After the GRU faced criticism, [it was eliminated, and its staff and functions shifted to the Violent Crime Impact Team.](#) The pattern repeats because the problem is structural. As Christy Lopez, former co-chair of the DC Police Reform Commission, wrote, [these units "can't be fixed"](#) because their problems go beyond selection, training, and supervision.

Recommendations:

- Legislate a clear, enforceable ban on jump-out searches.
- Require that all plainclothes and tactical units operate under publicly available rules of engagement, subject to DC Council approval, that define the legal basis required for any stop or search, permissible tactics, and mandatory documentation requirements.
- [Require compliance with the NEAR Act's](#) requirement to complete stop cards (where officers record the justification for a stop, whether a search occurred, and demographic information about the person stopped).
- Disband units with documented patterns of unconstitutional conduct, including the Gun Recovery Unit.

Implementation: The DC Council should pass legislation banning jump-out searches. Any plainclothes or tactical unit operating after passage of that legislation must have publicly available rules of engagement approved by the Council.

(C3) STRENGTHEN POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

Introduction: DC has taken steps to strengthen police accountability, including passing the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act (CPJRAA), expanding the Office of Police Complaints' (OPC) jurisdiction, requiring body-worn cameras, and responding to the federal law enforcement surge with emergency transparency legislation. None of it has been fully implemented, funded, or defended. For years, MPD has not complied with legally required stop

documentation procedures. The CPJRAA provisions that would open disciplinary records and create a public misconduct database remain unfunded. And federal agents have operated on DC streets with no accountability to local law or seemingly human rights law. The recommendations in this section call on DC to fund and defend the laws already passed, go further by ending qualified immunity, and build the community oversight structures that put residents in genuine relationship with the power that polices them.

(50) FULLY FUND AND DEFEND THE COMPREHENSIVE POLICING AND JUSTICE REFORM AMENDMENT ACT

The Problem: [The Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022](#) (CPJRAA) is DC law. It includes [three provisions that have not been funded](#).

Section 134 prohibits MPD from using the personal privacy exemption to categorically withhold disciplinary and investigative records from FOIA requesters. **Section 135** requires OPC to create and maintain a publicly accessible, searchable database of sustained misconduct allegations. [MPD continues to withhold disciplinary records](#), and there is no public database of misconduct allegations.

Section 105 would expand the Police Complaints Board from five to nine members, eliminating the current seat reserved for an MPD member. It would extend OPC jurisdiction to the DC Housing Authority Police Department and the Office of the Inspector General. It would give OPC the authority to self-initiate complaints when it discovers evidence of misconduct not raised by a complainant, audit complaints referred back to agencies, and issue subpoenas. It would authorize OPC to receive and review complaints involving federal agencies operating under cooperative agreements with MPD, require agency principals to submit new or amended directives to the PCB for review, and require the PCB to regularly review complaints, use-of-force, and in-custody death data. The DC Council has passed a series of emergency and temporary acts to keep portions of Section 105 in effect in the interim, but has never funded the permanent version.

The stakes are now higher. In September 2025, Congress introduced the [CLEAN DC Act](#), which would repeal most provisions of the Comprehensive Policing Act.

Recommendations:

- Publicly oppose the CLEAN DC Act and any federal legislation that would repeal or undermine DC's police accountability framework, and direct the Mayor's Office and the DC Attorney General to exhaust all available legal avenues to defend the CPJRAA if federal repeal is pursued.
- Fund Sections 105, 134, and 135 of the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act, bringing all three sets of provisions into permanent effect.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should publicly and forcefully reject the CLEAN Act and fully fund the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act.

(51) STRENGTHEN MPD ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND OVERSIGHT

The Problem: DC has invested billions in MPD and given it extraordinary authority over residents' lives. What DC has not built is a sufficient accountability structure that puts residents in genuine relationship with that power.

Where DC has acted to improve accountability, oversight, and transparency, MPD has resisted or delayed its compliance. An [OPC audit of 77 reports from September 2021 through March 2025 found that officers completed none of the stop card sections in any of the reports reviewed](#), omitting the justification for the stop, whether consent was given for searches, whether force was used, and demographic data of the people stopped. MPD is required by [the NEAR Act](#) and its own general order to document this information. It is not doing so. Body-worn camera footage presents similar problems. MPD has a documented pattern of excessive redactions that the [DC Open Government Coalition and the Office of the DC Office of Open Government have both flagged as unlawful or inconsistent with the District's transparency policies](#).

The Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act provisions that mandate public disciplinary records and a public misconduct database remain unfunded (see [Recommendation 50](#)). And as federal law enforcement operations in DC have escalated (the Body-Worn Camera Transparency for Use of Force Emergency Amendment Act and the Full Accountability in Arrest Reporting Emergency Amendment Act notwithstanding), there is no *systematic* requirement for MPD to document or disclose its encounters, joint operations, or data-sharing arrangements with federal agencies, leaving residents with no way of knowing how local police resources are used in coordination with those agencies.

Recommendations:

- MPD must fully comply with all existing stop documentation requirements under the NEAR Act, and OPC should conduct and publish annual audits of stop card completion.
- MPD should publicly report all encounters with federal law enforcement agencies operating in the District on a regular basis, including joint operations, data sharing arrangements, and ride-alongs, and maintain a public log of such encounters.
- DC residents most impacted by policing should have a formal role in the selection of the Chief of Police and other public safety agency heads, including the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, DOC Director, and DYRS Director.

Implementation:

- The DC Council should pass a law establishing a Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability, elected by DC residents, with meaningful authority of public safety agency leadership, including the power to recommend or reject the selection of the MPD Chief, DOC Director, and DYRS Director.
- The Mayor should ensure MPD fully and timely complies with all transparency laws.

Models: In 2021, the Chicago City Council established the [Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability \(CCPSA\)](#) as a city department comprised of a citywide Community Commission and 22 elected District Councils, one in each police district. The Commission has authority to advance systemic reform and police accountability, while District Councils work at the district level to improve policing and public safety in their communities.

(52) END QUALIFIED IMMUNITY

The Problem: [Qualified immunity](#) protects law enforcement officers from civil liability unless they violated a “clearly established” right. In practice, courts have interpreted this standard so narrowly that victims are routinely denied any legal remedy.

In DC, where Black residents are 13 times more likely than white residents to be killed by police, qualified immunity has been used to block residents from suing MPD officers. In 2012, [the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia granted qualified immunity to officers who conducted an unannounced 4 a.m. search of a DC home without a warrant authorizing a nighttime entry](#). In 2015, [the DC Circuit granted qualified immunity to US Marshals who shot an unarmed 16-year-old after he declined to speak with them and began to drive away](#).

