COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AFFAIRS

ZACHARY PARKER, CHAIRPERSON
FISCAL YEAR 2026 COMMITTEE BUDGET REPORT

TO: Members of the Council of the District of Columbia

FROM: Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chairperson, Committee on Youth Affairs

DATE: Sunday, June 22, 2025

SUBJECT: Report and Recommendations of the Committee on Youth Affairs on the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget for Agencies Under Its Purview

The Committee on Youth Affairs ("Committee") having conducted hearings and received testimony on the Mayor's proposed operating and capital budgets for Fiscal Year 2026 ("FY 2026") for the agencies under its purview, reports its recommendations for review and consideration by the Committee of the Whole. The Committee also comments on several sections in the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Support Act of 2025, as proposed by the Mayor, and recommends several new sections.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary 2
Committee Adjustments Summary Tables 5
- Line-Item Budget and Revenue Adjustments 5
- Fiscal Year 2026 Sources and Uses Summary 5
- Fiscal Year 2026 Agency Operating Budget by Program Parent Level 1 8
- Fiscal Year 2026 Agency Capital Budget Changes 11

Committee Budget Process and Purview 12
Fiscal Year 2026 Agency Recommendations 13
- Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) 13
- Office the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC) 21
- Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) 23
- Committee of the Whole Recommendations 31

Fiscal Year 2025 Revised Local Budget Recommendations 31
Budget Support Act Recommendations 32
- Recommendations on Mayor's Proposed Subtitles 32
- Recommendations for New Subtitles 33

Committee Action and Vote 35
Attachments 36

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Executive Summary

This report from the Committee on Youth Affairs on the Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget for agencies under its jurisdiction was developed following several months of hearings, site visits to agencies and partner organizations, meetings, and other forms of public engagement. The Committee directly consulted with youth involved with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) to inform its Fiscal Year 2026 budget recommendations. These recommendations are anchored in three overarching goals: (1) reducing the number of youths entering the District's child welfare and criminal justice systems; (2) deepening care and rehabilitation for youth within CFSA and DYRS; and (3) strengthening exit planning and re-entry support for youth transitioning out of DYRS. The summary below highlights key recommendations made by the Committee on Youth Affairs in the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

- ***Recruit and Retain Talent Within our Child Welfare Agency***

Provide a $200,000 one-time enhancement to support CFSA's efforts to recruit social workers, thereby reducing staff caseloads and strengthening services for young people in the agency's care.

- ***Restore Programming to Investigate Physical and Sexual Abuse Cases Involving Youth***

Restore funding for the Safe Shores program by $1.35 million to maintain critical investigatory support for cases involving physical and sexual violence against youth through a transfer of funds from the Committee on Facilities.

- ***Restore Home-Visiting Services within our Child Welfare Agency***

Restore $200,000 in funding for home visiting services to offset a reduction in federal subsidies to CFSA and to support community-based programs that deliver child-centered, family-focused, community-connected, strength-based, and solution-focused services to families in their homes.

- ***Restore the Critical Oversight Function of the Ombudsperson for Children***

Restore the independent data-collection and oversight functions of the Ombudsperson for Children in conjunction with CFSA, funded partially by a $500,000 transfer from the Committee on Public Works and Operations.

- ***Right-size Educational and Rehabilitation Services within the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services***

Enhance educational services—specifically at the Youth Services Center (YSC)—by investing $500,000 in one-time supplemental funding to enable the See Forever Foundation (Maya

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Angelou Public Charter School), which manages educational services within DYRS, to hire additional teachers, purchase supporting technology, and establish pay equity between educators within the agency and their peers in the broader education system.

Establish a 12-month pre-apprenticeship training pilot grant program for youth within DYRS detention to provide specialized workforce training that will increase access to gainful employment in in-demand sectors and expand career opportunities upon exiting detention. The Committee funds the pre-apprenticeship training pilot program by investing a $350,000 transfer of funds from the Committee on the Executive and Labor.

- ***Fully Fund the DYRS components of the Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024 to Deepen Support and Accelerate Placements by the Department***

Invests $517,678.43 in Fiscal Year 2026 and $2,137,509.22 across the financial plan (Fiscal Years 2026-2029) for the addition of 4 FTEs tasked with implementation of certain provisions of legislation enacted by the Council last year to accelerate placements of youth committed to DYRS.

- ***Establish a Re-entry Program for Youth Exiting Detention to Reduce Rates of Recidivism***

Invest $650,000 to establish a pilot program that provides case management support for youth exiting DYRS, with the goal of reducing recidivism by connecting them to housing, mentorship, and educational and workforce opportunities.

- ***Fund Critical Youth Investments in other Committees***

Recognizing the need to bolster efforts to support children and families *before* they encounter the District's child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the Committee funds several critical youth-facing investments in other committees. These investments include (1) fully funding the Child Behavioral Health Dashboard Act of 2024 by means of a transfer of funds to the Committee on Health; (2) ensuring that the truancy prevention pilot administered by the Department of Human Services will operate in a middle school in the 2025-2026 school year, (3) restoring workforce development grants for gender non-conforming youth and (4) restoring transitional youth housing through a transfer to the Committee on Human Services; and (5) making a sizable down payment on efforts by the full council to restore the District Child Tax Credit, which the Mayor repealed in her FY26 proposed budget, through a transfer to the Committee of the Whole.

While the Committee believes these investments represent meaningful progress toward its stated goals, it acknowledges that significant needs remain within both CFSA and DYRS that could not be fully addressed with the limited budgetary resources available to the Committee. Specifically, the Committee remains concerned about the adequacy of rehabilitation services

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provided to youth in DYRS custody, the impact of staffing challenges on the quality of those services, and the continued delays in placing youth at the YSC. Within CFSA, the Committee is particularly concerned about the attrition of critical staff—especially social workers—and the inadequacy of subsidies available to foster parents, grandparents, and kinship caregivers. Looking ahead, the Committee is committed to advocating for both budgetary and non-budgetary measures to further advance its goals and better support the District's most vulnerable youth.

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Committee Adjustments Summary Tables

The following tables summarize the Committee's recommendations made to the Committee of the Whole pursuant to Rule 703 of the Council Period 26 Rules of Organization and Procedure for the Council of the District of Columbia.

Line-Item Budget and Revenue Adjustments

See Attachment A for a table of all budget attributes and comments for each recommended change to agency operating budgets and revenues, as well as full budget attributes for Committee transfers.

Fiscal Year 2026 Sources and Uses Summary

This table provides a summary of the changes the Committee recommends to the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget and Financial Plan. **Detailed information about each change, including budget attributes, can be found in Attachment A**.

HOW TO READ THIS TABLE

This table structures the Committee's recommendations into the funds available to be spent by the Committee, or "Sources," and how those funds were spent, or "Uses." Sources are listed as positive numbers, and the Uses of those funds are listed as negative numbers. The "Overall Balance" of the table is the sum of the Sources and the Uses entries, and if all available Sources have been allocated to various Uses, the Overall Balance is $0. Per Council Rule 703, a Committee cannot have a negative Overall Balance.

The Sources portion of this table includes recommended policy changes generating revenue, as well as a transfer of funds into the committee from another committee. The Sources portion of the table also includes a line that combines all of the Committee's recommended budget reductions, as reductions in an agency's budget are a Source of additional funds that can be used by the committee elsewhere, thus, **a recommendation that agencies *reduce their budgets* by $500,000 will appear as a *positive* entry on this table as that reduction is a new Source of funds that are now available to the Committee to be allocate to various Uses.** Please note that a disaggregated list of all reductions will be in Attachment A.

The Uses portion of the table details how the funds from the Sources portion of the table are allocated. As the Uses are spending available Sources, the entries are negative, thus, **a recommendation that an agency receive an *additional* $500,000 will appear as a *negative* entry on this table because the enhancement is a Use that is reducing the Sources of funds available to the Committee**.

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SOURCES AND USES SUMMARY TABLE

Fiscal Year 2026 SOURCES AND USES - Committee on Youth Affairs					
SOURCES	**FY 25**	**FY 26**	**FY 27**	**FY 28**	**FY 29**
Budget Reductions		$5,295,700.24	$5,405,528.80	$5,515,469.60	$5,627,652.23
Fund Balance Conversion					
Fund Balance Use					
Special Fund Sweeps					
Transfers In (See Note 1 - Transfers In)		$2,150,000.00	$510,860.00	$521,507.28	$532,377.61
TOTAL SOURCES	**$0.00**	**$7,445,700.24**	**$5,916,388.80**	**$6,036,976.88**	**$6,160,029.84**
USES - REVENUE EXPENDITURES	**FY 25**	**FY 26**	**FY 27**	**FY 28**	**FY 29**
B25-946, Mu Lambda Foundation Tax Exemption Act		($13,296.00)	($13,828.00)	($14,381.00)	($14,956.00)
Transfers Out (See Note 2 - Transfers Out)		($2,131,631.81)	($594,497.49)	($606,805.54)	($619,369.57)
TOTAL USES - REVENUE EXPENDITURES	**$0.00**	**($2,144,927.81)**	**($608,325.49)**	**($621,186.54)**	**($634,325.57)**
USES - BUDGET EXPENDITURES	**FY 25**	**FY 26**	**FY 27**	**FY 28**	**FY 29**
Legislation: "BSA Subtitle X. Youth Pre-apprenticeship Grant Pilot Program"		($300,000.00)			
Legislation: BSA Subtitle X. Youth Recidivism Reduction Grant Pilot Program		($500,000.00)			
Legislation: L25-321; Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, Sections 3 and 4		($284,000.00)	($290,156.00)	($296,188.50)	($302,347.03)
Child and Family Services Agency					
CFSA One-time enhancement: Safe Shores Restoration		($1,350,000.00)			
CFSA Home Visiting Program One-time Enhancement		($200,000.00)			
CFSA Social Worker $10,000 Sign-on bonus incentives		($200,000.00)			
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services					
DYRS Education Program One-time Enhancement		($500,000.00)			

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Additional PS Support (2 Care Coordinators at CS-12) to assist with implementation of L25-321; Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, Sections 3 and 4. Positions are in addition to those required in the FIS.		($233,678.43)	($238,730.78)	($243,678.74)	($248,729.73)
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children					
Restoration of OFC - Position #00109761 - Executive Director - Salary		($170,000.00)	($173,570.00)	($177,041.40)	($180,582.23)
Restoration of OFC - Position #00110007 - Deputy CFSA Ombudperson - Salary		($120,000.00)	($122,520.00)	($124,970.40)	($127,469.81)
Restoration of OFC - Position #00109761, #00110046, #00110047, RO0.OCFO STAFFING - Misc Fringe Benefits		($89,717.32)	($91,870.54)	($94,029.50)	($96,239.19)
Restoration of OFC - Position #00110046 - Ombuds Analyst - Salary		($80,000.00)	($81,680.00)	($83,313.60)	($84,979.87)
Restoration of OFC - Position #00110047 - Ombuds Analyst - Salary		($80,000.00)	($81,680.00)	($83,313.60)	($84,979.87)
Restoration of OFC - RO0.OCFO STAFFING - Salary		($66,979.31)	($68,385.88)	($69,753.60)	($71,148.67)
Restoration of OFC - Occupancy Fixed Costs		($60,000.00)	($61,200.00)	($62,424.00)	($63,672.48)
Restoration of OFC - Position #00110007 - Deputy CFSA Ombudperson - Fringe Benefits		($27,120.00)	($27,770.88)	($28,423.50)	($29,091.45)
Restoration of OFC - IT Software Maintenance		($15,093.36)	($15,395.23)	($15,703.13)	($16,017.19)
Restoration of OFC - Supplies & Materials		($10,309.00)	($10,515.18)	($10,725.48)	($10,939.99)
Restoration of OFC - Prof Service Fees & Contr		($7,500.00)	($7,650.00)	($7,803.00)	($7,959.06)
Restoration of OFC - Travel Out of City		($3,775.00)	($3,850.50)	($3,927.51)	($4,006.06)
Restoration of OFC - Equipment & Machinery		($1,000.00)	($1,020.00)	($1,040.40)	($1,061.21)
Restoration of OFC - Travel Local		($1,000.00)	($1,020.00)	($1,040.40)	($1,061.21)
Restoration of OFC - Membership Dues		($600.00)	($612.00)	($624.24)	($636.72)
TOTAL USES - BUDGET EXPENDITURES	**$0.00**	**($4,300,772.43)**	**($1,277,626.98)**	**($1,304,000.99)**	**($1,330,921.78)**
OVERALL BALANCE	**$0.00**	**$1,000,000.00**	**$4,030,436.33**	**$4,111,789.35**	**$4,194,782.49**
NOTE 1 - TRANSFERS IN	**FY 25**	**FY 26**	**FY 27**	**FY 28**	**FY 29**

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From CEAL: DYRS Youth Pre-Apprenticeship Grant Pilot Program		$300,000.00			
From FAC: Restoration of Safe Shores		$1,350,000.00			
From PWO: Restoration of Office of the Ombudsperson for Children		$500,000.00	$510,860.00	$521,507.28	$532,377.61
TOTAL TRANSFERS IN	**$0.00**	**$2,150,000.00**	**$510,860.00**	**$521,507.28**	**$532,377.61**

NOTE 2 - TRANSFERS OUT	**FY 25**	**FY 26**	**FY 27**	**FY 28**	**FY 29**
To BED: Retail Support Fund - Rhode Island Avenue		($350,000.00)			
To HLT: Child Behavioral Health Dashboard		($111,599.00)	($114,004.96)	($116,359.59)	($118,763.05)
To HS: DHS Wrap-Around Workforce Development Program		($300,000.00)			
To HS: Truancy Pilot expansion at DHS		($470,032.81)	($480,492.53)	($490,445.95)	($500,606.52)
To HS: Youth Transitional housing - DHS		($600,000.00)			
To JPS: Unification Study via DMPSJ (for L25-321)		($100,000.00)			
To PWO: Two Public Restrooms (Tanner Park, Starburst Plaza)		($200,000.00)			
TOTAL TRANSFERS OUT	**$0.00**	**($2,131,631.81)**	**($594,497.49)**	**($606,805.54)**	**($619,369.57)**

Fiscal Year 2026 Agency Operating Budget by Program Parent Level 1

Agency Operating Budget by DIFS Program (Parent Level 1)						
DIFS Program (Parent Level 1)	**FY 2024 Actuals**	**FY 2025 Approved**	**Mayor's FY 2026 Proposed**	**Committee Variance**	**Committee's FY 2026 Recommendation**	**Committee Percent Change from FY 2025**
Child and Family Services Agency						
AFO002 - AGENCY ACCOUNTING SERVICES	$2,429,362	$2,420,057	$2,385,747	$0	$2,385,747	(1.42%)
AFO003 - AGENCY BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES	$432,454	$443,030	$437,805	$0	$437,805	(1.18%)

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AMP003 - COMMUNICATIONS	$725,710	$516,396	$477,305	$0	$477,305	(7.57%)
AMP005 - CONTRACTING AND PROCUREMENT	$2,240,359	$2,172,843	$2,192,803	$0	$2,192,803	0.92%
AMP006 - CUSTOMER SERVICE	$4,978	$17,995	$20,158	$0	$20,158	12.02%
AMP009 - FLEET MANAGEMENT	$656,067	$911,543	$882,414	$0	$882,414	(3.20%)
AMP011 - HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES	$2,561,661	$1,901,823	$1,846,926	$200,000	$2,046,926	7.63%
AMP012 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	$24,941,866	$14,888,596	$12,543,912	($207,674)	$12,336,238	(17.14%)
AMP014 - LEGAL SERVICES	$4,634,848	$3,566,429	$3,573,954	$0	$3,573,954	0.21%
AMP016 - PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	$3,566,282	$1,809,587	$1,805,761	($117,190)	$1,688,571	(6.69%)
AMP019 - PROPERTY, ASSET, AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT	$6,346,692	$20,387,959	$18,675,553	$0	$18,675,553	(8.40%)
AMP024 - RISK MANAGEMENT	$156,207	$146,893	$143,901	$0	$143,901	(2.04%)
AMP026 - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	$1,871,409	$1,509,430	$1,516,002	($135,803)	$1,380,199	(8.56%)
AMP033 - EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	$25,075	$0	$0	$0	$0	n/a
H03601 - ADOPTION SUBSIDY AND SUPPORT	$17,944,684	$17,783,674	$17,244,654	$0	$17,244,654	(3.03%)
H03602 - GRANDPARENT SUBSIDY AND SUPPORT	$5,491,114	$6,512,313	$6,437,313	$0	$6,437,313	(1.15%)
H03603 - GUARDIANSHIP SUBSIDY AND SUPPORT	$6,938,655	$6,799,800	$5,900,000	$0	$5,900,000	(13.23%)
H03604 - RELATIVE CAREGIVER SUBSIDY AND SUPPORT	$962,615	$796,962	$771,962	$0	$771,962	(3.14%)
H03701 - CONTRACT MONITORING	$1,291,715	$1,165,142	$1,212,846	$0	$1,212,846	4.09%
H03703 - FAMILY RESOURCES	$2,788,847	$744,054	$495,840	$0	$495,840	(33.36%)
H03704 - KINSHIP SUPPORT	$4,099,030	$5,129,970	$4,982,571	($151,897)	$4,830,674	(5.83%)
H03705 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	$48,234,259	$47,429,683	$47,841,298	($1,167,858)	$46,673,439	(1.59%)
H03706 - PERMANENCY	$12,278,798	$16,870,923	$16,811,999	($144,517)	$16,667,482	(1.21%)
H03707 - TEEN SERVICES	$8,160,303	$3,047,324	$3,417,169	$0	$3,417,169	12.14%
H03801 - COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION	$7,992,470	$12,747,536	$12,807,434	$0	$12,807,434	0.47%
H03802 - FAMILIES FIRST DC	$3,841,379	$4,142,550	$3,928,546	$0	$3,928,546	(5.17%)
H03803 - HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS	$2,051,697	$3,893,988	$3,538,261	$82,142	$3,620,403	(7.03%)
H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	$21,416,079	$23,829,472	$22,511,099	$865,954	$23,377,053	(1.90%)
H03903 - IN-HOME SERVICES	$7,774,518	$757,672	$1,021,316	$0	$1,021,316	34.80%
H04001 - FACILITY LICENSING	$4,444,214	$3,767,156	$3,880,970	$0	$3,880,970	3.02%
H04002 - STATE PLANNING AND DATA ANALYSIS	($9,352)	$1,775,800	$1,765,299	($135,803)	$1,629,496	(8.24%)
H04003 - STATE POLICY	$1,007,515	$1,390,886	$1,337,782	($158,130)	$1,179,652	(15.19%)

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H04004 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	$3,582,038	$3,204,810	$3,166,273	($217,394)	$2,948,879	(7.99%)
H04101 - CLINICAL HEALTH SERVICES	$1,185,255	$1,413,384	$1,443,197	$0	$1,443,197	2.11%
H04102 - HEALTHY HORIZONS CLINIC SERVICES	$189,561	$525,075	$520,075	$0	$520,075	(0.95%)
H04103 - NURSE CARE MANAGEMENT	$2,849,714	$2,452,536	$2,461,591	$0	$2,461,591	0.37%
H04104 - WELL BEING AND SUPPORT	$4,725,027	$7,497,148	$6,406,614	($118,384)	$6,288,230	(16.13%)
PRG001 - NO PROGRAM	$891,681	$0	$0	$0	$0	n/a
TOTAL GROSS FUNDS	**$220,724,788**	**$224,370,439**	**$216,406,350**	**($1,406,553)**	**$214,999,797**	**(4.18%)**
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services						
AFO003 - AGENCY BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES	$703,124	$724,688	$820,589	$0	$820,589	13.23%
AFO005 - AGENCY /CLUSTER FINANCIAL EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION SERVICES	$95,408	$198,521	$204,304	$0	$204,304	2.91%
AFO010 - PAYROLL DEFAULT	$0	$302,137	$106,157	$0	$106,157	(64.86%)
AFO011 - P-CARD CLEARING	($59,652)	$0	$0	$0	$0	n/a
AMP005 - CONTRACTING AND PROCUREMENT	$843,899	$947,879	$762,546	$0	$762,546	(19.55%)
AMP008 - EEO AND DIVERSITY	$1,662,405	$1,801,795	$1,807,648	$0	$1,807,648	0.32%
AMP009 - FLEET MANAGEMENT	$597,794	$619,269	$629,818	$0	$629,818	1.70%
AMP011 - HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES	$1,757,836	$2,049,010	$2,205,528	($104,632)	$2,100,896	2.53%
AMP012 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	$1,269,041	$1,705,351	$3,880,726	($26,304)	$3,854,422	126.02%
AMP014 - LEGAL SERVICES	$750,130	$777,238	$775,140	$182,893	$958,034	23.26%
AMP016 - PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	$1,139,399	$1,514,372	$1,193,375	$0	$1,193,375	(21.20%)
AMP019 - PROPERTY, ASSET, AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT	$3,530,317	$3,848,638	$3,958,821	($216,556)	$3,742,265	(2.76%)
AMP020 - QUALITY ASSURANCE	$333,756	$418,891	$424,976	$0	$424,976	1.45%
AMP023 - RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	$461,601	$619,781	$645,404	$0	$645,404	4.13%
AMP024 - RISK MANAGEMENT	$388,061	$499,205	$401,991	$0	$401,991	(19.47%)
AMP026 - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	$787,538	$849,749	$978,945	$0	$978,945	15.20%
AMP030 - EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION	$3,160,814	$3,944,967	$4,013,763	$0	$4,013,763	1.74%
H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	$5,730,803	$5,593,879	$5,837,569	$252,803	$6,090,372	8.88%
H03502 - ECONOMIC OPPORTUNTIES DEVELOPMENT	$2,104,824	$231,478	$119,035	$300,000	$419,035	81.03%
H03503 - EDUCATION	$7,850,822	$7,812,364	$8,181,420	$94,772	$8,276,192	5.94%

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H03505 - YOUTH ENGAGMENT	$1,501,915	$1,489,121	$1,474,095	$0	$1,474,095	(1.01%)
H03506 - COMMUNITY OUTREACH	$9,156,711	$11,470,980	$9,644,841	($81,077)	$9,563,764	(16.63%)
H03507 - HEALTHCARE	$2,962,710	$4,044,019	$4,691,964	($318,191)	$4,373,773	8.15%
H03508 - RESIDENTIAL	$42,014,615	$27,228,007	$29,103,193	$0	$29,103,193	6.89%
H03509 - JUVENILE FACILITIES OVERSIGHT	$104,437	$0	$0	$0	$0	n/a
H03510 - SECURE FACILITIES - GENERAL	$4,656,809	$14,048,556	$14,220,348	($405,178)	$13,815,171	(1.66%)
PRG001 - NO PROGRAM	$59,652	$0	$0	$0	$0	n/a
TOTAL GROSS FUNDS	**$93,564,768**	**$92,739,895**	**$96,082,197**	**($321,469)**	**$95,760,728**	**3.26%**
Executive Office of the Mayor - YA						
O00101 - AFRICAN AFFAIRS	$733,523	$773,981	$0	$0	$0	(100.00%)
O00102 - AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS	$484,308	$749,248	$0	$0	$0	(100.00%)
TOTAL GROSS FUNDS	**$1,217,831**	**$1,523,229**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**(100.00%)**
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children						
H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	$578,855	$1,247,254	$0	$733,094	$733,094	(41.22%)
TOTAL GROSS FUNDS	**$578,855**	**$1,247,254**	**$0**	**$733,094**	**$733,094**	**(41.22%)**
GRAND TOTAL	**$316,086,242**	**$319,880,817**	**$312,488,547**	**($994,928)**	**$311,493,619**	**(2.62%)**

Fiscal Year 2026 Agency Capital Budget Changes

The Committee does not make recommendations for Fiscal Year 2026 Agency Capital Budget Changes.

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Committee Budget Process and Purview

The Committee on Youth Affairs is responsible for general matters related to District youth and family welfare services. The Committee serves an integral oversight role and maintains quality control over its subordinate agencies. The Committee is primarily responsible for the wellbeing of juveniles involved with Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS). The Committee also handles juvenile justice and criminal justice issues connected to the rehabilitation of District children generally. The Committee has joint jurisdiction with the Committee on Public Safety and Justice over these juvenile and criminal justice matters as they pertain to the Office of the Attorney General. The Committee also oversees the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children and additionally conducts oversight over the Mayor's Offices on African Affairs and African American Affairs programming related to youth mentorship, cultural events, and economic empowerment.

The District agencies, boards, and commissions that come under the Committee's purview are as follows:

- Child and Family Services Agency
- Citizen Review Panel on Child Abuse and Neglect
- Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services
- Juvenile Abscondence Review Committee
- Office and Commission on African Affairs
- Office and Commission on African American Affairs
- Office of the Attorney General (jointly, only for oversight purposes, with the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety)
- Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

Notably, the budgetary recommendations in this report focus on the Child and Family Services Agency, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, all of which fall under the Committee's budgetary oversight.

The Committee is chaired by Ward 5 Councilmember Zachary Parker. The other members of the Committee are At-Large Councilmember Kenyan R. McDuffie, Ward 2 Councilmember Brooke Pinto, and At-Large Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr..

The Committee held performance and budget oversight hearings on the following dates:

Performance Oversight Hearings		
Date	**Title**	**Attachment**
March 6, 2025	• Mayor's Office of African Affairs	• Attachment D
February 13, 2025	• Mayor's Office of African American Affairs	• Attachment E

DRAFT

Performance Oversight Hearings		
Date	**Title**	**Attachment**
	• Child and Family Services Agency • Office of Ombudsperson for Children	
March 6, 2025	• Department of Youth Rehabilitation (DYRS) • Office of the Attorney General	• Attachment F

Budget Oversight Hearings		
Date	**Title**	**Attachment**
May 29, 2025	• Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) • Office of Ombudsperson for Children (OFC)	• Attachment G
June 11, 2025	• Department of Youth Rehabilitation (DYRS)	• Attachment H

The Committee received comments from members of the public during these hearings. Copies of witness testimony are included in this report as Attachment D, Attachment E, Attachment F, Attachment G, and Attachment H.

A video recording of the hearings can be obtained through the Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment or at entertainment.dc.gov.

Fiscal Year 2026 Agency Recommendations

Summary information about the agency's recommended budget and related adjustments can be found in the earlier summary tables. A full list of all budget adjustments can be found in Attachment A.

Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)

AGENCY MISSION AND OVERVIEW

The mission of CFSA is to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of abused and neglected children in the District of Columbia and to strengthen their families.

CFSA investigates reports of child abuse and neglect and provides child protection. Services include supportive community-based services that help families overcome difficulties while keeping their children out of foster care, foster care for children who cannot be safe at home, and adoption for children who cannot go home. CFSA seeks to provide the highest quality of community-based services to increase the number of families who receive preventive and

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supportive services, and to expand the network of resources providing services to at-risk children and their families.

CFSA operates through the following 8 divisions:

In-Home And Out of Home Care - Provides case management for children and youth in foster care to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in care while moving them to permanence as quickly as possible via reunification, guardianship, or adoption.

This division contains the following 6 activities:

- **Adoption Subsidy and Support** - provides financial assistance services to eligible relatives and adoptive parents so that they can maintain children in permanent homes;

- **Guardianship Subsidy and Support** - provides financial assistance services to eligible relatives and non-family caregivers so that they can maintain children in permanent homes;

- **Kinship Support** - identifies viable family resources, conduct family team meetings, facilitates placements with relatives, expedites licensing of kinship foster parents, and provide supportive services to kinship caregivers;

- **Out-Of-Home Child Placement** - identifies living arrangements for children who must enter foster care, including family foster homes, group care, and independent living program;

- **Out-of-Home Clinical Case Management and Support** - serves families out-of-home through social work unites co-located with community partners to provide community-based family supportive services; and

- **In-Home Clinical Case Management and Support** - services families in-home through social work units co-located with community partners to provide community-based family supportive services.

CFSA Program Operations – Provides oversight of CFSA purchases via contracts and ensures program outcomes adherence to contractual requirements.

This division contains the following activity:

- **Contract Monitoring** – provides oversight of CFSA purchases via contracts and ensures program outcomes and adherence to contractual requirements.

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Office of Thriving Families – supports families caring for children and providing a long-term permanent placement for children.

This division contains the following 5 activities:

- **Grandparent Subsidy and Support** – provides financial assistance services to eligible grandparents so that they can maintain children in permanent homes;

- **Relative Caregiver Subsidy and Support** provides financial assistance services to eligible close relatives so that they can maintain children in permanent homes;

- **Community Prevention and Early Intervention**– provides staffing support and oversight of community-based prevention, supportive and after-care services to families and at-risk children in their homes, maximizing the use of informal and formal support systems;

- **Primary Prevention** - provides direct community-based prevention supportive and after-care services to families and at-risk children in their homes, maximizing the use of informal and formal support systems; and

- **Housing and Community Supports -** provides community-based housing and housing supportive services to families, at-risk children and older youth, maximizing the use of informal and formal support systems.

Hotline and Investigations - Receives reports of suspected child abuse and neglect through the hotline, investigates families whose children are alleged victims of abuse and neglect and makes determinations regarding immediate separation and/or court referrals.

This division contains the following activity:

- **Investigations -** receives reports of suspected child abuse and neglect through the hotline, investigates families whose children are alleged victims of abuse and neglect and makes determinations regarding immediate separation and/or court referrals.

State Policy and Planning Operations - serves as the "state-level" function for the District child welfare and supports CFSA's policy development, planning and data analysis, Fair Hearing, D.C. Child Protection Register, quality assurance, and training functions. In addition, Policy and Planning licenses foster parents, group home and independent living facilities that provide services to youth.

This division contains 5 activities:

- **Family Resources -** provides foster and adoptive resource recruitment and support

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services to current and potential foster, kinship, and adoptive parents;

- **Facility Licensing -** provides licensing for CFSA's foster homes;

- **State Planning and Data Analysis -** provides reporting, data analysis, technical assistance, and research services to the agency and external stakeholders in order to facilitate short and long-term agency strategic planning;

- **State Policy -** develops agency policy and provides review, interpretation and decision-making services to the Director and staff so that they can make decisions consistent with best practices and with statutory and regulatory requirements; and

- **State Quality Assurance -** provides assessment, monitoring, and recommendations services to CFSA staff and key stakeholders to improve child welfare practices. In addition, Quality Assurance is responsible for facilitating qualitative review processes such as child fatality reviews and quality service reviews to identify areas of strength and needs in line with best practices and child welfare standards.

Well Being – provides comprehensive well-being services for children in CFSA's care, including educational services, liaisons for substance abuse and domestic violence services, and day care. This program is responsible for implementing CFSA's trauma-informed practice.

This division contains the following 5 activities:

- **Older Youth Empowerment -** provides independent living skills, to include life skills Training, vocational and educational support, and transitional assistance to youth between the ages of 15-21;

- **Clinical Health Services -** provide**s** medical and behavioral health screenings prior to placement and expert consultation in health, residential treatment, developmental disabilities, and 24/7 on-call support for medical and mental health services;

- **Healthy Horizons Clinic Services -** provides medical health screenings prior to placement and expert consultation in health, residential treatment, developmental disabilities, and 24/7 on-call support for medical services;

- **Nurse Care Management - s**upports a cadre of nurse care professionals to support the medical needs of children in care; and

- **Wellbeing and Support - p**rovides comprehensives well-being services for children in CFSA's care, including educational services, liaisons for substance abuse, and domestic violence services.

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Agency Financial Operations - provides comprehensive and efficient financial management services to, and on behalf of, District agencies so that the financial integrity of the District of Columbia is maintained. This division is standard for all agencies using performance-based budgeting.

Agency Management - provides for administrative support and the required tools to achieve operational and programmatic results. This division is standard for all agencies using performance-based budgeting.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

For Fiscal Year 2026, the Committee recommends that CFSA prioritize efforts that maximize child and family well-being across the District. Key areas of focus should include: hiring additional social workers to reduce staff caseloads and deepen the quality of care youth receive; expanding the agency's reach through a broader and more robust home visitation network; strengthening partnerships with community-based organizations to improve the investigation of cases involving physical and sexual abuse against youth; and enhancing follow-up on truancy referrals to ensure no child falls through the cracks, even as broader systemic efforts to address truancy are pursued through other agencies.

Budget Recommendations

- ***Addressing the Critical Social Worker Shortage***

In recognition of the ongoing shortage of social workers, the Committee recommends the creation of competitive hiring packages that include compelling recruitment incentives and signing bonuses. This recommendation stems from a deep concern about the growing workloads placed on existing staff and the resulting strain on the quality of care provided to youth in the custody of CFSA. High caseloads not only contribute to staff burnout and attrition but also compromise the agency's ability to deliver timely, trauma-informed, and individualized services to vulnerable children and families.

To address this, the Committee has proposed a targeted budget realignment that will allow CFSA to better recruit, hire, and retain qualified social workers—particularly those with mental health expertise—by redirecting funds from unproductive allocations. Specifically, the Committee recommends eliminating 19 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions that have remained vacant for extended periods. These longstanding vacancies reflect structural inefficiencies and represent a missed opportunity to bolster frontline support. By repurposing the funding from these positions, CFSA can make immediate investments in workforce stabilization efforts and other supports, thereby helping to reduce caseloads, improve staff morale, and enhance service quality for the children and families who depend on the agency's care.

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- ***Closing the Gap for Home Visiting Programs***

CFSA funds a network of six Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) programs to provide home visitation programs that target families who may have histories of trauma, adverse childhood experiences, intimate partner violence, and mental health and/or substance abuse issues. These services also support expecting parents and families with young children who live in communities that face greater barriers to positive outcomes and have fewer resources to support child and family well-being. The home visiting/parent education initiative is broad-based and includes home visiting programs, parental education and support, and community-level approaches to enhance outcomes and well-being for young children and their families. The Committee acknowledges the vital importance of these programs.

While the Mayor's FY26 proposed budget provides funding for home visitation programs, it did not include a one-time enhancement made by the Council in FY25. Furthermore, CFSA will not be able to fund the amount typically covered by federal funds, which are currently unavailable to the agency. The Committee recommends closing this gap by enhancing the budget by $200,000 to account for loss in federal funds for home visiting programs and enable the agency to fund all six Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention programs in FY26.

- ***Restoring Safe Shores Funding***

Safe Shores is the only Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) in the District of Columbia and participates as a member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team on Child Abuse Investigations ("MDT"). MDT is a group of entities that works together to serve hundreds of children annually through its child abuse case review system, which makes the criminal legal system less traumatic and difficult to navigate for victims and their families by reducing duplicative interfacing with law enforcement for reporting and investigative documentation.

Safe Shores provides survivor-centered intervention, hope, and healing for children and families affected by abuse, trauma, and violence in the District and works to prevent and end child abuse and neglect through promising practices, policies, and partnerships.

The Mayor's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget included no funding for Safe Shores *or any equivalent services at CFSA or any other agency*. While the Executive asserts that these functions can be absorbed by CFSA, the Mayor's budget did not include the operating or capital costs CFSA would require to do so. Given the fact that these services are essential to the operation of the District's criminal justice system, the Committee finds it curious that the Office of the Chief Financial Officer would certify these cuts without evidence of any planned replacement.

Separately, the Committee holds significant reservations on the notion that CFSA is well positioned to take on the extensive and highly specialized responsibilities held by Safe Shores at a time when severe staffing shortages exist at the agency. The absorption of those functions

DRAFT

would also create conflicts of interest because CFSA would both be responsible for assisting in investigations involving youth and for decisions relating to custody. With the generous transfer of $1,350,000 from the Committee on Facilities, the Committee on Youth Affairs restores all funding to ensure Safe Shores's important work continues in Fiscal Year 2026.

- ***Reducing Truancy in the District***

The Committee recommends transferring $475,000 to the Committee on Human Services to support the expansion of the DHS truancy pilot program to an additional middle school. This recommendation reflects the Committee's continued concern over the inefficiencies and limitations in the current truancy referral process managed by CFSA.

According to CFSA's responses during performance oversight hearings, the agency screened in only approximately 200 out of more than 5,000 truancy referrals made year-to-date. CFSA interprets its mandate narrowly, focusing primarily on cases that meet a strict definition of educational neglect. As a result, the vast majority of truancy-related referrals are not investigated, and many students and families go without meaningful intervention.

The Committee supports CFSA's interpretation of its statutory mission and acknowledges that the agency is not best positioned to manage truancy cases that do not involve other indicators of abuse or neglect. For that reason, the Committee seeks to formally shift responsibility for truancy referrals from CFSA to DHS, which is better equipped to provide early intervention and wraparound services for students struggling with school attendance. This funding transfer will help scale the existing DHS pilot and begin the process of reorienting the District's truancy response system toward prevention and support rather than investigation.

Policy Recommendations

- ***Supporting Foster Youth Aging Out of the System by Expanding Permanency Options***

In light of testimony from community members and recommendations from local experts that aging foster youth need broader support networks, Committee suggests expanding permanency options for older youth by exploring alternative permanency plans. The SOUL Family concept was developed by former foster youth who recognized that children aging out of care needed more adult support than traditional legal pathways could afford them. The SOUL structure allows a child involved with CFSA to establish a legal relationship with non-parental caregivers- the SOUL Family- without terminating existing family relationships. This permanency option gives older youth the opportunity to receive care and form lasting relationships with a network of adults that will provide for them as they transition out of the foster system. The Committee heard from local proponents of SOUL, including former DC foster youth, that the SOUL model can serve as a powerful and necessary safety net for youth aging out of the system and the Committee promotes these expanded permanency options. In Fiscal Year 2026, the Committee will advance legislation to establish SOUL as a permanency option within CFSA.

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- ***Reducing Reliance on Hidden Foster Care***

The Committee strongly recommends CFSA aim to reduce instances of hidden foster care that may result from its practices, whether intentional or not. 'Hidden' foster care occurs when a child welfare agency identifies an abused or neglected child and puts the child in the care of relatives through the implementation of a safety plan that foregoes child removal and formal placement measures. This results in the denial of CFSA benefits for these children and relative caregivers and generally places them outside the scope of CFSA monitoring and support. As a result of the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, the practice of hidden foster care became more prevalent at CFSA as it struggled to operate at full capacity. Through increased oversight, the Committee is working to reduce CFSA's reliance on hidden foster care and ensure children are placed with the appropriate caregivers and resources in maximally supportive environments. In particular, the Committee is planning to re-evaluate how CFSA creates and executes safety plans so that children are not funneled out of the child welfare system's protections.

- ***Transferring the Truancy Referral System to DHS***

The Committee continues to maintain that CFSA is not the most appropriate agency to manage the District's truancy referral system. While the Committee encourages CFSA to significantly increase its engagement with families of children referred for truancy, it supports ongoing efforts to transition broader truancy intervention responsibilities to other District agencies, particularly the DHS. Importantly, CFSA's core mandate is to investigate instances of abuse and neglect, and the Committee believes these statutory responsibilities should remain firmly within the agency's purview. At the same time, the Committee affirms that general truancy response, especially in cases not involving clear indicators of neglect, is better addressed through agencies with preventive, family-stabilizing missions.

