



**CIC | District of Columbia Corrections Information Council**

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Performance Oversight Hearing  
March 1, 2023**

**Testimony of Donald L. Isaac Sr., Executive Director  
Corrections Information Council**

Good morning, Chairman Pinto and other members of the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee. I am Donald Isaac, the Executive Director of the Corrections Information Council (also known as the “CIC”) since November of 2018. The CIC is an independent agency created by the 1997 Revitalization Act. We received our first funding in 2013, and have grown yearly to a current staff of eleven people, which is comprised of seven program analysts. The CIC is responsible for inspecting, monitoring, and reporting on conditions at approximately 120 correctional facilities operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and its contractors or the DC Department of Corrections (DOC). This means that we physically go into facilities,

observe the conditions, and talk confidentially with residents from DC who have been convicted under the DC Code. We are a small agency with a large mandate. Since the District does not have a local prison, its incarcerated population is housed either locally within the custody of the DOC - or nationwide within the custody of the federal Bureau of Prisons. The population in the DOC is approximately 1,300, and the population in the BOP is over 2,600. Monitoring those conditions also encompasses the residential reentry centers (RRCs), which are also known as “halfway houses”. We do not handle individual complaints or provide legal representation or advice; we confidentially track the information that we receive from the incarcerated population – or their loved ones - via letters, interviews, emails, and phone calls. As an information council, we work at the macro level to provide the Council, Mayor, and public stakeholders with comprehensive knowledge and information acquired from our inspections and from the recommendations communicated to BOP and DOC executives.

I am proud of the work that my team has accomplished during recent years, and throughout the pandemic. From FY22 to date, we have produced fourteen inspection reports, which does not account for

our completion of two annual reports and our Youth Rehabilitation Amendment Act (YRA) reports. Additionally, from FY22 to date, we have conducted a combination of approximately twenty site visits and inspections. Our team selects inspection locations based on robust internal discussions of the following factors: number of received complaints, the severity of issues or complaints, the size of the DC population at the facility, the length of time since our last visit, and reports of any relevant thematic or systemic issues prevalent at a facility. Although there are a diverse number of concerns, several recurring issues in our reports focus on access to programming, staff treatment of residents, access to DC specific reentry resources, quality of care, and lockdowns.

Our mandate is focused on providing reports to specific executive bodies, and we have done an exceptional job at eliminating a once existent backlog to currently maintaining and exceeding our required deliverables. However, over the years, we have seen the importance of quickening and diversifying our communication. That is why we have listened to feedback and focused on revising reports to make them faster to produce, easier to highlight key issues, and easier to read. We

have also increased our social media presence, which means that we actively post on social media platforms, and we send out email blasts regarding issues we want to quickly communicate to the public. These occur in addition to our newsletter, which is produced every month and contains updated data. We have also increased the production of our information sheets, which are also available on our website and via social media posts - to provide information on a range of topics. Topics are developed to inform the community and highlight issues that residents and their families encounter or ask about, so we have provided data on topics such as - institutions with the most DC residents, ages of the population within facilities, voting rights, First Step Act education, parole schedules, the BOP grievance process, and medical care levels. Our goal in FY23 and beyond is to continue increasing our production of these resources.

Continuing with the idea of quickening and diversifying our communication, we are also examining ways to engage stakeholders. Logistical and structural planning are currently underway to incorporate *live* virtual presentations into our communication methods, which may include a restructuring of our open board meetings. We are

actively planning, and look forward to engaging the Council and the public in new ways.

In the past couple of months, we have been fortunate to welcome three new program analysts, and we thank former Public Safety Chairman Charles Allen for his support of expanding the office capacity. New staff allows us the opportunity to increase productivity and execute longstanding projects. We now have more manpower and have begun work on a project to re-examine prior recommendations and develop protocols for more consistent follow-up. This is an exciting opportunity for our agency to reflect on our impact and broaden our target agenda items during quarterly meetings with BOP and DOC executives.

As the internal structure of the office expands, we believe that professional development and strategic planning are important. At the conclusion of FY22, the agency participated in a strategic planning retreat designed to help us streamline processes and redefine duties. During that process, we also engaged in a vigorous discussion on racial equity, which was led by expert Michele Salters Williams. My team and I were able to reflect on how the mission of our agency aligns with the

principles of racial equity. As an information council, we try to be as objective as humanly possible, but ultimately - we are reporting on conditions and providing recommendations and information about issues faced by mostly Black individuals. That information is critical to placing those individuals in an equitable position during their incarceration and upon their release, and we will continue to reflect on such principles within our work.

We are also proud of the collaborations that unfolded since FY22. We collaborated with the Board of Elections to produce a report on the primary and general elections, which is forthcoming. We worked with the Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking in the development of their financial toolkit for incarcerated DC residents. We have hosted MORCA representatives on inspections and distributed resource sheets on behalf of their agency. We have worked with the Public Defender Service and distributed their Reentry Navigator books into federal facilities. We have also maintained communications with other notable organizations such as the Washington Lawyers Committee and the Georgetown Law Criminal Defense and Prisoner

Advocacy Clinic - to provide updated resources to incarcerated residents.

Lastly, in December – the CIC was able to finalize the negotiation of our MOU with the Bureau of Prisons. Our team worked hard to achieve the best possible document after corresponding for approximately two years on several key points related to timelines, data sharing, accessibility, and death notifications. We communicated with several entities throughout this process, and would like to acknowledge the efforts of Councilmember Allen, Congresswomen Holmes-Norton, the CJCC, and the Office of the Attorney General – to facilitate discussions between the CIC and BOP executives. We plan to continue strengthening our communications with BOP leadership - to progress our mission.

As another related area of interest, the CIC is often asked about its ability to enforce agency recommendations. We do not have enforcement power; however, it is our goal to continue transmitting the information necessary to document and improve conditions at the federal level, while also increasing the impact of our efforts at the local level. The CIC would like to acknowledge the efforts of Director Faust

and the DOC team for implementing some of our prior recommendations, which includes providing mattresses at the Central Cell block for pregnant women or people subject to weekend or extended stays; as well as our CDF and CTF recommendations for improved and expanded tablet accessibility, updated Language Access signage, providing hot meals for dinner, and increasing recreation. Director Faust and the CIC were also able to agree on adjusting the previous two-week notification time for an inspection to a 48-hour notification, which is a significant improvement in protocols.

Thank you, Chairman Pinto. I join the members of our CIC Board to express our gratitude for the support by you, the Council, and the Mayor for our agency and its mission. As the District examines efforts to regain local control of various criminal justice functions, the CIC looks forward to actively reporting on - and monitoring relative issues in order to provide insight and recommendations to the District.

Thank you.

*Donald Isaac*

**Donald L. Isaac, Sr.**  
**Executive Director**  
**DC Corrections Information Council (CIC)**

[donald.isaac@dc.gov](mailto:donald.isaac@dc.gov)

<https://cic.dc.gov>

1400 I Street NW – Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005 | 202.478.9211 | [dccic@dc.gov](mailto:dccic@dc.gov) | [www.cic.dc.gov](http://www.cic.dc.gov)