DC law requires that a person seeking to bring a claim against a DC government official file a notice of claim with the Office of the Attorney General within six months of the injury. In the aftermath of a traumatic police encounter, 180 days is a short window. The [DC Police Reform Commission](#) specifically flagged this requirement as a barrier that falls hardest on people least equipped to navigate a legal process in the immediate aftermath of harm.

Recommendations:

- Create an independent local cause of action for DC residents whose constitutional rights have been violated by law enforcement, explicitly excluding the qualified immunity defense.
- Eliminate or extend the notice of claim requirement.

Implementation:

- The Mayor and DC Council should enact legislation creating a local civil rights cause of action and extending the notice of claim timeline. At a minimum, the clock on that requirement should not run for any period during which the claimant is incarcerated or facing active criminal charges arising from the same incident.

Models:

- [Colorado](#) eliminated qualified immunity for state claims, creating a state civil action for constitutional violations.
- [New Mexico](#) eliminated qualified immunity as a defense in civil rights lawsuits brought under the state constitution.

- [New York City](#) eliminated qualified immunity as a defense for NYPD officers in specific civil rights claims.

(53) PROTECT DC RESIDENTS FROM FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OVERREACH

The Problem: [DC is unique among American cities](#). More than thirty federal law enforcement agencies operate within its borders, and because DC lacks statehood, residents have few tools to hold those agencies accountable. In August 2025, President Trump declared a crime emergency in DC, federalized MPD, and surged National Guard troops and federal agents, including ICE, CBP, HSI, and the U.S. Marshals Service, into DC streets.

This declaration precipitated a shift in how MPD operated. In August 2025, then-MPD Chief Pamela Smith issued [EO-25-005](#), authorizing cooperation with federal immigration agencies for people MPD encounters but does not arrest, and Mayor Bowser issued [Mayor's Order 2025-090](#) requiring coordination with federal law enforcement "to the maximum extent allowable by law." By October 2025, [more than 1,400 DC residents had been picked up for immigration violations](#).

The problem extends beyond immigration enforcement. The surge brought federal agents operating in unmarked vehicles without the identifying markings DC law requires of MPD officers, [conducting vehicle pursuits not subject to MPD's own chase policy](#), and using force without accountability. [Federal agents operating in DC have shot at at least two residents and killed a third](#).

The DC Council has now moved to require transparency for use-of-force incidents involving federal agents. That is a start, but accountability requires a clear policy on when and how MPD can cooperate with federal agencies and legislative limits on that cooperation.

Recommendations:

- The Mayor should rescind Mayor's Order 2025-090, and MPD should formally sunset EO-25-005.
- The DC Council should reaffirm and strengthen enforcement of the Sanctuary Values Act, and reject any further attempts by the executive to repeal or weaken it.
- The DC Council should pass permanent versions of the transparency requirements enacted in the Body-Worn Camera Transparency for Use of Force Emergency Amendment Act and the Full Accountability in Arrest Reporting Emergency Amendment Act.
- The Mayor should issue an executive order requiring MPD to document and refer to the Office of the Attorney General evidence of potential criminal violations by federal agents.
- The DC Council should pass a law authorizing the Office of Police Complaints to establish a public portal for DC residents to report misconduct by federal agents operating in the District, with records maintained for potential prosecution and civil accountability.

Models:

- The [Mayor of Chicago's Executive Order 2026-01](#) created a process for documenting and referring federal agent misconduct for prosecution.
- Several of these recommendations reflect or further develop strategies outlined in the Yale Justice Collaboratory's and the Center for Policing Equity's, [The People's Safety: How Cities Can Protect Local Control Over Public Safety](#), which provides a detailed framework for how local officials can prepare for, prevent, and respond to unwarranted federal intrusions into local public safety organized around rejecting secret police-style enforcement, creating public clarity, and resisting complicity.

(D) REDUCE INCARCERATION, POOR JAIL CONDITIONS, COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES, AND BARRIERS TO REENTRY

DC incarcerates [too many people](#), for too long, in conditions that harm rather than rehabilitate, and then fails them when they come home. This is documented in audit after audit, acknowledged by the agencies responsible, and visible in the lives of the DC residents who go through the system. It is also expensive. Research consistently shows that reducing sentences, improving programming and conditions, and investing in reentry saves money and reduces recidivism. DC has continued to spend more on a system that produces worse outcomes than it should. And the harms are not distributed evenly, as they largely hurt Black residents. Despite being less than 45% of the population, Black people are roughly 90% of people in DC's correctional system.

Part of the problem is structural. DC's criminal code has not been comprehensively updated in more than a century. DC residents convicted of DC Code felonies are sent to federal prisons hundreds of miles from home, supervised by federal agencies not accountable to DC voters, and returned to a patchwork of reentry services too small and too short to work. The District's lack of statehood makes all of this harder to fix. Congress can override DC law, the main prosecutor is not accountable to local residents, and federal agencies control swaths of the justice system that would be locally run anywhere else. New threats from the current federal administration have made defending even the limited local control DC has an urgent priority.

(D1) REDUCE INCARCERATION & INCREASE EVIDENCE-BASED ALTERNATIVES

Introduction: The most direct way to reduce DC's incarcerated population is to change the laws that determine who goes to prison and for how long. DC has paths to address that. One is to repeal the most harmful provisions of the Secure DC Omnibus Amendment Act, including the pretrial detention expansion, Drug Free Zones, and sentencing enhancements that increased

penalties without evidence of safety benefit. Another is to pursue the criminal code reforms that the DC Council unanimously supported in the Revised Criminal Code Act before Congress blocked it. Beyond sentencing, DC can shrink its incarceration footprint through greater use of diversion, alternatives to incarceration, and restorative and transformative justice approaches at the prosecution and sentencing phases. And it can reduce the financial burdens that follow people through the justice system by reforming the fines and fees that make reentry harder.

(54) CRIMINAL CODE REFORM: PURSUE ACHIEVABLE REFORMS NOW

The Problem: DC’s criminal code has not been comprehensively updated in more than 100 years. DC’s 16-year effort to do so, culminating with the [Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022](#) (RCCA), failed when [Congress overturned it](#). The law would have eliminated obsolete offenses, ensured sentences are proportionate, and clarified overlapping charges. It would have extended the right to a jury trial to all misdemeanors, as is the case in [most states](#). By ensuring the statutes are clear and constitutional, the RCCA would make the law easier to understand and administer. [These changes were unanimously passed by the DC Council](#) and supported by [83 percent of District voters](#).