- ***Increasing Subsidies to Foster Parents, Grandparents, and Close Relatives***

The Committee acknowledges the rapidly rising costs of caring for youth faced by foster parents, grandparents, and close relative caregivers in the District. As prices continue to climb, caregivers have advocated for increasing subsidy rates to help them keep apace and provide sufficiently for youth in their care. Looking forward, the Committee plans to consider avenues to boost the Grandparent Caregiver and Close Relative Caregiver Programs and build in more benefits for foster families.

- ***Extending the Eligible Age for Subsidies Under the Grandparents and Close Relatives Program***

Grandparent and close relative caregivers and their advocates continue to report that the current subsidy eligibility age of 18 is insufficient. Many subsidized youth who turn 18 continue to live with grandparents and close relatives until they graduate from high school. Because their subsidy ends as soon as they reach the age of majority, these youth and their caregivers lose crucial support prior to their transition to employment and independence. This can lead to undue

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hardship for these families who struggle to make up for the subsidy's shortfall. The Committee plans to consider raising the eligible age for grandparent and close relative subsidies to 19, provided that subsidized youth remain in high school or vocational training. This extension is consistent with TANF and GAC cut-offs and will empower youth to achieve academic milestones and help them make healthy transitions to adulthood.

Office the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC)

AGENCY MISSION AND OVERVIEW

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC) is committed to working collaboratively across systems that impact CFSA to foster improved outcomes, strengthen service delivery and increase accountability.

The OFC receives complaints and makes recommendation for resolution of complaints from CFSA constituents involving an administrative act of CFSA or a CFSA affiliate. The OFC will also facilitate interagency communication and coordination related to issues impacting CFSA children. OFC may investigate on its own initiative, systemic concerns related to CFSA children including issues relating to interagency communication and coordination. The OFC will review and provide recommendations to policies, procedures, regulations, and directives as established, implemented or practiced by CFSA or a CFSA affiliate.

In addition, the OFC will notify the appropriate CFSA contact, including the Agency Director and Office of General Counsel (OGC), if necessary, of identified concerns and make recommendations for improvement. The OFC will facilitate communication between CFSA and CFSA constituents as needed; offer voluntary conflict resolution services and provide education, information and referrals to individuals as appropriate.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- ***Restoring the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children***

The Mayor's FY26 Budget proposal eliminates the OFC. The Committee recommends restoring the OFC at $733, 094 in Fiscal Year 2026 and reversing the Mayor's proposal to eliminate the agency.

The Ombudsperson provides independent oversight and stands as an accountability and transparency mechanism for the child welfare system at large. According to OFC, the Office received 181 complaints from February 2023 through May 2025 and 63 complaints during FY25 (October 2024 through May 31, 2025), only 9 of which were screened out. The Office's independent investigations serve as a check on CFSA to address the structural power differential between CFSA and youth under its care and to elevate troubling trends within the District's child welfare system that warrant investigation. The functions of this office are necessary given the elimination of the internal ombudsperson within CFSA and ongoing reports of malpractice from within the agency.

DRAFT

The unique positionality of the OFC enables it to identify and tackle systemic issues and support interagency coordination. For example, OFC continues to engage in a comprehensive tracking of CFSA "crossover" youth who become involved in juvenile delinquency. In addition, OFC serves to resolve day to day issues for families involved in the child and family welfare system across agencies.

While the Committee supports OFC's mission and believes in the promise of its core functions to advance oversight of the District's child welfare system, the Committee was not able to fully restore all positions eliminated in the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposal due to its limited resources. As a result, one position is not restored in Fiscal Year 2026 by recommendation of the Committee: Chief Deputy Ombudsperson. Given the significant resource constraints it faced, the Committee sought to prioritize the restoration of the Executive Director, the statutorily mandated Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson, and two Ombuds Analyst positions with the objective of preserving key functions, including complaint investigation and resolution, identification of systemic issues and policy recommendations, and data collection and reporting. Job descriptions provided by the OFC to the Committee suggest that the restored positions recommended by the Committee maintain these essential duties. Additionally, only partial funding is restored to the non-personal operating budget based on input from the Office.

In light of the operating budget reduction resulting from these changes, the Committee recommends OFC work to identify interagency and external collaboration opportunities that can bolster its capacity to reach the Office's intended objectives. For example, the OFC may explore a partnership with the data unit within the Office of the Attorney General to identify trends of crossover youth, or consult with the Office of the DC Auditor to identify effective and efficient oversight tools at its disposal.

While the Committee ultimately recommends the reduction in 1 full-time equivalent (FTE), the Committee will continue exploring in Fiscal Year 2026 the most effective staffing structure for the Office and additional measures that may ensure its longevity.

- ***Conducting Robust Independent Oversight of Child Welfare***

While acknowledging the reduction to staff recommended for Fiscal Year 2026, the Committee calls on the OFC to leverage its restored operating budget to design and implement a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to oversight of youth within the care of CFSA and across broader youth-serving agencies, pursuant to their legislative mandate.

It its Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Report, the Committee on Facilities and Family Services suggested four main areas where the OFC could improve: increased data and analysis of placement disruptions in its annual report, increased data and analysis of mental health services for children involved with CFSA in its annual report, increased data and analysis of crossover youth in its annual report, and finally for OFC to include all cases and recommendations for

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agencies beside CFSA in its annual report.[1] To date, OFC has made inroads on these improvement areas, but gaps still remain.

Specifically, the Committee contends that the OFC should endeavor to make more progress with its data collection efforts and significantly increase the number of investigatory cases the office manages. The Committee plans to hold quarterly hearings in FY26 to monitor progress on the Office's activities and the aforementioned focus areas.

Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS)

AGENCY MISSION AND OVERVIEW

The mission of DYRS is to give court-involved youth the opportunity to become more productive citizens by building on the strengths of youths and their families in the least restrictive, most homelike environment consistent with public safety.

DYRS' vision is to provide the nation's best continuum of care for court-involved youth and their families through a wide range of programs that emphasize individual strengths, personal accountability, public safety, skill development, family involvement and community support.

DYRS is responsible for the supervision, custody, and care of young people charged with a delinquent act in the District of Columbia in one of the following circumstances:

- Youth who are detained in a DYRS facility while awaiting adjudication.
- Youth who are committed to DYRS by a DC Family Court judge following adjudication.

Youth can be initially committed to the agency until age 18 and may remain in the care of DYRS until the age of 21. The agency provides comprehensive support services to committed youth in our secure facilities as well as within the community. DYRS is designed to help young people get on the right track and successfully transition into adulthood.

DYRS works with fellow District agencies, community partners, and juvenile justice experts to achieve these goals. We collaborate to implement innovative, research-based models that align with best practices in the juvenile justice and youth development fields.

DYRS operates through the following three divisions:

Youth and Family Programs – provides Community Services for court-ordered youth,

[1] Certification of the Report and Recommendations of the Committee on Facilities and Family Services on the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget and Financial Plan for Agencies Under Its Purview.

DRAFT

including Supervised Independent Living Programs, Extended Family Homes, Residential Treatment Facilities, and Therapeutic Foster Care. This division provides custodial care, supervision, services, support, and opportunities to youth committed to the care and custody of DYRS and those awaiting court processing who are placed in the secure detention facility (Youth Services Center) or shelter care by the D.C. Superior Court.

This division contains the following 9 activities:

- **Case Management** – provides individualized case and care planning, management, and monitoring for all DYRS youth and families, including Pre-Dispositional Plan Development and Youth Family Team Meeting facilitation services;

- **Economic Opportunities Development** – provides youth in the District with free education and professional development opportunities and is responsible for orchestrating all programming for VOLT Academy;

- **Education** – provides youth in the care and custody of DYRS with access to educational programming and resources to ensure continuous academic achievement;

- **Youth Engagement** – manages violence preventative services and support programs for youth and families in the District;

- **Community Outreach** – ensures delivery of vital community-based support services, pro-social opportunities, and community engagement focused on coordinating family outreach programming, parent support groups, parent orientations, and family engagement events;

- **Healthcare-General** – provides food services, acute care services, immunizations, health and wellness education, behavioral health services, and preventative and comprehensive medical services to all DYRS youth in secure care;

- **Residential** – provides custodial care, supervision, services, support, and opportunities to youth committed to the care and custody of DYRS; care and custody of youth ordered to shelter care by the Superior Court of the District of Columbia; and community services for court-ordered youth (including Supervised Independent Living Programs, Extended Family Homes, Residential Treatment Facilities, and Therapeutic Foster Care); and

- **Secure Facilities-General** – provides management oversight, supervision, and administrative support to assure DYRS' goals are met as it relates to detained and committed populations while managing all referrals to contracted residential services. This includes tracking the utilization of contracted programs and services to inform planning and resource allocation. Residential program staff are responsible for providing

DRAFT

short-term care in secure custody at the Youth Services Center (YSC) for youth awaiting adjudication, disposition, or transfer to another facility.

Agency Management – provides administrative support and the required tools to achieve operational and programmatic results. This division is standard for all agencies using performance-based budgeting.

Agency Financial Operations – provides comprehensive and efficient financial management services to, and on behalf of, District agencies so that the financial integrity of the District of Columbia is maintained. This division is standard for all agencies using performance-based budgeting.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Budget Recommendations

The Committee's recommendations for DYRS are guided by three primary goals: (1) reducing the number of youth entering the District's criminal justice system; (2) deepening rehabilitation services for youth within DYRS; and (3) strengthening exit planning and re-entry support for youth transitioning out of detention. In summary, these priorities can be framed as prevention, rehabilitation, and re-entry support.

- ***Prevention: Reducing Truancy in the District***

The Committee's primary strategy for reducing the number of youth entering DYRS is to address chronic absenteeism and truancy in the District. While recent years have shown improvement in attendance metrics—with chronic absenteeism declining by 3.9 percentage points (from 43.1% in school year 2022–23 to 39.2% in 2023–24) and chronic truancy decreasing by 6.6 percentage points (from 36.9% to 30.3%)—significant challenges remain. As highlighted in a recent *Washington Post* investigation, truancy has surged in middle schools, rising from roughly 10% in the 2014–15 school year to over 30% by 2023–24.[2] Some schools, particularly those in underserved East-of-the-Anacostia neighborhoods, continue to experience truancy rates exceeding 50%.

Furthermore, the correlation between school attendance and youth criminal involvement has become increasingly evident. In 2023, following troubling attendance trends, the District experienced a notable spike in youth-involved crimes, particularly robberies and carjackings, with juvenile robbery arrests reaching their highest levels since the 1990s. These crime trends closely align with areas experiencing the sharpest increases in truancy, where students are often exposed to high-risk environments. In response, the Committee remains committed to advancing

[2] "Empty Desks: How the District's failure to curb truancy in middle schools fueled the biggest youth crime surge in a generation." Washington Post. June 9, 2025.

DRAFT

policies and investments that strengthen school engagement, improve attendance, and reduce justice system involvement among the District's youth.

While the Committee continues to advocate for an overhaul of the District's attendance system, including transitioning responsibility from CFSA and Court Social Services to DHS, it supports the ongoing pilot effort at DHS and seeks to expand its operations to an additional middle school. Therefore, the Committee transfers to the Committee on Human Services $475,000 to support this expansion in Fiscal Year 2026 and $1, 471, 545 across Fiscal Years 2027-2029. While this pilot is not directly related to DYRS, the Committee strongly believes it ultimately impacts the matriculation of youth into the District's criminal justice system.

- ***Rehabilitation: Accelerating Placements and Improving Programming at DYRS***

The Committee continues to be concerned about lagging timelines for placement and increasing population numbers at YSC. With new public safety strategies implemented District-wide that suggest more youth might encounter our criminal justice system, the Committee strongly believes it is essential to enhance rehabilitation services through educational and therapeutic services and accelerate placement timelines. The Reducing Recidivism at DYRS Act of 2024, which became law in April 2025, mandates that DYRS complete a validated risk and needs assessment for youth and produce within 10 days of detainment or shelter care and produce individualized treatment plans that inform their rehabilitation program placement within 2 days of the child's disposition hearing. By mandating a strict timeline for this initial assessment and planning, the law aims to accelerate placements of youth who often linger at YSC for months as they await assessments, rehabilitation plans, and ultimately placement. The law aims to reduce "dead time" whereby DYRS fails to make placements and provide programming over extended periods of time, delaying the rehabilitation and eventual release of many justice-involved youth.

The Committee seeks to support the implementation of Sections 3 and 4 of the Reducing Recidivism at DYRS Act of 2024 by funding 2 full-time equivalents (FTEs) identified in the Fiscal Impact Statement. These two positions include one Management Analyst to coordinate and track the newly required pre-disposition meetings and one Attorney to coordinate with the child's attorney and parents or guardians to review the validated risk and needs assessment and any other information necessary to develop an individualized rehabilitation plan for the youth.[3] In addition, the Committee recommends funding two additional full-time equivalents (FTEs) carrying out the duties of "Care Coordinator." During the Committee's budget oversight hearing, DYRS identified Care Coordinators as being integral to their approach to implementing the legislation. By fully funding Sections 3 and 4 and providing additional support FTEs, the Committee seeks to enable DYRS to carry out a more appropriate timeline for completing assessment, planning, and placement of youth held at YSC, ultimately reducing the youth awaiting placement population and addressing ongoing overcrowding issues at the facility. The Committee will closely monitor DYRS's implementation of the Reducing Recidivism at DYRS

[3] Fiscal Impact Statement –Recidivism Reduction, Oversight, and Accountability for DYRS Act of 2024 (ROAD Act), Office of the Chief Financial Officer.

DRAFT

Act of 2024 in Fiscal Year 2026 and will seek data reflecting the timeliness of assessment, rehabilitation planning, and placement of youth committed to the Department.

In addition to bolstering DYRS's capacity to reduce its detention population count, the Committee seeks to address significant concerns regarding the education programming received by youth at YSC. During an unannounced visit in May 2025, the Committee discovered that DYRS did not have direct instruction services in place for at least one female overflow unit. In lieu of direct instruction, youth received daily packets to be completed in return for prizes such as snacks, with little to no feedback provided. While the Department reported at its June 2025 budget oversight hearing that the issue had been corrected, the Committee questions that the issue has been rectified and believes detained youth at YSC continue to receive subpar educational programming. Therefore, the Committee dedicates $500,000 in one-time funding to supplement the agency's educational programming and enable Maya Angelou Academy to hire more teachers, to ensure there is pay equity for those teachers as compared to educators in the broader DC education ecosystem, and to purchase technology to support the instructional delivery.

- ***Re-entry Support: Improving Support for Youth Exiting Detention***

The Committee continues to be concerned about alarming rates of recidivism among detained youth at DYRS. The majority of youth the Committee has engaged at YSC and New Beginnings have had numerous stints of detention within DYRS. This confirms that there is a need to enhance rehabilitation efforts and better support youth when exiting detention. During this year's performance oversight hearing, Director Sam Abed shared with the Committee his plans to leverage existing staff to create a new exit planning or "reentry" division by the fall. The division would be charged with overhauling and managing the process and timelines by which youth committed to DYRS receive an individualized reentry plan.

To support DYRS's efforts to enhance its exit planning and to advance one of the Committee's goals, the Committee recommends investing $500,000 in Fiscal Year 2026 to establish a 12-month pilot grant program which will fund re-entry support services for a number of youth exiting DYRS detention to ensure they are connected to mental and behavioral health services and educational and work opportunities to reduce chances of recidivism.

The grant pilot will culminate with a detailed reporting to the Council, the District Attorney General, and DYRS, which will share outcomes tracked during the award period. The forthcoming report and data from the pilot will help to inform practices within DYRS to better support youth exiting detention.

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Policy Recommendations

- ***Reducing the Number of Youth Awaiting Placement***

The Committee maintains concerns regarding excessive delays for youth awaiting placement at the YSC. The YSC is a 98-bed facility which was last expanded by 10 new beds in 2018.[4]

Despite its constraints, the YSC has increasingly exceeded its capacity as the facility's daily population count has steadily increased over the last two years. Ongoing efforts taken by the Mayor and Council to apply additional curfew restrictions have resulted in even higher numbers of youth confined to the YSC facility than it has the resources, space, or mandate to accommodate. The Committee acknowledges that YSC is designed for temporary detention and that DYRS must recommit to developing and maintaining efficient placement procedures. The Committee heard testimony regarding the negative impact of slow placement on the health and wellbeing of youth at YSC. The Committee is also cognizant of other consequences related to these delays, including outbreaks of violence due to overcrowding and abscondence from detention.

The Committee will continue its close monitoring of youth awaiting placement population data, including length of stay and DYRS compliance with timelines mandated in the Reducing Recidivism at DYRS Act of 2024.

- ***Improving Team Decision-making Meetings and Family Engagement***

One of the key changes made by Director Abed upon assuming his role was to eliminate the Team Decision-making Meeting (TDM) team and shift the management of TDMs to Care Coordinators. Under previous DYRS protocols (as of 2024), a TDM was held during which parents, guardians, attorneys, youth, and staff met to plan for the discharge of the youth ahead of their release.[5] Through extensive engagement with advocates and stakeholders, the Committee has learned that parents, families, and attorneys have increasingly been excluded from these meetings. Director Abed stated during the FY26 budget oversight hearing that the agency's goal is to hold TDMs within 10 days of placement, which considering prolonged timelines for placements, is insufficient. The Committee will monitor DYRS's progress with TDMs as it implements the Reducing Recidivism at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024 and will hold regular oversight hearings focused on the inclusion of parents and legal representatives in these meetings.

- ***Monitoring Incidents at DYRS Facilities***

The Committee remains concerned about reports of abusive incidents at DYRS facilities. It notes one particularly disturbing account from Disability Rights DC that reveals multiple occurrences

[4] Office of Independent Juvenile Justice Facilities Oversight.

[5] Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG/DC SAG) Title II Formula Grants Program State Plan 2024-2026.

DRAFT

of alleged illegal and dangerous restraint of youth with disabilities by employees at YSC in the past year. The Committee acknowledges that in response to this report and others, DYRS announced a policy directive that prone restraints are expressly forbidden in its facilities and worked to update incident response protocols to avoid unnecessary episodes of staff intervention. In addition, DYRS began working in partnership with a trauma-informed care expert who will consult on training staff on de-escalation practices. However, the Committee is aware that strong oversight will be needed to ensure effective implementation of these measures and that other issues, such as extended youth seclusion and confinement at facilities, will need to be addressed going forward. The Committee will also continue to engage with community stakeholders and other experts to maintain careful, informed review of DYRS policy and execution.

- ***Complying with Fire Safety Regulations***

The Office of Independent Juvenile Justice Facilities Oversight released this year an alarming report citing failing conditions with regard to fire inspection, testing, and monitoring systems at YSC and New Beginnings. In response to the citations listed in the report, the Committee made an unannounced visit to the YSC, during which it was found there existed a lack of "fire watchers," a key aspect of DYRS's interim plans to offset safety failures with their fire system. During its budget oversight hearing, DYRS assured the Committee that measures had been taken to rectify any safety concerns and that the appropriate contracts were in place to complete necessary work in a timely fashion. Nevertheless, the Committee will continue to monitor necessary improvements to ensure that all youth and staff within DYRS facilities are safe. The Committee strongly recommends DYRS strictly adhere to the recommendations made the Office of Independent Juvenile Justice Facilities Oversight.

- ***Assuring Placement Facilities' Compliance***

The Committee remains concerned about placement facilities' compliance with safety standards and code regulations. Of note, on May 19, three juveniles absconded from an out-of-state placement facility due to a lack of compliance to agency expectations and regulatory requirements. While the agency conducted a review of regulations of the specific facility, the Committee recommends conducting a comprehensive review of all placement facilities, in and out of state, to ensure compliance with safety standards and code regulations. This recommendation is driven not only by the need to maintain safety and accountability within DYRS-managed and contracted facilities, but also the imperative to improve public safety. The Committee views this as a serious failure of facility management and urges immediate action by the agency to ensure this does not happen again in the future.

- ***Expanding and Deepening Rehabilitation Programming and Activities***

The Committee believes that a key strategy to strengthen rehabilitative outcomes for detained youth at DYRS is the expansion of meaningful programming and structured activities across all facilities. While the Committee has recommended targeted investments in the FY26 budget, including funding for enhanced educational programming and the creation of a pre-

DRAFT

apprenticeship program, more comprehensive efforts are needed to ensure that all youth have access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate, and engaging rehabilitative programming.

The Committee will continue its oversight to monitor how the agency supports youth in its care and urges DYRS to take proactive steps to close programming gaps. Moving forward, the Committee recommends that the agency explore the use of individualized laptops or other educational technologies to provide personalized learning opportunities. It also encourages DYRS to ensure that each housing unit offers a variety of structured activities that productively occupy youth during periods of unstructured or "down time."

Additionally, as the agency begins to implement the requirements of the Reducing Recidivism at DYRS Act of 2024, the Committee expects programming to be expanded and tailored to meet the specific needs of each youth, as outlined in the individualized rehabilitative plans the agency will be required to develop.

- ***Addressing Staffing Challenges***

The Committee is aware of ongoing staffing challenges within DYRS, particularly as they relate to the use, and potential misuse, of various leave policies. As such, the Committee supports the Mayor's proposal to adjust leave eligibility standards for District agency employees.

Importantly, the Committee draws a clear distinction between modifications to leave policies for government personnel and broader public access to paid leave. While the Committee continues to support efforts to expand leave access for District residents, there is ample evidence that leave policies are being inconsistently applied or in some cases abused within certain agencies, including DYRS, with negative impacts on staffing and service delivery.

To help stabilize operations and reduce delays in service, the Committee recommends the addition of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions to support DYRS's efforts to accelerate placement timelines and strengthen its rehabilitative programming. Looking ahead, the Committee also supports exploring the use of hiring and retention incentives to improve recruitment and retention outcomes within the agency, though due to limited resources, the Committee is not able to commit to those benefits currently.

- ***Tracking and Supporting Crossover Youth***

Through close consultation with local advocates and stakeholders, the Committee is aware of concerns regarding the lack of coordination and targeted efforts to support crossover youth, a subset of youth who have interacted with the child welfare system prior to their involvement with the criminal justice system. To this end, the Office of the DC Auditor released a report last year detailing the need for further interagency collaboration to address the specific needs of this youth population. A number of recommendations stemming from this report warrant additional consideration by multiple agencies, including DYRS.

DRAFT

In particular, the Committee calls on DYRS to act on the Auditor's recommendations to identify and track crossover youth in their case management system, establish a "Crossover Youth Steering Committee", and train staff on the unique needs of crossover youth. The Committee will maintain close coordination with CFSA and DYRS in Fiscal Year 2026 to ensure that a more robust set of support is in place for this unique population and that efforts are made to act on the Auditor's recommendations.

Committee of the Whole Recommendations

DISTRICT CHILD TAX CREDIT ALLOCATION

The Committee recommends that a portion of the Committee's remaining balance, totaling $1,000,000 in Fiscal Year 2026 and $13,337,008.20 across the financial plan (Fiscal Years 2026-2029) be allocated by the Committee of the Whole for the purposes of funding the District Child Tax Credit.

The Child Tax Credit is a proven policy tool to reduce child and family poverty, promote stability, and support long-term positive outcomes for children. Research consistently shows that raising the economic floor for families through refundable tax credits improves educational performance, health outcomes, and future earning potential. Reversing the Mayor's proposed cut to the District Child Tax Credit is essential because even modest enhancements to a family's resources bolster child and family success.

When implemented at the federal level in 2021, the temporary expansion of the Child Tax Credit cut child poverty nearly in half from 9.7% in 2020 to 5.2% in 2021. According to the Center on Poverty & Social Policy, child poverty in the District dropped to 13.8% in 2021, compared to nearly 22.8% before the expansion. These gains undoubtedly inform child outcomes and ultimately speak to improved youth wellbeing. Scaling the District Child Tax Credit will have similar positive outcomes for youth.

The table below summarizes this investment recommendation:

CHILD TAX CREDIT INVESTMENT FROM YA – COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
$1,000,000	$4,030,436.33	$4,111,789.35	$4,194,782.49

Fiscal Year 2025 Revised Local Budget Recommendations

The Committee does not recommend any changes to the FY25 Revised Local Budget.

DRAFT

Budget Support Act Recommendations

Recommendations on Mayor's Proposed Subtitles

The Committee provides comments on the following subtitles of the "Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Support Act of 2025":

- Title V. Subtitle B. "Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Amendment Act of 2025"

The legislative language is included in Attachment B.

TITLE V. SUBTITLE B. "OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN AMENDMENT ACT OF 2025"

Purpose, Effect, and Impact on Existing Law

This subtitle the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020, eliminating the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.

Committee Recommendation and Reasoning

The Committee recommends *striking* the Mayor's proposed subtitle eliminating the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. To account for significant resource constraints, the Committee restores all current FTEs with the exception of the Chief Deputy Ombudsperson. The Committee contends that, notwithstanding considerations for significant improvement in meeting its mandate, OFC plays a nonduplicative and critical role in conducting oversight over the District's child welfare system, and this subtitle reflects the Committee's desire to maintain the Office's existence and its core and legally mandated functions.

Fiscal Impact

While the fiscal impact of the Mayor's subtitle was $1.127M in savings, this figure was based on the number of positions approved in the FY25 budget. The Committee recommends restoring 4.75 full-time equivalents (FTEs) beginning in Fiscal Year 2026, reducing the personal service costs by 1.0 FTE (Chief Deputy Ombudsperson). The table below summarizes the Committee's recommended budget totals across the financial plan (Fiscal Years 2026-2029).

FY26 Recommendation - Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	**FY 2026**	**FY 2027**	**FY 2028**	**FY 2029**	**Total**
Personal Services	$633,816.64	$647,477.30	$660,845.59	$674,491.09	$2,616,630.61
Non-Personal Services	$99,277.36	$101,262.91	$103,288.17	$105,353.93	$409,182.36
Total Savings	$733,094.00	$748,740.21	$764,133.75	$779,845.02	$3,025,812.97

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Recommendations for New Subtitles

The Committee provides comments on the following subtitles of the "Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Support Act of 2025":

- Subtitle X. Youth Pre-apprenticeship Grant Pilot Program Establishment Amendment Act of 2025.

- Subtitle X. Youth Recidivism Reduction Pilot Grant Program Establishment Amendment Act of 2025.

- Subtitle X. Committee on Youth Affairs Subject to Appropriations Repeals and Modifications Act of 2025.

The legislative language is included in Attachment C.

SUBTITLE X. YOUTH PRE-APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PILOT PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT AMENDMENT ACT OF 2025.

Purpose, Effect, and Impact on Existing Law

This subtitle establishes a 12-month pilot grant in Fiscal Year 2026 to fund pre-apprenticeship training for youth detained at New Beginnings.

Committee Reasoning

The Committee heard from multiple stakeholders and community members during the DYRS budget hearing about the need for youth to develop productive job skills while in DYRS detention. Pre-apprenticeship programming allows youth to gain knowledge and professional connections that they can use to gain employment or return to education upon their re-entry to the community. While DYRS agrees that detained youth would benefit from the opportunity to gain these skills and connect with local industry, there is currently no formal program to provide these trainings and no resources available for it. This grant will fund the creation of an official DYRS program that funds workforce skills training for detained youth through an evidence-based instruction model. The program will promote targeted-skills development to enable youth to earn post-secondary education credit and industry-recognized apprenticeships. With this training, youth will have the chance to obtain high-skill, high-wage employment in local industry and steer away from recidivism.

Section-by-Section Analysis

Sec. xxx1 Short title.

Sec. xxx2 Amends the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services Establishment Act of 2004, effective December 9, 2004 (D.C. Law 15-335; D.C. Official Code § 2–1515 *et seq*.) by

DRAFT

adding a section that establishes a grant pilot program at DYRS to fund pre-apprenticeship training for youth at New Beginnings.

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact of this subtitle is $300,000 in Fiscal Year 2026, and there is no fiscal impact in Fiscal Years 2027-2029.

SUBTITLE X. YOUTH RECIDIVISM REDUCTION PILOT GRANT PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT AMENDMENT ACT OF 2025.

Purpose, Effect, and Impact on Existing Law

This subtitle establishes a 12-month pilot grant in Fiscal Year 2026 to fund community reentry services for youth exiting secure detention at DYRS facilities.

Committee Reasoning

The Committee heard directly from detained youth and from advocates during performance oversight about a lack of coordinated support for youth who are released from DYRS secure detention. DYRS has conceded that exit planning within the agency requires reforms, and the agency plans to create a new exit planning division, leveraging existing staff, to produce a more robust exit planning process by January 2026. While DYRS exit plans will generate a blueprint for youth leaving DYRS, DYRS maintains that they do not have the resources nor the responsibility to ensure the implementation of the reentry plans. This grant seeks to provide funds for community organizational support to implement the reentry plans by providing for programs that assist with housing, education reenrollment coordination, mentorship, workforce training, and other community activities with the overall goal of reducing recidivism and providing better opportunities for youth to change their trajectories.

Section-by-Section Analysis

Sec. xxx1 This subtitle may be cited as the "Youth Recidivism Reduction Grant Pilot Program Establishment Amendment Act of 2025".

Sec. xxx2 Amends The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services Establishment Act of 2004, effective December 9, 2004 (D.C. Law 15-335; D.C. Official Code § 2–1515 *et seq*.) by adding a new section that establishes a grant pilot program to fund youth re-entry services.

Fiscal Impact

This subtitle has a fiscal impact of $500,000 in Fiscal Year 2026, and there is no impact in Fiscal Years 2027-2029.

DRAFT

SUBTITLE X. COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AFFAIRS SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATIONS REPEALS AND MODIFICATIONS ACT OF 2025.

Purpose, Effect, and Impact on Existing Law

This subtitle repeals the subject to appropriations qualifier in Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the Reducing Recidivism at DYRS Act of 2024.

Committee Reasoning

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Committee funds Section 3 and Section 4 of the Reducing Recidivism at DYRS Act of 2024 and transfers funds to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety to fund section 5 of the same. This subtitle acknowledges the funding of the legislation and consequently repeals the law's subject to appropriations language. These sections of the law apply only to DYRS and provide for the implementation of assessments, development of individualized rehabilitation plans, planning of pre-dispositional meetings, and measures that may be taken by parents or guardians for the wellbeing of youth committed to DYRS.

Section-by-Section Analysis

Sec. xxx1 Short title.

Sec. xxx2 Amends the Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, effective Mar 28, 2025 (D.C. Law 25-0321; 71 DCR 11542) by repealing the subject to appropriations language for sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Act.

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact of this subtitle is $284,000 in Fiscal Year 2026 and $1,172,691.53 across the financial plan summarized in the table below.

FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
$284,000.00	$290,156.00	$296,188.50	$302,347.03

Committee Action and Vote

On Monday, June 23, 2025, at 12:XX p.m., the Committee met in person and virtually to consider and vote on the Mayor's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget for the agencies under its purview, the provisions of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Support Act of 2025 referred to the Committee for comment and the new subtitles proposed, and the Committee's Budget Report. Chairperson Zachary Parker called the Additional Meeting to order and determined the existence of a quorum with Councilmembers XXXXXX in attendance.

DRAFT

[Summary of markup]

Committee and Legislative Staff:

Deputy Chief of Staff:	*Conor Shaw*
Committee Director:	*Thomas Franco*
Legislative Director:	*Neferteria Brown:*
Legislative Counsel:	*Joseph Dweck*
Legislative Assistant:	*Allison Bailey*
Policy Advisor:	*Sam Bonar*

Central Office Staff Assigned to the Committee:

Senior Budget Analyst:	*Samuel Hodges*
Budget Analyst:	*Kaira Smith*
Assistant General Counsel:	*Runako Kumbula Allsopp*

Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of Revenue Analysis, Staff Assigned to the Committee:

Fiscal Analyst:	*Kevin Lang*

Attachments

Attachment A:	Consolidated Entry Report of Recommended Changes to Agency Budgets and Revenues for Agencies under the Committee's Purview
Attachment B:	Recommended Legislative Language for the Mayor's Proposed Budget Support Act Subtitles under the Committee's Purview
Attachment C:	Recommended Legislative Language for New Subtitles
Attachment D:	MOAA 3-6-25 Performance Oversight Hearing Witness Testimony
Attachment E:	MOAAA-CFSA-OFC Performance 2-13-25 Oversight Hearing Witness Testimony
Attachment F:	DYRS-Office of Attorney General 3-6-25 Performance Oversight Hearing Witness Testimony

DRAFT

Attachment G: CFSA-OFC 5-29-25 Budget Hearing Witness Testimony

Attachment H: DYRS 6-11-25 Budget Oversight Hearing Witness Testimony

Attachment J: Budget Oversight - Agency Testimony

Attachment K: Budget Oversight – Agency Responses to Pre-hearing Questions

DRAFT

Attachment A

Agency	Scenario	Committee	Cluster	Agency Code	DFS Appr. Fund	DFS Fund	DFS Program Parent L1	DFSProgram	DFSCost Ctr. Parent L1	DFS Cost Center	DFS Account Parent L1	DFS Account	DFS Project	Proposed Change in FTEs	Resources/ Budget	Adjustment	Recurring or One-Time Change	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	Comments	Legislation	Tech. Corr.
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP011 - HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES	100058 - HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES - GENERAL	H5 101 - OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	70396 - HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE - RL0	701300C - ADDITIONAL GROSS PAY	7013010 - OTHER ADDITIONAL GROSS PAY	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	One Time		$200,000				CFSA Social Worker $10,000 Sign-on bonus incentives		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP012 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	100071 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - GENERAL	H5 101 - OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	70395 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OFFICE - RL0	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($56,503)	($57,690)	($58,843)	($60,020)	Position #13312 - Computer Operator has been vacant since 12/7/19 YA-010		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP012 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	100071 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - GENERAL	H5 101 - OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	70395 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OFFICE - RL0	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($106,763)	($109,005)	($111,185)	($113,409)	Position #18834 - Information Technology Specialist has been vacant since 6/19/22 YA-013		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP012 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	100071 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - GENERAL	H5 101 - OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	70395 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OFFICE - RL0	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($15,369)	($15,738)	($16,108)	($16,486)	Position #13312 - Computer Operator has been vacant since 12/7/19 YA-031		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP012 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	100071 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - GENERAL	H5 101 - OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	70395 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OFFICE - RL0	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($29,040)	($29,736)	($30,435)	($31,151)	Position #18834 - Information Technology Specialist has been vacant since 6/19/22 YA-034		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP016 - PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	100154 - PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	H5 401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70402 - PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($92,130)	($94,065)	($95,946)	($97,865)	Position #34702 - Executive Assistant has been vacant since 1/3/25 YA-020		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP016 - PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	100154 - PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	H5 401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70402 - PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($25,059)	($25,661)	($26,264)	($26,881)	Position #34702 - Executive Assistant has been vacant since 1/3/25 YA-041		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP026 - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	100148 - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT - GENERAL	H5 401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70404 - CHILD WELFARE TRAINING ACADEMY	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($106,763)	($109,005)	($111,185)	($113,409)	Position #7535 - Trainer has been vacant since 8/15/21 YA-006		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP026 - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	100148 - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT - GENERAL	H5 401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70404 - CHILD WELFARE TRAINING ACADEMY	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($29,040)	($29,736)	($30,435)	($31,151)	Position #7535 - Trainer has been vacant since 8/15/21 YA-027		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03704 - KINSHIP SUPPORT	700253 - KINSHIP SUPPORT	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70408 - KINSHIP SUPPORT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($119,416)	($121,924)	($124,362)	($126,849)	Position #13784 - Community Services Program Supervisor has been vacant since 8/15/21 YA-011		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03704 - KINSHIP SUPPORT	700253 - KINSHIP SUPPORT	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70408 - KINSHIP SUPPORT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($32,481)	($33,261)	($34,042)	($34,842)	Position #13784 - Community Services Program Supervisor has been vacant since 8/15/21 YA-032		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03705 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	700254 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70407 - PLACEMENT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($92,656)	($94,602)	($96,494)	($98,424)	Position #12863 - Resource Development Specialist has been vacant since 6/12/19 YA-009		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03705 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	700254 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70407 - PLACEMENT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($25,202)	($25,807)	($26,414)	($27,034)	Position #12863 - Resource Development Specialist has been vacant since 6/12/19 YA-030		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03705 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	700254 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70407 - PLACEMENT OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	202352 - Room and Board		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($900,000)	($918,000)	($936,360)	($955,087)	Reduction to decrease growth from FY 2025 levels (YA-085)		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03705 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	700254 - OUT-OF-HOME CHILD PLACEMENT	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70407 - PLACEMENT OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	202921 - Out of Home - Maintenance of Persons		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($150,000)	($153,000)	($156,060)	($159,181)	Reduction to decrease growth from FY 2025 levels (YA-086)		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03706 - PERMANENCY	700255 - PERMANENCY	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70405 - PERMANENCY OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($51,456)	($52,537)	($53,587)	($54,659)	Position #20162 - Clerical Assistant has been vacant since 3/22/23 YA-014		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03706 - PERMANENCY	700255 - PERMANENCY	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70405 - PERMANENCY OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($62,158)	($63,463)	($64,733)	($66,027)	Position #23404 - Staff Assistant has been vacant since 9/24/23 YA-017		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03706 - PERMANENCY	700255 - PERMANENCY	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70405 - PERMANENCY OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($13,996)	($14,332)	($14,669)	($15,013)	Position #20162 - Clerical Assistant has been vacant since 3/22/23 YA-035		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03706 - PERMANENCY	700255 - PERMANENCY	H5 501 - IN-HOME AND OUT OF HOME CARE	70405 - PERMANENCY OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($16,907)	($17,313)	($17,720)	($18,136)	Position #23404 - Staff Assistant has been vacant since 9/24/23 YA-038		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03803 - HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS	700259 - HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS	H5 201 - OFFICE OF THRIVING FAMILIES	70397 - COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($92,656)	($94,602)	($96,494)	($98,424)	Position #5606 - Program Specialist has been vacant since 8/21/21 YA-004		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03803 - HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS	700259 - HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS	H5 201 - OFFICE OF THRIVING FAMILIES	70397 - COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($25,202)	($25,807)	($26,414)	($27,034)	Position #5606 - Program Specialist has been vacant since 8/21/21 YA-025		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03803 - HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS	700259 - HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS	H5 201 - OFFICE OF THRIVING FAMILIES	70397 - COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	One Time		$200,000				CFSA Home Visiting Program One-time Enhancement		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5 301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($92,656)	($94,602)	($96,494)	($98,424)	Position #4853 - Program Analyst has been vacant since 8/23/23 YA-002		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5 301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($106,763)	($109,005)	($111,185)	($113,409)	Position #5222 - Policy Specialist has been vacant since 1/1/2024 YA-003		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5 301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($74,074)	($75,630)	($77,142)	($78,685)	Position #20456 - Family Support Worker has been vacant since 10/10/23 YA-016		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5 301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($107,046)	($109,294)	($111,480)	($113,709)	Position #31535 - Intake Hotline Worker has been vacant since 8/11/23 YA-019		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5 301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($25,202)	($25,807)	($26,414)	($27,034)	Position #4853 - Program Analyst has been vacant since 8/23/23 YA-023		FALSE

Agency	Scenario	Committee	Cluster	Agency Code	DIFS Appr. Fund	DIFS Fund	DIFS Program Parent L1	DIFS Program	DIFS Cost Ctr. Parent L1	DIFS Cost Center	DIFS Account Parent L1	DIFS Account	DIFS Project	Proposed Change in FTEs	Resources/ Budget	Adjustment	Recurring or One-Time Change	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	Comments	Legislation	Tech. Corr.
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($29,040)	($29,736)	($30,435)	($31,151)	Position #5222 - Policy Specialist has been vacant since 1/1/2024 YA-024		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($20,148)	($20,632)	($21,117)	($21,613)	Position #20456 - Family Support Worker has been vacant since 10/10/23 YA-037		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($29,117)	($29,815)	($30,516)	($31,233)	Position #31535 - Intake Hotline Worker has been vacant since 8/11/23 YA-040		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03901 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	700260 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	H5301 - HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS	70399 - CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	One Time		$1,350,000				CFSA One-time enhancement: Safe Shores Restoration		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04002 - STATE PLANNING AND DATA ANALYSIS	700264 - STATE PLANNING AND DATA ANALYSIS	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70402 - PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($106,763)	($109,005)	($111,185)	($113,409)	Position #6177 - Planning Specialist has been vacant since 2/12/23 YA-005		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04002 - STATE PLANNING AND DATA ANALYSIS	700264 - STATE PLANNING AND DATA ANALYSIS	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70402 - PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($29,040)	($29,736)	($30,435)	($31,151)	Position #6177 - Planning Specialist has been vacant since 2/12/23 YA-026		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04003 - STATE POLICY	700265 - STATE POLICY	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70403 - PLANNING, POLICY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($62,158)	($63,463)	($64,733)	($66,027)	Position #8838 - CPR Assistant, CS-303-9 has been vacant since 12/30/2023 YA-007		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04003 - STATE POLICY	700265 - STATE POLICY	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70403 - PLANNING, POLICY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($62,158)	($63,463)	($64,733)	($66,027)	Position #99760 - CPR Assistant, CS-303-9 has been vacant since 3/24/2009 YA-021		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04003 - STATE POLICY	700265 - STATE POLICY	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70403 - PLANNING, POLICY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($16,907)	($17,313)	($17,720)	($18,136)	Position #8838 - CPR Assistant, CS-303-9 has been vacant since 12/30/2023 YA-028		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04003 - STATE POLICY	700265 - STATE POLICY	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70403 - PLANNING, POLICY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($16,907)	($17,313)	($17,720)	($18,136)	Position #99760 - CPR Assistant, CS-303-9 has been vacant since 3/24/2009 YA-042		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04004 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	700266 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70402 - PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($106,763)	($109,005)	($111,185)	($113,409)	Position #20420 - Management Analyst has been vacant since 5/28/22 YA-015		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04004 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	700266 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70402 - PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($64,144)	($65,491)	($66,801)	($68,137)	Position #24212 - Staff Assistant has been vacant sinc 7/16/24 YA-018		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04004 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	700266 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70402 - PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($29,040)	($29,736)	($30,435)	($31,151)	Position #20420 - Management Analyst has been vacant since 5/28/22 YA-036		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04004 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	700266 - STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE	H5401 - OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAM SUPPORT	70402 - PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($17,447)	($17,866)	($18,286)	($18,715)	Position #24212 - Staff Assistant has been vacant sinc 7/16/24 YA-039		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04104 - WELL BEING AND SUPPORT	700270 - WELL BEING AND SUPPORT	H5601 - OFFICE OF WELL BEING	70409 - WELL-BEING SUPPORT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($93,069)	($95,023)	($96,924)	($98,862)	Position #16270 - Program Specialist has been vacant since 6/1/23 YA-012		FALSE
Child and Family Services Agency	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RL0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H04104 - WELL BEING AND SUPPORT	700270 - WELL BEING AND SUPPORT	H5601 - OFFICE OF WELL BEING	70409 - WELL-BEING SUPPORT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($25,315)	($25,922)	($26,532)	($27,155)	Position #16270 - Program Specialist has been vacant since 6/1/23 YA-033		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP011 - HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES	100058 - HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES - GENERAL	H4701 - CHIEF OPERATIONS BUREAU		701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($81,808)	($83,526)	($85,196)	($86,900)	Removing Currently Vacant Position: 00006152. (YA-103A)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP011 - HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES	100058 - HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES - GENERAL	H4701 - CHIEF OPERATIONS BUREAU		701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($22,824)	($23,372)	($23,921)	($24,484)	Removing Currently Vacant Position: 00006152. (YA-103B)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP012 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	100071 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - GENERAL	H4701 - CHIEF OPERATIONS BUREAU	70375 - IT OFFICE - JZ0	713100C - OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	7131035 - IT HARDWARE MAINTENANCE	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($500)	($510)	($520)	($531)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-099)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP012 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	100071 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - GENERAL	H4701 - CHIEF OPERATIONS BUREAU	70375 - IT OFFICE - JZ0	717100C - PURCHASES EQUIPMENT & MACHINERY	7171008 - IT HARDWARE ACQUISITIONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($25,804)	($26,320)	($26,846)	($27,383)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-101)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP014 - LEGAL SERVICES	100092 - LEGAL SERVICES - GENERAL	H7201 - OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL LEGAL	70382 - OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL LEGAL	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	1.00	Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$141,678	$144,653	$147,546	$150,497	Reducing Redivism at DYRS Act of 2024 Implementation - Attorney Position (Salary)	L25-321; Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, Sections 3 and 4	FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP014 - LEGAL SERVICES	100092 - LEGAL SERVICES - GENERAL	H7201 - OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL LEGAL	70382 - OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL LEGAL	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$41,215	$42,205	$43,196	$44,212	Reducing Redivism at DYRS Act of 2024 - Attorney Position (Fringe)	L25-321; Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, Sections 3 and 4	FALSE

Agency	Scenario	Committee	Cluster	Agency Code	DIFS Appr. Fund	DIFS Fund	DIFS Program Parent L1	DIFS Program	DIFS Cost Ctr. Parent L1	DIFS Cost Center	DIFS Account Parent L1	DIFS Account	DIFS Project	Proposed Change in FTEs	Resources/ Budget	Adjustment	Recurring or One-Time Change	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	Comments	Legislation	Tech. Corr.
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP019 - PROPERTY, ASSET, AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT	100113 - PROPERTY, ASSET, AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT-GENERAL	H4701 - CHIEF OPERATIONS BUREAU	70374 - PROPERTY MANAGEMENT OFFICE	711100C - SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	7111008 - CLOTHING & UNIFORMS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($3,000)	($3,060)	($3,121)	($3,184)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-096)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP019 - PROPERTY, ASSET, AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT	100113 - PROPERTY, ASSET, AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT-GENERAL	H4701 - CHIEF OPERATIONS BUREAU	70374 - PROPERTY MANAGEMENT OFFICE	713100C - OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	7131009 - PROF SERVICE FEES & CONTR	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($31,555)	($32,186)	($32,830)	($33,486)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-097)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	AMP019 - PROPERTY, ASSET, AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT	100113 - PROPERTY, ASSET, AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT-GENERAL	H4701 - CHIEF OPERATIONS BUREAU	70374 - PROPERTY MANAGEMENT OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($182,001)	($185,641)	($189,354)	($193,141)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-087)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	700229 - CASE MANAGEMENT- IZ0	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70473 - CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	1.00	Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$78,322	$79,967	$81,566	$83,197	Reducing Redivism at DYRS Act of 2024 Implementation - Management Analyst (Salary)	L25-321; Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, Sections 3 and 4	FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	700229 - CASE MANAGEMENT- IZ0	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70473 - CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	2.00	Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$185,312	$189,204	$192,988	$196,847	Additional PS Support (2 Care Coordinators at CS-12) to assist with implementation of L25-321; Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, Sections 3 and 4. Positions are in addition to those required in the FIS.		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	700229 - CASE MANAGEMENT- IZ0	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70473 - CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$22,785	$23,331	$23,880	$24,441	Reducing Redivism at DYRS Act of 2024 - Management Analyst (Fringe)	L25-321; Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, Sections 3 and 4	FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	700229 - CASE MANAGEMENT- IZ0	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70473 - CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$48,366	$49,527	$50,691	$51,882	Additional PS Support (2 Care Coordinators at CS-12) to assist with implementation of L25-321; Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, Sections 3 and 4. Positions are in addition to those required in the FIS.		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	700229 - CASE MANAGEMENT- IZ0	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70473 - CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($410,609)	($418,821)	($427,198)	($435,742)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-088)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	700229 - CASE MANAGEMENT- IZ0	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70473 - CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	One Time		$500,000				DYRS BSA: Youth Recidivism Reduction Grant Pilot	BSA Subtitle X. Youth Recidivism Reduction Grant Pilot Program	FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	700229 - CASE MANAGEMENT- IZ0	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU		701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	(1.00)	Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($133,990)	($136,804)	($139,540)	($142,331)	Removing Currently Vacant Position: 00015547. (YA-104A)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03501 - CASE MANAGEMENT	700229 - CASE MANAGEMENT- IZ0	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU		701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($37,383)	($38,280)	($39,180)	($40,101)	Removing Currently Vacant Position: 00015547. (YA-104B)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03502 - ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES DEVELOPMENT	700232 - ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES DEVELOPMENT	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70474 - YOUTH PROGRAMS-COMMUNITY OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	One Time		$300,000				DYRS BSA: Youth Pre-apprenticeship Grant Pilot	"BSA Subtitle X. Youth Pre-apprenticeship Grant Pilot Program"	FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03503 - EDUCATION	700233 - EDUCATION	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70475 - YOUTH EDUCATION OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	One Time		$500,000				DYRS Education Program One-time Enhancement		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03503 - EDUCATION	700233 - EDUCATION	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70475 - YOUTH EDUCATION OFFICE	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($405,228)	($413,333)	($421,599)	($430,031)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-089)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03506 - COMMUNITY OUTREACH	700231 - COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70547 - YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($81,077)	($82,699)	($84,353)	($86,040)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-092)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03507 - HEALTHCARE	700234 - HEALTH AND WELLNESS	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70551 - MEDICAL	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($318,191)	($324,554)	($331,046)	($337,667)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-093)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03510 - SECURE FACILITIES - GENERAL	700235 - MEDICAL	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70544 - YOUTH SERVICES CENTER (YSC)	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($163,650)	($166,923)	($170,261)	($173,666)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-090)		FALSE
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Public Safety and Justice	JZ0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H03510 - SECURE FACILITIES - GENERAL	700235 - MEDICAL	H4901 - YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS BUREAU	70553 - NEW BEGINNINGS	714100C - GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	7141002 - MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	000000 - 0		Budget	Reduction	Recurring		($241,528)	($246,358)	($251,286)	($256,311)	Funds in this cost center and account combination were not fully detailed in submission documents to the committee (YA-094)		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	70496 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	1.00	Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$170,000	$173,570	$177,041	$180,582	Restoration of OFC - Position #00109761 - Executive Director - Salary		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	70496 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	1.00	Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$80,000	$81,680	$83,314	$84,980	Restoration of OFC - Position #00110046 - Ombuds Analyst - Salary		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	70496 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	1.00	Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$80,000	$81,680	$83,314	$84,980	Restoration of OFC - Position #00110047 - Ombuds Analyst - Salary		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	70496 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	0.75	Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$66,979	$68,386	$69,754	$71,149	Restoration of OFC - RO0.OCFO STAFFING - Salary		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	70496 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	701100C - CONTINUING FULL TIME	7011001 - CONTINUING FULL TIME	000000 - 0	1.00	Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$120,000	$122,520	$124,970	$127,470	Restoration of OFC - Position #00110007 - Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson - Salary		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	70496 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$89,717	$91,871	$94,030	$96,239	Restoration of OFC - Position #00109761, #00110046, #00110047, RO0.OCFO STAFFING - Misc Frinze Benefits		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	70496 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	701400C - FRINGE BENEFITS - CURR PERSONNEL	7014008 - MISC FRINGE BENEFITS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$27,120	$27,771	$28,424	$29,091	Restoration of OFC - Position #00110007 - Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson - Frinze Benefits		FALSE

Agency	Scenario	Committee	Cluster	Agency Code	DIFS Appr. Fund	DIFS Fund	DIFS Program Parent L1	DIFS Program	DIFS Cost Ctr. Parent L1	DIFS Cost Center	DIFS Account Parent L1	DIFS Account	DIFS Project	Proposed Change in FTEs	Resources/ Budget	Adjustment	Recurring or One-Time Change	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	Comments	Legislation	Tech. Corr.
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	704196 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	711100C - SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	7111002 - OFFICE SUPPLIES	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$10,309	$10,515	$10,725	$10,940	Restoration of OFC - Supplies & Materials		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	704196 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	712100C - ENERGY COMM & BLDG RENTALS	7121011 - OCCUPANCY FIXED COSTS	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$60,000	$61,200	$62,424	$63,672	Restoration of OFC - Occupancy Fixed Costs		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	704196 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	713100C - OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	7131002 - TRAVEL - LOCAL	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$1,000	$1,020	$1,040	$1,061	Restoration of OFC - Travel Local		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	704196 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	713100C - OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	7131003 - TRAVEL - OUT OF CITY	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$3,775	$3,851	$3,928	$4,006	Restoration of OFC - Travel Out of City		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	704196 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	713100C - OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	7131009 - PROF SERVICE FEES & CONTR	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$7,500	$7,650	$7,803	$7,959	Restoration of OFC - Prof Service Fees & Contr		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	704196 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	713100C - OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	7131025 - PAYMENT OF MEMBERSHIP DUES	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$600	$612	$624	$637	Restoration of OFC - Membership Dues		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	704196 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	713100C - OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	7131036 - IT SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$15,093	$15,395	$15,703	$16,017	Restoration of OFC - IT Software Maintenance		FALSE
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs	Human Support Services	RO0	1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS	H05101 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	700345 - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	H7901 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	704196 - OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN	717100C - PURCHASES EQUIPMENT & MACHINERY	7171002 - PURCHASES FURNITURE & FIXTURES	000000 - 0		Budget	Enhance	Recurring		$1,000	$1,020	$1,040	$1,061	Restoration of OFC - Equipment & Machinery		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer in	One Time		$1,350,000				From FAC: Restoration of SafeShores		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer in	Recurring		$500,000	$510,860	$521,507	$532,378	From PWO: Restoration of Office of the Ombudsperson for Children		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer in	One Time		$300,000				From CEAL: DYRS Youth Pre-Apprenticeship Grant Pilot Program		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer out	Recurring		($470,033)	($480,493)	($490,446)	($500,607)	To HS: Truancy Pilot expansion at DHS		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer out	One Time		($200,000)				To PWO: Two Public Restrooms (Tanner Park, Starburst Plaza)		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer out	Recurring		($111,599)	($114,005)	($116,360)	($118,763)	To HLT: Child Behavioral Health Dashboard		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer out	One Time		($300,000)				To HS: DHS Wrap-Around Workforce Development Program		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Revenue Proposal	Recurring		($13,296)	($13,828)	($14,381)	($14,956)	B25-946, Mu Lambda Foundation Tax Exemption Act	B25-946, Mu Lambda Foundation Tax Exemption Act	FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer out	One Time		($350,000)				To BED: Retail Support Fund - Rhode Island Avenue		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer out	One Time		($600,000)				To HS: Youth Transitional housing - DHS		FALSE
	Committee Recommendation	Committee on Youth Affairs			1010 - LOCAL FUND	10 10001 - LOCAL FUNDS									Resources	Transfer out	One Time		($100,000)				To JPS: Unification Study via DMPSJ (for L25-321)		FALSE

Attachment B

~~**SUBTITLE B. OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN**~~

~~Sec. 5011. Short title.~~

~~This subtitle may be cited as the "Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Amendment Act of 2025".~~

~~Sec. 5012. Title I of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020, effective April 5, 2021 (D.C. Law 23-270; D.C. Official Code §§ 4-671.01–4-671.12), is repealed.~~

~~Sec. 5013. The Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act of 1977, effective September 23, 1977 (D.C. Law 2-22; D.C. Official Code § 4-1301.01 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:~~

~~(a) Section 203(a) (D.C. Official Code § 4-1302.03(a)) is amended as follows:~~

~~(1) Paragraph (9) is amended by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting the phrase "; and" in its place.~~

~~(2) Paragraph (10) is amended by striking the phrase "; and" and inserting a period in its place.~~

~~(3) Paragraph (11) is repealed.~~

~~(b) Section 306(a) (D.C. Official Code § 4-1303.06(a)) is amended as follows:~~

~~(1) Paragraph (5) is amended by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting the phrase "; or" in its place.~~

~~(2) Paragraph (6) is amended by striking the phrase "; or" and inserting a period in its place.~~

~~(3) Paragraph (7) is repealed.~~

~~(c) Section 311 (D.C. Official Code § 4-1303.11) is repealed.~~

~~Sec. 5014. Section 4604 of the Child Fatality Review Committee Establishment Act of 2001, effective October 3, 2001 (D.C. Law 14-28; D.C. Official Code § 4-1371.04), is amended as follows:~~

~~(a) Subsection (c-1) is repealed.~~

~~(b) Subsection (d) is amended by striking the phrase "the Council in the case of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, or of the federal or judicial body designating their availability for appointment." and inserting the phrase "or of the federal or judicial body designating their availability for appointment." in its place.~~

~~Sec. 5015. Section 4 of the Students in the Care of D.C. Coordinating Committee Act of 2018, effective April 11, 2019 (D.C. Law 22-303; D.C. Official Code § 2-1599.03), is amended as follows:~~

~~(a) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase "shall consist of 26 voting members" and inserting the phrase "shall consist of 25 voting members" in its place.~~

~~(b) Subsection (a)(1) is amended as follows:~~

~~(1) Sub-paragraph (O) is amended by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting the phrase "; and" in its place.~~

~~(2) Sub-paragraph (P) is amended by striking the phrase "; and" and inserting a period in its place.~~

~~(3) Sub-paragraph (Q) is repealed.~~

~~Sec. 5016. Section 1816a of the Office of the Chief Technology Officer Establishment Act of 1998, effective March 3, 2010 (D.C. Law 18-111; D.C. Official Code § 1-1406), is amended by striking the phrase "Council of the District of Columbia, the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, or the Office of the Attorney~~

~~General;" and inserting the phrase "Council of the District of Columbia, the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, or the Office of the Attorney General;" in its place.~~

~~Sec. 5017. Section 2c of the Council of the District of Columbia Independence Act of 1982, effective March 11, 2010 (D.C. Law 18-119; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.44c), is amended as follows:~~

~~(a) The section heading is amended to read as follows:~~

~~"Sec. 2c. Disclosure of information to the Council; District of Columbia Auditor; conditions on disclosure.".~~

~~(b) Subsection (a) is amended as follows:~~

~~(1) Paragraph (4) is amended by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting the phrase "; or" in its place.~~

~~(2) Paragraph (5) is amended by striking the phrase "; or" and inserting a period in its place.~~

~~(3) Paragraph (6) is repealed.~~

~~Sec. 5018. Section 406(b) of the District of Columbia Government Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-139; D.C. Official Code § 1-604.06(b)), is amended as follows:~~

~~(a) Paragraph (28) is amended by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting the phrase "; and" in its place.~~

~~(b) Paragraph (29) is repealed.~~

~~Sec. 5019. Section 204(a-1)(2) of the District of Columbia Administrative Procedure Act, effective March 29, 1977 (D.C. Law 1-96; D.C. Official Code § 2-534(a-1)(2)), is amended as follows:~~

~~(a) Subparagraph (D) is amended by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting the phrase "; or" in its place;~~

~~(b) Subparagraph (E) is amended by striking the phrase "; or" and inserting a period in its place.~~

~~(c) Subparagraph (F) is repealed.~~

Attachment C

SUBTITLE x. Youth Pre-Apprenticeship Grant Pilot Program

Sec. xxx1. Short title.

This subtitle may be cited as the "Youth Pre-Apprenticeship Grant Pilot Program Establishment Amendment Act of 2025".

Sec. xxx2. The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services Establishment Act of 2004, effective December 9, 2004 (D.C. Law 15-335; D.C. Official Code § 2–1515 *et seq*.), is amended as follows:

(a) Section 107 (D.C. Official Code § 2–1515.07) is amended by adding a new subsection (c) to read as follows:

" (c) **Establishment of the Youth Pre-Apprenticeship Grant Pilot Program**.

"(1) In Fiscal Year 2026, the Department shall establish a pilot grant program to support pre-apprenticeship training programs for youth detained at New Beginnings for the duration of one year.

"(2) To be eligible to participate in the pilot program, an applicant shall hold status in good standing as:

"(A) An accredited higher education institution;

"(B) 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; or

"(C) Prior or current provider of apprenticeship programming at a Department Achievement Center.

"(3) An applicant shall have a demonstrated history of providing pre-apprenticeship training or apprenticeship programs for youth.

DRAFT

"(4) The pilot grant shall fund programs that provide pre-apprenticeship training services to detained youth at New Beginnings. The grant awardee shall provide participants with workforce skills training and evidence-based instruction that:

"(A) Promotes targeted skills development in an in-demand industry sector or occupation;

"(B) Is conducive to work and training in a safe environment in accordance with applicable Federal and District child labor laws; and

"(C) Enables participants to gain:

"(i) Postsecondary education credit, as applicable; or

"(ii) Access to an industry-recognized apprenticeship program, as applicable, that:

"(I) Leads to a career in high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand industry sectors and occupations in the local or regional labor market;

"(II) Pays wages to apprentices based on a progressively increasing, clearly defined schedule of wages;

"(III) Provide youth apprentices with supportive services and other services to recruit and retain the youth apprentices, and assure their persistence in and completion of the program; and

"(IV) Provide collaborative professional development services to workplace supervisors, mentors, teachers, counselors, and other staff to develop and maintain a well-integrated, high-performing program.

"(V) Provides individualized career counseling, counseling about postsecondary education, or academic counseling.

DRAFT

"(5) Preference shall be made in favor of applicants:

"(A) Based within the District of Columbia or primarily serving residents of the District of Columbia; and

"(B) With a demonstrated history of partnership with the Government of the District of Columbia, including grant awards within the past five years, current or prior MOUs within the past five years, or partnerships with the Department of Employment Services."

"(6) Within 14 months of receiving a grant issued pursuant to this Act, an awardee shall submit to the Department and the Council a report that describes, at a minimum, the:

"(A) Number of youth served broken down by age and residence by Ward;

"(B) Services received by youth participants;

"(C) Outcomes by type of service rendered to participants;

"(D) Number of youth participants who are enrolled in postsecondary education; and

"(E) Number of youth participants who are enrolled in apprenticeship programs."

DRAFT

SUBTITLE x. Youth Recidivism Reduction Grant Pilot Program

Sec. xxx1. Short title.

This subtitle may be cited as the "Youth Recidivism Reduction Grant Pilot Program Establishment Amendment Act of 2025".

Sec. xxx2. The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services Establishment Act of 2004, effective December 9, 2004, (D.C. Law 15-335; D.C. Official Code § 2–1515 *et seq*.) is amended as follows:

(a) Section 107 (D.C. Official Code § 2–1515.07) is amended by adding a new subsection (d) to read as follows:

"(d). **Establishment of Youth Recidivism Reduction Grant Pilot Program.**

"(1) In Fiscal Year 2026, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services shall establish a pilot grant program to support youth re-entry services for the duration of one year.

"(2) To be eligible to participate in the pilot program, an applicant shall hold status in good standing as a:

"(A) 501(c)(3) non-profit organization;

"(B) Neighborhood Family Success Center; or

"(C) Other Department or Child and Family Services Agency grantee within the past five years.

"(3) The grant shall fund projects that:

"(A) provide the following aftercare and case management services that provide and coordinate the delivery of community services to youth upon release from a Department secure facility:

"(i) Housing assistance;

"(ii) Job training;

"(iii) Conflict resolution skills training;

"(iv) Assistance with coordination of school reenrollment and credit transfer;

"(v) Access to out-of-school programming, including enrollment in and transportation to afterschool activities;

"(vi) Mentorship programming;

"(vii) Any such other services to address identified needs for the purposes of preventing youth from committing further offenses.

"(B) include close coordination with the Department to implement aspects of discharge and reentry plans described in Sec.4(c) of the Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024.

"(4) Preference shall be granted to applicants:

"(A) based within the District of Columbia or with a mission of primarily serving residents of the District of Columbia; and

"(B) with a demonstrated history of partnership with the Government of the District of Columbia, including District-funded grant awards within the past five years, current or prior MOUs with a District agency within the past five years, or partnerships with the Department within the past five years.

"(5) Within 14 months of receiving a grant issued pursuant to this Act, a recipient shall submit to the Department and the Council a report that describes, at a minimum:

DRAFT

"(A) The number of youth served broken down by age and residence by Ward;

"(B) The services received by youth participants;

"(C) Outcomes by type of service rendered to participants;

"(D) The number of school-aged youth participants who are enrolled in school or a GED program;

"(E) The number of non-school-aged youth participants who are enrolled in postsecondary education; and

"(F) The number of non-school-aged youth participants who are employed full or part time.

"(6) Within 14 months of issuing any grant pursuant to this Act, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services shall submit to the Office of the Attorney General and the Council committee with jurisdiction over the Department a report disclosing for each youth participant any known involvement with law enforcement or return to Department custody during the duration of the grant period, subject to juvenile confidentiality laws."

DRAFT

SUBTITLE x. Subject to Appropriations Repeals and Modifications

Sec. xxx1. Short title.

This subtitle may be cited as the "Committee on Youth Affairs Subject to Appropriations Repeals and Modifications Amendment Act of 2025".

Sec. xxx2. Section 7(a) of the Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024, effective Mar 28, 2025 (D.C. Law 25-0321; 71 DCR 11542), is amended by striking the phrase "Sections 2, 3, 4, and 5" and inserting the phrase "Section 2" in its place.

DRAFT

Attachment D

Testimony Before the Committee on Youth Affairs

Regarding the Mayor's Office on African Affairs

Presented by: Angela Enwezor, Founder and Business Owner
Prisca's Art
Date: March 5, 2025

Honorable Chairperson and Distinguished Committee Members,

I am Angela Enwezor, Founder and Business Owner of Prisca's Art, and I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before this esteemed Committee on Youth Affairs regarding our organization's work and potential collaborations with the Mayor's Office on African Affairs.

About Prisca's Art

Established in 2018 in the District of Columbia, Prisca's Art was founded with a clear vision: to create an all-inclusive fashion brand that caters specifically to plus-size and curvy women who are often overlooked by mainstream markets. Our slogan, "Creativity is a never-ending dialogue," reflects our commitment to ongoing innovation and cultural expression through fashion.

Since our founding, we have completed over 520 projects, worked with more than 2,000 different African fabrics, and served over 500 clients throughout the DC Metro area. Our headquarters is proudly based in Northeast DC, where we are deeply rooted in the community.

Our Mission and Vision

Prisca's Art is intentional in creating timeless pieces that elevate the mind, body, and soul by designing to fit each individual's lifestyle and personality. We predominantly use African fabrics like Batik, Adire, Kente, Mud Cloth, Kitenge, and Ankara to create modern functional pieces that appeal to both traditional and contemporary women.

Our vision extends beyond fashion. We aim to establish Prisca's Art as a worldwide brand while empowering young girls through community involvement, partnerships, collaborations, and volunteer work. This vision aligns perfectly with the goals of the Mayor's Office on African Affairs in supporting African immigrant communities and fostering cultural expression.

Milestones and Community Impact

Our journey has been marked by several significant milestones that demonstrate our commitment to the DC community:

- In 2018, we established Prisca's Art and launched our first Sidewalk Fashion Show in Northeast DC
- In 2021-2022, we were featured in Marymount University's "Voyage to Utopia" Annual Fashion Show in Arlington, VA
- In 2022, we hosted our first solo event with vendors - the Glamour Creatives Market in Northeast DC
- In 2024 we hosted our first solo event with vendors – At the Renaissance Center 11th Annual Cultural Event

These events have allowed us to showcase African culture through fashion while creating opportunities for community engagement and education about African textiles and design techniques.

Cultural Preservation and Youth Empowerment

As an African-owned business, Prisca's Art serves as a cultural bridge, preserving and promoting African textile traditions while making them accessible and relevant to contemporary audiences. Our work particularly resonates with young African immigrants and first-generation Americans who are seeking connections to their heritage through creative expression.

Through our bespoke creations and ready-to-wear pieces, we provide opportunities for cultural education and appreciation. Our custom prom dresses, wedding attire, and everyday fashion items empower young people to embrace and celebrate their cultural identity with pride.

Potential Collaboration with the Mayor's Office on African Affairs

We believe there is significant potential for collaboration between Prisca's Art and the Mayor's Office on African Affairs in several areas:

1. **Youth Mentorship Programs**: Developing workshops where young African immigrants can learn about textile arts and fashion design as potential career paths
2. **Cultural Events**: Co-hosting fashion shows and exhibitions that highlight African cultural expressions
3. **Economic Empowerment**: Creating apprenticeship opportunities for young people interested in fashion entrepreneurship
4. **Community Building**: Using fashion as a vehicle for community cohesion and cross-cultural understanding

Request for Support

As we continue to grow and expand our impact, we would welcome support from the Mayor's Office on African Affairs in the following areas:

1. Grant opportunities to develop youth-focused fashion education programs
2. Access to venues for community fashion shows and cultural exhibitions
3. Connections to other African immigrant-serving organizations for potential collaborations
4. Support for participation in District-wide cultural events and festivals

Conclusion

Prisca's Art is more than a fashion brand – we are a vehicle for cultural expression, community building, and youth empowerment. Our work aligns with the mission of the Mayor's Office on African Affairs in supporting the African diaspora community and creating opportunities for cultural and economic development.

We look forward to exploring potential partnerships and thank you for your consideration and support of small, African-owned businesses in the District.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Enwezor
Founder and Business Owner
Prisca's Art

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hello@priscas-art.com
https://priscas-art.com

Performance Oversight Hearing:

Committee on Government Operations

Office of African Affairs

March , 2025

Mary’s Center Teen Program

Tiffany Melendez

Good afternoon committee members.

My name is Tiffany Melendez and I am here today representing Mary's Center, a grantee of the Office of African Affairs and of the Office of Latino Affairs. For the past 10 years, the Teen Program at Mary's Center has been fortunate to not only receive funds but also support and learning opportunities from this office. We have worked closely with the Mayor's Office on African Affairs and the Office of Latino Affairs to provide the young African and Latinx community in Washington, DC with health and programming services.

Our community health center has been able to provide teen confidential services to over 2,000 teens. Our Family Support Workers often work with the teens but are able to enroll other family members in health services and link them to other medical and social services as needed.

Through our after-school programs, this grant allows us to continue providing educational support for teens in mainly wards 1, 4, and 5. Although over the years we have seen students come from all the different wards in DC. In May of last year, we celebrated with 30 High School seniors their graduations from schools like Banneker, Roosevelt, Bell, Coolidge and E.L. Haynes. 100% of our students were admitted and are enrolled in a college or university or trade school, with nearly a third (11) of these students receiving scholarships and four earning full rides. Our students were able to accomplish so much while adjusting to life, and most importantly while social justice issues continued to take place in their communities. One of these students is Hiba, an Ethiopian student who has participated in our program since her freshman year of high school. She is a bright and an exemplary student who has the grades, the extracurricular activities, and the drive to continue her education. Our Youth Development Workers worked closely with Hiba to organize her due dates and college application list, search for scholarships, and internships for the summer. She always said, "I work hard to excel in my academic and personal life to make my community and family proud." Hiba was awarded the Questbridge Scholarship, which is covering her full

tuition to Barnard University, with only an eight percent acceptance rate. She plans on studying medicine.

It is stories like Hiba's that we share because Washington, DC is full of bright and motivated young people who succeed when they are provided the tools they need to do so.

I can attest to the success of the program, as I once was a teen in the Mary's Center Teen Program. I was able to go to college and obtained my bachelor's degree last May. I can tell you that this funding was crucial in my life as it encouraged and guided me in finding the right college and the financial aid/scholarships available to me. As a staff member now, I see how much these programs continue to help our communities and impact the lives of young people in Washington DC. I see every day how essential these services are not only for the growth of every individual that comes through our doors, but for our communities as a whole.

The reality is that over the past years with the pandemic, crime, and other influences out of our control, many sectors of our community have been overwhelmed. This includes our education sector, with our teachers, counselors, administration, and many more. We currently have 84 students taking part in our program. Our programs act as bridges to opportunity and these grants allow us to continue to do just that. We want to bridge the gaps that many students fall into, and help our schools ensure that the students in this city have the tools to succeed in their daily lives, wherever they go.

We thank the Office of African Affairs and Office of Latino Affairs for allowing us to continue to do this great work, for their support in our efforts to reach as many community members as possible and I thank all of you for your time.

Attachment E

Buenos días a todos los Miembros del Comité y miembros del Consejo. Gracias por la oportunidad de testificar frente de ustedes. Mi nombre es Anderson Betancourt, soy residente del Distrito 8 y estoy aquí para compartir mi testimonio acerca mis experiencias como participante en el programa de Visitas al Hogar.

2.Estar en el Programa de Visitas al Hogar ha tenido un impacto positivo en mi familia y verdaderamente significativo en diferentes aspectos como la educación de mis hijos, el bienestar para mí y quiénes forman parte de mi familia . Dicho programa con Papas que incluye a toda la familia ayudo a mejorar algunos ambitos de mi vida como ser mejor padre, esposo, proveedor, incluso ha contribuido en el control de los distintos sentimientos y emociones, que evoca mi proceso, ya que, en mi caso llegue a un/este país buscando un mejor futuro para mi familia, el cuál posee un idioma, cultura y leyes diferentes, aún así, he sentido el apoyo de este programa como una guía, donde me han dado herramientas para aprender y seguir luchando día a día, aprendiendo a ser un padre presente en el desarrollo y crianza de mis hijos.
3. Las visitas son semanales, algunas veces en persona, otra veces virtualmente, pero no hay diferencia por que tienen el mismo resultado positivo. Un espacio donde aprendo cosas como padre que pensé que no eran importantes, cosas en las que no me había fijado antes, como era con mis hijos y mi esposa, aprediendo hacer mejor por ellos y para ellos, aveces con inquietudes donde varían los temas, pero siempre dándome las herramientas y los recursos que están a su alcance, que han sido de gran ayuda. Llegue aquí, empezando de cero, pero haciendo todo el esfuerzo para salir adelante- recibí por parte de mi trabajadora social, referidos de alimentos, de abogados, de pañales, en esta época de invierno referido para chaquetas) lo cuál agradezco y seguiré agradeciendo - por mi parte seguiré trabajando honradamente y luchando para proveerle a mi familia.
4. La visitadora Social significa para mi familia y para mí, una guía, es alguien que nos enseña y orienta de manera educada y por supuesto correcta. Cada semana aprendemos a explorar el crecimiento y desarrollo de mis hijos, siendo mejores personas, creando en nosotros una relación de respeto, empatía, apoyo y trabajo conjunto, donde soy escuchado, despejo dudas y aprendo. Además de trabajar y llevar a la práctica el hecho de ser mejor padre, esposo, ser humano , gracias a la utilización de las herramientas que me brindan.
El papel o trabajo del visitante al hogar es importante, por que es quien crea esa conexión con la familia -no es que no la haya, pero favorece a qué está se mantenga, porque para ellos lo primordial es el bienestar de la familia. Es quien conoce de primera mano las necesidades o las fallas que hay como familia. A quien se le permite conocer la realidad.
5. En un futuro seamos parte del programa ya siendo una comunidad de padres realizados demostrando que Father-child attachment ha sido de gran ayuda para nosotros y el resultado serán hijos felices y sanos, estudiosos, con valores y principios.
Por eso es importante contar con el apoyo del concejo de DC.

Este programa de visitas al hogar están diseñados para apoyar a los padres y las familias, ofreciendo orientación, recursos y asistencia con un visitador en nuestro hogar. Este programa ayuda a los padres a construir una base sólida para el desarrollo y educación de nuestros hijos. 6.toda mi gratitud con el concejo de DC y miembros del comité, por este año haber apoyado a nuestras familias, Gracias Visitas al hogar, gracias a mi visitadora de hogar, este programa funciona gracias a Ustedes. No les quito más de su tiempo. Que tenga un excelente día.

Washington Dc, February 2025.
Testimony

Good morning, Committee Members and Council Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you.
My name is Axel Granados Moreno, I am Nicaraguan, and I reside in this beautiful city. I would like to share my experience with the Mary's Center fatherhood program, as well as with my Family Support Worker, Mr. Jaime Llanos.
First of all, I want to express my gratitude to both the Fatherhood program and Jaime, because thanks to them, I have obtained valuable information, resources and knowledge that have been of great help to people like me, who have been in this country for a short time and, many times, do not have the necessary access or resources to get ahead. Through this program, I have met other people in situations similar to mine, which has allowed me to connect and create a support network. This group helps us, as fathers and heads of household, to face some shortcomings both in the social and work and family spheres.
Mr. Jaime Llanos has shown great empathy and, above all, a lot of solidarity from the first moment I met him. He has always been involved in supporting families, providing guidance on how to treat our children and wives, as well as assistance with diapers, a crib, milk, and wipes for my baby. In addition, we have received support from the program that has allowed us to acquire basic supplies for the home and other needs.
Throughout this time, Jaime has been a great support by creating channels of help for job searches, access to studies and training, allowing us to improve as parents, workers, and adapt more quickly and efficiently to this new American culture and society. Thanks to his work, we have strengthened our family and work ties. Honestly, I never expected to receive this help when I arrived in the United States.
I also want to express my gratitude to Luisa Millan and Carlos Merchant, who, although I mention them at the end, are no less important. They are very kind people and are always attentive to our needs and problems. I consider this program to be a great help and blessing for communities like mine and for all people in general. I can only say: Thank you, thank you so much! May God continue to bless you.

Introduction

Hello everyone. My name is Bernadette, and I'm here today to talk about why SOUL is important and why it's a necessary option for young people in foster care.

Why is SOUL important?
SOUL is designed to strengthen connections and provide support for youth in care by recognizing their relationships with trusted adults in their lives. Without strong, lasting relationships, navigating the system can feel isolating. SOUL ensures that youth have a say in where they live and who supports them, giving them the stability that is often missing in traditional foster care placements.

Why did you want to work on creating SOUL legislation?
This legislation is critical because it is youth-centered and informed by lived experience. The foster care system should not be built solely on policies created without direct input from those impacted. Through my involvement, I have worked alongside other leaders to ensure that SOUL reflects the real needs of young people in care—whether it's maintaining family connections, securing supportive placements, or ensuring that youth have resources to succeed when they transition to adulthood.

Why don't current permanency options work for every young person?
Not every youth in care fits into the traditional mold of reunification, adoption, or guardianship. Many age out without a permanent home or support system in place. Existing processes, such as APPLA (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement), do not ensure continued connections to supportive adults, leaving young people to navigate housing, education, and finances on their own. SOUL helps bridge this gap by reinforcing existing relationships and creating stability beyond the time spent in foster care.