Recommendation: The Mayor and DC Council should revisit the Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022 and identify which changes can be pursued in discrete pieces now, rather than deferring all reform until a more politically favorable moment. At a minimum, these changes include:

- Establishing definitions
- Establishing defenses
- Increase proportionately in sentences
- End felony murder doctrine
- Second Look for All to include people who committed crimes outside of the current age window set out by IRAA
- Repeal mandatory minimums

Implementation: The Mayor should promote these reforms, and the Mayor and DC Council should pass legislation to accomplish these changes.

Models: Since the 1960s, dozens of states have embarked on criminal code reforms similar to what DC attempted in the Revised Criminal Code Act.

- [California limited, and in some cases, eliminated the application of the felony murder doctrine](#) and, through a number of laws, [established broad retroactive resentencing for people previously excluded from the state’s sentencing reforms. Older beneficiaries of second look laws](#) who had served long sentences and [people resentenced under felony murder reform laws](#) both had low recidivism rates.

(55) REPEAL THE MOST HARMFUL PROVISIONS OF SECURE DC

The [Secure DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2024](#) included several provisions that reversed prior reforms, including re-establishing Drug-Free Zones, loosening restrictions on police chases, expanding pretrial detention, and increasing penalties without evidence of safety benefit. What follows is a description of the most harmful provisions of the Secure DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2024.

The Problem: *Prior to Secure DC, Courts had authority under DC's bail statute for courts to hold a person accused of a violent crime pretrial. The practical effect of inserting a new rebuttable presumption was to shift discretion away from judges to prosecutors who decide which offense to charge, selecting from an archaic criminal code. This is a particularly harmful provision to maintain under the current leadership of the Department of Justice and United States Attorney Office for the District of Columbia. The [Criminal Justice Coordinating Council has not been able to connect the expanded rebuttable presumption for pretrial detention to an increase in public safety](#), but the number of people at the jail has steadily increased, putting stress on an already falling-apart facility and further straining the staffing shortage at DOC. Detention can significantly interfere with a person's life and livelihood, and research shows that even [just a few days of pretrial jailing make a person more likely to commit a crime in the future](#). Since [only one percent of people are rearrested for a violent crime](#) while released awaiting trial, this provision would have little to no impact on the violent crime rate while actively promoting instability in our communities.*

Recommendation: Allow the pretrial detention expansion to expire, as the expanded grounds for detention increase incarceration without improving public safety outcomes.

Models: [Prior to Secure DC's expansion of the pretrial detention presumption, DC was widely cited as a national model of pretrial reform](#), with about one percent of people rearrested for a serious violent offense while on pretrial release. Research on [Cook County, Illinois, Harris County, Philadelphia, and New Jersey similarly found that reducing pretrial detention had minimal impact on community safety](#) while reducing the harms associated with unnecessary incarceration.

The Problem: *Drug-Free Zones, another provision of Secure DC, do not effectively deter [drug use or crime](#). However, these zones provide additional means for police to discriminate based on race and socioeconomic status. This bill grants unilateral power to MPD to declare "any public area" a drug-free zone and disperse individuals in that area without oversight or limitation. Decades of evidence [across jurisdictions](#) demonstrates the devastating impact of this harmful "War on Drugs" policy on Black and lower-resourced communities. This approach also increases the risk of overdose deaths, which already outpace homicides, by relying on [ineffective criminalization](#) instead of effective public health interventions. [Drug Free Zones were unanimously repealed by the DC Council in 2014](#).*

Recommendation: Repeal Drug Free Zones (again), as the re-establishment of drug free zones has a documented history of racially disparate enforcement without crime reduction.

Model: The District itself repealed Drug Free Zones unanimously in 2014, recognizing their history of racially disparate enforcement without evidence of crime reduction. Secure DC's reinstatement reversed a decade of DC's own evidence-based policy.

The Problem: *Secure DC also loosened DC's high speed police chase limits to remove risk of death to the individual fleeing as a factor. [Police chases have killed thousands of people](#) and most deaths caused by pursuits are of [bystanders and passengers](#). In a heavily populated urban area like DC, cars driving upwards of 80 miles an hour endangers children, pedestrians, bicyclists, and others. This is an unacceptable risk to life, functionally creating the possibility of a death sentence for fleeing from police. Yet, [82 percent of deadly police chases start with minor infractions](#).*

Recommendation: Reverse the loosening of police chase limits and restore the stronger standard that was in place before Secure DC created a broader exception.

Models: DC established a model itself through [the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022](#), which made it illegal for officers to chase a car unless they reasonably believed the chase wouldn't cause death or serious bodily injury to any person.

The Problem: *Another provision in Secure DC that makes us less safe is the creation of new sentencing enhancements. These measures can [increase recidivism](#), needlessly [consume justice system](#) resources, and offer [no deterrent effect](#). In DC, 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."*

Recommendation: Repeal the sentencing enhancements added under Secure DC, which increase penalties without evidence they deter crime.

Models: [California mostly repealed its three strikes law through legislation passed in 2018 and expanded relief to apply retroactively in 2022](#). Those who benefited from the laws had lower recidivism rates than other returning citizens.

Implementation: The Mayor should promote the importance of letting the pretrial detention expansion expire, and promote the need to repeal other provisions. The DC Council should not renew the pretrial detention expansion. The Mayor and Council should pass legislation to repeal these portions of Secure DC.

(56) SHRINK THE FOOTPRINT OF THE DC JAIL (CDF & CTF) WITH MORE DIVERSION AND ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

The Problem: Incarceration is an incredibly costly and [not particularly effective response to harm caused by people who are struggling with behavioral health needs, trying to make ends meet, or caught up in community violence or conflicts](#). Diversion is a key "off-ramp" that individuals can access to avoid the negative consequences of arrest or conviction of a crime, and avoid years of incarceration and justice system control. But among the tens of thousands of

people who are arrested and convicted of crimes in DC, prosecutors divert very few people charged with felonies.

Recommendation: See [Section A](#) and recommendations [44](#), [45](#) and [57](#).

(57) INCREASE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMMING IN THE COMMUNITY AND MEDIATION AT PROSECUTION AND SENTENCING PHASES

The Problem: Traditional criminal legal responses to harm often reproduce harm, rather than facilitate meaningful accountability and healing. Restorative justice offers a different path and is [“a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations to heal and put things as right as possible.”](#) Transformative justice is a framework that addresses harm without reliance on state actors like police, prisons, or child welfare systems and instead [“actively cultivate\[s\] the things we know prevent violence such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved.”](#)

[Both approaches function most effectively when rooted in community](#), rather than administered through state systems, but [DC’s investment seems to flow primarily through government agencies](#) whose prosecutorial and supervisory roles limit what they can achieve.