Why is an extended network of adults an important source of support?
Support shouldn't end when a young person turns 18 or ages out of care. Having a network of trusted adults whether it's a teacher, mentor, or extended family member can provide critical guidance, emotional support, and practical resources. These relationships can make the difference between a young person struggling alone or having the support they need to transition successfully into adulthood.

I support SOUL because it gives youth the ability to build a future with people who truly care about them. Legislators need to recognize that foster care should not just be about placement it should be about stability, connection, and long-term success. Young people need options that allow them to maintain meaningful relationships and have a voice in where they live. SOUL is a step in the right direction, ensuring that no young person has to navigate the challenges of foster care and adulthood alone.

Thank you so much for listening.

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing,

Testimony of Brian Bookard

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

To whom it may concern,

My name is Brian Bookard. Quenching the Father Thirst has had a profound impact on my life, not just as a father but as a man.

As a dad with joint custody of my teenage daughter, the workshops challenged me to look inward at my parenting style and address areas that needed growth. It wasn't always easy, but the program gave me the tools and support to become a better father.

I've always been told I have the “gift of gab,” so transitioning from participant to facilitator in Quenching the Father Thirst was one of my greatest accomplishments. Living in Southeast Washington DC, I've seen firsthand how fathers are often portrayed negatively or overlooked. This program was different, it was empowering. It provided a space where fathers were uplifted, encouraged, and equipped to be present and engaged in their children's lives. The impact was so powerful that I, Brian Bookard, took a step further to join the Love More Movement Life Coaching Program. Over the years, I have recruited and engaged many fathers in Quenching the Father Thirst; some were my friends from my community. Seeing their growth and transition transformation has been incredibly rewarding. This program doesn't just change fathers; it changes families and entire communities. I am proud to be a part of it.

Working alongside Brother Chester Marshall and Brother Rodney Brice with African Man Development has made me realize that I am not only knowledgeable in what I facilitate but I can also stand as a profound representative of the program’s dedication to successfully improving the lives of the fathers and men they serve. I want to thank Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative for serving as the catalyst to my introduction to QFT and on-going participation with other men to thrive as healthier Fathers.

Sincerely,

Brian Bookard
IamProme

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing,

Testimony of Christopher Akinbuwa

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Christopher Akinbuwa, and I am a proud graduate of the Quenching Father's Thirst (QFT) Program. Initially, I believed my role would simply involve occasional participation, but I quickly realized how transformative and impactful this program would be for my life.

As a Black male educator with 17 years of experience, I've often found myself stepping into a paternal role for many of the students I've had the privilege of teaching. Through their openness, I've learned a great deal about the challenges, triumphs, and complexities they navigate daily. While I've always sought to apply these lessons in my work with students, the QFT program has offered me an invaluable opportunity: connecting and growing alongside other Black men—fathers who are actively shaping the lives of their children in Washington, D.C.

This program has shown me the profound importance of Black men being present, engaged, and positive role models—not just in their families but within our broader communities. Through honest conversations, mutual support, and collective reflection, QFT has deepened my understanding of what it means to be an active and purposeful Black man in today's society. It has also helped me reflect on my own upbringing and the ripple effects of strong, intentional Black male presence on individuals, families, and entire communities.

Programs like QFT are essential. They create safe, transparent spaces for Black men to connect, heal, and grow, empowering us to become better fathers, husbands, educators, and citizens. The positive impact extends far beyond the individuals involved —it influences families, schools, neighborhoods, and future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my experience. I hope this underscores just how critical these programs are for fostering stronger communities and a better world. Much appreciation is extended to Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative for supporting this opportunity to be available for so many men who are fathers.

Sincerely,

Christopher Akinbuwa

Performance Oversight Hearing Fiscal Year 2024-2025
"Child and Family Service Agency"

Testimony
Darryl Garte Wise
Thursday, February 13, 2025

Good afternoon Committee Chair and Committee members. I am here to offer my testimony at this Performance Oversight Hearing for the Child and Family Services Agency.

Opening Remarks:

My name is Darryl Wise, and I am a proud graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. Currently, I am pursuing my Master's Degree in Social Service with a minor in Public Policy at the Catholic University of America. I am also a lifetime member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated.

Since graduating, I have held several leadership and executive management roles in the hospitality industry, both in the private sector and in the DC Government. I currently work as a Workforce Development Specialist in the Executive Office of the Mayor, specifically in the Mayor's Office on Returning Citizens Affairs.

Recently, I have embarked on a new journey in my life: I have become a proud resource parent to a beautiful baby boy, whom I will refer to as Baby C for privacy reasons. When I first considered becoming a resource parent, I felt nervous about the children, their backgrounds, and the legal requirements involved. Fortunately, the wonderful staff at the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) helped me understand the process right away and put my unfounded fears at ease. Most importantly, they guided me to focus on what truly matters: helping young children find love in difficult circumstances.

Being a Resource Parent is both challenging and rewarding. I fell in love with Baby C right away. However, I have to admit I was nervous when I received that phone call at 9:30 pm just after being licensed four hours earlier. I asked myself what I have done… When Baby C finally arrived a little after 11 that night, Baby C was screaming and very confused.

After many hours of pacing the floors with him in my arms we both looked at each other and I looked into his big bright eyes telling me it's going to be alright, and he looked into my baby blue eyes and must of seen the same the thing, at which point he settled down and went to sleep. I believe at that point our bond was created. I was committed to helping him reunify with his family if at all possible.

Fostering comes with new experiences and many emotions. The support and guidance I received from CFSA helped me tremendously throughout the fostering process. However, I love baby C who was entrusted to me and when he needed a home, I was honored to become his forever family. Many people ask me why I have chosen to foster. The answer is easy - there is a need, and I am partnered with a wonderful agency. Not to mention I was raised in foster care myself. I was the ward of the Archdiocese

of Philadelphia until I aged out. I was blessed to have been placed to one set of Foster Parents, the late David and the Honorable Rose Lenning. To this day I am still a part of their every growing family.

My parents taught me to fight for what's right and to give back to our community. So, fostering is another way for me to give back. Going through the Resource Parenting training program was intense and informative. The trainers and Social Works made the foster care process so easy to navigate and were with me every step of the way. I felt so informed and supported. The social workers at CFSA are the very best in the field! I am forever grateful to CFSA for impacting my life in such a meaningful way. I am happy to announce I am in the adoption process of Baby C.

Thank you, Committee Chair and Committee Members, for giving me an opportunity to speak today.

Testimony on
FY26 Performance Oversight for the Child and Family Services Agency
Before the Committee on Youth Affairs
February 13, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairperson Parker and members and staff of the Committee on Youth Affairs. I am Dr. Dawn Sherman, Vice President of Community Impact and Evaluation at Community of Hope (COH) and a Ward 7 resident. Community of Hope is a Federally Qualified Health Center, offers services to families and individuals experiencing homelessness, and operates the Bellevue Family Success Center (FSC) at our Conway Health and Resource Center in Ward 8.

We are excited about the launch of Families First DC 2.0, and look forward to seeing the network of family success centers expand, providing increased access to services for families in Wards 7 and 8. The Bellevue Family Success Center is part of a network of ten family success centers funded by Families First DC. The Bellevue Family Success Center's priorities are guided by a Community Advisory Council, and we have a Program Director and three Family Success Specialists fully dedicated to supporting families in the Bellevue community. Through the Family Success Center, Community of Hope connects families with existing community and government resources to address their needs and concerns through both one-time assistance and short-term service coordination for up to 21 days. On-site support services include referrals to rental assistance, TANF/SNAP/SSI application assistance, job application assistance, and gift cards for emergency food assistance. We also provide referrals for residents to Community of Hope's medical, dental, emotional wellness, WIC, and homelessness prevention programs.

In addition to our direct client supports, we are expanding our community safety and violence prevention programming to include at least four events with the guidance of our Community Advisory Council. These events will offer resources and on-site supports for residents, as well as a resident discussion on recent safety issues in the Bellevue community. The Bellevue FSC will partner with community violence interrupters such as Cure the Streets to hold these town-hall style resident discussions where residents can provide feedback on community safety issues, and report their feedback to the CAC. On March 15th we will be hosting the first of these events. Community Love Day will be a combined resource fair and town hall where community members will be able to come together to discuss the impact of community violence and safety concerns, as well as potential resident-focused solutions to community violence.

We are proud of the work that we are doing at the Bellevue FSC, but to continue providing direct support services to our community clients in addition to meeting the new violence prevention programming requirements in our grants, it is crucial that the Child and Family Services Agency increase funding for family success centers. Addressing violence within our communities is

vitally important to our residents, and increased funding is crucial in order to create spaces for community members to do this, without decreasing the direct client supports that are fundamental to the success of our families.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work of DC Child and Family Services Administration and its Office of Thriving Families to create and fund programs that promote family success and wellbeing and thank the Agency for its continued collaboration in investing in DC's families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today, I am available to answer questions.

Testimony of Elyssa Glickstein, MPH
Early Childhood Innovation Network

Performance Oversight Hearing: Child and Family Services Agency
Committee on Youth Affairs
Council of the District of Columbia
February 2025

Good afternoon, Chairperson Parker, and members of the Committee. My name is Elyssa Glickstein, and I am a policy associate for the Early Childhood Innovation Network (ECIN). ECIN is a local collaborative of health and education providers, community-based organizations, researchers, and advocates that promote resilience in families and children from pregnancy through age 5 in Washington, DC.[1] Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

We applaud CFSA's commitment and focus on the critical prenatal to three period, and attendant programs and policies. Prenatal to three is one of the most crucial times in a child's life, where the developing brain and the body are most vulnerable to external influences such as environmental conditions and parental attachments.[2][3] Because of this, effective interventions and programs should focus on building household economic security, improving parental health and wellbeing, and strengthening parent-child interactions CFSA also demonstrated their commitment to early childhood Over the past year, CFSA has been an active participant and steering committee member in the ECIN Prenatal to Five Capacity Building Collaborative (P5CBC). The ECIN P5CBC is a local public private coalition that works to increase investments and improve equity in prenatal-to-3 programs and services that support the health and development of D.C. infants, toddlers, and their families.[4] Additionally, CFSA developed an intentional Prenatal to Three 2022-2025 Plan, focusing specifically on prevention and family strengthening. CFSA also worked closely with the ECIN P5CBC to facilitate evidence-based training for many individuals in the Family Success Center Network in the Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN) model, which enhances provider-caregiver relationships.

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[1] For more information on ECIN and its innovations, see https://www.ecin.org/.
[2] The Urban Child Institute. (2020*). Baby's brain begins now: Conception to age 3.* http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/why-0-3/baby-and-brain
[3] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Early brain development and health.* https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/early-braindevelopment.html#:~:text=The%20right%20care%20for%20children,brains%20have%20a%20healthy%20start
[4] For more information on the ECIN Prenatal to Five Capacity Building Collaborative, see https://www.ecin.org/prenatal-to-5#aboutp5cbc

Rooted in our deep partnership with the Office of Thriving Families at CFSA and in recognition of our experience and expertise, ECIN was asked to assist CFSA in providing recommendations for potential enhancements to DC's Family First Prevention Plan. This plan encompasses programs that emphasize prevention and reduction in the occurrence and frequency of child welfare placements. Through robust discussions with CFSA, ECIN delivered recommendations on evidence-based early childhood programs that could be funded through Family First Prevention Services Act dollars in DC. We were grateful for the opportunity to partner with CFSA, and for their ongoing interest in early childhood focused programs and look forward to future opportunities for collaboration.

CFSA has also always been a stronger supporter and beneficiary of ECIN's Family Leadership Certificate program. In collaboration with local experts and the *Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies,* ECIN helped to create the Certificate in Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health: Family Leadership Track for parents, caregivers, and community members to become frontline community mental health workers (CHMWs).[5] Participants in this 9-month long certificate program gain a breadth of skills and experience in social-emotional wellbeing, mindfulness, and child and family mental health in early learning, educational, healthcare and community settings. It is also available for current professionals to upskill. Overall, ECIN has provided the Family Leadership certificate training to over 30 staff members of CFSA. Further, many graduates of our certificate program have gone on to work for CFSA, including as staffers on the District's 211 Warmline.

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony – I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

[5] More information about the certificate program can be found here: Online Certificate in Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Family Leadership | Georgetown SCS

Testimony for

The Committee on Youth Affairs

Child and Family Services Agency

February 13, 2024

Submitted By

Fernanda Ruiz

Home Visiting Director

Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Inc.

to

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Testimony for 2024-24 Performance Oversight Hearing
Committee on Youth
Child and Family Services Agency
February 13, 2025

Fernanda Ruiz
Home Visiting Director
Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Inc
2333 Ontario Rd NW

Good morning Chairman Zachary Parker and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Fernanda Ruiz, and I am the Home Visiting Director at Mary's Center, a member of Under 3DC and a District resident from Ward 4 and soon to be resident from Ward 5. In my role I support the Father Child Attachment (FCA) program funded by the Child and Families Services Agency (CFSA) and other home visiting models currently implemented in the District through other funding sources.

FCA is a home visiting program that promotes positive father involvement and works toward strengthening the father-child relationship. The FCA Program's main purpose is to improve the health and social wellbeing of children and their entire families. Through program participation, fathers increase parenting skills, acquire and augment knowledge of child development, become self-sufficient and financially responsible, and build healthy relationships with their children. .

FCA is engaging in incredible work in the District.

In FY24, FCA served 42 fathers and 41 children. 15 out of the 42 fathers reside in Ward 5. Collectively we completed 366 home visits. Moreover, the data that CFSA has shared with us shows positive outcomes. According to the data CFSA collected and analyzed through the Retrospective Protective Factor Survey (PFS), Retrospective surveys revealed significant growth among participating fathers, with improvements such as 78% in family functioning and resilience, 44% in nurturing and attachment, and 78% in social support.

I am including the feedback we received on the program by the fathers in the program during our last Participant Satisfaction Survey we collected between January and March of 2024. We heard from a total of 12 fathers currently enrolled. One father shared, "I like that workers seek to help me because it's heard for a man to ask for help and Jaime always has been there to help me!" As you will see in the charts, the feedback speaks to the impact of the program. We are currently collecting our Participant Satisfaction Survey for 2025 and we will be presenting the results at the Budget Hearing.

Our experience working with CFSA has been one of respect, collaboration and mutual commitment to our community. DC Action's recent report, "The State Of Administrative Burden For DC's Home Visitors," discusses challenges with grantors requiring duplicative data systems and increasing administrative burden leading to home visitors burnout. On this note, we want to commend CFSA for being intentional about administrative requirements and allowing programs to prioritize actual time spent with families over administrative tasks. CFSA requires grantees to use the Retrospective PFS and Find Help. They choose the Retrospective PFS version to minimize the screening of families, while still measuring impact effectively. Similarly, Find Help is a low administrative burden, yet a helpful resource. The bulk of our documentation is done in our own database, which allows us to design the data collection according to our needs and own our data.

Our Grant Monitor is always available to answer questions and provide technical assistance. CFSA is constantly fostering collaboration among the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention grantees, strengthening the system of care of families in the District.

During the last year, CFSA has made great efforts to support fathers through the Fatherhood Engagement Committee. They realigned their focus to strengthen CFSA's relationship with fathers and build community partnerships. CFSA has demonstrated a commitment to collaborating with fathers in the community early on through prevention strategies. They provide an open forum, where community voices are heard. We are proud to be part of this movement.

However, funding from CFSA has been extremely inconsistent which makes implementing the program extremely difficult. For example, in FY2024, the Committee on Facilities and Family Services included $300,000 recurring funds to support CFSA home visiting programs. However, during the budget oversight hearing, CFSA shared that the agency viewed that increase as only one-time and did not include it in the Fiscal Year 2025 proposed budget.[1] Given the tough budget environment FY2025, we were extremely grateful when the Committee on Facilities and Family Services were able to find one-time funding of $400,000.

Unfortunately, this week when we received the agreement to continue the implementation of FCA in the District the funding was cut. The agreement is for the amount of $150,000 and is pro-rated to 9 months. In FY24, our agreement was for the total amount of $250,000. If we were to be funded at the same rate as last year, a pro-rated agreement of 9 months would reflect an award amount of $187,500. While we are excited to continue to partner with CFSA to continue offering support to fathers in the District, we are faced with the hard decision to reduce our staffing and services due to reductions in funds. We are excited to continue building on our efforts with CFSA to offer strong programming for fathers in the District and invest in prevention. At the

[1] Committee on Facilities and Family Services, Budget Report, (May 1, 2024), https://lims.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/55149/Committee_Report/B25-0785-Committee_Report8.pdf?Id=195424.

same time, we are left with the predicament of reducing staff by one position and eliminating 15 slots for fathers.

Funding and compensation greatly impact participant outcomes and staff retention. We have presented testimony every year outlining the impact of staff turnover, so often due to needing a salary more reflective of their skills and abilities. We've reviewed how lapses in funding impact consistency and continuity of services, including loss of contact with families and loss of trained staff who have built trusting relationships with families.

Home visitors are educated, well trained, dedicated and committed individuals. They are passionate about working with families. 81% of home visitors have a bachelor's degree in human services, child development or another relevant field with our remaining team joining us as District residents with experience in early childhood development, community health and other areas that support our participants. Yet, as many social services jobs, home visiting is a job that is mostly done by women and people of color[2]. Historically, community members that are underpaid. Home visitors find their jobs rewarding and meaningful. However, a rewarding position is only one aspect of what allows us to be engaged in our work; we also need to ensure our compensation matches the importance, skill level and quality that we bring. As an agency that has implemented home visiting for 29 years, we know what is necessary to be effective and we know home visiting staff deserve pay that reflects the time and investment that the team has put into their role to ensure the highest quality of care and support to our communities.

For these reasons, Mary's Center and Under 3 DC have been advocating for the last few years to increase funding for home visiting programs to increase home visitor compensation. We have appreciated that the DC Council has championed this work. We remain frustrated that the Executive continues to not implement the funding allocated by the Council. This will continue to cause barriers in effective implementation of home visiting in the District.

Mary's Center continues through our social change model to be committed to the health, education and safety of families in the District. We urge CFSA to continue their investment in prevention services and that we do not remove these essential supports for families of young children. We continue to manage racism, trauma, inequity and loss, let's recognize the importance of maintaining investment in our programs within our system of care towards safe and healthy families that lead to safe and healthy communities.

Thank you very much for your attention and time. I am happy to answer any questions.

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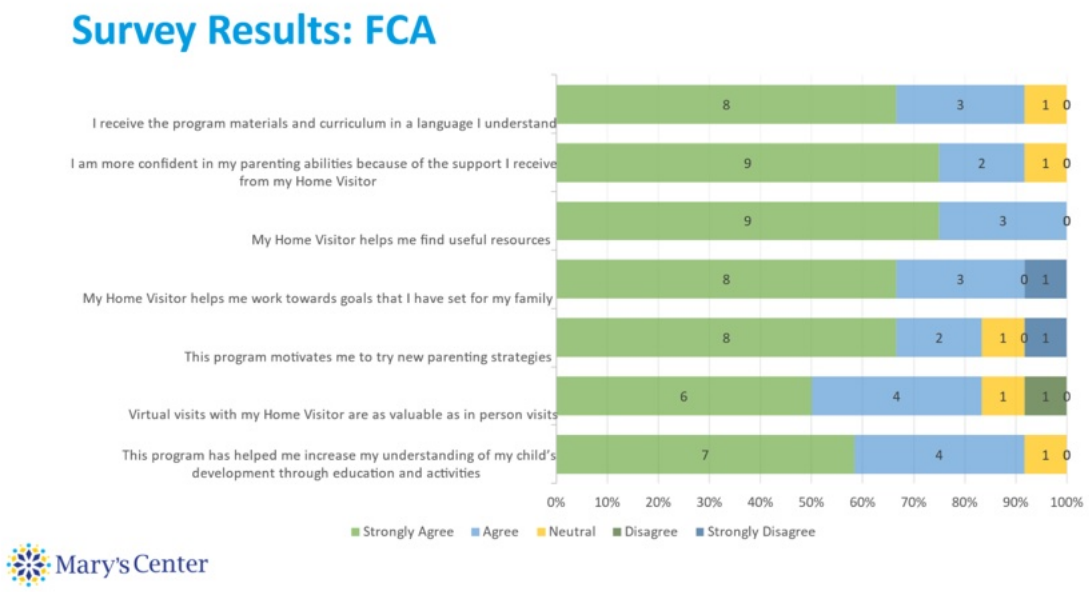
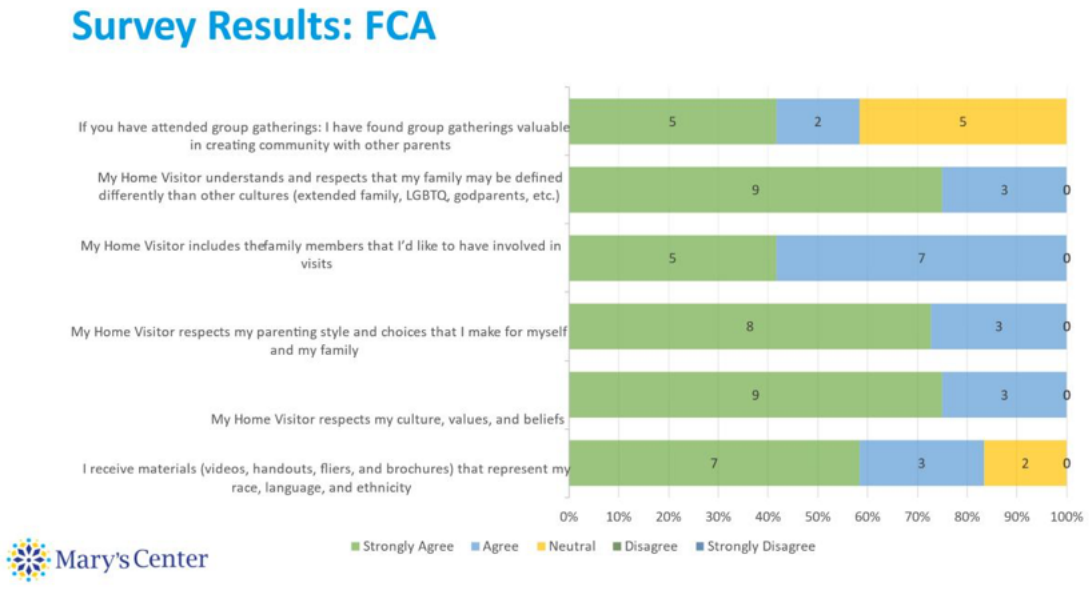
[2] Data Source: Home Visitors Experience Report (2021). DC Home Visiting Council. Retrieved from: http://www.dchomevisiting.org/uploads/1/1/9/0/119003017/home_visitors_experience_report-final_english.pdf

Attachment A: Participant Satisfaction Survey 2024 Results.

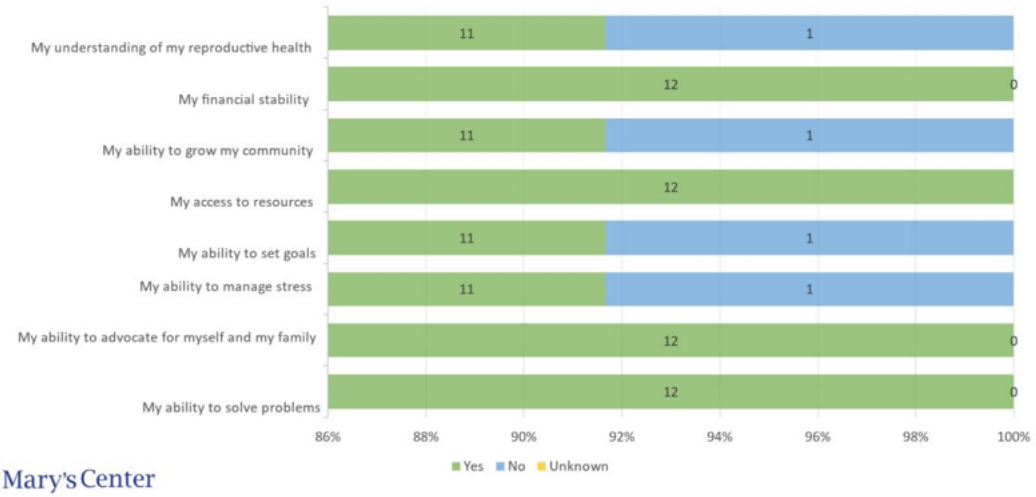


Mary's Center



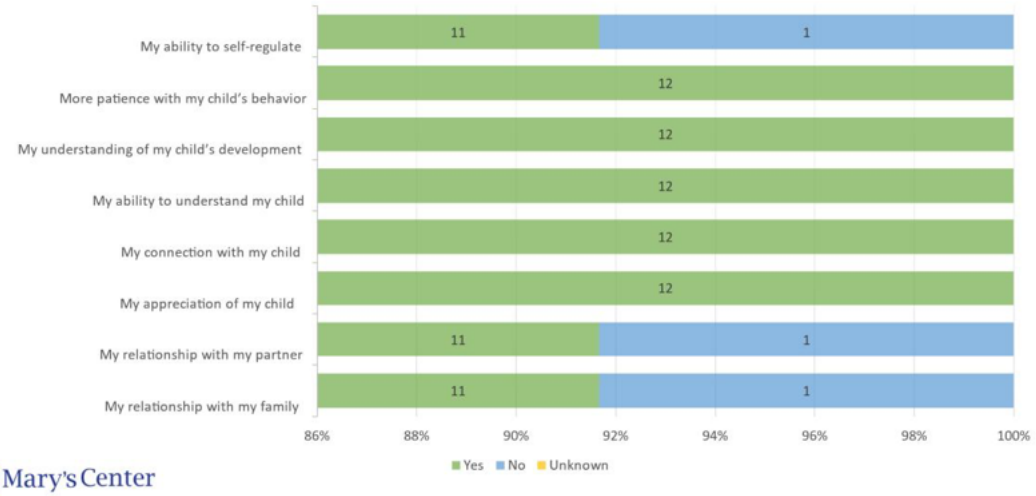
Mary's Center

Survey Results: FCA



Mary's Center

Survey Results: FCA



Mary's Center

Survey Results: Narrative

What would motivate you to stay engaged in the program until graduation?

- I like this program because it supports low-income people a lot
- That there are things that help me and my family and people who need it.
- I liked everything
- The support they give me, the kindness, I feel comfortable!
- It motivates me because they teach me how to be a better parent and my life has been easier since I've been in the program!
- Have access to information, help, and mental health more than food and diapers.
- The help they offer me, the talks!
- I like that workers seek to help me because it's hard for a man to ask for help and Jaime always has been there to help me!
- For the help they give me in the needs that I have.

Please share any other compliments, concerns, or suggestions you may have for the team:

- I am very happy about this program

Thank you, Council Member and committee members, for allowing me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jimmy Llanos, and I am a Family Support Worker at Mary's Center, with the Father-Child Attachment Program. I am here to express my gratitude for the opportunity to support participants in achieving their goals and to emphasize the critical role we play in helping families navigate their challenges.

As a Family Support Worker, I believe building strong, trusting relationships with families is very important. It's our priority to foster open and honest communication, creating a supportive environment where families feel comfortable reaching out for guidance whenever they need. By establishing ourselves as a trusted resource, we connect families with the services and assistance they require, whether it's healthcare, legal support, or childcare services. This connection enables families to focus on their personal and family goals with the peace of mind that the necessary support is in place.

I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations within this program—discussions about fatherhood, masculinity, and vulnerability. Providing a space for fathers to openly share their experiences as parents, spouses, and community members is vital. This environment not only allows them to express themselves but also helps build a sense of solidarity and support among fathers who may face similar challenges.

Allow me to share an example of the impact we've had. For nearly two years, I've been working with a 22-year-old father who initially sought assistance with legal advice, health insurance, job searches, and completing his high school education. Through our support, we connected him to health services, legal assistance, and educational programs. Today, he is employed and actively participating in parenting classes, taking significant steps to improve his life and his family's well-being.

I am proud to see the positive transformation in this young father's life, and I know there are many others in our community who need the same kind of support but are currently without access to these resources. Through home visits, we are able to directly connect fathers to essential services and, perhaps more importantly, provide a safe space for them to reflect on their personal experiences, connect with others, and share the challenges and triumphs of parenting. This creates a community of support where fathers can learn from one another and continue to grow as parents and individuals.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I am hopeful that we can continue to expand and improve these vital services to reach even more families in need.

Dear Councilmember Parker and members of the Youth Affairs Committee,

First of all, thank you for taking your time to read this. I am Jamarri White, a native Washingtonian and recent Howard University graduate. I've lived here and occasionally Maryland my entire life. I've also spent half of my life in foster care up until 2020 when I was adopted at the age of 19.

During my tenure in the system I had about ten placements. Various foster homes, congregate care settings, failed kinship, even almost missed out on my loving family if I hadn't come to my senses and realized those people loved me more than anyone. And they continue to show it day in and day out, no matter what situation I'm in I will always ask my parents for their help. I dream of that feeling for every youth in care.

Unfortunately, most older youth here in our city age out or choose emancipation because they've never experienced that love nor do they believe it exists after their traumatic experiences within the system - such as the state I was in before meeting my family. Experiences that could be avoided if we enact the SOUL Family Initiative. This permanency pathway will essentially allow youth to choose their family, building lifelong connections with their most trusted adults.

Quite frankly the system now feels more like a lottery system where some children have the loving foster care experience that's so coveted - while most have to endure hardships to no end, ultimately finding their own way in life after being thrown out the system at age 21 regardless of if they are ready or not. A trend that should not be so consistent. A trend that would have saved me years of trauma and otherwise negative experiences with parental figures. I watched every adult I actually wanted to live with pass the opportunity up - due to financial anxiety, the processes being too drawn out, not having their things together etc. My father passed as soon as my little brother was born, aunt couldn't take me because her name wasn't on her lease, grandma couldn't take me because she didn't make enough money. I found what I thought to be a great home in my father's sister's home only for the kinship to fail.

As you know most prospective foster parents would like a younger child easily moldable and not a teen who's trying to find a way in the world so I was separated from my heart, my younger brother and tossed in a group home. I begged for a lifeline every day in the group home, almost to the point of tallying the walls.

Every adult I had a meaningful relationship with could not take me due to the complications of the guardianship process or financial strain. Now where my story differs is I went back to my now family on my own, and they accepted me back. If they hadn't my fate would have been much like that of my peers - aged out, incarcerated, some trafficked, others had the life squeezed out of them and only wanted to get money to survive. We can get coffee and discuss my group home experiences later if any of you are interested but the point is, we need this initiative. This is the most transformative legislation I've seen in all my years of living as it relates to the child welfare system. It takes a village, and this gives youth the keys to build their own.

Leaving the system early, knowing what a family is, knowing people have your back and it's not against the wall. A shorter process that is less invasive and more open to trusted adults by the youth. Allowing youth to live with one member and having others support where they can is the ultimate way of letting a youth decide their pathway as opposed to feeling like lambs left to the slaughter. This will help ensure many of our city's youth can envision a future for themselves beyond where their next meal is coming from. A future where death, incarceration, or being trafficked hasn't even entered their minds because they are so entrenched in love.

During my public speaking appearances, panels etc. I've come across many nonprofit directors and professionals alike. I always hear long drawn out plans - many of which are feasible however the SOUL Family Initiative is a no brainer - me and all the youth who've actually experienced the system feel the same. It is the ultimate way of letting a youth be in control of their life when many of them feel quite the opposite. That is why me and my peers give all the time we have to advocating for this initiative.

Our time in the system may have passed but it's not just about our experiences - we are trying to ensure our ordeals are not consistencies in this system. This is for all the youth who will come after and innovate even more than we could imagine. By passing the SOUL family permanency pathway you will be doing a great justice to our city and the foster youth who inhabit it.

Thank you for reading.

Testimony of

Janai Bradley, Ward 5 resident and client of

Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative

Before the

District of Columbia City Council's Committee of Youth Affairs

Chairperson Zachary Parker

February 13, 2025

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs and staff. My name is Janai Bradley, and I am a Ward 5 resident and current client of the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative.

I would like to acknowledge Interim Director Trice of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and her staff for recognizing the need to support families in the community and focusing on prevention.

I am a Creative Director with years of experience with a BA in Marketing. My strengths are adaptability, leadership, and creativity. I am a proud mother of two, ages 7 and 2 weeks old.

I first found out about the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative through their RiseUp Entrepreneurial Program where I received help in applying for and receiving my DC Business License. I also participated in various community events at the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative such as the back-to-school event this past summer and the James Creek Community Clean Up event. I enjoy my time at the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative and connecting with the case managers.

I was also a mother in need of support and fell on hard times because I lost my job and was facing an eviction, all while being in my third trimester of pregnancy. I searched for numerous community organizations to get resources; and was blessed when my RiseUp Employment Specialist referred me to Edgewood/Brookland Collaborative's Family Strengthening Program for assistance. It was there I met Ms. Cameron, a Family Support Worker (FSW) who saw me as a person and not a number. She genuinely cared about my wellbeing and worked with me to find a new job, items for my newborn, and even connected me to getting Christmas gifts for my children. I was also able to obtain and secure housing resources so that my family would not be left out in the cold this winter. With the help of the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative's RiseUp Employment Program and their Family Strengthening Program, I was successful in getting the support I needed.

I believe the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative can benefit other families because they genuinely care for clients and their well-being. They assist as needed and can provide families with resources to help in hard times.

In closing, the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative is a wonderful organization that everyone should back. They have many programs and resources to fit various needs in the community. They not only focus on family but serving the community. I am certain that the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative positively impacted my entrepreneurial experience, improved my sense of community, and saved us from homelessness.

Thank you.

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing

Testimony of Javon Henson

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

The Deanwood Family Success Center (DFSC) has had a profound impact on my life by allowing me to connect with the employees and people in my community. It has not only provided me with essential resources but has also given me the opportunity to give back, creating a sense of belonging and shared support within the community.

The staff and services offered by DFSC are critical to our neighborhood. When I have no food, they provide it. When I run out of necessities like tissue, they have it. Even when I need to wash my clothes, they make sure I have the detergent to do so. These resources fill essential gaps in my life and the lives of many others who rely on them in difficult times.

If the center were to close, it would be heartbreaking. Building relationships with people who genuinely care about you and your family would be a significant loss, only to see them and their support suddenly disappear. DFSC is more than just a resource hub—it is a vital part of the community, providing comfort, stability, and a sense of security for those who depend on it.

1. Good morning, Mr. Zachery Parker and members of the Committee on Youth Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Council today. My name is Karen Chicas, I am a family support worker at Mary's Center for the Father-Child Attachment program, and I am testifying on fatherhood today.

2. The impact of this program on children and families is tremendous. I have witnessed families through some of their most vulnerable and challenging times. However, I have also witnessed some of their happiest of times, for example families welcoming another member of the family. Fathers serve a crucial role in families, especially with their children. To have a father be involved, engaged, and loving, is to have a father who is present. FCA empowers fathers to be engaged, aware, and involved in their child's development. I believe that as a family support worker I can establish a professional connection with fathers and their families and provide resources, structure, and support their goals. I have worked with fathers who struggled to speak about their mental health, others who did not know how to apply for health or dental insurance. I have assisted 58% of my participants in obtaining medical and dental insurance. Some of my participants did not see a medical provider for over 10 years. I like to view the impact of FCA as the transformation of a butterfly. When I first see fathers, they are in their caterpillar form, learning to navigate the world we live in, these fathers work hard to support their families, and most of them forget and/or neglect their health. This challenge itself is fundamental to their transformation. When the fathers recognize that they need to be well and when they accept my support, they can transform into their own cocoon and begin their transformation. FCA is a bridge for these families. The children of my participants have more engaged father's due to my support and the 24:7 Dad sessions that are worked on with father's during home visits. Many of my participants had absent father's growing up, and many of them were raised by their grandparents.
3. A day in the life of a home visitor for me depends on what crisis or challenges occurred among my participants. I plan all my home visits, but every day is different. Whether virtual or in-person I have a goal planned for that home visit. However, completing that goal is ultimately dependent on what is occurring in my participant's life. Approximately 50% of my participants go through crises or challenges that impede me from completing a 24:7 Dad session or parents as teachers' activity. I value the trust my participants put in me to share their stories, challenges, and vulnerabilities. As a family support worker, part of my duty is to listen to my participants and assist them with resources that can support them. The remaining 50% of my participants and I can complete our parental education sessions and recap our session at the end of each visit. I like to use a strength-based approach and point out the positive things that they shared and thank them for allowing me to visit and for their time.
4. Challenges that I face in my role as a home visitor are being a female, serving homeless participants, serving participants with a toxic masculinity mindset, and language barrier. Although I am a first-generation Salvadoran American, I take my trainings in both Spanish and English to better support my participants. It is important for me to be able to communicate with them effectively. However, double training can be time consuming. I have supported participants who

are homeless and providing resources for housing has been a challenge. I remember walking into Virginia William's and only speaking to the employee for less than 30 seconds before we were turned away. As a female home visitor, it is important for me to establish and maintain proper boundaries with my participants. As a female it could also be more challenging to build the rapport with my participants. I set boundaries with my participants and inform them that my role is to support them, and I provide a judgement free zone. I have been blessed to have accomplished positive connections with my participants. I believe that being a female family support worker can be beneficial because it can provide males with more confidence to talk about certain topics that they may feel unable to speak with other males. I support my participants by validating their thoughts and feelings. I truly value the opportunity, and I express my gratitude to my participants for putting their trust in me to serve and support them and their families.

Budget cuts will negatively impact on my ability to carry out my role now and in the future by reducing the number of resources we can provide.

5. I would like my role to continue improving and supporting additional community members and families. I believe that home visitors can assist participants or families with holding an open space for dialogue and communication without fear of vulnerability. I would like to share a story of one of my participants who is the father of five beautiful and intelligent daughters. My participant joined FCA during a challenging and vulnerable time. He shared his struggles and fears with me. I have implemented the 24:7 Dad sessions with this father and have worked with this father for several months until he felt that he could trust me with some of his deepest struggles of addiction. I would like to share this experience because society has been tough on masculinity. Society tends to applaud toxic masculinity or at least has shown us to not speak out against it. Society has embedded thoughts to young boys and/or teenagers that they need to be tough, to not cry, and to be a man. But truly, does every man know what it mean's to be a man? I envision normalizing certain topics about men and fatherhood into society. As home visitors it's extremely important to show compassion and empathy to our participants.

   I want to express my gratitude to CFSA for being great partners with Mary's Center. I hope we can continue to provide services for our participants and community.

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Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council
Committee on Youth Affairs
February 13, 2025

Public Hearing:
Performance Oversight Hearing
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

Leah Castelaz
Senior Policy Attorney
Children's Law Center

Introduction

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, and members of the Committee. My name is Leah Castelaz. I am a Senior Policy Attorney at Children's Law Center and a Ward 5 resident of the District. Children's Law Center believes every child should grow up with a strong foundation of family, health and education and live in a world free from poverty, trauma, racism and other forms of oppression. Our more than 100 staff – together with DC children and families, community partners and pro bono attorneys – use the law to solve children's urgent problems today and improve the systems that will affect their lives tomorrow. Since our founding in 1996, we have reached more than 50,000 children and families directly and multiplied our impact by advocating for city-wide solutions that benefit hundreds of thousands more.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the performance of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children over the last year. Each year, Children's Law Center attorneys serve as guardians-ad-litem for several hundred children in foster care and protective supervision – over half of all children in the care and custody of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).[1] As a result, we see firsthand how children and families who are involved in the child welfare system struggle to have their needs met by CFSA and its sister agencies. For example, our clients and their families frequently experience excessive delays to accessing appropriate behavioral health services, face unmet educational needs, and struggle to find affordable, suitable

housing.[2] Failure to meet these needs in turn causes and prolongs family instability and undermines children's ability to thrive and reach their full potential.[3]

The Ombudsperson for Children is a critical tool to be able to fulfill the District's duty to DC's foster children and exercise effective oversight of DC's child welfare system – a system that encompasses many agencies beyond just CFSA.[4] The Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), Department of Health (DC Health), District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA), Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF), the Office of the Superintendent of Education (OSSE), District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) all have a role to play in ensuring the District fulfills its responsibilities to DC's foster children and their families.

Given the Ombudsperson's very important, unique position, as the second ever independent legislative body, there are numerous opportunities for the Ombudsperson to engage in ensuring that District agencies are meeting their obligations to DC's foster youth.[5] The Ombudsperson's core functions – effective oversight, systemic trend analysis, interagency coordination, and investigation and day-to-day problem solving[6] – allow it to play a critical role in assisting the Council with holding DC agencies accountable for their role in protecting and uplifting DC's most vulnerable children and families. The Ombudsperson sits in a position that allows the Ombudsperson to

understand governmental agencies' roles in the lives of DC families and children, address interagency coordination, and build relationships with all agencies involved in the District's child welfare system.

Given the clear need for the Ombudsperson,[7] we are grateful for Council's extraordinary efforts to establish it – through unanimously voting to establish the Ombudsperson in 2020 and unanimously overriding the Mayor's veto in 2021,[8] to fully funding the Ombudsperson in FY2022,[9] and fully restoring funding for the Ombudsperson both in FY2023 and FY2025 after the Mayor defunded the Office from the proposed budget.[10] This investment has paid off.

In two short years the Ombudsperson has made significant progress in its role with continued opportunities for advancement. My testimony today will (1) highlight how the Ombudsperson has been a critical resource for the District through their complaint process and improved coordination efforts; (2) discuss how the Ombudsperson supports the DC Council and their oversight function; and (3) provide insight into the continued barriers to the Ombudsperson being able to exercise effective oversight of crossover youth in the District.

The Ombudsperson is a Crucial Resource for the District by Resolving Complaints and Improving Coordination Between the Government and the Community

Petrina Jones-Jesz wrote in the FY2024 report, "Although our office is new and has existed for only two full fiscal years (FYs 2023 and 2024), we have made tremendous progress in standing up the office and serving the residents of DC." We agree. Over the

past year, the Ombudsperson for Children has continued to grow its capacity to problem-solve on behalf of individuals and families involved in the child-welfare family, deepen its connections to and impact in the community, and provide valuable insights to the Council in support of its oversight of the child welfare system.

The Ombudsperson for Children helps children and families navigate the complexities of the child welfare system through its many functions. First, the Ombudsperson works to resolve everyday problems by providing the space for children, families, and agency staff to work through and resolve these conflicts together or ensure children and families can connect with the right person to get their needs met in a timely manner.

The Ombudsperson has received 134 complaints since it first started receiving complaints in February 2023 and has engaged with the community in other informal ways like in townhalls and community gathering spaces.[11] Through their direct constituent work, the Ombudsperson has served as a place to connect grandparents with school transportation for their grandchildren, support kinship caregiver connections for children in care, connect services to families, and facilitate visitations between birth parents and children in care – to name a few.[12] In FY2023, the Ombudsperson closed 32 complaints, and FY2024, they closed 74 complaints – meaning out of the 134 complaints in the two fiscal years only 28 remain open.[13] Often a case remains open for a longer period of time due to the complexity of the complaint and the

steps needed for a thorough assessment of the constituent's concerns.[14] We appreciate the thoroughness and care which the Ombudsperson is taking to ensure a full investigation that results in solutions and recommendations to alleviate similar issues in the future.

The Ombudsperson's impact is also felt outside of complaints to the Ombudsperson. First, it has served as a place for information and referrals for DC residents as indicated in their annual reports.[15] During FY2024, the Ombudsperson received 22 contacts that were assigned as an "Information & Referral" and the Ombudsperson was able to make needed connections for District children and families.[16] The Ombudsperson has additional insights to what District families may be looking for with regards to resources, services, and supports. We ask the Ombudsperson to continue to share insight on calls about information and referral to help support how the District understands the needs of residents, where gaps in information exist, and opportunities to improve connections to services.

Second, the Ombudsperson plays a crucial role in making connections across the community and the government that help to facilitate information sharing as well as improved communication, coordination and connectiveness in the District. According to the 2024 Annual Report, "connecting and engaging with the community and government organizations continues to be a mission for the OFC. The purpose for this

engagement is to promote the work of the office, understand resources available to children and families in the District, and develop partnerships."[17]

In both FY2023 and FY2024, the Ombudsperson engaged with a variety of stakeholders. The Ombudsperson continues to make significant efforts to do outreach to the community to share the mission and goals of the Ombudsperson. In FY2024, the Ombudsperson engaged in monthly and quarterly child welfare advocate meetings, presented at Foster and Adoptive Parents Advocacy Center (FAPAC) Youth and Parent Summit, and was a strong partner with the Children's Law Center to support our guardians-ad-litem – just to name a few examples of engagement.[18] Being community facing is a critical component to help DC residents see the Ombudsperson as a tool to help resolve concerns and issues arising in the child welfare system.

Moreover, the Ombudsperson deepened their connections with government stakeholders. The Ombudsperson has a strong relationship with CFSA but has also worked to replicate that across other government agencies like the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS). The Ombudsperson has also worked in partnership with multiple agencies at a time to discuss issues like DC residents' access to utilities.[19] The Ombudsperson continues to work to identify and build relationships with those agencies impacting the lives of children and families involved in the child welfare system.

The Ombudsperson also provides opportunities to bring the government and community together. For example, in December 2024, the Agency had an open house at their office. This was a chance to sit down and engage in conversation across stakeholders and to hear more about the Ombudsperson's work. Ultimately, the work of the Ombudsperson to resolve complaints and provide solutions must be done in partnership with DC government agencies. The relationship building done by the Ombudsperson is critical to ensure they can execute day-to-day problem solving. We applaud this work and ask that this Committee continue to support the efforts of the Ombudsperson by providing them the resources, tools, and spaces to move forward solutions to complaints as well as develop these critical relationships.

The Ombudsperson Plays a Critical Role in Supporting the Oversight Functions of the Council

Another key function of the Ombudsperson is identifying trends and systemic issues impacting children and families involved in the child welfare system and developing recommendations based on this analysis, which are shared primarily through the Ombudsperson's annual report.[20]

The FY2024 report reflects thematic concerns that reflect our own client experiences, particularly their findings related to supports for kin caregivers.[21] A kin caregiver is an individual who either has a familial relation to a child or is known to have a close personal or emotional tie with the child or the child's family and is willing

to step in to care for the child in a day-to-day capacity.[22] Kin caregivers can prevent the removal of child into the formal foster care system by stepping in to care for a child when a parent/current caregiver is unable to at the time.[23] For the purposes of this testimony, we will refer to this as kinship diversion.[24]

As CFSA continues to prioritize prevention of children into the child welfare system, kinship diversion has a critical role to play. Kinship diversion, done right, can keep families together, reduce the trauma associated with placement in foster care, and allow families to make decisions without the oversight of a court or child welfare agency.[25] There must be guardrails for this practice, however, so that kinship caregivers are not coerced into these arrangements, they are receiving adequate information regarding these arrangements, as well as their options and rights, and they are provided sufficient support to care for the children.[26] Getting kinship diversion right can mean that fewer children are unnecessarily drawn into the child welfare system and subjected to the harm of being removed from their own people and community and placed with strangers.

The FY2024 Annual Report finds that getting kinship diversion right is an area for improvement in the District. Specifically, the report states there are continued challenges regarding the agency's ability to address the needs of kin caregivers that step in to provide temporary care to avoid the children's placement into foster care.[27] In the Ombudsperson's investigations, the kin caregivers struggled to receive resources that

are needed to care for the child which in turn led to difficulties for the caregiver when trying to access housing, childcare, employment, and transportation.[28]

The Ombudsperson has identified some important trends regarding kin caregivers. First, kin caregivers require well-documented supports in the beginning of taking a child into their care.[29] Second, kin caregivers require supports throughout the care of the child/children.[30] Third, the District's lack of interagency coordination hinders kin caregivers' ability to take on the responsibilities of caring for the children in their lives.[31] [32]

To address these concerns, the Ombudsperson offers several recommendations, including: (1) the use of a comprehensive needs assessment and a standardized checklist to ensure all areas of needs are addressed for families in the initial stages of a potential kinship diversion; (2) better documentation of the options provided to kin caregivers; (3) better education materials for kin caregivers to use in navigating resources and understanding their responsibility; (4) closed-loop referrals to the Collaboratives and Family Success Centers; and (5) ongoing connection with relevant government agencies for support outside the immediate connection. We agree with these recommendations.[33]

The Ombudsperson's work – informing the Council regarding trends, persistent gaps, and new emerging issues, and offering recommendations such as in the case of kinship diversion – is critical to supporting the DC Council and this Committee's

oversight functions. As the Ombudsperson continues to grow and develop in its role, however, we would like to see the Ombudsperson increase its focus on interagency coordination. For example, with respect to kinship diversion, the report discussed the case of a grandmother, who lost her job and was no longer able to care for her grandchildren.[34] Currently, the recommendations only identify ways in which CFSA could provide support for this family. However, there are other government agencies that may be able to intervene and/or support the grandmother – agencies like the Department of Employment Services and the Department of Human Services could possibly be helpful in these circumstances.[35]

As noted above the child welfare system is more than CFSA; it encompasses many, many more government agencies. The Ombudsperson is explicitly required to "build relationships with other government agencies and identify areas where interagency coordination must be improved to better meet the needs of DC's foster children."[36] As exemplified in the next section, the Ombudsperson has done significant work in interagency coordination between the juvenile legal system and CFSA. We hope to see this continue to expand into other areas of the child welfare system. Therefore, we ask this Committee to support the Ombudsperson's efforts to build these relationships across the District. This Committee can identify agencies and partners that should be connected with the Ombudsperson and help ensure those connections are made.

The Ombudsperson Plays a Critical Role in Assessing Improvements to the Juvenile Legal System, But Faces Continued Challenges to Accessing Key Data

As noted above, the Ombudsperson for Children is positioned to identify areas where interagency coordination must be improved to better meet the needs of DC's foster children. The Ombudsperson is the only District agency that is legislatively mandated to track crossover youth or conduct system analyses on factors affecting their outcomes.[37] Crossover youth are children who experience both the foster care system and the juvenile legal system even if at separate times.[38] This population of youth experience significant challenges to their wellbeing and stability, too often rolling from one system into the next.[39] Additionally, crossover youth face even greater barriers to positive outcomes including more difficulties in school and higher unemployment rates than foster care youth involved in only one system. The Ombudsperson's analysis of data informs gaps in services, and opportunities for collaboration towards improved outcomes for crossover youth.

However, there have been clear challenges to data collection.[40] First, the Office of the Ombudsperson found that CFSA and DYRS each have their own differing data collection processes, definitions, and procedures. These challenges are also highlighted in "A Broken Web: Improved Interagency Collaboration is Needed for D.C.'s Crossover Youth" – a recent report by the Council for Court Excellence for the Office of D.C. Auditor.[41]

The Broken Web report found that the District lacks a unified approach to collect information on crossover youth and ensure the District is addressing the needs of these vulnerable young people. Further, "to the extent that the audited agencies are communicating about and coordinating services for crossover youth, it is only for the subset who simultaneously are committed to DYRS and have an open CFSA case."[42] Meaning that the District is unable to accurately identify the number and traits of crossover youth in our community because the scope is too narrow. This also means that we cannot assess the District's ability to coordinate the services being offered or supervision being provided, target specialized programming for these youth, or provide resources for their families and caregivers.

Fortunately, there has been great partnership between DYRS, CFSA, and the Ombudsperson. In FY2024, the Ombudsperson provided recommendations about standardizing data from CFSA and DYRS.[43] The three teams – Ombudsperson, CFSA, and DYRS – now have a monthly reconciliation process. However, these data processes only focus on youth involved in DYRS – a significantly smaller population then the total youth involved in the juvenile legal system.

Although the Ombudsperson has made progress with the smaller population of DYRS committed youth, there continues to be significant challenges in assessing the broader crossover youth population outside of DYRS involvement. This requires the Ombudsperson to be able to access records that are in other areas of the government

including OAG and Court Social Services (CSS). The Ombudsperson does not report explicitly working with either of these offices in its efforts to collect data on crossover youth. We encourage the Ombudsperson to strengthen their relationships with OAG, in particular, to better understand how they may be able to properly track youth who are involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile legal system. We also ask that this Committee support the Ombudsperson in their relationship with OAG, especially given the Committee's joint oversight of OAG.

Addressing the persistent challenges in collecting information on crossover youth would greatly benefit the Committee on Youth Affairs, which is responsible for oversight of both CFSA and DYRS. Towards the end of 2024, Chairman Parker held roundtables on DYRS. In these roundtables Chairman Parker highlighted his interest in crossover youth and addressing the challenges they face particularly in accessing appropriate placements and needed services.[44]

The roundtables and the hearing on the Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024 ("ROAD Act") highlighted the persistent challenges in the juvenile legal system and the need for effective oversight. Specifically, at the DYRS government roundtable it was highlighted that data continues to be an issue due to lack of unified system.[45] Given the Office of the Ombudsperson role in monitoring and reporting on data for crossover youth and their direct experience with the difficulties of

accessing data it would appear that the Ombudsperson has a significant role in helping to address persistent challenges in the juvenile legal system.

The Ombudsperson could help to identify ways in which to create more unified data sharing to improve better interagency coordination. Specifically, the Office of the Ombudsperson is required to report: (A) The number, demographics, and other relevant characteristics of the crossover-youth population; (B) Data, metrics, and trend analyses related to outcomes for crossover youth; (C) Assessment of interagency communication and coordination related to crossover youth and its impact on outcomes for crossover youth; and (D) Any other information the Ombudsperson considers relevant to the outcomes for crossover youth.[46] The information collected should inform many of the key issue areas cited in the roundtables – issues like placement, behavioral health services, interagency coordination.

However, as noted above, the Ombudsperson must be able to access the information it needs to properly monitor the youth who are involved in both the juvenile legal system and child welfare system whether simultaneously or at different points in time. Therefore, we ask this Committee to support the Ombudsperson in ensuring they are able to access the necessary data. We also encourage this Committee to ensure a strong relationship with the Ombudsperson and look to it to support crossover youth initiatives in the District.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome any questions the Committee may have.

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[1] Children's Law Center attorneys represent children who are the subject of abuse and neglect cases in DC's Family Court. CLC attorneys fight to find safe homes and ensure that children receive the services they need to overcome the trauma that first brought them into the child welfare system. DC Children's Law Center, About Us, *available at*: https://www.childrenslawcenter.org/content/about-us. The term "protective supervision" means a legal status created by Division order in neglect cases whereby a minor is permitted to remain in his home under supervision, subject to return to the Division during the period of protective supervision. D.C. Code § 16-2301(19).

[2] Internal Children's Law Center Data Collection, "GAL Deep Dive," June 2022 through May 2023.

[3] Tami Weerasingha-Cote and Amber Rieke, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (December 6, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Dec-6-2023-Hearing-on-B25-0500-and-Foster-Youth-Behavioral-Health_FINAL.pdf. See also Megan Conway, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (December 6, 2023), *available at:* https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Megan-Conway-Testimony-for-Dec-6-2023-Hearing-on-Bill-B25-0500-and-Foster-Youth-Bheavioral-Health_FINAL.pdf; Rachel Ungar, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (December 6, 2023), available at: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RU-Draft-Testimony-EM-updated_-narrative_final.pdf; William Cox, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (December 6, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Wil-Cox-Testimony-for-Dec-6-2023-Hearing-on-Bill-B25-0500-and-Foster-Youth-Bheavioral-Health_FINAL.pdf. *See also* Sharra E. Greer and Amber Rieke, testimony before the District of Columbia Council Committee on Health, (February 1, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/fy23-oversight-testimony-department-of-behavioral-health/.; Makenna Osborn, testimony before the District of Columbia Council Committee on Housing, District of Columbia Housing Authority, (February 22, 2024), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/2023-24-oversight-testimony-committee-on-housing-district-of-columbia-housing-authority/.

[4] D.C. Law 23-270. Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020.

[5] DC Council, Organizational Chart, *available at:* https://dccouncil.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CP-25-Organization-Chart.pdf.

[6] DC Act 23-617. Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020; See also Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, About, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/.

[7] Judith Sandalow, Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council, Committee of the Whole, (June 7, 2021), available at: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/JSandalow_Childrens-Law-CenterTestimony-for-June-7-2021-Committee-of-the-Whole-Budget-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-1.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council, Committee on Human Services, (June 10, 2021), available at: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SGreer_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-June-10- 2021-CFSA-Budget-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council, Committee on Housing & Executive Administration, (June 22, 2021), available at: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SGreer_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-June-22- 2021-City-Administrator-Budget-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf;

and Tami Weerasingha-Cote, Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council, Committee on Human Services, (March 24, 2022), available at: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimonyfor-Mar.-24-2022-CFSA-Budget-Hearing_Final-1.pdf. Sharra E. Greer, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Testimony-for-the-Committee-on-Facilities-and-Family-Services_Office-of-the-Ombudsperson_final.pdf; Leah Castelaz, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Leah-Castelaz_Testimony-before-the-Committee-on-Facilities-and-Family-Services_Ombudsperson-for-Children_2.21.24_final.pdf; Leah Castelaz, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (April 25, 2024), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/fy25-budget-testimony-office-of-the-ombudsperson-for-children/.

[8] Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020, Legislative History, available at: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B23-0437.

[9] Judith Sandalow, Children's Law Center Testimony before the DC Council Committee of the Whole, (June 7, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/JSandalow_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-June-7-2021-Committee-of-the-Whole-Budget-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-1.pdf.

[10] Judith Sandalow, Children's Law Center Testimony before the DC Council Committee of the Whole, (April 8, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/JSandalow_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-April-8-2022-Committee-of-the-Whole-Budget-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-Exhibits-A-and-B-1.pdf; FY2023, Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Table RO0-1, E-107; Leah Castelaz, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (April 25, 2024), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/fy25-budget-testimony-office-of-the-ombudsperson-for-children/; FY2025, Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Table RO0-1, E-103.

[11] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[12] *Id*.

[13] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2023 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf. *See also* District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[14] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[15] *Id.*

[16] *Id.*

[17] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[18] *Id.*

[19] *Id.*

[20] D.C. Law 23-270. Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020.

[21] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[22] D.C. Code § 4-1301.02. Definitions.

[23] Stronger Kinship Diversion Policies Are Needed to Support Children and Caregivers, *available at:* https://www.aecf.org/blog/stronger-kinship-diversion-policies-are-needed-to-support-children-and-caregivers#:~:text=Most%20child%20welfare%20agencies%20facilitate,children%20out%20of%20foster%20care.

[24] There are significant complexities around this term. First, there is no uniform definition of kinship diversion, but in our testimony, we use it describe situations in which a child welfare agency investigates a report of child abuse or neglect, determines that a child cannot remain safely with parents/guardians, and helps to facilitate that child's care by a relative instead of bringing the child into state custody. *See* Judicial

Council of California, Beyond the Bench 2023 Conference Materials, *available at:* https://courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/courts/default/2024-12/btb_23_4n_7.pdf. As noted in this article there are several conflicting perceptions and opinions on diversion that make this a complex term and difficult to navigate through policy. Additionally, CFSA does not use the term diversion. They do use policies around informal family planning arrangements and safety planning. Specifically, informal family planning arrangements are used with families after a child and their family come to the attention of CFSA through a hotline report, and the investigative social worker conducts an assessment and determines the child(ren)/youth can remain safe with the parents/legal guardian of the child or in the community with an identified caretaker. Families may develop their own plan and identify supportive resources to help safely care for their children. These supportive resources may include the non-custodial parent, a relative or another identified caretaker. *See* District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), AI Informal Family Planning Arrangements Process, (May 2024), *available at:* https://cfsa.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cfsa/publication/attachments/AI_Informal_Family_Planning_Arrangements_Process_Final_May_2024.pdf.

[25] New Insights on State Kinship Diversion Policies, *available at:* https://www.aecf.org/resources/new-insights-on-state-kinship-diversion-policies.

[26] *Id.*

[27] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[28] *Id.*; *See also* District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2023 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf.

[29] According to the FY2024 report, kin caregivers are frequently offered support when CFSA first gets involved. However, the supports and services CFSA offers to kin caregivers, at the beginning of a case, are not well-documented. This means that there is no way to track CFSA's standard practices or whether kin caregivers are consistently being offered the services they need to be able to care for children diverted to their homes. *See* District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[30] For example, in one case the Ombudsperson highlighted in their report included a grandmother who had her grandchildren in her care from August 2022 to June 2023. Home visits stopped in November 2022 and ongoing phone contact with the social worker ended in December 2022. By February 2023, the grandmother had lost her job. This highlights that early in the care of her grandchildren, the grandmother was well supported by the agency. However, as the case continued the grandmother still needed supports but was not connected with relevant agencies or support systems that could have allowed her to continue to care for her grandchildren. *See* District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[31] Moreover, as identified by the Ombudsperson, kin caregivers often need supports across many agencies like education, health, and housing. CFSA alone cannot provide all these supports and instead must rely on its sister agencies to ensure kin caregivers are connected with the necessary resources the family will need after CFSA is no longer involved. *See* District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[32] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[33] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, Children's Law Center Testimony for the CFSA Budget Hearing, (March 24, 2022), *available at:* https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Mar.-24-2022-CFSA-Budget-Hearing_Final-1.pdf.

[34] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[35] The Department of Employment Services could provide assistance by offering job training, employment placement services, and unemployment benefits, which may help kin caregivers regain financial stability and continue providing care. The Department of Human Services could support kin caregivers through programs like TANF,

SNAP, and emergency rental or utility assistance, ensuring that families facing economic hardships can access the resources needed to maintain stable caregiving arrangements.

[36] D.C. Law 23-270. Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020.

[37] *Id.*

[38] *Id.*

[39] Council of Court Excellence, *A Broken Web: Improved Interagency Collaboration is Needed for D.C.'s Crossover Youth*, DC Auditor, (May 28, 2024), *available at:* https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/659c0df344c9c8325dd821ca/673caf1772f0ea16a294172a_Crossover.Youth.Report.5.28.24.Final.pdf.

[40] Council of Court Excellence, *A Broken Web: Improved Interagency Collaboration is Needed for D.C.'s Crossover Youth*, DC Auditor, (May 28, 2024), *available at:* https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/659c0df344c9c8325dd821ca/673caf1772f0ea16a294172a_Crossover.Youth.Report.5.28.24.Final.pdf.

[41] Crossover Youth Report, (May 28, 2024), *available at:* https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/659c0df344c9c8325dd821ca/673caf1772f0ea16a294172a_Crossover.Youth.Report.5.28.24.Final.pdf.

[42] *Id.*

[43] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at:* https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[44] Ward 5 Councilmember Zachary Parker, *Oversight Roundtable: DYRS Performance, Processes, and Continuum of Services*, (November 18, 2024), *available at:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQ2eiAaWQwA&t=10179s. *See also* Ward 5 Councilmember Zachary Parker, *Public Hearing: DYRS Performance, Processes, and Continuum of Services*, *available at:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXiicRQIqqA&t=20s

[45] Ward 5 Councilmember Zachary Parker, *Oversight Roundtable: DYRS Performance, Processes, and Continuum of Services*, (November 18, 2024), *available at:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQ2eiAaWQwA&t=10179s.

[46] DC Act 23-617. Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020. Sec. 108. "Reporting." (b)(3)(A)-(D).

Good morning, Mr. Zachery Parker and members of the Committee on Youth Affairs.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Luisa Millán, and I serve as the Father-Child Attachment Program also known as the FCA program supervisor at Mary's Center. I want to share a story that highlights the importance of our work and the critical role fathers play in their children's lives.

Last December 24th, I met a 7-year-old girl named Melany at Children's Hospital. As her family waited for news about her brother's surgery, Melany looked me in the eyes and said, "I'm going to be a doctor and I will work in this hospital to help kids get better, just like they're helping my brother." Her confidence struck me— Melany truly believes in herself and her dream, and I believe in both her and her dream as well.

What made this moment even more powerful was that Melany's father, who has been part of our FCA program, was right by her side. With the support of our program, he has become more emotionally involved and has created a stable environment for his family despite some challenges. He assured Melany, "I believe in you", while looking back at me also saying, "I know she'll achieve her dream."

Fathers are often overlooked in parenting programs, but they are just as critical to the well-being of children as mothers. Our FCA program specifically works with fathers. As of today, we have 23 fathers enrolled, 14 of whom are from Ward 5. The program provides them with holistic tools to connect with their children in meaningful ways. We see firsthand how having an emotionally available, actively involved father is transformative for children. For children like Melany, a father's belief and encouragement are just as valuable as any resource we can provide.

Our home visitors work daily with fathers who face challenges like poverty, instability, and generational trauma. We equip them with the tools they need to become the fathers they aspire to be—the fathers they may not have had but always needed. When fathers are involved, children thrive, and the emotional and financial stability they provide has a lasting impact on a child's future.

As you review funding for the 2026 Fiscal Year, I urge you to not only continue funding home visiting programs, such as the proposed $940,000 for the Child and Family Services Administration (CFSA), but to ensure that our dedicated employees receive fair pay. Fair compensation will help us retain skilled professionals who are committed to improving the lives of families and will directly impact the quality and sustainability of the services we provide.

I ask you to reflect on the role fathers play in shaping the future of children. Let's think about our own childhood and our relationship with our father or father figure. If he wasn't there, or struggled to be emotionally present, imagine how a program like ours could have helped him

become the father we needed. Every father deserves the chance to be that support for their children, which is why fatherhood programs are also vital—it empowers fathers to be present, engaged, and to make a lasting positive impact on their children's lives.

In conclusion, when we invest in fathers, we invest in the future of our children and our community. Our work goes beyond resources—it builds lasting connections that help children thrive. By supporting fathers and our dedicated workforce, we are shaping a brighter future for everyone. The time to make this investment is now.

Much gratitude for your time.

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing

Testimony of Lynette Bowser

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

The Deanwood Family Success Center has been an incredible asset to our community, providing essential resources that help families thrive and come together. Its presence fosters a sense of unity and support, creating opportunities for people to build something great for everyone. The ability to give back and receive the help we need is invaluable in making our community stronger.

The staff has been a tremendous resource, offering not only support but also valuable knowledge. Their expertise and dedication have made a significant difference in my life, as they are skilled, compassionate, and truly understand the needs of the people they serve. Their guidance has helped me and so many others navigate challenges and access the help we need.

If the center were to close, it would be devastating for our community. Losing such a vital resource would leave many struggling without the necessary support. The work being done here is too important to lose, and I refuse to stand by and let that happen—I would start a boycott to fight for the center and its incredible staff because our community needs them now more than ever.

Testimony before the DC Council

Youth Affairs Committee

Child and Family Services Agency Oversight Hearing

Maria Jackson

Mother's Outreach Network

Thursday, February 13th, 2025

My name is Maria Jackson. I am a member of Mother's Outreach Network's Moms Empower program and a MON Advocacy Fellow. I am here today to speak for parents who couldn't be here and may not know about this opportunity to share their concerns.

Many parents risk losing their children because they don't have stable housing. If the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) knows families need better housing to stay together, they should provide housing vouchers. If these vouchers aren't being used properly, we need to ask where they are going. For moms involved with CFSA, there are important questions: Can they still get Rapid Rehousing if their children have been taken? If only one child was removed, do they still qualify for help? If they are struggling to find work, will they lose housing support, or should they receive assistance to get back on their feet?

Too often, CFSA removes children instead of helping families escape poverty. Families need real support, housing, financial aid, and job programs, and not judgment.

If a child is taken and later returned, CFSA must ensure that the family has a safe place to live. Providing housing vouchers can help. Struggling families need Rapid Rehousing and other services to help them succeed. If CFSA isn't using funds to help, DHS should step in to make sure children get what they need, like furniture and other essentials.

Another big change in policy that would help is ensuring parents have a lawyer when CFSA contacts them. CFSA should tell parents they have a right to legal help before any decisions are made. Many parents don't know their rights or that they might be listed in a child welfare database. CFSA often promises to send paperwork but doesn't follow through. Legal representation would help parents navigate the system and protect their families.

I ask the Council to take action to keep families together by addressing these housing and legal support issues. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.

Testimony before the District of Columbia Council

Committee on

Performance Oversight Hearing

Child and Family Services Agency

February 13, 2025

Marie K. Cohen

Child Welfare Monitor

My name is Marie Cohen and I live in Ward 6. After my first career as a policy analyst and researcher, I became a social worker and served in the District's child welfare system until 2015. Soon after leaving that job, I became a member of the Citizen Review Panel for Child Abuse and Neglect and later the Child Fatality Review Committee. I also began writing a blog, which later became *Child Welfare Monitor*, to share insights from my time in the field. I am proud to say that Child Welfare Monitor is read by many key policymakers, advocates, and academics in the field. I am also the senior Project Associate at Lives Cut Short, a project to document child maltreatment fatalities around the country. I spend most of my time writing about national issues, but I do follow CFSA developments by attending briefings, reading agency reports, and analyzing the data posted on the CFSA Data Dashboard. I also keep in touch through one-to-one volunteer work. After spending eight years as a mentor with BEST Kids, I'm now in training to be a CASA volunteer.

I'd like to start with the tragic death of five-year-old DeAndre Pettus, Jr.[1] who died under suspicious circumstances on October 6 of last year. 'He was an energetic student who greeted everyone with a smile," was how Murch Elementary School described DeAndre in a letter sent home to families. DeAndre "was known for his enthusiastic imagination and liked to pretend he had transformed into Spider-Man. Legos were another staple of his creativity, and his curiosity about dinosaurs fueled countless conversations." DeAndre's father has been charged with cruelty to children in his death, a charge which may be elevated to homicide depending on the results of a pending autopsy. DeAndre's sister, who first told police her brother had slipped and fallen, told another story[2] at the Safe Shores Child Advocacy Center, where she felt safe from punishment by her father. She told a counselor that she had seen her father throw her younger brother into a wall, and he never woke up. It turns out that CFSA had removed all three children from Pettus Sr. after he was arrested in 2023 after assaulting a woman

with whom he had been romantically involved. But the agency returned the children, and we don't know if that decision was backed by a thorough evaluation of his capacity to care for them.

DeAndre was one of at least eight children who died of maltreatment in the District in FY 2024, based on an analysis of OCME reports requested by Lives Cut Short.[3] The other children were two month old Amiri Royal Bynum;[4] one-year-old Jordan Ballard,[5] one year old Journee Moore,[6] and two male infants, a one-year-old boy, and a three-year-old girl that we know of only from OCME reports. Four of these little ones died of blunt force injuries, three of them died of poisoning from fentanyl or methamphetamine, and one died of asphyxia due to smothering. We counted five child deaths declared to be homicides by OCME as well as two accidents, a one-year-old boy dead of fentanyl intoxication and an infant dead of methamphetamine intoxication, that were obviously due to neglect. And then there is DeAndre, whose body is awaiting a second autopsy but who was obviously a homicide victim.

Unfortunately, we do not know how many of the eight maltreatment victims listed by OCME were known to CFSA because that information is protected by privacy laws, ostensibly to protect parents. However, CFSA does report that of the four child abuse homicides it reports occurred in 2024, three of the families were involved with CFSA at the time of the deaths.[7] That means they were currently being investigated or were the subject of an in-home or out-of-home case. That is scary.

Of course, child deaths are the most extreme outcome when CFSA fails to protect children that it knows are at risk. But these deaths are really the tip of the iceberg. For each child who dies of abuse or neglect, we have no idea how many children suffer serious injuries or suffer chronic maltreatment that compromises their development. That's why CFSA (like other child welfare agencies) studies the deaths of children that it knew about as a part of its Continuous Quality Improvement work and produces an internal child fatality report that I cite below.

Children can fall between the cracks at every stage of CFSA involvement, from screening at the hotline, to investigations, to in-home and out-of-home case management.

Reports screened out inappropriately: Referrals, or calls to the hotline, increased by 3.6 percent from FY 2023 to FY 2024, according to CFSA's Data Dashboard.[8] Similar to the previous year, CFSA accepted only 19 percent of these cases for investigation. This is much lower than the national rate of 47.5 percent that are accepted. There is reason to believe hotline workers are screening out too many referrals. The 41 children known to CFSA whose deaths were discussed in CFSA's 2023 annual fatality report[9] were the subject of 185 hotline calls in the five years before they died, of which 48 percent were screened out. In retrospect, one wonders if any of these calls, if investigated, could have averted the fatality.

- In its FY 2024 Annual Report,[10] the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC)'s reports receiving a complaint that a child with special needs was being starved while in the care of her grandfather. The school had made two calls to CPS in 2022, the second one saying the child had missed more than 160 days of school and that the grandfather had said he would not be sending the child to school. Both referrals were screened out. The child was admitted to Children's Hospital in January 2024 with severe malnutrition and an enlarged abdomen.
- CFSA's 2023 Annual Fatality report includes the case of a five-year-old who died of smoke inhalation after his mother left him alone with his nine-year-old-brother. There were three calls related to educational neglect by this family during the pandemic, none of which were investigated. *Educational neglect is often a harbinger of other issues, so these calls should not be ignored, especially if they are repeated.*

- In the case of a seven-month-old who died of blunt force injuries to the torso, two earlier calls regarding a sibling (including concerns of exposure to domestic violence) were not investigated.

Incomplete and inadequate Investigations: In the most startling finding of my analysis of the CFSA Dashboard data, I found a jump in the number of investigations categorized as incomplete, from 525 in FY2023 to 1,442 in FY2024.[11] That was an increase from 15% of all investigations to 38% of all investigations. This trend likely stems from the workforce crisis that is affecting CFSA and other child welfare and human services agencies around the country. One of CFSA's performance Indicators states that 90 percent of investigators will have caseloads less than or equal to 12 and no individual investigator shall have a caseload of greater than 15. But in its oversight responses, CFSA reported that all but nine of 39 social workers (probably investigators) had an average caseload of over 15 during fiscal year 2024. With average caseloads as high as 37 for the year. In the current fiscal year, all but 13 of 38 workers having an average caseload of over 15, with average caseloads as high as 36.8. This is no surprise since the number of investigative social workers has dropped from 100 before the pandemic to 40 today, according to CFSA's written testimony. It appears that the agency is taking measures to address the crisis, but they may have to do more.

Of course, incomplete investigations are only one concern when staffing is inadequate. There is also the possibility that investigations may be completed without complying with agency standards. The families of 41 children who died were the subject of 62 CPS investigations in the five years before the child died. Only 17 of these investigations resulted in an open in-home or foster care case. In the case of a one-year-old who died of blunt force injuries, an investigation was closed shortly before the family moved to another jurisdiction, where the homicide took place a month later. The investigation involved allegations that the child was a victim of physical abuse and unexplained injury. But CFSA reports that

"the hospital social worker indicated there was low suspicion of maltreatment. The investigation closed as "unfounded" and the family was referred to a community service agency for ongoing housing and employment support." Something does not seem right here. If the suspicion of maltreatment was low, why did the hospital call?

More foster care placements, fewer in-home cases: The reduced number of completed investigations resulted in a reduction of the number of substantiated investigations from 799 (21 percent of investigations) in FY2023 to 606 (or 16 percent of investigations) in FY2024. One might have thought that this would have resulted in fewer children entering foster care, but the opposite happened. The number of children entering foster care increased from 179 in FY 2023 to 243 in FY 2024. And the number of in-home cases opened dropped from 365 to 295. Since foster care entries are reported by child, not by case, we cannot compare the total number of cases opened in FY 2023 with that number in FY 2024. But compared to the last day of FY 2023, there were 50 more children in foster care at the end of FY 2024, balanced out by a decrease of 49 children being served in their homes, so that the total number of children being served remained almost exactly the same.

Conclusions

It may be reassuring that the number of children served by CFSA changed so little in FY2023. One can hope that despite the high percentage of incomplete investigations, the agency is identifying the children that are at risk and simply leaving some of the paperwork for later. But the large drop in the number of substantiated investigations is concerning and I hope the Council will work with CFSA to address the workforce crisis and ensure the agency's ability to protect children that are in harm's way.

This may be the time for critical thinking about CFSA's goal of transformation from a child welfare agency to a "child and family wellbeing system," which director Tanya Trice references in her

written testimony. This terminology, which has also been used by other jurisdictions, refers to efforts to devote more resources to front end, upstream services that support families *before* abuse or neglect occurs and to "remodel child welfare systems into…..systems that extend beyond child protection to all systems that help bolster child and family wellbeing."[12] But when an agency struggles to fulfill its core mission, does it really make sense to expand into areas that belong to other agencies, such as housing and financial assistance? And indeed, in its oversight responses, the agency said its agenda in the next five years includes "reimagining and narrowing the involvement of CFSA to work with families only when abuse and neglect are present." This sounds like a more sensible plan.

[1] Paul Duggan, Emily Davis, and Keith L. Alexander, "Father Charged after 5-year-old son dies; boy remembered as 'vibrant, creative.'" Washington Post, updated October 8, 2024. Available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2024/10/07/dc-child-dies-father-arrested/

[2] Keith L. Alexander, "Child witness in death of 5-year-old brother provides new evidence." Washington Post, January 22, 2025." Available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2025/01/22/dc-child-dies-father-charged/

[3] See Lives Cut Short website, https://livescutshort.org/the-children/.

[4] Peter Hermann, "Infant's Death from Fentanyl overdose was a homicide, police say." *Washington Post*, August 31, 2024, available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2024/08/31/infant-fentanyl-overdose-homicide/

[5] Jenny Gathright, "Death of 1-year-old who suffered blunt force injuries ruled a homicide." *Washington Post*, August 26, 2024, available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2024/08/26/dc-infant-homicide-jordan-ballard/.

[6] Darcy Spencer, "'What could she have done? Grandparents mourn girl, 1, killed in DC." NBC Washington, October 3, 2024, available from https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/what-could-she-have-done-grandparents-mourn-girl-1-who-died-saturday-night/3733062/

[7] CFSA oversight responses, page 313.

[8] See Dashboard.cfsa.gov.