DC has invested in programs that integrate restorative justice for youth. Though [the Office of the Attorney General \(OAG\) acknowledges, “restorative justice practices are not typically associated with a prosecutor’s office,” it facilitates restorative practices in schools and in cases involving youth](#). According to DC Public Schools’ 2026 performance oversight responses, [Access Youth’s Restorative Justice in Schools Program “provided early interventions to address behaviors that often lead to suspension or arrest.”](#) Youth-focused programs have had some positive results. For example, [Access Youth’s school-based program reports 85 percent of participating students avoid repeat suspensions](#). The OAG’s youth restorative justice program received [215 referrals in FY25, all delinquency matters, and held 15 successful conferences](#).

Adult restorative and transformative justice programs do not seem to be as robust. In its FY25 performance oversight responses, the [OAG reported facilitating restorative justice practices in one traffic fatality case](#). The Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), which supervises roughly 10,000 adults annually, [references restorative justice throughout its strategic plan, but its documented adult programming consists of Victim Impact Panels in DUI and DWI cases](#) with plans to “begin researching” broader incorporation of restorative justice principles. The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) recently discontinued its Restorative Justice Initiative as a funded program and now describes it as [“an operational philosophy that is infused into all ONSE programming”](#) rather than a discrete investment.

Community-led organizations in DC are facilitating [restorative justice training](#) and processes, including restorative justice and healing circles for [youth](#) and [adults](#), [healing centers](#), [community care](#), and [community mediation](#).

Restorative justice practices exist, but seem fragmented and it is unclear what transformative justice programs are available.

Recommendation: Invest in community-led restorative and transformative justice work, including a restorative justice community center to provide space for these initiatives. These investments should be understood as part of a broader ecosystem of community-led healing (e.g., [healing houses](#)). Increase mediation opportunities at prosecution and sentencing.

Implementation: The Mayor should increase incorporation of these techniques across DC programs and services, and both the Mayor and DC Council should fund increased programming. [The District Task Force on Jails and Justice](#) suggested increased funding through the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) or Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) to ensure greater restorative justice and transformative justice programming, including the possibility of establishing a restorative justice community center.

Models:

- In 2024, the [NYC Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice and the Institute for State & Local Governance at the City University of New York](#) announced an investment of \$16.5 million in restorative justice, with \$6.5 million supporting community-based programming, including community-based conflict resolution. In NYC, [Common Justice](#) operates a restorative justice diversion program targeting young adults charged with felonies.
- [SpiritHouse South, Inc.](#) is a Black women-led organization based in **Durham, NC** that works to empower communities to achieve liberation by focusing on community traditions, art, media, and collective healing to address issues like racism, poverty, and gender inequity.

(58) REDUCE CRIMINAL-LEGAL FINES AND FEES AND PUBLICIZE DATA

Problem: Instead of a second chance at building a future, thousands of DC residents incarcerated and returning home from jail and prisons each year often face ongoing punishment in the form of [criminal legal fines and fees](#). People who become involved with the criminal legal system must pay a host of fines, fees, and other financial obligations imposed at nearly every stage of the criminal legal process. Revenues generated through these criminal legal fines and fees fund government functions. Additionally, [DC law currently allows for incarceration of people for unpaid fees and fines](#).

Historically, [lawmakers throughout the US and DC used criminal legal fines and fees to criminalize and extract wealth primarily from Black communities](#). These fines and fees have deep roots in a history of anti-Black racism. These fees 1) disproportionately harm Black people and people with low incomes; 2) often lead to perverse budgeting incentives; and 3) result in lasting harms for those unable to pay and for their communities. Debt from these fines and fees [strain individuals and families](#), undercutting the chances of successful reentry.

Recommendations:

- Eliminate or reduce criminal-legal fines and fees within the DC Superior Court, Department of Corrections, and the reentry process that are unreasonable or too costly for vulnerable, low-income DC residents to pay.
- DC Superior Court, Department of Corrections, and the DC Sentencing Commission should publish annual reports on criminal-legal fines and fees data for full public transparency. The reports should include the purpose, amount, and recipient of the fees, as well as total revenue collected and its use.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should legislate revisions and reductions to DC's criminal fines and fees structures. The Mayor should instruct the DOC and Sentencing Commission to publish reports on DC's fines and fees. The Mayor and Council should collaborate with the Superior Court and any relevant federally-controlled agencies to reform fines and fees and ensure transparency about them.

Models: In 2025, [Oklahoma](#) passed a law allowing judges to waive the costs of prosecution, eliminating public defense application and electronic monitoring fees and repealing other service fees.

(D2) IMPROVE CONDITIONS AND OVERSIGHT OF THE CORRECTIONS SYSTEM

Introduction: The conditions at the DC jail are deplorable and have been for decades. Audits have documented the same problems: preventable deaths, mold and environmental hazards, poor food, inadequate medical and behavioral health care, insufficient programming, too little time out of cells, and overuse of solitary confinement. The Central Detention Facility is more than 50 years old and beyond meaningful repair. New leadership must make improving the lives of the thousands of DC residents held there each year an urgent priority. And for DC residents held in federal Bureau of Prisons facilities far from home, DC must build the oversight and advocacy infrastructure to ensure they are not invisible and to protect them.

(59) TRANSFORM THE JAIL FACILITIES AND REDUCE ITS POPULATION

The Problem: [The Central Detention Facility is more than 50 years old](#) and falling apart. The building is dangerous for the people incarcerated there and the staff who work there. A [2025 audit](#) documented preventable deaths, mold and other environmental hazards, poor food, inadequate medical and behavioral health care, insufficient programming, too little time out of cells, and overreliance on solitary confinement. A [2019 audit found the same things](#). [So did reports before that](#). On key measures like solitary confinement use and preventable deaths, [DC outpaces the national average in the wrong direction](#). The people most harmed are the [roughly 2,000 mostly Black DC residents held there](#) at any given time, many of whom have not been convicted of anything.

Calls to replace the facility are not new either. The [District Task Force on Jails and Justice](#) laid out a path in 2021 for a smaller, better-designed facility with meaningful programming. DC has

not acted on it. Recent planning efforts focused on an administrative building and exterior appearance rather than on the conditions that make the jail dangerous for the people inside it.