[9] CFSA, *Child Fatality Report: 2023*, January 28, 2025, available from https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/annual-child-fatality-review-report#gsc.tab=0.

[10] Petrina Jones-Jesz, OFC FY 2024 Annual Report: October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024. District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, undated. Available from https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[11] Marie Cohen, "Child Protective Services in the District of Columbia: An Alarming Increase in Incomplete Investigations in FY 2024. *Child Welfare Monitor*, January 10, 2025, available from https://childwelfaremonitor.org/2025/01/10/child-protective-services-in-the-district-of-columbia-an-alarming-increase-in-incomplete-investigations-in-fy2024/.

[12] Regina S. Dyton, Supporting the Shift from Child Welfare to Child and Family Wellbeing." Social Current, March 11, 2022. Available from https://www.social-current.org/2022/03/supporting-the-shift-from-child-welfare-to-child-and-family-wellbeing/.

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing,

Testimony of Marshon Grooms

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

The Deanwood Family Success Center has been an invaluable resource in my life, providing essential support for my daughter and grandchild. The services and resources available have helped me navigate important needs and ensured my family's well-being.

The staff have played a crucial role in my personal growth, especially in assisting me with applications and improving my computer skills. Their patience, knowledge, and willingness to help have made a significant difference, giving me the confidence to access opportunities I may not have otherwise pursued.

If the center were too close, it would be a devastating loss for me and my family. I have built strong relationships with the employees and trust them as a reliable source of guidance and support. Their assistance has become an integral part of my routine, and losing these services would create a significant gap in the help I rely on.

The center is more than just a facility, it is a lifeline for those who depend on its resources, and its continued operation is essential for individuals and families like mine.

Horton's Kids
Securing Futures for Southeast

2/12/2025

To the DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs,

Horton's Kids expresses deep gratitude for the invaluable support provided by the Child and Family Services Agency's Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Programs (CBCAPP). These resources are essential for delivering comprehensive services to over 600 children and their families in Ward 8 of Washington, DC.

CBCAPP has been pivotal in our implementation of evidence-based parenting programs. These initiatives have the transformative potential to enhance family dynamics by equipping parents with essential skills and strategies to create nurturing home environments that foster children's growth. We anticipate significant benefits, including enhanced communication, healthier child development, and stronger family bonds, ultimately reducing the risk of child abuse and neglect.

This is a pivotal opportunity to advocate for sustained support from the Child and Family Services Administration. Such backing is vital for maintaining and expanding programs that profoundly impact our community. Together, we can affect lasting, positive change for families in Ward 8 and beyond.

We are sincerely thankful for our partnership with CFSA and the Office of Thriving Families and greatly appreciate their unwavering dedication to this mission.

Sincerely,

Meghan McCamis
Senior Director of Community and Family Programs
Horton's Kids

SURVIVORS AND ADVOCATES FOR EMPOWERMENT

Supporting and Empowering Domestic Violence Survivors since 1997
Apoyando a Víctimas de Violencia Doméstica desde 1997

Testimony of Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (DC SAFE)

Performance Hearing - Child and Family Services Administration

Committee on Youth Affairs - DC Council

February 13, 2025

Thank you Chairperson Parker and members of the committee. My name is Michelle Sewell and I am the Crisis Shelter Director for DC SAFE. DC SAFE serves a critical role in the city's public safety infrastructure as the only 24/7 crisis intervention agency for domestic violence. Last year, we served over 12,000 clients including 318 families and 648 children in our crisis shelter.

With our focus on intimate partner violence, we can not help but recognize the risk our clients face as they seek safety but also the pervasive impact domestic violence has for the whole family. Domestic violence not only results in direct harm to children, but there are lasting effects of exposure to domestic violence that can impact children's lives far into the future. Our clients are often acutely aware of the potential harm caused by violence in the household and it is a motivating factor in seeking help. We have been pleased to see CFSA also recognize this and pivot their approach in protecting children to align with supporting rather than penalizing survivors in an effort to provide trauma informed care and support as survivors navigate toward safety and stability when domestic violence impacts their families.

We have been delighted to partner with them around this unfortunately pervasive issue. Their engagement in the High Risk Domestic Violence Initiative, in working with us directly to strengthen our connections and in our work with dedicated individual case managers, has been commendable. As we move forward in our partnership and collaboration we have several areas where we think additional attention and support could be helpful, including better internal tracking of high risk domestic violence cases. Being able to recognize high risk cases early and across not just CFSA but several government agencies is a common goal identified in the Domestic Violence System Review and one we believe can help those most at risk receive comprehensive and collaborative support for their safety.

We are also hoping to further our work with CFSA through a renewed MOU which would help us collaborate more closely for our CFSA involved clients, including hoping to work with them to provide more critical in person touch points for clients in our shelter. At a time when there is so much disruption in the lives of our clients and their children, we believe it is critical to streamline services and deliver support to clients where they are in the community. In addition, we believe enhanced training and support for CFSA staff from hotline workers, to investigators, to case workers is essential. More advanced training on the dynamics of domestic violence as a pattern of violence and how that dynamic can disrupt families lives in complex and unexpected ways would help provide for a more holistic approach in working with families. Further, we have often seen confusion from caseworkers on navigating the many systems of support in DC, especially for housing. With the recent lack of accessible Crime Victims Compensation benefits in recent years, we often see confusion in navigating pathways to safety and we know quite well how complex requirements, policies, and timelines for housing supports for families can be over all. While there is collaboration between DHS and CFSA as well as specific support for case workers seeking domestic violence resources, we believe those efforts could be strengthened.

Expanding CFSA's knowledge base and collaboration is an important tool in strengthening their work with survivors but we also want to call attention to the critical need for offender accountability. Unfortunately, all too often we have seen that, while survivors are not being directly held accountable for their offender's harm, little is done to hold offending parents accountable themselves. In one case we reviewed this year, a CFSA case was opened due to education neglect, neglect which seems likely tied to multiple serious domestic violence incidents and stays in crisis shelter which were nearly continually disrupting the family's stability. The client's case workers agreed that their mother, the victim of continual violence at the hand of her partner and father of her children, was amazing with the children when caring for them independently and they had a clear understanding of the harm the father was causing both directly and indirectly in the family's life. They disclosed that the father was not engaged with CFSA in relation to their open case but when asked about consequences both for his

harmful action and lack of cooperation the overall response was that there is nothing CFSA can do. That is unacceptable. In our discussion with CFSA both on an individual client level but also in system wide interactions such as through the Domestic Violence System Review, it has been unclear how individual case workers and CFSA as a whole can engage and facilitate follow through from offending parents such that the burden of their violent behavior falls on them and not the protective parent. CFSA's supportive approach for survivors is a welcome change but when that is not paired with equal accountability for both parents, the survivor continues to ultimately bear the burden and responsibility of abuse.

An element essential to creating a better and more balanced system of accountability is for better access to meaningful offender supports. As we have testified in other committees, there is a lack of access to domestic violence specific behavioral interventions for offenders outside the civil or criminal court system. As we seek for a more engaged response for offending parents from CFSA, we must acknowledge that case workers must also have tools and supports for those parents to aid in mitigating violence. This is not a specific CFSA concern and one the city must address as a whole to provide better outcomes across agencies and for district residents as a whole.

We hope to continue to collaborate with CFSA in the coming year and look forward to seeing their continued growth under new leadership. We know that a border movement toward more holistic and active collaboration as well as a focus on offender accountability is needed across the wide swath of intersecting supports and resources survivors navigate in seeking safety and we look forward to building toward these goals with CFSA and our other partners. Thank you for your time today and we look forward to any questions you may have.

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing

Testimony of Kimberly Mitchell

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

Good Morning Mr. Chair and All Other Council Members on the Dias. Thank you for this opportunity to come before to advocate for the Grandparent Caregivers' Program of the District of Columbia. I am Olivia Chase, Grandmother of now 16-year-old Richard Sowell. As many of you already know, you and many others in Washington, DC are our village, and we are so grateful that you are.

When I embarked on this journey, 16 years ago, I had no clue as to all this journey would entail, even though I am the mother of three sons. I guess you wonder how this is so. Well, let me suggest, as many of my cohorts would agree, there is a Vast Gulf between raising your own children and raising your grandchildren in a "Digital World." Just imagine, trying to understand what they're talking about when they say "just feel the vibe, no cap" or my all-time favorite, "I've Got The Drip!" Councilmember, I here to share "They're Not Like Us!"

However, for every problem, obstacle, difficulty or generational gap I've encountered as a Seenager, my term for Senior Citizen, raising a teenager, there has been a solution from The Grandparent Caregivers' Program of Washington DC. They have met and continue to meet our needs emotionally, physically, financially, and oftentimes spiritually.

Outreach has become their mantra as they come out into the community to meet our needs. They have realized our desperation when it comes to staying current in this time when the world is in everyone's hands, but ours that is. Although "Apps" or "Maps" make life so much easier for most, for us, it's at best frustrating and at worst complicated. We don't always get the latest platform, but we do get the "Human Touch," and, we certainly appreciate it.

The "Servants Hearts" this program displays when they come out to Plaza West to help many of us with recertification, explanation of program changes, education of new resources and support on many other levels, is unmatched. Our most recent support has been with the program's assistance with the My Schools Lottery Application Process.

We not only glean from their knowledge; we also thoroughly enjoy the fellowship they always so readily provide. For some of us, raising grandchildren isolates us from the "normal life of our peers." However,

because they provide avenues for us to be together, we have been able to develop a community of our own where we can appreciate each other as well as understand and be understood what real life is like for us and really all about. It's exhilarating to be in a program "Where Everybody Knows Your Name." I'm sure you all can identify with that feeling.

In conclusion, I feel free to speak for each of the grandparents in this room, as well as those who have chimed in, to say, Thank You for this program that works and serves one of the most vulnerable populations in the District of Columbia with care, compassion and concern. This is a program that can be bragged about because it makes our lives more purposeful and productive. They are truly the wind beneath our wings.

Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC)

2023-2024 Performance Oversight Hearing
February 13, 2025

Ombudsperson, Petrina L. Jones-Jesz
Written Statement of Testimony

Council of the District of Columbia
Committee on Youth Affairs
Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chairperson

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs, and the DC community:

My name is Petrina Jones-Jesz and I am honored to serve as the District's Ombudsperson for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, also known as the OFC or the Office. My appointment as the Ombudsperson and Executive director of the OFC began in January 2024 and we have continued to grow as an organization since then. Joining me at the table is William Thomas, Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson; and Antonio Baxter, Agency Fiscal Officer (AFO). Another team member with us today is Daphne Billingsley, Chief Deputy Ombudsperson for the OFC. Thank you for the opportunity to present an update on the Office's performance during FY2024 and to date in FY2025.

The mission of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children continues to be our guiding statement as we implement the work defined in D. C. Law 23-270. Equally important to our charge is the responsibility of serving as a resource to community members who express concerns about administrative decisions made by the child welfare system. Our mission is to work collaboratively across systems that impact CFSA children to foster improved outcomes, strengthen service delivery and increase accountability.

FY2024 was a productive year in terms of standing up the Office and engaging the community. During this year, the OFC hired new staff to fill two vacant positions: the Chief Deputy Ombudsperson position and an Ombuds Analyst position. Currently there are five staff members working in the Office, which makes the Office nearly fully staffed. The last position to fill is the Attorney Advisor position. We have been working with human resources to classify the position and intend to post the position as soon as possible.

In our last performance oversight hearing, we shared with the committee that the Office is working to enhance OFC's case management system. The purpose of these enhancements was to make our case management system more functional. The improvements made to the case management database include the addition of a data and performance dashboard, the ability to add and track completed tasks per case, and a function to attach and store documents relevant to an investigative case. This project was completed in May 2024 with the launch of a new version of the database.

It is the Office's responsibility to receive complaints about administrative actions taken by the child welfare agency from D. C. constituents in person, by email, phone call, or online. In FY2024, the OFC received 69 contacts or complaints, with 42 of those complaints leading to an investigation. The OFC produced and issued seven findings and recommendations report in FY2024 documenting specific complaints that resulted in findings that reflect violations of law, policy, or best practice. To date in FY2025, the Office received 29 contacts or complaints. Further, of the cases closed in FY2024, there were 101 children served. For FY2025, the number of children is 33 of the closed cases to date.

The Office is in a great position to intensify our focus in FY2025 on systemic trend analysis, individuals with lived experience on child welfare policy and practice and using data to identify positive results and areas needing improvement. For example:

- The OFC held two focus groups in FY2025 to hear from local constituents about their experiences while involved with the child welfare system. A focus group was held with relative caregivers in October 2024. Another focus group was held with youth formerly involved with CFSA in November 2024. These focus groups were held after business hours to accommodate work and school schedules. Food and incentives were provided.

- The OFC held its first open house in December 2024 and invited individuals from community organizations, government agencies, and child welfare advocates. The purpose of the open house was to invite organizations and individuals to learn more about OFC and share a first look at the OFC performance data to be included in the FY2024 annual report.

- We have been working with organizational and individual stakeholders this fiscal year on identifying and reporting on crossover youth. Discussions about crossover youth included topics such as definitions, frameworks, and methods for requesting data to begin reporting. Due to the Office's enabling legislation the specific definition of a crossover youth is "a CFSA child who is currently or has previously been the subject of a petition alleging delinquency filed by the Office of the Attorney General, pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 16-2305, or by another jurisdiction." The Office has requested and received approval to access data through the Superior Court's strategic management division that will resource the codified definition.

- On a broader note, we believe it will be helpful to have access to juvenile justice data and attendance data from the public and charter schools. This additional information will assist us in comprehensively assessing the needs of children who are served by not only CFSA but other District agencies.

In conclusion, we have accomplished much and still have work to do to help improve outcomes for children and families in the district. This is a charge that my team and I take on enthusiastically as we know that serving the community, and specifically individuals who need assistance with resolving concerns, is an important responsibility. Thank you, Youth Affairs Committee members, for your leadership, commitment and your time today.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Draft Testimony (version 3)

Performance Oversight Committee Hearing

Youth Affairs

February 4, 2025

Good afternoon Chairman Parker and Members of the Committee. My name is Princess Simms. I am a member of the SOUL Lex group and have lived experience in the DC foster care system.

To me, family may begin with your bloodline, but it doesn't stop there. When I entered the foster care system, I felt alone. Reunification wasn't an option for me. And guardianship wasn't a proper fit either. Even though I had many relatives, I couldn't imagine any of them being my only caregiver. I had over 15 failed placement and not for the reasons you may think. For example, my spirituality is so important to me. Many of the foster parents I was placed with practiced different religions from my own. And as a teen, transitioning into adulthood, I needed a trusted adult in my life that shared my beliefs or at least respected them, whether I chose to explore them further or opt out, not be forced to conform to their ideology because I lived in their house or because they couldn't find a "baby sitter before church."

This is where SOUL Family could make a difference. SOUL gives young adults the option to choose more than one legal caregiver, as well as a community of supportive adults to lean on. If SOUL Family had been an option for me; I would have had more people in my life helping support me, I wouldn't have quit book club or band practice. I would have been front row at the Kingdom Hall.

In terms of self-advocacy, my foster care lawyer Megan Conway is the closest example I had at the time to someone who exhibited such qualities. When I spoke in anger or tears, she helped me take the words I said and translate them into ways other people could hear. She also pushed me to graduate and pursue higher education, including college and vocational programs. She encouraged me to open my own shop when my physical disabilities didn't allow me to work for others. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be here speaking with you today.

This is just the start of what a SOUL Family could make possible. When I aged out, I moved out and disconnected from my foster parents and without any of the services I thought I was going to be able to access (food, education, housing, etc.) If SOUL Family would have been an option for me, I could have lived with my foster parents and still had backup people in my life in the event I need more support, in case of an emergency or placement disruptions, as well as all the services I was entitled to for education,

healthcare, and housing. I wouldn't have had to choose one over the other and possibly risked having nothing at all.

Currently I am a senior licensed cosmetologist, a small business beauty owner. Although I have day to day struggles, I am surviving. I am still in contact with my former foster parents on a limited basis. My hope is that with SOUL Family in DC, all young people will thrive and not just survive within a supportive, stable environment filled with backup plans, resources, services, a sense of community and a family they designed and deserve.

Testimony of Rahman Branch, Chief Executive Officer

East River Family Strengthening Collaborative

before the

Council of the District of Columbia

Committee on Youth Affairs

Fiscal Year 2025 Performance Oversight Hearing regarding the

Child and Family Services Agency

February 13, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairperson and members of the Committee. My name is Rahman Branch, and I am honored to serve as the Chief Executive Officer of East River Family Strengthening Collaborative (ERFSC). I am here today as a representative of ERFSC and the entire Healthy Families, Thriving Communities Collaborative network, which includes Collaborative Solutions for Communities, Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative, Edgewood Brookland Family Support Collaborative, East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, and Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative.

For over 25 years, our network has been a cornerstone in the District's efforts to strengthen families, working closely with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) in alignment with the Mayor's vision of ensuring every family—regardless of zip code or circumstance—has access to the resources and support they need to thrive. Our work is rooted in the belief that communities are best equipped to uplift their own, and through this invaluable partnership, we have created a holistic system of care that places children and families at the center.

The Collaborative model is not just a framework—it is a commitment; a movement that ensures families receive support before they are in crisis. We provide a network of services, including workforce development, parenting education, housing stabilization, school-based programs, truancy prevention, youth violence intervention, reentry support, and health and wellness programs for seniors. These efforts are not isolated; they are interconnected, addressing the root causes of instability while empowering families to build sustainable futures.

As the former Executive Director of the Mayor's Office on African American Affairs, I had the privilege of developing the Fair Shot Toolkit, which outlines the many programs and services

available to DC residents. While these programs exist, navigating them remains a significant challenge for many families. The Collaboratives serve as trusted community coalitions that not only connect residents to these resources but also empower them to persist through the processes necessary for growth and stability. We walk alongside families, reminding them of their resilience and ability to create lasting change.

Without this collective effort, the impact on the District would be profound. Studies indicate that the cost of placing just one child in foster care exceeds $47,000 annually. Currently, the Collaborative Network serves more than 5,000 families citywide—families that, without intervention, might otherwise enter the child welfare system. This translates to an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 individuals receiving direct and indirect support. The economic and social costs of failing to invest in preventative services far exceed the resources required to sustain them.

Beyond financial implications, the human cost is immeasurable. Children in foster care face a greater risk of adverse outcomes, including lower academic achievement, increased mental health struggles, and higher rates of involvement in the juvenile justice system. The work of the Collaboratives changes this trajectory, ensuring children remain in stable, loving environments with opportunities to thrive.

Our role is particularly critical in addressing the challenges faced by Black men in the District. Economic disparities, systemic barriers in education and employment, and lack of access to resources all contribute to instability. The Collaboratives provide vital support such as job training, mentorship, and family services, ensuring that Black men have the tools necessary for stability and success. Our work recognizes the leadership, resilience, and talent within Black men in our communities and seeks to uplift them rather than define them by their struggles.

Our partnership with CFSA has been instrumental in these efforts. Under the visionary leadership of Director Trice, CFSA has embraced a community-centered approach, understanding that government programs, while essential, are temporary, but the Collaboratives are forever because they are of the community. This philosophy has strengthened our work, allowing us to implement impactful initiatives like the Warmline, which provides immediate access to social services. However, maintaining and expanding these services requires ongoing investment. The demand for our services has increased, yet budgets have not kept pace with inflation, rising operational costs, and the competitive salaries needed to retain high-quality staff.

Underfunding community-based services weakens the very infrastructure that has made the District a national leader in child and family welfare. Washington, DC, is looked to as a model for community-driven child welfare reform, but we cannot take this success for granted. We must ensure a fully resourced Collaborative Network that can continue to provide essential prevention and intervention services at scale.

As we address youth involvement in crime, we must recognize the role of strong family and community support systems in prevention. Crime does not occur in isolation—it is often a symptom of deeper systemic challenges such as poverty, trauma, and family instability. The work of the Collaboratives serves as a front-line defense, offering families the support they need before problems escalate into crises. Investing in our Collaboratives means investing in safer neighborhoods, stronger families, and a brighter future for our city.

In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation for CFSA and Director Trice's leadership. The partnership between CFSA and the Collaborative Network has built a model that works—one that prioritizes community expertise, strengthens family resilience, and ultimately keeps children out of the child welfare system. However, we cannot do this work alone. We need continued investment, strategic support, and a shared commitment to ensuring that every child and family in the District has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your time and your unwavering commitment to the well-being of DC's children and families. I look forward to our continued partnership in building a stronger, more equitable city for all.

NCCF
The National Center For Children and Families

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social current
Activating the Power of the Social Sector

Testimony of Ralph D. Belk, LICSW, LCSW-C
Executive Director, The National Center for Children and Family (NCCF)
2025 Performance Oversight Hearing: Committee on Youth Services
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Zachary Parker, Chair
February 13, 2025

Good morning, Chairperson Parker and members of the Committee.

My name is Ralph Belk, and I am the Executive Director at The National Center for Children and Families (NCCF). NCCF is a nationally accredited child and family serving organization incorporated in 1915. We currently operate 22 programs in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia including serving as a provider of family-based foster care for DC in partnership with CFSA for over 26 years.

In 2017, NCCF began the Temporary Safe Haven partnership with CFSA as the primary private provider of services to DC's children and youth placed in care in Maryland. Over the last eight years, we've continued to evolve our approach and enhance our services to ensure that youth are safe and thriving and are moving towards permanency with families that are prepared to care for them. NCCF was excited to have played a critical role in partnering with CFSA as the agency successfully exited court oversight in 2022.

As we move into another year of partnership with DC and CFSA, I come before this committee to update you on some of the many successes NCCF has delivered for the 390 children we served in FY24 as well as some of the shortfalls and challenges we experienced as an agency.

Highlights include:

- NCCF met or exceed 9 out of 10 Lashawn Benchmarks during the previous fiscal year, only missing the final benchmark by 2% (see appendix).

- CPS reports involving NCCF clients decreased by 36% compared to FY23. The highest category for reporters was NCCF staff at (62%) which speaks to NCCF's culture of transparency and ensures all allegations are reported and investigated by a separate entity.

- KinNetwork and Birth Family Engagement Specialists have been incredibly successful in prioritizing family connections for permanency.

  - 15 youth were adopted with another sibling
  - 5 youth were adopted into a home where another sibling resides
  - 2 guardianships were with another sibling
  - All guardianships were with kin
  - 13 youth reunified with another sibling
  - 6 youth reunified with dads

- NCCF is fully staffed for both Social Workers and Family Support Workers (FSW). NCCF's Integrated model successfully reduces turnover and burnout rates because of the support received by Social Workers from other teams and roles such as our Education Specialists, Birth Family Engagement Specialists and KinNetwork Team.

- We are regularly meeting census numbers (200 youth – always have between 195 – 200 depending on closures)

- Our newly opened boutique at NCCF's Rhode Island Avenue location is providing donated resources to families, including birth families, in need.

- All NCCF Therapists are Trauma Focused Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) certified and provide those services to our clients.

- I am pleased to report that as a result of the superior work of our Education Specialist team. NCCF's high school graduation rate in both 2023 and 2024 was 100% with each youth moving on successfully to a college, trade school, or permanent employment.
  - 4 graduates from 2023 – 3 out of 4 went to college, 1 was employed. All went to HBCUs
  - 4 graduates from 2024 – 3 out of 4 went to college, 1 went to trade program (received certificate and graduated). All went to HBCUs

This past year has not been without its challenges.

- The uptick in community violence has drastically affected the FFI program. We've experienced significant loss in the form of more than a dozen deaths since October 2023, the largest majority being birth parents of children in care. Just last week, the FFI team experienced 2 losses. The social worker assigned to one of these cases has experienced 7 losses related to her caseload. As you can only imagine, this level of loss impacts one's overall well-being. Last year, NCCF instituted the Work-related Trauma Leave Policy which gives staff impacted by client loss 2 days admin leave to which gives protected space for staff to pause and take care of themselves.

- NCCF continues to receive referrals for placements where the acuity is high, including chronic abscondence, criminal history, and frequent placement. These youth often have been in care for extended periods of time and have had multiple recommendations for higher levels of care; however, bed availability in facilities are limited and youth over age 14 are required to provide consent, which rarely occurs. We continue to offer foster parent trainings focused on developing increased understanding of trauma and skills in dealing with the older adolescent population that NCCF serves. Additionally, NCCF utilizes our KinNetwork program to increase the chances of finding more placement resources and lifelong connections for this particular population.

- NCCF struggles to find foster parents that are confident in their ability to care for medically fragile or significantly intellectually disabled youth. Both newly licensed and seasoned foster parents frequently decline placements of youth with medical conditions that necessitate consistent medical equipment and youth with autism with more significant symptoms such as nonverbal or aggressive behaviors. FFI will continue to focus recruitment efforts on households who are open to receiving the necessary training to support these youth and will also provide seasoned foster parents with additional specialized training opportunities.

- The legal procedures for adoption in the District of Columbia are a significant barrier in the permanency process. A Ta.L hearing is required in order to change a client's goal to adoption unless parents waive the rights to a trial. Once a Ta.L occurs and a goal change is approved, another adoption trial is required after an adoption petition is filed. The scheduling of these hearings is inefficient due to calendar conflicts by all legal parties. Additionally, there have been several changes and turnovers with the number of judges presiding over neglect cases that also negatively impact scheduling hearings and trials necessary for adoption proceedings and permanency hearings. In addition, the program staff are unable to close out adoption cases due to delays with neglect judges issuing Findings of Facts, which is the legal outcome of the adoption trial, as well as adoption decrees once an adoption is granted. These critical documents are required in order to finalize an adoption and close the neglect case. The Child and Family Services Administrative team is aware that the hearings cause delays in the adoption process. The agency has participated in meetings with CFSA Leadership and the OAG Deputy Director to address the concerns regarding the legal delays related to adoption hearings. This continues to be a macro issue that extends beyond NCCF.

- There has been a decrease in foster parents' willingness to accept daycare aged youth in their home due to childcare affordability challenges as well as identifying childcare facilities that will accept our youth. CFSA only reimburses a certain amount per week for childcare services. These rates have not increased since 2014, leaving foster parents to spend the majority, if not all of their stipend, on childcare costs. NCCF has utilized our Education Specialists to help foster parents identify childcare centers that are more affordable and willing to take youth on short notice. Despite identifying more affordable options, they still cut into the foster parents' stipend significantly, leaving little funding remaining for the actual care of the child.

- Finally, and most significantly is this year's budget process with CFSA. The unnecessarily prolonged budget negotiation process, delayed invoices, as well as having to operate with multiple and shifting budgets for the past year has tested the endurance of this 110-year-old agency. This has created severe financial strain for NCCF with, at one point, CFSA owing NCCF $3.5 million. No nonprofit organization can survive these conditions. Our ask is that at the conclusion of this contract year, which ends March 16, 2025, NCCF signs a one-year budget that will take us to March 2026 while maintaining the same level of staff supports that have proven to produce great outcomes for youth and families and sustains this model which has demonstrated success again and again and has accelerated CFSA's achievements in the child welfare space.

Many thanks to the committee for this opportunity to provide testimony. NCCF is pleased to continue its partnership with the District in meeting the needs of vulnerable children, youth and families.

Appendix

Lashawn Benchmark Performance
NCCF met or exceeded 9 out of 10 Lashawn Benchmarks during FY24

NCCF EXCEEDED THE FOLLOWING BENCHMARKS:

- CMT 163 Child Case Plan – 90%: NCCF exceeded the benchmark by 5% (95%)
- CMT 164 Family Case Plan – 90%; NCCF exceeded the benchmark by 3% (93%)
- CMT 219 Sibling visit – 1 visit per month – 80%; NCCF exceeded the benchmark by 6% (86%)
- CMT 219 Siblings visit – 2+ visits per month – 75%; NCCF exceeded the benchmark by 4% (79%)
- HTH004 Pre–Placement Screening– 90%; NCCF exceeded the benchmark by 4% (94%)
- HTH005 Health/Medical Evaluation – 95%, NCCF exceeded the benchmark by % (96%)
- HTH005 Dental Evaluation – 75%, NCCF exceeded the benchmark by 11% (86%)

NCCF MET THE FOLLOWING BENCHMARK:

- CMT 165 Children in Foster Care – 95%; NCCF met the benchmark for the year by (95)
- CMT 166 Visit to Children In-Home 2+ Visits- 85%; NCCF met the benchmark for the year by 85%

NCCF MISSED THE FOLLOWING BENCHMARKS:

- CMT 166 Visit to Children In-Home 1 Visit - 95%; NCCF missed the benchmark for the year by 2% (93%)
- NCCF score 93% and missed the benchmark by 2% for Visits to Children In-Home 1 Visit (CMT 166) benchmark of 95%

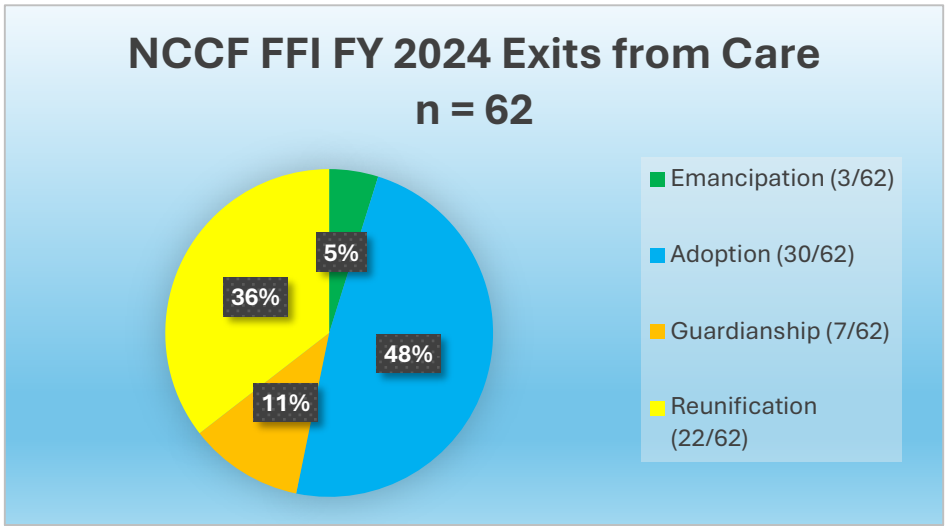
NCCF Family Focused Initiative FY2024 and FY2025 Highlights (Permanency)

In FY2024, between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024, NCCF's FFI Division case managed 247 youth/186 families in foster care.

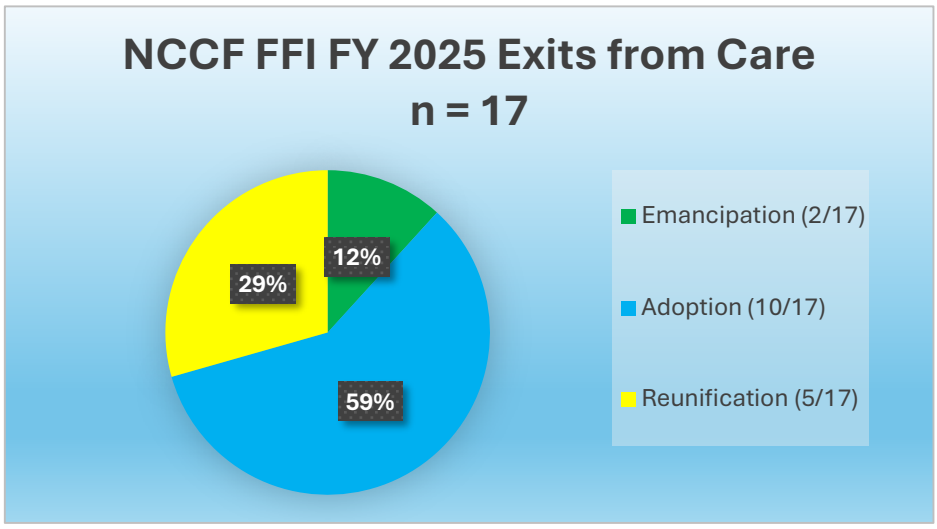
In FY2024, between October 1, 2024 and January 31, 2025, NCCF's FFI Division case managed 209 youth/151 families in foster care.
**This number does not include siblings of youth in care – CMT400*

Permanencies (source CMT367)

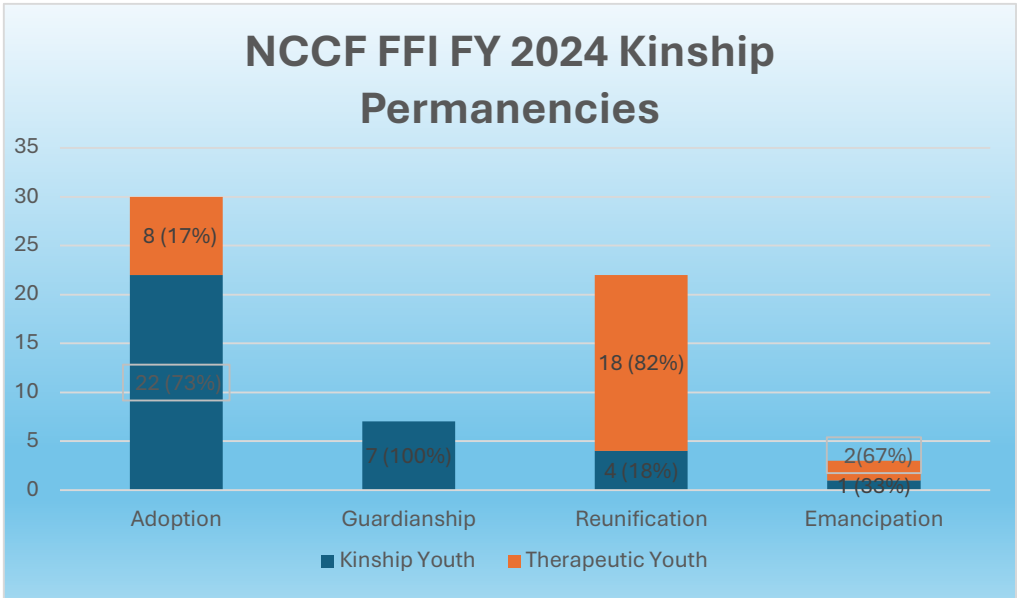
In FY 2024, between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024, 62 youth exited NCCF's care (25%).



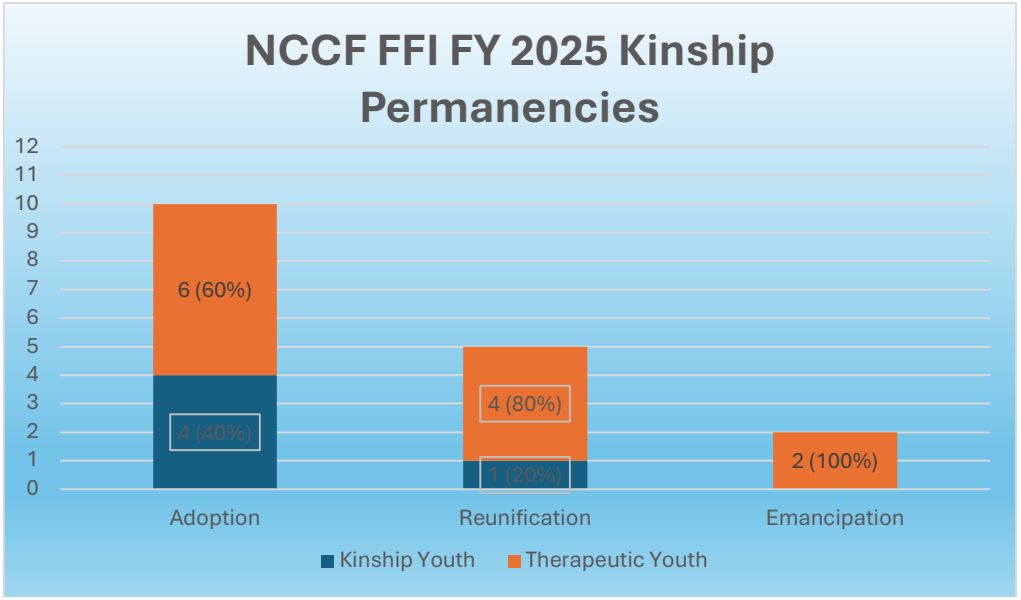
In FY 2025, between October 1, 2024 and January 31, 2025, 17 youth exited NCCF's care (8%).



In FY 2024, between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024, 34 of the 62 (55%) youth achieved permanency with kin, or were in kinship placements at the time they exited care.



In FY 2025, between October 1, 2025 and January 31, 2025, 5 out of the 17 (29%) youth achieved permanency with kin, or were in kinship placements at the time they exited care.



Success Stories:

Zyarre (Age 18): After years of bouncing between multiple foster placements, each one leaving behind memories of uncertainty and longing for stability, Zyarre finally found a sense of belonging when he was adopted by a warm, loving family. The transition wasn't easy, but the care and understanding of his new parents helped Zyarre to heal and begin to thrive. With a newfound confidence and a deep sense of support, he excelled in school, dreaming bigger than ever before. The day they left for college, suitcase in hand, marked a new chapter of independence and hope. Though Zyarre's journey had been filled with challenges, the love from his adoptive family gave him the strength to pursue his dreams and build a bright future. Zyarre will be finishing up his freshman year at North Carolina A&T this Spring, where he is involved in multiple clubs and activities. He is studying criminal justice and continues to maintain good grades.

Shelton (Age 12): Shelton came into care when he was only one year old. He was severely neglected by his birth mother and was removed for neglect and abuse. His birth father is not a regular presence in his life. His maternal grandmother became his legal guardian initially, but she decided she didn't want him after several years and returned him to foster care. He was then placed in six or seven foster homes throughout this time. He was also returned to his mother for three months when he was ten and was again severely neglected and again endured physical abuse, so he returned to the foster care system. He attended the same school off and on since PreK and was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalculia and put in a classroom for kids with severe special needs.

He was placed with his current foster parents in May 2023 and continues to thrive in this new environment. He has recently had a whole new series of academic testing done at school under the guidance of his new foster parents and an educational attorney. It was concluded that he was misdiagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalculia and his new diagnosis showed that he was suffering from educational neglect due to his movements in foster care and lack of stability and a consistent adult advocate.

His current foster parents provide Shelton with love, structure, advocacy and safety. They are educated, value hard work, and are both are self-made individuals who grew up in poverty in DC but overcame significant obstacles to succeed as adults. They mentor him emotionally and educationally and work with him every day on reading/writing and math and NCC's TNK program has provided a tutor to work with him several hours a week to help him progress. When he moved to this foster home one year ago, he was reading and writing and doing math on the kindergarten to first grade level, despite being about to enter sixth grade. He is now reading and writing/doing math at a 3-4th grade level and he won several awards for his improvement at his current school. He is moving to a new school and out of the special education classroom for 7th

grade. The new school is in the neighborhood where his foster parents live and is a much better school than his current one.

Shelton completed intensive tutoring this summer requiring that he work four hours a day, five days a week for six weeks to help him catch up. The modality includes one-on-one tutoring with an evidenced based phonics teaching program. Shelton is a very bright young person and a very eager learner. His tutor, foster parents and case team are thrilled with his progress. The investment in Shelton is one that will make a significant positive impact on his future.

Bond Family (Four Siblings): The Bond children are a sibling set placed in foster care after experiencing significant domestic violence in their birth mother's home. They were placed with NCCF parent Earnestine Hollins. Two of the children were able to successfully reunify with their respective birth fathers, while the other two remained in Ms. Hollins' care. Tragically, their birth mother was murdered in a domestic violence incident involving her partner. Throughout this difficult time, Ms. Hollins supported all four youth, regularly welcoming the two who had reunified with their birth fathers into her home for visits. Ms. Hollins adopted the two children who remained in her care and has become a kinship provider for the entire family, embracing the biological family of the Bond children. Though not a blood relative, Ms. Hollins has become a deeply valued figure in their lives, inviting extended family members to celebrations, holidays, and other special occasions. The youth thrive in her care, and their continued contact with one another highlights the success of their placement and the profound, lasting impact of Ms. Hollins' dedication. All four children now refer to her as "Mom."

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing,

Testimony of Rashaun Daise

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Rashaun Daise. I am a 45-year-old black male with eight kids. I was so happy when I got the opportunity to participate in Quenching the Father's Thirst through Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative. I learned a lot from different individuals that I use in my everyday life when dealing with my kids. It is a great program to participate in and have different conversations. From the other men, you hear different stories and learn tips on how to deal with different varieties of kid's behavior, attitudes, disabilities, and functions. We don't have as many problems when black fathers get to sit around a table and discuss what they are going through with their kids, their kid's life or their significant other or partner. I really do appreciate the program. Some people think it is just a bunch of black men together and nothing good is going to come out of it. But every time we joined the meeting; it was different and meaningful. We used our intellect to contribute to the program and support each other with our issues. I do think a lot of programs need to have this in their circle, so that fathers can understand each other and better understand their kids and point them in the right direction towards success and not failure.

I want to thank Far Southeast Collaborative, IamProme, Capitol Hill Guys, and other organizations that put this together so that black fathers could be a pillar in their community to help with their kids.

Thank you,

Rajuan Daise

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
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February 13, 2025

Good morning Council,

My name is Roger Scott. I am a proud resident of Ward 4, a dedicated 20-year employee of the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), and the President of AFSCME Local 2401, representing over 2,000 employees across 16 human service agencies throughout the District.

I am here today to raise an urgent alarm about a crisis at CFSA that demands immediate attention—the agency's persistent struggle to recruit and retain social workers. This workforce shortage is placing immense strain on CFSA's ability to fulfill its core mission: protecting children and supporting families vulnerable to abuse and neglect. If unaddressed, this challenge could lead to dire consequences reminiscent of the LaShawn case, which kept CFSA under court oversight for nearly 30 years.

Currently, CFSA has 67 vacant social worker positions, with the majority concentrated in the Office of Hotline and Investigations (OHI). That equates to 13 five-member investigative units sitting empty—units that should be actively responding to reports of child abuse and neglect. Despite temporary measures, such as reassigning staff across divisions and streamlining some procedures, these vacancies have left existing workers overwhelmed, overburdened, and more inclined to seek employment elsewhere.

The exodus of social workers from CFSA accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, with many leaving due to inadequate safety protections for field staff. Post-pandemic, the problem only worsened. Employees who proved their ability to meet—and often exceed—productivity targets while working remotely were not only denied expanded telework options but were instead subjected to stricter in-office requirements. This rigid approach, driven by priorities unrelated to employee well-being or operational efficiency, has made CFSA an unattractive employer compared to private agencies and nonprofits that offer better work-life balance, even at lower pay.

CFSA has, unfortunately, become a stepping-stone agency where talented social workers gain experience before moving on to organizations that recognize the importance of flexibility and employee satisfaction. This is a preventable issue. To stabilize CFSA's workforce and retain skilled professionals, we urge the Council to support the following measures:

1. **Expanded Telework and Flexible Schedules:** Providing more remote work opportunities will improve morale, reduce burnout, and make CFSA more competitive in the labor market.
2. **Quality Salary Increases for High Performers:** Social workers who achieve "Effective Performer" or "Role Model" ratings on their annual evaluations should be rewarded with step increases or financial incentives, similar to practices in other District agencies.
3. **Enhanced Recruitment Strategies:** CFSA must proactively market itself as an employer of choice by emphasizing professional development opportunities, workplace flexibility, and competitive benefits.

The work of CFSA social workers is critical, often life-saving. It is imperative that we take immediate action to ensure they receive the support, compensation, and workplace conditions they deserve. The stability of our child welfare system—and the well-being of the children and families we serve—depends on it.

Thank you for your time and attention.
Roger Scott
President, AFSCME Local 2401

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing,

Testimony of Saba Waters

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025, my name is Saba Waters, and I am a recipient of the Grandparent Caregivers and Close Relative program. My experience with the Grandparents Program has been wonderful. The program has taught me how strength, love and happiness come together through other families. Also, how grateful I am to be a part of the District Government accomplishments. It has been a wonderful experience for me and grandchildren working with staff and other grandparents. The support of the program has strengthened me, enlightened me and motivated me for future opportunities in life. In closing I would like to thank the DC government for allowing me to have this wonderful opportunity in life.

God Bless.

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing,

Testimony of Shirley Smith

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025, my name is Shirley Smith, and I am a recipient of the Grandparent Caregivers and Close Relative program (GCP). God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. Hebrews 6:10

I went from riding the bus with three kids to the grocery store and to school, and to the library to use computers and to football practice and to football games.

Through the program, I'm able to afford to live in DC and afford transportation and computers and everything else that includes our daily living. It was hard but through this program it made it a lot easier.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Fiscal Year 2024
Performance Oversight Hearing
Mayor's Office on African American Affairs

Testimony of
Steven Walker
Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor

Before the
Committee On Youth Affairs
The Honorable Zachary Parker, Chairperson

Thursday, February 13, 2025
11:00 AM

Good afternoon, Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs, staff, and residents of the District of Columbia.

My name is Steven Walker, and I am the Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Muriel Bowser. On her behalf, I excited to present performance oversight testimony for the Mayor's Office on African American Affairs (MOAAA).

I want to begin today by acknowledging the team at the office for their continued engagement with residents, businesses, and community leaders in all eight wards of Washington DC. Today, I'll highlight some accomplishments and activities of the Mayor's Office on African American Affairs during Fiscal Year 2024, and to date in FY25.

Engagements

Like other offices in the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs, MOAAA's charge is:

- Community outreach in all eight wards to connect residents to services and programs offered at District agencies.
- Engagement and partnerships with community and civic groups, nonprofit organizations, faith institutions and other affinity groups to both share information and hear concerns.
- Coordinating events and activities to celebrate Black culture in the District.

In FY24 MOAAA saw expansion both in attendance and partnerships in existing programs and services. In December 2023, the office partnered with the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP) to launch DMV's Black Restaurant week, to highlight the diversity of cuisine and entrepreneurial spirit of DC. In February 2024, we kicked off Black History Month with the "Welcome Black-- African Americans in the Arts" event which saw over 500 residents celebrate black

excellence in music and arts. That same month, the office partnered with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and Office of Cable, Television, Film, Music, and Entertainment (OCTFME) for the Black in Action Event which honored 5 current boxers and legendary announcer Henry "Discombobulating" Jones.

Community Partnerships

As mentioned earlier in my testimony, community partnerships expanded in FY24, with the Office funding approximately $200,000 across 20 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that serve the African American community across the District. The focus of the grants this past fiscal year we based on the Administration's priorities – public safety, public education and DC's Comeback. FY 24 grants included:

- Educational empowerment, like the work done through College Bound, Inc who helped uplift 751 students through academic mentoring.

- A fair shot for residents, like the program offered by grantee Building Bridges Across the River, which provided 442 applicants job training programs.
- Public safety, like the violence interrupter program run by the East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership which saw the connection of mentors to 165 residents in the community.

MOAAA will continue to work with District partners to create impactful programs that connect residents to a fair shot and a recovery focused on health, equity, opportunity, and prosperity.

Celebrations of Black Achievement and Black Culture

MOAAA also plays a lead role in established events celebrating African American achievement and Black Culture, including but not limited to MLK Day, Black History Month, DC Emancipation Day, Black Restaurant Week, Juneteenth and Black Music Month.

As we enter the second week of Black History Month, the office is focused on celebrating both historical contributions and current

achievements of African Americans in business, community, education, entertainment and politics form the ***past and present*** for making Washington DC the greatest city in America. So far, the posts have celebrated two former mayors, world renown singer Marvin Gaye, and legendary black businesses, like Today's Pizza in Ward 5. There's more to come, and I invite everyone watching today to visit the office's website and social media accounts to learn more.

Councilmember Parker, this concludes my testimony today, I look forward to answering any questions from the Committee.

Written Testament before the District of Columbia Council
Committee on Youth Affairs
February 13, 2025

Performance Oversight Hearing
Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)

Sumayya Lane, RN
Grandmother of current foster-care toddler
Under CFSA

I am testifying today because my grandson was taken from the safe, secure and loving surroundings of his family and thrown into mental torment and trauma, to be cared for by a total stranger; my grandson had just turned two years of age December, 2024.

The justification for removal of the child by CFSA, from the home, was exposure to domestic violence between the parents, not involving the child. There was no known thorough assessment provided to the Judge on the physical and mental condition of the child prior to his removal. The Judge had no knowledge on whether it would be more harmful to remove the child or let the child remain with his family and be provided in-home supports. And my daughter was not advised about an Omsbudman to assist with her

His mother has supervised visits for 2 hours once weekly, so when she went for her first allotted visit, she described her son's physical and mental condition as being heart breaking and horrifying. His eyes were blood-shot red, hair unkept and brittle, sediment floating on the surface of his bottle and weight loss. I am substantially concerned on the well-being and safety of my grandson.

A Social History Assessment was completed June 3, 2024, by the DC Superior Court describing the well-being of the child in question in only two and a half sentences, " the child was "…born full term and met his developmental milestones…the child enjoys watching educational television shows, obsessed with his shadow, loves mirrors, is active and enjoys eating." Nothing about being

malnourished, body bruising, being disheveled or other signs of abuse or neglect observed, NOTHING.

A report by the DC KinCare Alliances outlines concerns of a shortage of investigative social workers…"resulting in diminished capacity of the Agency to initiate and complete investigations timely…we believe compromises the safety of the District's children…complaints from clients about their relative children being left in abusive situations…also have noted an uptick in child maltreatment fatalities."

There are family members that are ready and available to receive our child to be in familiar surroundings and assure his well-being. However, we are kept in the dark as to what progress is being made to return the child to an alternate family member. Meanwhile, we are being tormented on a daily basis as to what is happening to our loved one.

I am asking this Council to seek funding mechanisms as afforded from the Title IV-E Family First Prevention Services Act, a Federal framework that focuses on prevention-oriented services in providing trauma-informed supports that address many of the underlying needs facing families.

Please look into this case to help with returning our loved one back to his family.

connecting teens • creating families • changing lives

District of Columbia Council Committee on Youth Affairs
Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Hearing
February 13, 2025

Chairman Parker and members of the Youth Affairs committee,

My name is Susan Punnett. I am a District of Columbia resident and Executive Director of Family & Youth Initiative. DCFYI is a small DC non-profit that brings together teens who are in foster care and adult volunteers to forge lasting relationships and thus help teens achieve permanency. We are proud of the work we have done over 14 years of helping some teens find adoptive families and other teens connect with adults who have stayed in their lives through foster care and into adulthood. We believe ALL young people deserve to have adults they can trust and count on no matter what.

I am here today in DCFYI's capacity as the community partner supporting an amazing group of individuals who share the experience of having been in DC foster care. These Lived Experts, or LEx Leaders, are the driving force creating a new type of permanency for older youth in DC foster care, called SOUL or SOUL Family. This group of Lived Experts have committed hundreds of hours of time, meeting as a group every other Saturday and also participating in meetings and workgroups with partners at Child and Family Services Agency, Children's Law Center, the Office of the DC Attorney General, and others. Through their work, LEx Leaders are ensuring that SOUL will be responsive to the needs and wants of youth just like them. They are creating a goal and a process that would have allowed those who are already adults to have achieved permanency as teens and which could lead to permanency for LEx who are still in care.

Not only is the proposed SOUL Family permanency option new and innovative, but so is the process of designing it. I doubt there are other examples of a government agency both working

so collaboratively with outside entities and, even more importantly, giving the lead to those with the lived experience of having been in the government system. LEx Leaders serve as co-chairs of every work group. In meetings, other partners actively defer to the LEx position when hashing out decisions. This approach will lead to better results both for youth in care and also for the child welfare system.

Those of us who have had the privilege of working with the Lived Experts have been awed by the attention and thoughtfulness they bring to this process – they keep us on task, point out nuances others have missed, bring us back to our shared values, and appropriately call out when the rest of us let them down.

I am grateful to CFSA for opening this process and welcoming the broad range of perspectives and experiences that will make SOUL a truly transformative option for older youth in care. I am grateful to the Lived Experts for committing to this work, even when it gets frustrating, and for reminding the rest of us why it is so critically important to allow those with lived experience to lead – in program design, implementation, and evaluation. (This is something we have taken to heart at DCFYI, changing practices on how we involve our own Lived Experts.)

You will hear from a few of the Lived Experts through this hearing – some who are testifying today, others whose schedules did not allow them to appear but are submitting written or oral testimony. Other Lived Experts who are just as passionate about this work are not comfortable speaking publicly but would love the opportunity to meet with you to talk about SOUL.

All of us are looking forward to the implementation of this new permanency option for older youth in foster care.

In addition, I hope the success of this effort will lead to broader changes within CFSA, giving all youth a greater role in determining their futures whether they choose SOUL as a permanency option or not. I also hope the process of creating SOUL serves as a catalyst for other DC government agencies to include those with lived experience as they create, implement, and evaluate their own programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council
Committee on Youth Affairs
February 6, 2025

Public Hearing:
Performance Oversight Hearing
Child and Family Services Agency

Tami Weerasingha-Cote
Policy Director
Children's Law Center

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Parker and members of the Committee. My name is Tami Weerasingha-Cote and I am the Policy Director for Children's Law Center. I am also a Ward 4 resident and the parent of three children here in the District. Children's Law Center believes every child should grow up with a strong foundation of family, health and education and live in a world free from poverty, trauma, racism and other forms of oppression. Our more than 100 staff – together with DC children and families, community partners and pro bono attorneys – use the law to solve children's urgent problems today and improve the systems that will affect their lives tomorrow. Since our founding in 1996, we have reached more than 50,000 children and families directly and multiplied our impact by advocating for city-wide solutions that benefit hundreds of thousands more.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding the performance of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) over the past year. Children's Law Center attorneys serve as guardians-ad-litem for children in the care and custody of CFSA.[1] Currently, we represent approximately half the children involved with CFSA – several hundred children in foster care and protective supervision each year.[2] Children's Law Center also has teams of attorneys dedicated to helping families secure special education services for their children, address unhealthy housing conditions, and obtain custody or guardianship of children in their extended family.[3] As a result, we not only

have expertise in the issues impacting children who are already in the care and custody of CFSA, we also have insight into systemic issues affecting the broader population of families most likely to be impacted by CFSA's policies and practices.

Over the past year, CFSA continued its efforts to transform the District's child welfare agency into a "child and family well-being system" that seamlessly connects children and families with resources in their communities "with the goal of them never having to come to the attention of CFSA."[4] To this end, the agency significantly invested in prevention strategies intended to meet families in need with resources, rather than separating children from their families.

CFSA also put substantial effort this past year into working with current and former foster youth, as well as community partners including Children's Law Center, to develop a legislative proposal for a new legal permanency option for older foster youth, who often struggle to find stability and positive outcomes in our current system.[5] We applaud the agency's intentional and inclusive approach to this work, which centered youth voices. We hope to see this legislative proposal move forward quickly with the full support of this Committee and the broader Council.

In other areas, however, our clients' experiences with CFSA have been mixed. Although CFSA has meaningfully expanded its placement array over the past few years, additional investments are needed to ensure that appropriate placements are available for every child in foster care. With respect to housing for youth aging out of foster care,

CFSA has removed some barriers to housing supports – but most youth still struggle to obtain stable housing before they exit care. Finally, the agency's failure to properly conserve foster youth's social security funds as required by District law has put those funds at risk of being reclaimed by the Social Security Administration and, in some cases, may have already resulted in those funds being lost.

CFSA's Transformation Work to Build a Child and Family Well-Being System Provides a Way for the District to Meet the Needs of Children and Families Without Inflicting the Harms of the Child Welfare System

CFSA's goal of transforming from a child welfare agency to a child and family well-being system is both radical and utterly necessary. When District parents struggle to care for their children because of poverty (meaning they can't pay for food, safe and healthy housing, childcare, or adequate clothing) or because of untreated physical or mental health problems or substance use disorders, our city's primary solution has been to funnel these families into the child welfare system. This system is built and designed with one primary purpose – to separate children from their parents and place them in foster care.[6]

For many years, CFSA has worked within the confines of its primary purpose to try to support families without removing children – through service referrals, in-home cases, informal family or kin placements, etc.[7] But ultimately, when a parent is unable to meet the needs of their child, CFSA's role is to take custody of that child until that parent can prove they are able to meet the child's needs – and if the parent can't achieve that

within a prescribed window of time, then CFSA's job is to find another permanent home for that child.[8]

CFSA's transformation work is a recognition that to minimize the number of families that enter this system – to "narrow the front door"[9] to only those families where removal is truly the lesser of two evils – the full panoply of District agencies and services must meet these families' needs *before* they reach CFSA. To this end, CFSA is working to support the integration of DC's human services agencies, programs, and services into a well-coordinated and accessible network of effective resources so that families struggling with poverty and deprivation can receive the help they need before their circumstances crescendo into child abuse or neglect.[10] We must, therefore, understand this work as essential to preventing the occurrence of child abuse and neglect.

CFSA has made significant investments in recent years to increase access to city services and programs designed to address conditions of poverty, including establishing 11 Family Success Centers (FSCs) and reconstituting the District's 211 Warmline.[11] Since opening in October 2020, the FSCs have served tens of thousands of families and individuals.[12] FSCs seek to connect residents with existing supports and services offered by both District agencies and community-based organizations, as well as offer regular specialized programming designed to meet the needs of the particular neighborhood they serve.[13] The most frequently requested services include food, clothing, mental and behavioral health programming, parenting supports, and assistance navigating services

– reflecting the needs we see at the heart of most of our child welfare cases.[14] In FY2024, DC residents received over 10,000 services from FSCs.[15]

In October 2023, CFSA "soft launched" the repurposed 211 Warmline as the District's unified social service resource and referral line.[16] Warmline callers seeking help with a social need[17] – such as food, housing, medical benefits, etc., – are either provided with the detailed information and guidance they need to resolve the problem (e.g. contact information for shelter intake, or date/time/location information for grocery distributions), connected directly with a specific program or resource through a closed-loop referral, or connected with a community-based organization that provides more in-depth case management and assistance with navigating the relevant District-funded and community-based services.[18]

During its twelve-month "soft launch" period (when the Warmline was operational but not proactively marketed), the Warmline received 12,671 calls from District residents and families seeking help.[19] The most common needs reported to the Warmline were housing, food assistance, and utilities[20] – again reflecting needs that often cause the instability that brings families to the attention of the child welfare system.

The Warmline officially launched just this past week. It is our understanding that CFSA will be widely promoting the Warmline to the public – engaging in community outreach, awareness campaigns through social media, and issuing promotional materials – all of which is likely to increase the volume of calls to the Warmline.

Children's Law Center strongly supports CFSA's work in establishing the FSCs and reconstituting the 211 Warmline as means of increasing access to vital government and community-based resources, services, and programming. We note, however, that increased access alone is insufficient to meet needs. As the FSCs and Warmline operators work to identify families in need and match them with resources, government and community-based programs must have sufficient capacity, and – most importantly – be effective at meeting families' needs. The Warmline is a critical tool for understanding the needs of our residents and identifying the gap between those needs and existing services and supports in the District. Closing this gap provides a way for the city to meet the needs of children and families, without bringing them into harmful systems – including the child welfare system.

Among the "lessons learned" by CFSA during the Warmline's soft-launch period, CFSA flagged that "District partnerships need strengthening to enhance [the] continuum of care across agencies."[21] Further, the agency noted that "limited access to other agency's systems create barriers" to meeting the needs of those who call the Warmline for help.[22] In other words, CFSA cannot do this work alone. CFSA is taking the lead in building an integrated human services system that provides a "continuum of primary prevention services" accessible to all District families.[23] Transformation to a child and family well-being system requires the active support and involvement of many other government agencies.

To this end, CFSA has built partnerships with several key health and human services-related agencies to support the Warmline, including the Department of Human Services, the Department of Behavioral Health, District of Columbia Public Schools, and the DC Housing Authority.[24] For the Warmline to be successful, however, deeper engagement across a wider set of agencies is needed. Both the Executive and the Council must buy into this vision and support this shift towards coordination and integration for it to take hold and make a difference in how DC families in need experience their government and community. We urge this Committee to take a lead role in supporting CFSA in this work, and to pursue the collaboration and coordination across Council Committees that is needed to make this vision a reality.

CFSA's Support for SOUL – a Youth-Driven Permanency Option – Demonstrates a Commitment to Preventing Youth from Aging Out of Care and Empowering Youth Voices

When a child enters the foster care system and the court finds that they have been neglected by their parents, that child generally has three pathways to closing their case and achieving permanency: reunification with their parents, adoption, or guardianship.[25] Although these pathways work for many children in care, some children – typically older youth – find that none of them are suitable for their particular situation. These youth are left to "age out" of the foster care system – exiting the care of CFSA at the age of 21.[26] Approximately 50-60% of older youth in foster care age out of the system[27] – meaning they will go into the adult world without a permanent family; without the sustained

support that everyone needs to be successful in life. Challenges and struggles are part of becoming an adult, and no one should have to navigate them alone.

Recognizing that aging out of foster care is harmful to youth in care and that the foster care system is ill-suited to meeting the needs of older youth,[28] over the past year CFSA, in partnership with Children's Law Center and a group of former and current foster youth ("Lived Experience/LEX Leaders") and others, supported the development of a proposal for a new legal permanency option in the District: SOUL. SOUL stands for Support, Opportunity, Unity & Legal Relationships.

SOUL is a youth-driven, new permanency goal for older youth (16+) in foster care. SOUL legally recognizes and supports the circle of loving adults in an older youth's life who are committed to their future. By choosing a SOUL permanency goal, older youth can create a permanent family and codify legal relationships with multiple caregivers and supporters, including people from their families of origin.

The District is one of the first jurisdictions to start working on implementing this concept, putting CFSA at the forefront of figuring out how to adapt to the shifting demographics of the foster care population.[29] Children's Law Center has for many years expressed concerns that older youth are languishing in foster care,[30] and we applaud the agency for acknowledging the multitude of ways the current system doesn't work for older youth and proactively seeking a creative solution. In particular, we must commend the agency for prioritizing youth and community voices throughout the process of

developing this legislative proposal. LEX Leaders co-chaired every working group and were at the table for every discussion. The legislative proposal that resulted from this process is stronger and better designed because of the input and leadership of those most impacted by the child welfare system – the youth in it. We are excited for this proposed legislation to move forward and ask this Committee and the full Council to do everything in their power to pass and fund it as swiftly as possible.

CFSA's Investments in Expanding its Placement Array Have Been Effective at Increasing Placement Stability, but Additional Work is Needed

In our performance oversight testimony last year, we expressed cautious optimism that CFSA's investments in specialized, therapeutic, and supportive placements appeared to result in some improvement in placement stability for children in care.[31] We are pleased to report that the trend towards improved placement stability seems to have continued over the past year. Although CFSA's performance oversight data for FY2024 shows that the percent of children in care who experienced three or more placements during the year stayed approximately the same at around 20 percent,[32] this remains a meaningful improvement compared to previous years – in FY2022 it was 27 percent and in FY2021 it was 24 percent.[33]

This positive trend is supported by our internal data and analysis. Every year, Children's Law Center reviews several hundred of our active guardian-ad-litem cases to gain better insight into our clients' experiences in foster care. One area we capture in our review is the level of "placement instability" our clients experience, beyond what is

captured as a "placement change" in CFSA's data.[34] Our most recent review (covering cases open between June 2023 and May 2024), revealed that 59 of our clients in care (approximately 17 percent) experienced some form of placement instability.[35] This continues the decrease in placement instability for children in foster care that we've seen over the past three years: from 128 clients (approximately 33 percent) in 2020-2021, to 110 clients (approximately 25 percent) in 2021-2022, to 70 clients (approximately 20 percent) in 2022-2023.[36]

These improvements in placement stability reflect significant investments by CFSA over the past few years to build out its placement array, specifically with specialized, therapeutic, and supported placement options, including:

- **PSI Family Services**, which provides intensive foster care placements for children in CFSA's care and custody.[37]
- **Professional Foster Homes**, which are homes where resource parents are employed in a professional capacity to provide care, particularly for foster children who are medically fragile, have high-level behavioral health needs, or are pregnant and parenting foster youth.[38]
- **Lutheran Social Services**, which provides foster homes and case management services for Spanish-speaking children.[39]
- **Allen House**, a therapeutic group home run by Sasha Bruce, which also provides supported placements for foster children ages 13 to 17.[40]

- **The Bridge Program**, a residential facility that includes on-site 24/7 clinical staff and other supports designed to stabilize youth ages 13 to 17 with significant behavioral health needs.[41] This program opened during the past year and showed early success at being a good placement option for children in care who previously would have been left to spend nights at the agency or the youth homeless shelter due to the lack of an appropriate placement for them.[42] The city had to unexpectedly terminate the contract with the provider of these services at the end of 2024, but is looking to reopen the program as soon as possible. In the meantime, several of our clients have ended up sleeping at the agency – underscoring the importance of this placement option.[43]

Although we commend CFSA for the progress the agency has made towards expanding its placement array, the extent to which children in care – including dozens of our clients – continue to experience placement instability remains a significant challenge. As we have testified for many years, CFSA's lack of placements for older youth and children with significant behavioral health needs has been harmful to children in the agency's care.[44]

Further, as CFSA has increased its prevention efforts and worked to keep children in care with their families through in-home cases and kin caregiving arrangements, a greater proportion of the foster care population is comprised of older youth and children

with significant behavioral health needs.[45] As a result, although the overall population of foster children is shrinking, the children in care are more likely to need the higher levels of support provided by specialized resource-intensive placements. CFSA, therefore, needs to continue building out its placement array until it has enough of the right kinds of placements to support the specific population of children in care. We commend CFSA for its strategic and resource-intensive efforts to improve its placement array over the past year and ask this Committee to ensure CFSA has the resources and support needed to continue this essential work.

Despite the Elimination of Some Barriers, Eligible Foster Youth Still Struggle to Access Housing Through the FUP Voucher Program

As we have testified previously, youth aging out of foster care face significant challenges transitioning out of foster care and into independent living.[46] Among other issues, these challenges often include finding employment, securing housing, and paying for rent and transportation.

The Family Unification Program ("FUP") voucher program offers a potential solution to a frequent challenge older youth experience – securing stable housing upon exiting care. FUP vouchers provide older youth exiting foster care with up to 5 years of rental assistance, along with additional supportive services.[47] Unfortunately, our clients – and most youth aging out of CFSA's care – have struggled to obtain housing through this program.

As we have testified previously, "[t]he reasons why our clients are not able to consistently access FUP vouchers are unclear – though it appears obstacles exist at various points along the pipeline from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to DC's Housing Authority (DCHA), to CFSA itself."[48]

The 2023 passage of the Preserving Our Kids' Equity Through Trusts and Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022 ("POKETT"), has helped to eliminate some of those obstacles. Before POKETT, we found that many of our clients were not informed or aware that they could be eligible for FUP vouchers. Further, CFSA had an opaque, internal process for determining which youths would be allowed to apply for FUP – separate and apart from the federal criteria.

We are pleased to report that these aspects of the process, at least, have improved. Older youth in care appear to be informed of their potential eligibility for FUP vouchers, and the agency is no longer gatekeeping access to the program. As a result, in our experience, older youth in care are more consistently able to apply for FUP vouchers. For example, a recent review of our cases showed that for our older youth clients, everyone who wanted to apply for a FUP voucher was able to.

Unfortunately, our review also showed that although they were able to apply for FUP, most of these clients did not receive vouchers or obtain housing through the FUP program before aging out of foster care. Our clients' experience is consistent with the agency's most recent report on housing for youth aging out of care – which found that

of the 33 youth who aged out of care in FY2024, only 4 successfully applied for FUP – and of these none received a voucher or housing through the FUP program before aging out.[49]

Despite our attorneys' best efforts, we still don't have clarity on why foster youth exiting care – the population FUP vouchers are explicitly designed to help – are consistently unable to obtain housing through this program before exiting care. We believe there may be some confusion between CFSA and DCHA regarding which agency should be taking the lead on supporting foster youth through the process of securing housing through the FUP voucher program. Based on what we've seen in our cases, we would like CFSA to take steps to ensure social workers support youth through the initial FUP application process – including gathering key documentation and proactively tracking the eligibility determination. Once the application is submitted to DCHA and youth is determined to be eligible, however, it's our view that DCHA likely needs to provide a deeper level of individual support for foster youth navigating the rest of the process – from securing the voucher, to finding an apartment, to getting the landlord to fill out and submit the required paperwork, to passing inspection, to finally – moving in.

More information is needed to fully understand this problem, identify the root causes, and design effective solutions. To this end, we ask this Committee to convene a hearing on this issue jointly with the Committee on Housing, inviting both CFSA and

DCHA to testify and answer questions. Together, we hope the Committees will bring clarity to this issue and take steps to increase foster youths' access to housing through the FUP program.

CFSA's Failure to Properly Implement the Social Security Income Requirements of the POKETT Act Violates the Law and Puts Foster Youths' Assets At Risk

POKETT also requires CFSA to screen all children in foster care to determine whether they are eligible for Social Security Benefits.[50] If they are eligible, the agency is required to apply for benefits on their behalf and conserve those benefits for the child until the child exits care.[51] Notably, the law expressly prohibits CFSA from using these funds for "any costs associated with the child's care."[52] Despite having had years to plan for and implement the requirements of this law, CFSA is still failing to do so, putting the youths' assets at risk and denying them the benefits intended for them under the law.

First, although POKETT requires CFSA to screen every child in care for social security benefit eligibility,[53] this is not happening consistently. In the last year, we've had at least two clients with obvious SSI-qualifying disabilities who were not screened, and for whom no benefit application was filed. As a result, both clients missed out on benefits that they should have received because CFSA failed to comply with POKETT.

Second, and most significantly, POKETT requires CFSA to "[m]onitor federal asset or resource limits that would affect the child's eligibility to continue to receive benefits and conserve the benefits in a way to avoid violating or exceeding those

limits."[54] The law provides a list of potential accounts or methods by which this can be done, including the establishment of a dedicated 529A or ABLE, or a special needs trust.[55] CFSA has not done this. Instead, CFSA has continued to keep youths' social security benefits in CFSA-held bank accounts. Children's Law Center currently has 52 clients in foster care receiving Social Security benefits – and zero of them are having their benefits properly conserved in an appropriate account.

POKETT requires the funds to be properly conserved in specific types of accounts because otherwise the funds are subject to being reclaimed by the Social Security Administration.[56] By failing to conserve the funds in appropriate accounts, CFSA is violating both District and federal law, and creating a huge risk that youth in care will ultimately lose access to these funds altogether.

The risk of the funds getting reclaimed by the Social Security Administration is highest when youth are exiting care. At that time, CFSA is required to file paperwork with the Social Security Administration terminating the agency as the youth's payee and returning any unspent funds.[57] Because POKETT prohibits the agency from spending youths' Social Security benefits, if the funds have not been conserved in an appropriate account that shields them (like an ABLE account or special needs trust), they must be reported as unspent funds and sent back to the Social Security Administration.[58] Of 10 clients receiving benefits who exited care within the last year, only two had their funds properly conserved before case closure – and that was due to

extensive pressure from our attorneys. For the remaining eight clients, their funds are considered "unspent", and the youth are likely no longer able to use them because they were not properly conserved.

Third, in addition to requiring the agency to "[m]onitor federal asset and resource limits that would affect the child's eligibility to continue to receive benefits,"[59] POKETT also requires the agency to "avoid overpayment of Social Security benefits while serving as the representative payee."[60] To fulfill these requirements, CFSA must keep track of how other benefits, programs, income, and placement impact a youth's eligibility for Social Security benefits, and timely report relevant information to the Social Security Administration to avoid overpayment. In our experience, CFSA is not doing this. Social workers generally do not seem to be aware of the types of things that can impact our clients' social security eligibility and as a result, are not reporting the relevant information. If and when the Social Security Administration discovers the overpayment (for example, when they see the W-2 from a client's summer job), the Social Security Administration then deducts that money from future benefit payments – or even requires the youth to make payments. Again, the youth is penalized for the agency's failures.[61]

Fourth, POKETT requires CFSA to provide "financial literacy education, financial management training, and financial skills building" to youth exiting care and gaining access to their conserved funds, and to collaborate with the youth to develop a

"written plan" for the future use of the conserved funds.[62] To the best of our understanding, this is not happening. Of our 10 clients receiving benefits who exited care within the last year, only two received any financial literacy education and none were assisted in developing a written plan.

By failing to comply with the requirements of POKETT, the agency is risking youths' assets and denying them important benefits – both of which could be vital to the youths' future stability and success. We strongly urge the Committee to hold CFSA accountable for these violations and maintain close oversight over this program until these issues are resolved.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome any questions the Committee may have.

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[1] Children's Law Center attorneys represent children who are the subject of abuse and neglect cases in DC's Family Court. CLC attorneys fight to find safe homes and ensure that children receive the services they need to overcome the trauma that first brought them into the child welfare system. DC Children's Law Center, About Us, *available at*: https://www.childrenslawcenter.org/content/about-us. The term "protective supervision" means a legal status created by Division order in neglect cases whereby a minor is permitted to remain in his home under supervision, subject to return to the Division during the period of protective supervision. D.C. Code § 16-2301(19).

[2] DC Children's Law Center, About Us, available at: https://www.childrenslawcenter.org/content/about-us.

[3] Children's Law Center, Our Impact, available at: https://childrenslawcenter.org/our-impact/.

[4] Robert L. Matthews, Testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, Performance Oversight Hearing Fiscal Year 2022, Child and Family Service Agency, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kod57y5ukqmwopg/AAAGPTIiA_GzfrtaDmi8CcKca/2023%20Folders/2.24.23%20-%20POH%20for%20CFSA%20and%20Ombuds%20for%20Children/Government%20Testimony?e=2&preview=CFSA+FY22+Performance+Oversight+Hearing+Testimony_Director+Robert+L+Matthews-Final.pdf&subfolder_nav_tracking=1&dl=0.

[5] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 25, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-25-2021-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 27, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-17-2022-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Childrens-Law-Center_Performance-Oversight_FY2022-23-CFSA_final.pdf.

[6] § 4–1303.01a. Establishment and purposes of Child and Family Services Agency; 42 U.S. Code Part B – Child and Family Services § 629 – Purpose; and *Child Welfare: Purposes, Federal Programs, and Funding*, Congress Research Service, October 27, 2023, *available at*: https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/IF10590.pdf.

[7] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 25, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-25-2021-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 17, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-17-2022-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Childrens-Law-Center_Performance-Oversight_FY2022-23-CFSA_final.pdf. *See also* Child and Family Services Agency, Program In-Home Services, (May 27, 2022), *available at*: https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/program-home-services#:~:text=It%20is%20CFSA%20policy%20to,to%20promote%20family%20well%2Dbeing.

[8] Child and Family Services, Permanency Practice, (May 19, 2020), *available at*: https://cfsa.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cfsa/publication/attachments/Permanency_Practice_Policy_FINAL%20%282%29_0.pdf; DC Code Title 16, Chapter 23. Family Division [Family Court] Proceedings; DC Code Title 4. Public Care Systems, Chapter 12. Child Abuse and Neglect. Subchapter I. Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Part C. Child and Family Services Agency § 4–1303.03. Duties and powers of the Director; Public Law 105–89. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA).

[9] "The Front Door is a term CFSA uses to indicate families that are known to CFSA through a call to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline and/or through an open in-home case. CFSA's goal is to safely narrow the Front Door, i.e. prevent entry of children into foster care. Children deserve to grow up with their families and should be removed only as the last resort. When CFSA must remove a child for safety, the Agency seeks to place with relatives first." *See* Child and Family Services Agency, Dashboard, *available at*: https://cfsadashboard.dc.gov/page/front-door.

[10] Robert L. Matthews, Testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, Performance Oversight Hearing Fiscal Year 2022, Child and Family Service Agency, (February 24, 2023), *available at*:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kod57y5ukqmwopg/AAAGPTIiA_GzfrtaDmi8CcKca/2023%20Folders/2.24.23%20-%20POH%20for%20CFSA%20and%20Ombuds%20for%20Children/Government%20Testimony?e=2&preview=CFSA+FY22+Performance+Oversight+Hearing+Testimony_Director+Robert+L+Matthews-Final.pdf&subfolder_nav_tracking=1&dl=0.

[11] In June of 2023, the Directors of the following District agencies all signed on to do their part to realize the vision of Keeping DC Families together and the shared ownership of operating a child and family well-being system: Department of Aging and Community Living, DDS, DCPS, DYRS, DCHA, DC Health, DBH, DHS, and OUC. FY2023 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q113(b), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253. *See also* FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q131, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698

[12] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q126(a), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698. Please note that CFSA articulates the difference in tracking between FY21, FY22, FY23, and FY24. This is primarily due to a shift from FSCs self-reporting to CFSA using a third-party system to more accurately track. While it may look like there is a drop in number of families served, it is actually reflective of more accurate tracking.

[13] Child and Family Services Agency, Keeping DC Families Together, *available at*: https://cfsa.dc.gov/page/keeping-dc-families-together; FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q126, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[14] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q126(b), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[15] On file with Children's Law Center.

[16] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q133(e), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[17] "Based on their stated needs, they may be re-routed to 211 Warmline, 311, 911, or the CPS Hotline. If the needs are solely social service related, callers will all be transferred to 211 for assistance. Likewise, 211 Warmline call center agents are trained to route and escalate calls to the other lines i.e. CPS Hotline, 311, and/or 911 depending on the nature and sensitivity of the caller's needs (be it child maltreatment concerns, repairs and/or damage concerns to property, or crisis emergency response needs)." *See* FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q134(b), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[18] Y2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, responses to Q134, Q136, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.; CFSA Nov. 7, 2024 Pop-Up Briefing Slide, slides 9, 15, 16, on file with Children's Law Center.

[19] CFSA Nov. 7, 2024 Pop-Up Briefing Slide, slide 7, on file with Children's Law Center.

[20] *Id*. Slide 6.

[21] *Id*. Slide 6.

[22] *Id*. Slide 6.