Recommendations:

- Tear down the Central Detention Facility.
- Regardless of the facility, reduce the jail population and dramatically improve the conditions, programming, and services, in line with the District Task Force on Jails and Justice [recommendations](#). This should include installing new leadership focused on transforming the culture within the jail.
- *If* a new facility is built, prioritize it in the capital budget, design it for a smaller population with a focus on treatment and programming, and ensure the process is guided by a Community Advisory Board (CAB).
- Set a goal of no preventable deaths at the jail, with accountability for failure to achieve that goal.
- Fund and fully implement the [Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022](#), and improve the Correction Information Council's (CIC) oversight of DOC facilities.
- Ensure that DC residents convicted of DC Code violations can serve their sentences in DC, rather than in distant federal Bureau of Prisons facilities, including by exploring the development of local facility capacity to make this possible.

Implementation: The [District Task Force on Jails and Justice](#) provides implementation steps for many of these recommendations.

The Mayor should set a goal of no preventable deaths at the DOC and pressure the DOC to meet that goal. The Mayor should appoint new leadership at the CIC and DOC that vigorously pursues oversight and promotes culture change. The Mayor should ensure that leadership at DOC and culture at the jail are fully focused on care and rehabilitation for all people in their custody. The programs that are currently offered to small segments of the jail population should be expanded, including more programming for people in maximum security units. The poor quality food, entry of contraband, and lack of out of cell time should not be accepted as a fact of life. Improvements in conditions should include more nutritional food per [Section 32 of Secure DC](#), a return to in-person visitation, improved medical and mental health services, more out of cell and outdoor time, and more.

The DC Council should improve its oversight of jail conditions. The Mayor and Council should improve the Correction Information Council's oversight of DOC facilities, including funding and implementing the Corrections Oversight Improvement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2022.

The Mayor and Council should ensure transparency and robust public participation at every step of the process of developing any new facility. According to the National Institute of Corrections, successful jail CABs routinely include a wide array of participants, such as justice-impacted

individuals, community advocates, agency leaders, and elected officials, who can provide a distinct and meaningful perspective on the design, construction, and oversight of correctional facilities.

See also [Recommendation 56](#) on reducing the footprint of DC jail facilities and [Recommendation 70](#) on bringing DC residents home from the Bureau of Prisons.

(6o) REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PREGNANT WOMEN AND NEW MOMS AT THE JAIL AND IMPROVE THEIR CARE WHILE THERE

The Problem: When an individual is pregnant and gives birth, they [need](#) a proper diet, prenatal vitamins, regular medical check-ups, exercise, emotional support, a birth plan, and continuing connections to their child to nurture a new life. Instead, some women in the custody of the Department of Corrections (DOC) have [experienced inconsistent prenatal and postpartum care, been handcuffed late in their pregnancies, had DOC officers in the delivery room after doctors asked them to leave, and been subjected to forced separation from their newborns](#). These conditions make it more challenging for someone to navigate a high-risk pregnancy and increase the risk for Black women who already face [higher rates of maternal mortality](#).

Recommendations:

- Fund and implement the [Safe and Supported Pregnancy and Delivery for Incarcerated Individuals Amendment Act of 2024](#).
- Create additional community alternatives to incarceration for people navigating childbirth and pregnancy.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should fund the [Safe and Supported Pregnancy and Delivery for Incarcerated Individuals Amendment Act of 2024](#). The Mayor should ensure proper implementation of the law at the DOC. The Mayor and Council should legislate and fund expanded alternatives to incarceration for pregnant women and new mothers at the jail, and include the best interest of young children or dependent adults in sentencing decisions. The Mayor should ensure the DOC uses its existing discretion to place more people in alternatives to incarceration. The Mayor and Council should [enact similar](#) policies for DYRS as described in [Recommendation 39](#).

Models:

- [Minnesota allowed the Commissioner of Corrections to place pregnant and immediately postpartum women into community alternatives](#) such as halfway houses, supervise them in accordance with current statute, and provide them treatment and programming in the placement location for the duration of their pregnancy and for up to one year post-birth to allow for the child to be near their mother for the first year of their lives.
- Recognizing that “allowing incarcerated mothers and babies to cohabitate during the baby’s first year of life leads to babies having more secure attachments when compared to those who have not cohabitated for a full year,” [Illinois](#) passed a law requiring courts to consider the best interest of a young child when sentencing a parent.

- [Missouri](#) requires judges to consider community-based treatment as an alternative to incarceration if someone is a primary caregiver.

(61) PROHIBIT SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN THE DC JAIL

The Problem: When someone incarcerated is placed in [solitary confinement](#), they are kept alone in a small cell for 22 hours or more a day, with no meaningful human interaction. Research shows that [people who experience solitary confinement while incarcerated are more likely to die](#), experience deteriorating [mental health](#), and engage in [suicidal](#) behavior. Solitary confinement can make prisons or jails [less safe](#). Solitary confinement [can increase recidivism](#) upon [release](#). Even [corrections officers see the problems](#) caused by solitary confinement and are developing alternatives to its use. An [audit](#) of the Central Detention Facility (CDF) and Correctional Treatment Facility (CTF) from 2024 found that the DOC placed approximately 11% of jail residents in solitary confinement, roughly twice the national average for jails.

Recommendation: End the use of solitary confinement at the jail regardless of the name, and eliminate solitary-like conditions.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass, fund, and faithfully implement the [ERASE Solitary Confinement Act of 2025](#). The Mayor should require greater transparency from the Department of Corrections about its use of solitary confinement and solitary-like conditions, under the [United Nations definition](#).

Models: Prisons and jails across the country, from [Washington State](#) and [New Jersey](#) to [San Francisco](#) and [New York City](#) are working to reduce the use of solitary confinement.

(62) ALLOW PEOPLE INCARCERATED AT DC JAIL AND THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES TO TESTIFY VIRTUALLY AT COUNCIL HEARINGS

Problem: Unlike most DC residents, the [nearly 2,000 DC residents confined to DC DOC](#) facilities are not allowed to advocate for policies by virtually accessing hearings conducted by the DC Council. This disproportionately impacts DC's Black residents, who represent nearly 90 percent of people in the jail. While the [DOC has stated that there are technological and staffing barriers](#) to allowing residents to engage in this advocacy, the jail is already allowing residents to participate in similar activities and processes in the facility. Allowing DC jail residents to advocate in public Council hearings virtually would increase oversight of corrections facilities. Since [civic engagement is a form of education](#), it would also [reduce recidivism](#) rates, enable residents to maintain community ties, and build real-life skills.

Recommendation: Require the DOC and the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DYRS) to allow residents to advocate before the DC Council virtually and the ANC Commissioner at the jail to testify in person.

Implementation:

- The Mayor and DC Council should pass and implement [the Ensuring Access and Supporting Engagement \(EASE\) for DOC residents Act of 2025](#).

- The Mayor and DC Council should introduce and pass legislation that would: allow youth detained by DYRS to advocate before the DC Council.
- The Mayor should instruct the DOC to allow the ANC Commissioner, an elected position, to provide testimony at Council hearings in person.

Models: [Massachusetts](#) and [Washington](#) allow incarcerated people to advocate before legislative bodies.

(63) CREATE A PLAN AND TAKE STEPS TO RETURN LOCAL CONTROL OF THE ENTIRE DC JUSTICE SYSTEM, WHILE VIGOROUSLY DEFENDING AGAINST EFFORTS TO FURTHER ERODE LOCAL CONTROL

The Problem: Because [DC is not a state](#) federal agencies control large portions of the DC justice system that [would be run by state or local governments anywhere else](#). The US Parole Commission (USPC), whose members are not accountable to DC residents, [decides whether incarcerated DC residents stay in prison or return to their communities and whether someone on parole returns to prison](#). The federal [Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency and Pretrial Services Agency supervise thousands of DC residents](#) annually, making recommendations and decisions about people's freedom, without accountability to the people they affect. [DC residents convicted of DC Code felonies are sent to federal Bureau of Prisons](#) facilities hundreds of miles from their families, making reentry harder and community ties harder to maintain. None of these agencies are accountable to DC voters, DC's elected officials have limited leverage over them, and data sharing between these agencies and DC agencies is inconsistent and incomplete.

The USPC's authority to supervise DC residents is not permanent; [Congress must periodically reauthorize it](#). Each reauthorization is an opportunity for DC to advocate for a transition to local control rather than ceding the status quo. DC should use every such moment to press for a path to a locally accountable parole system. This is one step in what should be an overall plan to retake control of the District's entire justice system. Another critical and urgent step is defending against current efforts from the federal government to expand its control of DC's justice system.

Recommendations:

- Develop a multi-phase plan to bring DC-focused legal system entities under the control of DC residents and elected officials, and begin implementation immediately. The plan should include a timeline and dedicated funding for each phase.
- As the most immediate step, establish a DC-controlled parole system, using each USPC reauthorization as an opportunity to advocate for transition.
- Forcefully oppose federal efforts to expand federal control of DC's justice system, including imposition of cash bail, increased mandatory minimums, repeal of police reforms, repeal of second look and record sealing laws, and any other attacks on DC autonomy.

Implementation: The Mayor should lead a community advisory process to develop the multi-phase plan, with a concrete proposal for a DC-controlled parole system as the first deliverable. The Mayor and DC Council should legislate and fund the parole system and press Congress to allow USPC authority to expire and transition to local control. The Mayor and Council should maintain proactive, consistent outreach to members of Congress. The Mayor and Council should forcefully and publicly oppose any federal legislation that erodes DC's authority over its own justice system.

Models: Addressing one piece of this effort, the Washington Lawyers' Committee and Public Defender Service published [a proposal for a DC-controlled parole system](#).

See also Recommendations [64](#) and [70](#).

(64) ESTABLISH AN OMBUDSMAN FOR PEOPLE CONVICTED UNDER DC CODE HELD IN FEDERAL CUSTODY OR UNDER FEDERAL SUPERVISION

Problem: The federal agencies that control currently and formerly incarcerated DC residents' lives (the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), BOP-run halfway houses, the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, and the Pretrial Services Agency) are [not accountable to DC residents or elected officials](#). DC's Corrections Information Council has legal jurisdiction to access BOP facilities, but this access is limited in practice. The result is a gap in oversight that falls hardest on the people least able to navigate it on their own. DC's Corrections Information Council [does not have the capacity to investigate or advocate](#) on behalf of DC residents across these agencies.

Recommendation: Establish an ombudsman office for all DC residents under the custody or supervision of a federal agency due to DC Code convictions, with authority to investigate complaints, advocate on residents' behalf, and report publicly on conditions and outcomes across these agencies.

Implementation: The Mayor should negotiate with the federal government to establish the ombudsman office. One possible avenue would be to create a unit within the newly established [ombudsman office for the Bureau of Prisons](#), with funding and oversight shared with DC. The office should have permission to enter BOP facilities, rather than being forced to negotiate with BOP for access.

Model: According to the [National Resource Center for Correctional Oversight](#), ten states have a correctional ombudsman including **Maryland** and **Virginia**. [Congress has legislated and made appropriations to fund an ombudsman office for the federal Bureau of Prisons](#).

See also [Recommendation 63](#) on returning local control of DC's justice system and [Recommendation 70](#) on bringing DC residents home from the BOP.

(D3) INVEST & REFORM FOR REENTRY SUCCESS

Introduction: More than 2,000 DC residents return from incarceration each year to a system of services that is too small, too short, and too fragmented. Housing programs are insufficient and uncoordinated. Employment programs may not translate into permanent jobs. Peer-led

services remain underfunded. Behavioral health providers who are culturally competent and accessible to returning residents are scarce. And the collateral consequences of incarceration make stability harder to achieve.

The recommendations in this section address investing in reentry services and removing the legal and financial barriers that undermine success. That means funding reentry at the scale and duration required to work, expanding record relief, protecting people with criminal histories from discrimination, reforming the debt and clean hands provisions that trap returning citizens, and restructuring community supervision so it supports success rather than setting people up to fail.

(65) INVEST TO INCREASE THE SCALE, DURATION, AND COORDINATION OF REENTRY SERVICES

Problem: More than 2,000 DC residents return from incarceration each year to a patchwork of services that are too small, too short in duration, and disconnected. Declaring them ineffective under those conditions misattributes the failure. Whatever the cause, insufficient support systems for people returning from incarceration result in high rates of recidivism, failing the individuals, their families, and their communities.

Though evidence demonstrates that the best reentry programs begin during incarceration, these programs are scarce with limited capacity. Housing programs are insufficient and uncoordinated. Employment programs may not translate into permanent jobs when subsidized positions typically end after six months without a pathway to sustained employment. Peer-led services remain underfunded relative to need. Culturally competent behavioral health providers accessible to returning residents are scarce. And the system lacks the transparency needed for people to navigate it or for policymakers to improve it.

Recommendations:

- Invest in reentry services and supports at a scale and duration sufficient to produce outcomes, including housing, employment pathways, behavioral health, and wraparound services.
- Increase peer-led supportive services, especially those that address the diverse needs of various populations such as IRAA recipients and increase employment, housing opportunities, and other critical resources for individuals who are justice-involved.
- Ensure DC residents in the Bureau of Prisons are connected to reentry resources while they are incarcerated.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should increase funding for reentry housing, employment, and mental and behavioral health services, to expand scale and lengthen duration of programs. The Mayor should improve coordination, quality, and transparency of the reentry services system. The Council should improve oversight to emphasize coordination, transparency, and quality. The Mayor and Council should make budget enhancements to

relevant DC agencies to allow for visits to BOP and jail facilities to begin reentry planning. The Mayor should negotiate partnerships with BOP to allow such visits.

Models:

- The [Center for Employment Opportunities Returning Citizens Stimulus program](#) provided cash assistance to formerly incarcerated people. Participants received three payments once they reached self-selected milestones designed to be achievable within 30 days and supportive of attaining employment. A randomized evaluation found that [participants had higher short-term employment and reduced recidivism](#), particularly among those at highest risk of reoffending. The model provides immediate paid transitional employment, job coaching, and post-placement support starting the day of release.
- [UTEK offers “Behind the Walls” programming](#) where UTEK staff work with incarcerated young adults to support their mental health and reentry planning. Upon release, the program may pick up the young adult from the facility, take them to do things like get new clothes, or enroll in UTEK job programs.

(66) ENSURE TIMELY, COMPLETE IMPLEMENTATION OF DC’S RECORD RELIEF LAW AND EXPAND IT.

The Problem: One in seven DC residents has a criminal record, and those records create [lifetime barriers](#) to employment and housing. [The Second Chance Amendment Act of 2022](#) (SCAA) was a meaningful step, but DC’s record sealing and expungement system still leaves many people without a path to relief. Lengthy waiting periods remain, and many offenses are not eligible at all.

Research indicates that [after a waiting period of 5 to 7 years without criminal activity, most individuals with records pose no more significant threat to public safety](#) than the general population. Yet, the SCAA currently has an 8 year waiting period for record relief eligibility for felony convictions. Waiting periods should be based on the available evidence around recidivism and its drivers. [Shorter waiting periods increase the employability of qualified workers](#), which improves the economy, strengthens businesses, and transforms the lives of those seeking a meaningful career.

Even under the current law, the community lacks clarity about its enforcement. Local and federal agencies continue to resist implementation. The Office of Human Rights (OHR), which is authorized under the SCAA to adjudicate complaints against employers and background check providers who use records that should have been sealed or expunged, [lacks sufficient resources](#) to provide robust enforcement.

Recommendations:

- Ensure timely and complete implementation of the SCAA.
- Improve enforcement of the SCAA and reporting about outcomes and impacts.

- Expand the SCAA to shorten waiting periods, increase the records subject to automatic relief, and give people with records a chance to seal them.
- Calculate the waiting periods based on the date of conviction, not the date of sentencing.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should use oversight to ensure proper implementation by DC agencies, and press the courts and federal agencies to follow the law. By Mayoral action or legislation, the Mayor or Council should require the Office of Human Rights to publicly report on the number and nature of administrative complaints filed under the SCAA, including resolution of the complaints, repeated complaints about specific entities, and fines imposed and paid. The Mayor and Council should ensure OHR is adequately funded to implement the SCAA in the next budget cycle.

The Mayor and Council should pass an amendment to the SCAA to shorten waiting periods, increase the records subject to automatic sealing or expungement, and allow every record to qualify for sealing by petition.

Models: [Minnesota's 2023 Clean Slate Act](#) provides automatic sealing after two years for misdemeanors and five years for felony convictions.

(67) TACKLE COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES OF INCARCERATION WITH HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

Problem: Individuals with prior criminal records often encounter discrimination in areas like employment, education, and housing. In DC, this discrimination disproportionately affects Black people; [96 percent of those sentenced for felony crimes are Black](#). Current “ban the box” laws are [narrow, poorly known, and have shown limited effectiveness](#), with one study finding they [may increase racial discrimination in hiring](#).

Recommendations: Amend the [DC Human Rights Act](#) to add people with incarceration, conviction or arrest histories as protected classes so that the [Office of Human Rights](#) can investigate cases of discrimination on these grounds.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass legislation amending the DC Human Rights Act to include people with incarceration, conviction or arrest histories as protected classes.

Models: [Illinois](#), [Wisconsin](#), and [Atlanta](#) have added people with criminal records as protected classes in human rights statutes.

(68) REFORM CLEAN HANDS AND PROVIDE RELIEF FROM DEBT

Problem: Debt is one of the most [persistent barriers to successful reentry](#). DC residents returning from jail or prison can come home to find hundreds or thousands of dollars in traffic fines. [Child support arrears present a similar trap](#): although [DC allows parents incarcerated for longer than 30 days to modify support orders](#), in practice [most never learn of that right in time](#), and months of arrears can accumulate before any modification is possible.

[DC's Clean Hands law compounds both problems](#). The law prevents residents from receiving certain licenses and registrations if they owe money to DC. Recent reforms have [exempted driver's licenses and most occupational licenses](#) from Clean Hands requirements, and the [debt threshold for business licensing was raised](#) in some instances. But vehicle registration remains subject to a \$100 threshold. Residents who owe the District more than \$100 in traffic fines or related fees still cannot register or renew their vehicle registration, and while payment plans exist, the high upfront costs put them out of reach. For returning citizens, this means facing the choice of driving unregistered or not driving at all, at [precisely the moment when access to transportation is most critical to finding and keeping work](#).

Recommendations:

- Provide relief for traffic enforcement debt accrued during incarceration.
- Automatically suspend child support orders during incarceration.
- Reform the Clean Hands law so that outstanding debt to the government is not a barrier to vehicle registration.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass legislation to allow for automatic suspension of child support payments during incarceration. The Mayor should update the payment plans for the DMV to allow for more accessible plans or for the forgiveness of debt in some circumstances. The Mayor and Council should pass legislation to exempt personal vehicle registration from the Clean Hands law.

Models: [Maryland limits the accrual of arrears](#) while an obligor is incarcerated.

(69) REFORM COMMUNITY SUPERVISION TO INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY AND REDUCE THE JAIL POPULATION

Problem: In DC, [about 30 percent of people on probation, parole, and supervised release are arrested and end up back in jail](#) because of a violation of their supervision. In [FY24, the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency \(CSOSA\) supervised roughly 10,000 individuals](#), the vast majority of whom were Black. The system uses [more sanctions than incentives](#), imposes longer supervision terms than necessary, and piles on conditions that are easy to violate and hard to contest.

The early termination process illustrates the problem. In DC, [you have to serve half your probation term](#) before you can request an early termination of supervision, then [meet fourteen separate criteria](#) before a CSOSA officer can make the request, and [if you have a serious felony conviction or a "history of violence," you won't be considered](#) at all. From 2018 to 2023, CSOSA continuously supervised over 31,000 people. Only 700 were eligible and applied, and [only about 200 received early termination](#). Similar barriers face people on parole or supervised release.

Recommendations:

- Institute an [earned compliance credit](#) program where, every 30 days, if someone succeeds on probation, supervised release, or parole, their sentence is reduced by 30 days.
- [Eliminate revocations](#) of community supervision in response to technical violations. In the meantime, reduce such revocations.
- Reduce incarceration for low level offenses.
- Allow people on community supervision who are accused of technical violations or misdemeanors to [remain in the community](#) while awaiting their revocation hearing or case resolution.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should pass legislation to create earned compliance credits. After initial cost increases, reduced case loads and reduced revocations leading to jail time will result in significant savings for DC and the federally controlled Court Supervision and Offender Services Agency.

The Mayor and Council should press the US Parole Commission to amend 28 CFR 2.218 to prohibit revocations of release in response to the first finding of a technical violation, unless the releasee is in loss of contact status or has allegedly violated sex offense related conditions or a stay away/protective order.

The [District Task Force on Jails and Justice](#) also offered guidance on implementation of these recommendations.

Models:

- Twenty-two states have enacted laws allowing people to earn time off their supervision for compliance, education, or programming completion. [New York](#) and [Arizona](#) developed earned compliance credit programs and saw probation populations decline, leading to significant savings and better public safety outcomes.
- According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), “a few states have also established special programs which include noncustodial restrictions on movement, often in the form of home confinement or placement in a non-locked residential facility, supervised by staff but allowing people to leave for work, treatment and other limited activities. Examples of these programs include a community accountability pilot program and intensive probation in Arizona, a community corrections program in Colorado, and a community control program in Florida.”

(7o) ENSURE DC RESIDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO A TRANSITION FACILITY CLOSE TO HOME THAT IS DESIGNED FOR REINTEGRATION

The Problem: When someone finishes their sentence in a halfway house, they should be in an environment that is less crowded and more home-like, with programming, rules, and structures focused on rehabilitation, not punishment. DC has not built that system. [Many DC residents](#)

[leaving prison are placed at a Baltimore halfway house](#) contracted by the federal Bureau of Prisons, creating significant barriers to reentry. Residents report problems getting transportation to DC, overly restrictive rules that make it hard to access services and medical care or maintain employment, and [oversight entities](#) and [former residents](#) say facilities are overcrowded and too far from worksites.

Efforts to build a new halfway house in DC have been impacted by [community opposition](#), and current plans would result in a large facility like the one that had to be [closed](#) due to [unsafe accommodations](#) and [inadequate reentry services](#). Research on the outcomes of people who finish their sentence in a halfway house shows [they do not reduce recidivism](#), and [large facilities like the 300-bed facility planned for DC](#) have a poor track record of rehabilitation. Studies show that people who receive [specialized case management services](#) that help individuals connect to treatment, programs, and other supports see shorter lengths of stay in halfway houses and are less likely to return to prison.

The problem begins before the halfway house. [DC residents convicted of DC Code felonies are sent to federal Bureau of Prisons](#) facilities hundreds of miles from their families, making reentry harder and community ties harder to maintain. Research consistently shows that [maintaining family and community connections during incarceration improves reentry outcomes and reduces recidivism](#). Returning home to an unfamiliar city, cut off from support networks, makes an already difficult transition harder.

Recommendation:

- Expand halfway house & community corrections capacity in DC, increase supports for halfway house residents, and change the model to decrease concentration and increase services onsite.
 - Increase capacity of small-scale, service-rich halfway houses and community corrections facilities as an alternative to incarceration.
 - Increase supports for DC residents in halfway houses outside of the District, such as with transportation stipends, services, and employment.
 - Press the BOP to release more people with DC Code convictions to home confinement rather than halfway houses, consistent with [their efforts](#) under the First Step Act.
- As a longer-term goal, work toward DC residents serving their entire sentences in DC rather than in distant federal facilities, as part of the broader local control plan described in [Recommendation 63](#).

Implementation: The Mayor should instruct the DOC to increase capacity for people who would be held at the jail to instead be placed in halfway houses and community corrections facilities. These would be DOC contracts with facilities, allowing for people to be placed in them rather than at the jail pretrial or for their sentence. They could also lead to future BOP contracts with smaller facilities, but for people nearing the end of their prison sentence. The Mayor and DC Council should allocate funding through MORCA or OVSJG to support DC residents placed at halfway houses to more easily access jobs and services with up-front transportation stipends, employment support and job readiness, and dedicated mental health professionals. The Mayor

and Council should press the BOP to release more people with DC Code convictions to home confinement rather than halfway houses, consistent with efforts under the First Step Act.

See also [Recommendation 63](#) on establishing local control over DC's justice system, [Recommendation 65](#) for support of returning citizens upon reentry, and [section D1](#), emphasizing alternatives to incarceration and prioritizing release from jail or prison.

Recommendation: Press for local control of federal halfway houses focused on DC residents, or at a minimum, advocate for them to be smaller, more distributed, more home-like, and enriched with services.

Implementation: The Mayor and DC Council should negotiate an agreement with the BOP for DC to take control of the contract for halfway houses for people returning to DC from BOP facilities. As an alternative, they should advocate for the halfway house contracts to prioritize smaller, more distributed, home-like environments with services on-site. The Mayor and Council should force rules change at the halfway houses contracted by the BOP to implement programming, rules, and structures that are focused on rehabilitation, not punishment, and to eliminate obstacles that prevent residents from working, with mental health professionals on-site.

See also: [Recommendation 63](#) on returning to local control of corrections systems.

Models: In [Norway](#) and [Finland](#), facilities more closely resemble home than incarceration facilities, and residents have freedom to work, seek education, and come and go from their placement. These facilities have better rehabilitation and recidivism outcomes than those seen in American corrections systems. Currently, European models are being adopted in [Connecticut](#) and [Pennsylvania](#). Reportedly, Tennessee is in the process of negotiating to take over BOP contracted halfway houses in that state.