[23] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q136, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[24] 211warmline, Our Partners, *available at*, https://211warmline.dc.gov/page/our-partners.

[25] Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is a last-resort permanency option once reunification, adoption by kin, permanent guardianship by kin, or non-kin adoption resources have been exhausted and/or have been determined not to be in the best interests of the child; legal custody happens

when the agency supports legal custody to an individual who has demonstrated a commitment to assuming long-term responsibility for a child is pursued as a permanency goal only under rare and specific circumstances; reunification happens when the agency works with the birth parent or caregiver from whom the child was removed, and their supports, to ameliorate conditions of neglect such that the child can safely return home; adoption happens if safe reunification is not a viable option, the agency will pursue adoption for the child with kin or the current resource provider based on whomever is most clinically appropriate, and if neither is an option, by recruiting a new adoptive resource; and guardianship may be pursued in lieu of adoption if neither reunification nor adoption is a viable option; the agency shall pursue guardianship for the child with willing kin or, under certain circumstances, a non-kin resource. *See* Child and Family Services, Permanency Practice, (May 19, 2020), *available at:* https://cfsa.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cfsa/publication/attachments/Permanency_Practice_Policy_FINAL%20%282%29_0.pdf; DC Code Title 4. Public Care Systems, Chapter 12. Child Abuse and Neglect. Subchapter I. Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Part C. Child and Family Services Agency § 4–1303.03. Duties and powers of the Director; Public Law 105–89.

[26] Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is a last-resort permanency option once reunification, adoption by kin, permanent guardianship by kin, or non-kin adoption resources have been exhausted and/or have been determined not to be in the best interests of the child. APPLA is only available for youth 16 or older. The social worker shall work actively with youth with to build lifelong connections, re-engage family, and achieve a successful transition to adulthood by setting and accomplishing goals across a series of critical domains, such as housing, education, employment, and physical and mental health. *See* Child and Family Services, Permanency Practice, (May 19, 2020), *available at:* https://cfsa.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cfsa/publication/attachments/Permanency_Practice_Policy_FINAL%20%282%29_0.pdf.

[27] Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), FACES.net management report CMT 367, "Children who Exited Care for Calendar Year 2024," pulled January 30, 2025.

[28] Older foster youth represent the largest number of youth who experience multiple placement disruptions. Of the 39 youth who experienced 5 or more placement disruptions, 22 of them were 16 years or older. Of the 60 youth who experienced 4 or more placement disruptions, 29 of them were 16 years or older. *See* FY2023 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q147, *available at:* https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253. Older foster youth represent the largest number of youths who experience multiple placement disruptions. Of the 40 youth who experienced 5 or more placement disruptions, 23 of them were 16 years or older. Of the 73 youth who experienced 4 or more placement disruptions, 23 of them were 16 years or older. FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q168, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 17, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-17-2022-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Childrens-Law-Center_Performance-Oversight_FY2022-23-CFSA_final.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 20, 2024), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/2023-24-oversight-testimony-child-and-family-services-agency/.

[29] In FY2023, older youth (16 and older) represented 33% of the foster population (165 out of 496). *See* FY2023 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q146, *available*

at: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253. In FY2024, older youth (16 and older) represented 30% of the foster population (166 out of 547). FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q167, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[30] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 25, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-25-2021-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 17, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-17-2022-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Childrens-Law-Center_Performance-Oversight_FY2022-23-CFSA_final.pdf.

[31] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), *available at:* https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-21-2024-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-002.pdf, pg. 12-24.

[32] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q168, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698; FY2023 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q147, *available at:* https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253.

[34] CLC collects placement instability information that includes other circumstances that may not be captured by CFSA data including (1) times where a client remains a hospital or residential treatment facility past the discharge date due to difficulty in finding a placement; (2) times a client is sent to respite care due to difficulty in finding a placement; (3) times a client has slept at the CFSA agency building; (4) times a client was placed at the Sasha Bruce homeless shelter; (5) times a client was in abscondence; and (6) times a client was placed in an extend home stay due to difficulty finding a placement. *See* Internal Children's Law Center Data Collection, "GAL Deep Dive," June 2023 through May 2024.

[35] Internal Children's Law Center Data Collection, "GAL Deep Dive," June 2023 through May 2024.

[36] Internal Children's Law Center Data Collection, "GAL Deep Dive," June 2020 through May 2021; Internal Children's Law Center Data Collection, "GAL Deep Dive," June 2021 through May 2022; Internal Children's Law Center Data Collection, "GAL Deep Dive," June 2022 through May 2023.

[37] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q161, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698; FY2023 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q140(f), *available at:* https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253.

[38] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q171(k), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[39] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q166, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[40] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q106, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[41] FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q172, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

[42] *Id.*

[43] In FY24, there were a total of 33 overnight stays by 7 unique youth, one youth stayed in the

building for 22 consecutive days. FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q173, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698. In FY23, there were a total of 124 overnight stays. Two youths accounted for 103 of them. FY2023 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q152, *available at:* https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253.

[44] Judith Sandalow, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (April 2, 2012), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/files/clc/040212%20Testimony-CFSA%20budget.pdf; Judith Sandalow, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (April 24, 2013), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/files/clc/042413%20Testimony-CFSA%20budget.pdf; Judith Sandalow, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (April 14, 2014), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/files/clc/CLC-CFSA-Budget-Testimony-4-14-14.pdf; Judith Sandalow, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (April 28, 2015), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CLC-Testimony-Child-Family-Services-Agency-FY16-Budget.pdf; Judith Sandalow, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (April 27, 2016), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CLC-Testimony-Child-and-Family-Services-Agency-FY2018-Budget.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 25, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-25-2021-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Aubrey Edwards-Luce, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 26, 2019), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/AEL-CFSA-FY2018-Oversight-Testimony-FINAL.pdf; Judith Sandalow, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 12, 2020), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/JSandalow-CFSA-FY2019-Oversight-Testimony-FINAL.pdf; Aubrey Edwards-Luce, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 12, 2020), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CFSA-Performance-Oversight-Testimony_AEL_Final.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (November 4, 2020), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CLC-Testimony-for-Nov.-4-2020-CFSA-Public-Roundtable.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 25, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-25-2021-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdfTami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 27, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-17-2022-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Childrens-Law-Center_Performance-Oversight_FY2022-23-CFSA_final.pdf.

[45] In FY2023, older youth (16 and older) represented 33% of the foster population (165 out of 496). *See* FY2023 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q146, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253. In FY2024, older youth (16 and older) represented 30% of the foster population (166 out of 547). FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q167, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698. In FY2023, 25 children experienced an episode of psychiatric hospitalization, and 12 children were spent time at a psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF). FY2023 Child and Family Services Agency

Performance Oversight Responses, responses to Q76(d), (f), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253. In FY2024, 30 children experienced an episode of psychiatric hospitalization, and 19 children were spent time at a psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF). FY2024 Child and Family Services Agency Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q194(d), (f), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698. In In FY2023, 448 of the 496 of youth in CFSA's care were actively engaged in behavioral health services. Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Annual Report, January 11, 2024, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf. Note: this report does not define "actively engaged in behavioral health services."

[46] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), *available at:* https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-21-2024-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-002.pdf, pg. 8-10, 14-15; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 25, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-25-2021-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 17, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-17-2022-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Sharra E. Greer, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Childrens-Law-Center_Performance-Oversight_FY2022-23-CFSA_final.pdf.

[47] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Family Unification Program (FUP)*, February 8, 2024, *available at*: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family#:~:text=The%20Family%20Unification%20Program%20(FUP,%2Dof%2Dhome%20care%2C%20or.

[48] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (September 22, 2022), *available at:* TWeerasingha-Cote_CLC-Testimony-for-Sept.-22-2022-Hearing-on-B24-0857-B24-0941_FINAL.pdf; p. 13.

[49] FY2023 CFSA Fostering Opportunities Annual Status Report, *Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities: Housing for Youth Aging Out of Agency Custody*, (February 28, 2024), *available at:* https://cfsa.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cfsa/publication/attachments/CFSA%20Fostering%20Opportunities%20Annual%20Status%20Report%20FY2023_FINAL%205.6.24.pdf; p. 4-5.

[50] D.C. Law 24-309. Preserving Our Kids' Equity Through Trusts and Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022. Section 312(a).

[51] *Id.*

[52] D.C. Law 24-309. Preserving Our Kids' Equity Through Trusts and Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022. Section 312(c)(1).

[53] D.C. Law 24-309. Preserving Our Kids' Equity Through Trusts and Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022. Section 312(a).

[54] D.C. Law 24-309. Preserving Our Kids' Equity Through Trusts and Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022. Section 312(c)(2).

[55] *Id.*

[56] D.C. Code § 4-1303.12 (c)(2). In order to remain eligible for SSI payments, beneficiaries may not accumulate resources in excess of the asset limit set forth in 20 CFR § 416.1205 (a), which, since 1989, has

amounted to $2,000. 20 C.F.R. § 416.202 (d). If cash attributed to a beneficiary exceeds $2,000, the beneficiary is thus ineligible for any further payments due to not meeting the requirements. 20 C.F.R. § 416.1240 (a). When the Social Security Administration discovers that payments have been made while the beneficiary did not meet the eligibility requirements, this is considered overpayment. 20 C.F.R. § 416.537 (a). In order to address overpayments, the beneficiary must refund any payments made during the time of eligibility, or their future payments will be reduced in order to repay the Administration over time. 20 C.F.R. § 416.570 (a).

[57] 20 C.F.R. § 416.660; Social Security, Program Operations Manual System (POMS), GN 00603.055 Transfer of Conserved Funds.

[58] *Id.*

[59] *Id.*

[60] D.C. Law 24-309. Preserving Our Kids' Equity Through Trusts and Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022. Section 312(f).

[61] 20 C.F.R. § 416.570 (a).

[62] D.C. Law 24-309. Preserving Our Kids' Equity Through Trusts and Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022. Section 312(d) and (g).

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing

Testimony of Tani'ya Rogers

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

My name is Tani'ya Rogers, and I am known in the Housing Justice arena as Lady T. I am a member of the Lived Experience Advisory Committee, which played a vital role in creating the 211 Warmline. Alongside CFSA, we are championing a cultural shift—moving DC from a place of child welfare to a place of family well-being.

For too long, systemic discrimination, racism, and unchecked capitalism have torn families apart. Too many Black and Brown families have been separated not because of neglect but because they needed help. There is a dangerous misconception that struggling to meet basic needs equates to parental failure. But poverty is not neglect—it is a lack of resources.

I know this firsthand. I lived in my car with my two sons for almost two months. My apartment was overrun with roaches despite repeated requests for extermination. We couldn't bathe, cook, or sleep in a safe environment. I was terrified to ask for help, and afraid that CFSA would label me a neglectful mother, afraid my children would be taken from me. I carried that fear in silence, and so did my children.

During this time, I hit my lowest point. An adult at my children's school commented on their appearance, hinting at CFSA intervention. At the same time, I was served with eviction papers—despite having a signed lease. On top of it all, I was still grieving the loss of my children's father.

My world was crumbling, and I felt powerless.

That is the reality for too many families in DC. When survival mode becomes the norm, when stress turns to desperation, and when a parent is left with no options, mistakes happen. That is when systems punish rather than protect. But proactivity is the key to breaking this cycle. The 211 Warmline provides proactive support, connecting struggling residents with the necessary resources before a crisis turns into a catastrophe.

When I reached out to 211, I had $2 to my name and had been waiting 14 days for a response to my food stamp application. My first call to 211 was discouraging, it did not reflect the robust, community-driven service we envisioned. But then something different happened.

A 211 supervisor personally called me back. She was kind, apologetic, and took immediate action. She had no idea I was a Lived Experience Committee Member at that moment. To her, I was simply a mother in need—and she treated me with the dignity and respect that every DC resident deserves. She connected me to a food stamp supervisor who quickly resolved an IT issue preventing me from receiving benefits.

Through this process, I witnessed something golden. Two people with the power to help, valuing me and my children as humans—not as statistics, burdens, or a case number. They never factored in any affiliations—they simply did what was right.

This is not charity, this is empowerment. 211 is about connecting families with the available resources and ensuring DC residents can thrive, not just survive. It is a model of collaborative leadership and community-driven advocacy in action.

As a housing organizer at ONE DC and a lifelong DC resident, I see every day how our working-class communities—seniors, veterans, single parents, youth—are fighting just to exist. To have stable housing. To put food on the table. To afford childcare. To survive in a city that was never designed for them to win.

The 211 Warmline is a step toward a DC that acknowledges and values every resident. It is a step toward a DC that listens, adapts, and grows alongside its people.

To undermine or devalue this initiative is to say that we do not want change. We accept homelessness, poverty, and desperation as the status quo. That we are comfortable letting our most vulnerable neighbors fall through the cracks.

So, I urge you—to support the 211 Warmline. Support the families who make up the fabric of this city. Support a DC where everyone has the chance to win.

Thank you.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency

Performance Oversight Hearing Fiscal Year 2025
Child and Family Services Agency

Testimony of
Tanya Torres Trice
Interim Director

Before the

Committee on Youth Affairs

Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
February 13, 2025

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs, and Committee Staff. I am Tanya Torres Trice, Interim Director for the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), proud social worker, and Ward 5 District resident. I am joined today by Deputy Director Sharafdeen Ibraheem who leads our Thriving Families Administration responsible for the prevention arm of the agency, Deputy Director Elizabeth Muffoletto who leads our Hotline and Investigation Administration where Child Protective Services is located and Deputy Director Ann Reilly who leads our In and Out of Home Administration where all case-carrying social workers are located. And lastly, Deputy Director Nicole Gilbert who leads our Office of Well Being where mental health, behavior health and older youth services are located.

Thank you for inviting me to testify in today's hearing to discuss CFSA's accomplishments in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, and to date in FY 2025. Our recent accomplishments include:

- The soft launch of the 211 Warmline and community response model.
- CFSA completed a significant milestone by conducting the first D.C.-led federal Child and Family Services Review Round-4 Review. CFSA, other DC human service agency employees, and community stakeholders partnered to review 65 cases (25 in-home and 40 foster care).
- 700 Mandated reporters registered through the Online Mandated Reporter Portal.
- CFSA received federal approval of its Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) amendment plan completed with the DC Department of Human Services.
- A major upgrade to our information system.

I would also like to highlight what my team and I have identified as CFSA's focus for FY 2025. These initiatives, amongst many others, support our evolution into a child and family well-being system.

Foster care and in-home populations stabilizing

As of September 30, 2024, CFSA was serving 546 children in foster care and 913 children in-home with their families. Of the children in foster care at the end of FY 2024, 31 percent were ages zero to five, 24 percent were ages six to 12 years old, 27 percent were 13 to 17 years old, and 17 percent were 18 to 20 years old. Eighty-three percent were Black or African American, twelve percent were Hispanic, and 1 percent were White. The trend continues where more than half of the children we serve come from Wards 7 and 8. While our foster care and in-home populations are stabilizing, the children and families who do come to our attention present with complex needs. To address these needs, CFSA is partnering with other government agencies and community partners, as well as offering a wide range of resources in-house.

Diversifying our Placement Array

CFSA continues to prioritize kinship placements, striving to keep children and youth within the District and maintain sibling bonds when family separation is unavoidable. Additionally, CFSA emphasizes foster home placements, recognizing that family-based environments offer the optimal foundation for children's well-being and growth. Specialized resource parents continue to play a crucial role in the placement array by providing care and support to children and youth with high needs. These dedicated resource parents receive specialized training to equip them with the skills necessary to address the complex needs of the children in their care. This specialized approach has been shown to improve placement stability and reduce maladaptive behaviors in children, leading to better outcomes.

The agency holds contracts with the National Center for Children and Families (NCCF), where close to half of children in care are placed, PSI Family Services, and Lutheran Social Services to provide foster home placements and case management. In addition to family-based placements, CFSA's diverse

placement array encompasses specialized group home settings, including traditional, therapeutic, pregnant/parenting teen options, as well as a group home specifically designed for youth with developmental delays. We are currently in the contracting process for a vendor to manage the BRIDGE program, a short-term placement option, and hope to have that option available by Q3 of FY2025. CFSA recognizes that providing the right type of placement is essential for a positive experience. Our goal is to continue to offer a wide range of options tailored to individual needs, and I am committed to continually assessing and expanding our placement array to achieve this.

211 Warmline:

The 211 Warmline, initially established to support the Keeping DC Families Together (KDCFT) initiative, has quickly grown into a comprehensive resource line for all District residents, extending beyond CFSA's mission of preventing child maltreatment. By strengthening inter-agency collaboration and data-sharing within the human services sector, the Warmline streamlines access to essential supports for DC residents, making it easier for them to find the help they need. CFSA leverages its community-based prevention providers and its long history with the Healthy Families/Thriving Community Collaboratives to serve as Community Responders, who are well-versed in an extensive range of services, including mental health, housing, employment, and education supports. Now co-located with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) Access HelpLine, both agencies are working towards a shared goal of cross-agency collaboration to effectively address the high-risk needs of District residents and families.

Since its soft-launch in October 2023, the Warmline has received over 16,000 calls from individuals in Washington, D.C., and beyond. Monthly call volume consistently exceeded 600, with a significant spike

during the summer driven by CFSA's partnership with DHS, which promoted 211 as a resource for information about the SUN Bucks program, a grocery assistance initiative. The caller's needs range from housing and shelter to food assistance, income support, employment, and utilities, with housing and shelter identified as the most prevalent need in almost half of all service requests.

As we enter the public launch phase of the 211 Warmline rollout, the agency's plan includes further work in neglect statute reform and mandated reporter training to better educate the public and clarify the role and scope of the 211 Warmline.

STAAND Update:

In 2019, CFSA received approval from the federal Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to implement a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). CFSA initiated an internal campaign called "Stronger Together Against Abuse and Neglect DC" (STAAND) to launch the project in FY 2021.

In FY23, the system's resource parent recruitment, licensing, relicensing, and service referral components went live. In FY 2024, CFSA launched two additional modules: the Training Portal and the Mandated Reporter Portal. The complete system, which will replace the legacy system, is set to go live in late spring of 2025.

Workforce, Strategies and Retention:

CFSA, like many child welfare agencies nationwide, is grappling with a severe social worker shortage, most acutely impacting our Hotline and Investigation Administration. Pre-pandemic, we had just over 100 investigative social workers; currently, we have only 40. While we are working very hard to on-board social workers in this area, it will take time for them to be trained and ready to take on

investigations. To combat this critical shortage and ensure adequate staffing, CFSA has employed the following strategies:

- Opened overtime hours for trained social workers in other CFSA areas to move investigations forward and ease workload.
- As a result of the social worker shortage, and to address the backlog, in March 2024, CFSA Launched Project Safety, a manager-led initiative, for quicker case closures on fully investigated cases with no findings of abuse and neglect and no safety concerns present.
- In October 2024, I made the decision to detail and train the entire In-Home Administration which had social workers with capacity to take neglect referrals. By December 31, 2024, the in-home administration had taken on 114 investigations. I am happy to report this strategy is working and I will continue to monitor and assess effectiveness for the best path forward.
- Our Human Resources Administration hired a dedicated social worker recruiter. We continue to engage local colleges and universities to build a pipeline of social workers, while leveraging online job boards and offering licensure assistance to attract and retain talent.
- We will continue to focus on professional development, competitive benefits, and a positive work environment to improve retention.

I am acutely aware of the challenges posed by the social worker shortage and its direct impact on investigative timeframes. While we continue to actively explore and implement innovative strategies to address this issue, rest assured that we will always prioritize child safety above all else. I remain committed to finding solutions that uphold our critical mission of protecting children and families and serving the District's most vulnerable residents.

FY 2025 Focus

CFSA is committed to transforming the District's child welfare system into a comprehensive child and family well-being system. This shift prioritizes prevention and collaboration among community partners, government agencies, and individuals with lived experience as experts.

In FY 2025, CFSA will focus on:

- Enhanced collaboration and partnerships across all sectors involved in child and family well-being to create a comprehensive support system to improve outcomes. This will include partnering with Local Education Agencies to identify the best strategies to address chronic absenteeism.
- Fully launching the 211 Warmline and community response model to connect families with essential resources across the city.
- Enhancing support for older youth in foster care across housing, financial wellness, behavioral health, and education to ensure successful transitions to adulthood.
- Prioritizing workforce well-being through psychological safety, accountability, and retention strategies.
- Launching the STAAND data system to improve data collection, analysis, integrity, and transparency.

Through these initiatives and the shift to the Keeping DC Families Together framework, CFSA aims to strengthen families and promote child and family well-being while maintaining its role as the child welfare agency.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I commend team CFSA for their unwavering daily commitment and dedication to supporting District families. Safe, healthy children and strong families are an invaluable resource our city needs and deserves. We are proud of Mayor Muriel Bowser's leadership in ensuring that the District of Columbia is a national model for child safety and well-being. All of us at CFSA are committed to this work every day and are dedicated to working together in finding solutions to improve overall outcomes for children and families. Until every child is safe, and families have the resources needed to not only survive, but to thrive, this work will remain essential, and we will continue striving to improve.

I would also like to thank you, Chairperson Parker, for your leadership and support. CFSA remains committed to operating with complete transparency, and I will ensure that the communication channels with your staff remain open and productive.

This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Esteemed Members of Congress and honored guests,

My name is Tracy Quarrelles, and it is a privilege to stand before you today as a proud resident of Ward 8, a senior citizen, and a participant in the Smart from the Start program. Over the last four years, I have been deeply involved in this initiative, and for the past two years, I have had the honor of serving on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). In this role, I have committed myself to ensuring that our community's voices and needs are acknowledged and actively addressed.

As a member of the CAC, I have embraced the role of ambassador for the Woodland Terrace Family Success Center. This position has empowered me to identify the urgent needs within our community and collaborate on programs that foster meaningful change in Ward 8. Alongside Smart from the Start, we have developed initiatives that truly make a difference, and I am eager to share our progress and vision for the future. Some programs and support include:

• Support single seniors with healthy eating courses, ensuring they have the knowledge and resources to maintain their well-being.

• Provide computer literacy training, helping residents gain essential digital skills to navigate today's world.

• Offered economic development programs, including budget training, that helped me clear my credit card debt and achieve financial stability.

• Encourage fitness and wellness programs like Zumba and our 90-day challenge, which kept many seniors active and engaged.t

I have completed four certification programs through Smart, including literacy, economic development, and healthy living courses. These programs have shaped me into a well-rounded individual and allowed me to become a resource for others.

I have recruited seniors from Ward 8 to ensure they can access critical services, such as food assistance and financial support.

• I have volunteered with back-to-school and coat drives, ensuring families and children have what they need to thrive.

• I have led efforts to utilize and expand food pantry services, ensuring no senior or family goes hungry.

When seniors in our community need help, they know they can come to me. With Smart from the Start, I have helped navigate countless individuals toward resources like food, financial aid, and health services. This is more than just a program—it's a lifeline for Ward 8 residents.

Smart from the Start has empowered adults and significantly benefited our youth, keeping our children engaged and safe from the pitfalls of violence in our community.

• Youth Programs at the Youth Empowerment Success (Y.E.S.) Center:

The Y.E.S. Center has been instrumental in providing a safe and nurturing environment for our children. Through organized trips, engaging activities, and structured tutoring sessions, the center helps keep our kids away from violence and negative influences. This program assists with homework, offers tutoring, and exposes children to enriching experiences outside their usual environment, broadening their horizons and fostering a sense of responsibility and achievement.

Ward 8 is a vibrant, resilient community that faces challenges. Access to resources, financial empowerment, and senior engagement must remain a priority. That is why I stand here today, urging you—our lawmakers and decision-makers—to continue investing in programs like Smart from the Start.

• By continuing to fund and expand the Family Success Centers, we can reach more seniors, families, and youth who deserve opportunities.

• We can provide critical literacy and workforce development programs, ensuring economic stability for future generations.

• We can expand food assistance programs, ensuring no one in our community has to go without a meal.

This program has boosted my morale, given me purpose, and kept me motivated—and I know it can do the same for countless others.

Today, I urge you to continue supporting Smart from the Start and other Success centers like it. The investment in these initiatives is an investment in stronger families, thriving communities, and brighter futures. I am living proof that with the proper support, resilience can turn into success."

"Imagine the impact we can make if we expand these efforts—more families lifted out of hardship, more children given opportunities, and more communities strengthened. Your leadership and advocacy can ensure that countless others receive the same support that changed my life."

Congress, I ask for your continued support. Not just for me, but for the seniors, the families, and the future of Ward 8.

Tracy Quarrelles

2024-2025

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Statement of the Council for Court Excellence
Before the Committee on Youth Affairs

Performance Oversight Hearing
Ombudsperson for Children

February 13, 2025

Thank you, Councilmember Parker and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to present this testimony regarding the performance of the office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC). My name is Tracy Velázquez and I am the Policy Director at the Council for Court Excellence (CCE), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. For more than 40 years, CCE has worked to improve the administration of justice in the courts and related agencies in D.C. through research and policy analysis, convening diverse stakeholders, and creating educational resources for the public. Please note that in accordance with our policy, no judicial member of CCE participated in the formulation or approval of this testimony. This testimony does not reflect the specific views of, or endorsement by, any judicial member of CCE.

My testimony today focuses on crossover youth. The definition of crossover youth in the statute authorizing OFC (D.C. Law 23-270) is "a CFSA child who is currently or has previously been the subject of a petition alleging delinquency filed by the Office of the Attorney General, or by another jurisdiction;" this legislation also defines a "CFSA Child" as "an individual who is 21 years of age or younger and involved with, previously involved with, or otherwise known to CFSA."

The office of the Ombudsperson for Children has specific responsibilities related to crossover youth; in particular, their annual report should incorporate "a crossover youth section, which shall include:
(A) The number, demographics, and other relevant characteristics of the crossover-youth population;
(B) Data, metrics, and trend analyses related to outcomes for crossover youth;
(C) Assessment of interagency communication and coordination related to crossover youth and its impact on outcomes for crossover youth; and
(D) Any other information the Ombudsperson considers relevant to the outcomes for crossover youth; and
(4) The conclusions and policy recommendations section, which shall include:
(A) Conclusions and policy recommendations based on the information provided; and

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(B) A status update on policy recommendations from prior annual reports, if applicable."

About nine months ago, CCE released a report on crossover youth entitled, "A Broken Web: Improved Interagency Collaboration is Needed for D.C.'s Crossover Youth." This report, produced on behalf of the ODCA, called for DYRS and CFSA to better identify crossover youth so that those in this particularly vulnerable population can receive the services and supports that they need to succeed. Research has shown that youth who have been abused and neglected have multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences – "ACEs" – which are correlated with a greater chance of involvement in the juvenile justice system. And a youth who has been or currently is in the child welfare system who crosses over to the youth justice system will likely have unmet needs related to their traumatic childhood experiences.

CCE's analysis of case files of DYRS-involved crossover youth for our report showed that 68% had four or more ACEs, which is the benchmark for significant negative impacts. In reviewing CFSA random case files, CCE found that crossover CFSA youth were more likely to have a mental health diagnosis, a learning disability and truancy problems as compared to CFSA youth who had not crossed over. These findings clearly support a higher level of need – and therefore more and specialized services - for these youth.

One of the top recommendations of our report was for CFSA and DYRS to "provide requested data on the full population of crossover youth so that the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC) can comply with its mandate to collect, analyze, and report on the population of crossover youth in D.C." These reporting requirements are needed for an accurate understanding of the size, characteristics, and needs of the District's crossover youth population; the factors that affect their life trajectories; and the services, programs, resources, and agency collaboration needed to improve their lives.

In the 2023 annual report contained none of the statutorily required information for crossover youth, as defined in 23-270. Rather, the reported data, which CFSA and DYRS jointly supplied to the Ombudsperson, is limited to the 8 young people who were simultaneously committed to CFSA and DYRS" during FY 2023 – which the agencies refer to as "dual-jacketed youth." D.C. Superior Court data we reviewed for our report made clear this was an undercount. Our analysis showed that there were 93 crossover youth on the last day of FY2022. Even just looking at "dual jacketed" youth, CCE's count was much higher – 35 in calendar year 2021 and 27 in calendar year 2022. As CCE had no access to data from Maryland, where almost half of D.C.'s foster youth live – this was likely still an undercount.

We had hoped that this year the agencies would comply, given the increased attention to this issue. However, when the 2024 report came out, there were even *fewer* youth identified – 6. Per the report, once again "data reported in this section is for young people who were simultaneously committed to CFSA and DYRS during FY 2024."

We were glad to read in the agency's responses that strategies have been identified to obtain data for analysis on crossover youth. We hope that OFC strives to gather data on the full statutory

definition of crossover youth; this would include CFSA youth who are: currently or have previously been the subject of a petition alleging delinquency filed by the Office of the Attorney General; under the supervision of Court Social Services; committed to DYRS; or involved in another jurisdiction's delinquency system. Additionally, OFC should collect data on all crossover youth known to CFSA; this would include not just current or past involvement, but those crossover youth known to CFSA who have experienced abuse and neglect but are not in the court neglect system. It may be that legislation is needed to ensure OFC can securely access the data necessary for an understanding of the population of crossover youth in D.C.

As noted above, in addition to counting these youth, OFC is mandated to collect and report on outcome data. While the statute doesn't identify what data and metrics should be used, what was provided in the OFC annual report on just these 6 youth was sparse and often discouraging. For example, instead of reporting on whether a youth was chronically absent from school, the metric used was whether the youth was "enrolled at some point during the fiscal year." None of the youth were employed or in a workforce development program, despite all being 16 years old or older. A third of the youth were rearrested during the fiscal year, and youth had **on average** four CFSA placements and 2.3 DYRS placements; multiple placements have been shown to have negative outcomes for youth. It is unclear how or whether this information is being used to inform the services these dual-jacketed youth need to successfully transition to adulthood. Increased specificity on what data should be collected and how it should be presented would both create baselines for agencies and allow for better oversight by this Committee.

Finally, we know that the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council – CJCC – has been exploring the possibility of contracting with a well-respected technical service provider to evaluate and make recommendations around serving crossover youth in D.C. If this does come to fruition, we hope that OFC will be centrally involved. Given both its statutory mandate and its independence from any one youth serving agency, if appropriately resourced it would be well situated for any strategic initiative around improving processes, services and outcomes for crossover youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions now or in the future on this matter.

DC KinCare Alliance
Supporting Kin and the Children they Raise

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Testimony Before the Council of the District of Columbia

Committee on Youth Affairs

Performance Oversight Hearing
Child and Family Services Agency
February 13, 2025

Victoria Taplin

Managing Attorney, Policy & Advocacy

DC KinCare Alliance

Good afternoon, Chairperson Parker and Members of the Committee on Youth Affairs. My name is Victoria Taplin, and I am a Managing Attorney for Policy & Advocacy with DC KinCare Alliance. Our mission is to support the legal, financial, and related service needs of relative caregivers who step up to raise children in their extended families in times of crisis when the children's parents are not able to care for them due to hospitalization, mental health and substance use disorders, incarceration, death, abuse and neglect, and/or deportation. In the 7 years since our founding, we have helped over 1,000 relative caregivers raising more than 1,000 DC children in more than 1,000 legal matters. DC KinCare Alliance is a member of the Fair Budget Coalition, and we support budget priorities and policies that alleviate poverty in the District of Columbia.

I am testifying today regarding the DC Child and Family Services Agency ("CFSA"). Our work intersects regularly with that of CFSA as we strive to support family members who come to the rescue of abused or neglected children in grave need, often very suddenly. We are very concerned by the shortage in investigative social workers, resulting in diminished capacity of the Agency to initiate and complete investigations timely, which in turn, we believe compromises the safety of the District's children. Not only have we received complaints from our clients about their relative children being left in abusive situations, but we also have noted an uptick in child maltreatment fatalities reported in the news. Furthermore, we are disappointed with some aspects of how CFSA is administering its caregiver subsidy programs, particularly, erecting unwarranted barriers to access, and a general lack of responsiveness or sense of partnership when we bring issues to their attention that have been reported to us by our clients.

A. Shortage of CPS Investigative Social Workers

We are concerned that the current shortage in CPS investigative social workers is negatively impacting child safety**.** Our clients have reported frustrations about the time it takes for investigations to begin and to be completed, and that CFSA is leaving children in unsafe conditions in their homes. In its responses to Performance Oversight Pre-Hearing Questions, dated February 10, 2025[1], CFSA stated its own benchmark of satisfactory performance as 90% of its CPS social workers having caseloads of 12 or fewer, and no caseworker having greater than 15 cases. Yet data for FY2025 to date shows that 28 out of a total of 38 social workers carried an average of more than 12 cases, with 23 of them carrying an average of more than 15 cases, and 19 carrying an average of more than 20 cases.

More concerning still, CFSA caseload data indicates that there are fewer than half the number of social workers doing this work now than in previous years. CFSA's responses to performance oversight questions for FY 2024 documented a total of 90 CPS social workers for FY2023. However, its most recent responses show that number dropping to only 39 social workers for FY2024, and dropping further still to only 38 social workers for FY2025-to-date. If social workers are not able to complete the required interviews and collect needed information timely, endangered children may suffer further harm.

B. CFSA's Administration of the GCP and CRCP

1. Unnecessary Documentation Requirements

A very important part of our work is advising our relative caregiver clients about public benefits that are available to them as District residents and assisting them to apply for those benefits by helping them submit online applications and upload necessary supporting documentation. Over the past year and a half, CFSA has imposed additional documentation

[1] https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/698.

requirements for the Grandparent Caregiver Program ("GCP") and the Close Relative Caregiver Program ("CRCP"), causing significant delays in the processing of applications and added stress for caregivers who need these subsidies to feed and clothe the children in their care. These additional requirements are not mandated by the applicable statutes and, in fact, act in contravention of their requirements that the Mayor "process an application for a subsidy with reasonable promptness." DC Code section 4-251.03(i) and 4-251.23(i). Moreover, they undermine the purposes of the programs to ensure the safety and security of children living with relative caregivers by providing financial help to care for these children as soon as possible.

In August 2024, we met with staff from the CFSA Office of Thriving Families to discuss these and other issues, and to talk about how we could work collaboratively to make the application process as easy and efficient as possible for relative caregivers. We provided staff with specific examples of how these additional documentation requirements have created barriers for caregivers to access the programs, yet in follow-up correspondence, CFSA insists there is no evidence that these requirements cause barriers and indicate they are not going to eliminate or even modify them. (See attached correspondence with CFSA regarding these barriers). We still maintain they are unnecessarily burdensome for caregivers with no corresponding reason they are necessary. According, we are asking CFSA to address the following unremedied concerns:

a. Lease to Prove DC Residency

To prove DC residency, applicants could previously provide **one** of the following documents: a District-issued ID, a lease or mortgage, ***OR*** a utility bill. Program staff now require a District-issued ID ***AND*** a current lease or mortgage, and will not accept a utility bill. Most of our caregiver clients do not own computers and, therefore, struggle with copying and uploading what is often a 10-20 page lease on their phone. Worse still, some of

our clients have found that if their lease has converted to month-to-month at the conclusion of the initial year-long lease term – common with public voucher leases in DC -- CFSA has not accepted it, telling them that the lease has "expired," and they have to obtain a rental verification from their landlord, which is onerous and can take time. If the concern is really about proving that the applicant still lives in DC, a recent utility bill showing their name and DC address should be sufficient. DHS accepts a utility bill to prove residency for TANF applications, so we question why proving residency should be more rigorous for the caregiver subsidies.

b. School Records to Prove Child is Living With the Caregiver

In the past, a school enrollment form was only required if an applicant did not have a custody order; for those applicants, submitting a school enrollment form was one way to prove they were the child's primary caregiver. Now, however, even when caregivers have a custody order, Program staff require that they also furnish a school enrollment form to confirm that the child is presently enrolled (and with recertifications, they must furnish an attendance record to prove that the child is attending school). This causes a delay for applicants because there are circumstances when a caregiver has recently taken a child into their home, and a school record showing their address can be difficult to obtain quickly, especially if they have taken in the child over a summer or other school break. Moreover, we query why CFSA is layering on this additional requirement, when proof that the child is in school is not an eligibility requirement under applicable law or policy.

2. Methodology for Calculating Subsidy Rate Must be Made Publicly Available

At our August 2024 meeting with CFSA and several times since, we have asked Program staff to provide the calculator or formula used to determine the subsidy daily rate. We have seen considerable variation in the daily rates received by our caregiver clients, and it is not apparent to us how the rate is calculated. We would like to know the formula so that we can provide caregivers information on what they should expect to receive and ensure the amount received is accurate. To date, we still have not been provided with the formula for calculating the subsidy daily rate, which should be readily available to the public.

C. Recommendation for Amendment to Caregiver Subsidy Statutes to Expand Eligibility

Under current law, caregivers are only eligible to receive the caregiver subsidy with respect to relative children in their care who are younger than age 18.[2] Once they turn 18, the subsidy ends. The reality is that although they have reached the age of majority, many young people are still in high school when they turn 18 and are not in a position to seek employment to become independent. We propose that the governing statutes for the GCP and the CRCP be amended to allow the subsidy to continue until the young adult turns 19, provided that the they are enrolled full-time in high school or a vocational or technical training program. TANF and GAC already operate this way, so this legislative change would make the caregiver subsidy programs consistent with these programs. The current cutoff creates a hardship for caregivers of 18-year-olds who are still in high school, because the cost of supporting them is no less than before, and usually more. This modest change to eligibility means that the subsidy would see the kinship family through the child's high school years, just like cash assistance currently does. Our legislative proposal, which was recommended to us by the residents of Plaza West Grandfamilies Housing, is attached.

[2] D.C. Code §§ 4-251.03(d) and 4-251.23(e).

In summary, we ask that CFSA implement less burdensome alternatives to its documentation requirements for the caregiver subsidies so that caregivers can receive the subsidy payments as quickly as possible, bearing in mind that even an additional week or day that a caregiver must wait causes stress and hardship on their kinship family. We also ask for greater transparency about how the subsidy daily rate is calculated, which is the public's right. And finally, we request that the DC Council consider a revision to the caregiver subsidy statutes to make eligibility for payments consistent with cash assistance programs – specifically, that payments would continue with respect to young adults up to age 19 who are still in the caregiver's home and attending school or a vocational/technical training program.

*****

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.

Re: GCP/CRCP Subsidy Rate Inquiry

From Marla Spindel <marla@dckincare.org>

To McKinley, Yolanda (CFSA)<yolanda.mckinley@dc.gov>

CC Weinmann, Sebastian (Council)<sweinmann@dccouncil.gov>, Trice, Tanya T. (CFSA)<Tanya.Trice@dc.gov>, Ibraheem, Sharafdeen (CFSA)<sharafdeen.ibraheem@dc.gov>, Wilson, Dedrick (CFSA)<dedrick.wilson@dc.gov>, Blackmon, Keena (CFSA)<keena.blackmon1@dc.gov>, Grey, Nicola N. (CFSA)<nicola.grey@dc.gov>, Victoria Taplin<vicky@dckincare.org>, Thomas, William (OFC)<william.thomas@dc.gov>

Date Monday, January 6th, 2025 at 8:00 AM

Dear Ms. McKinley,

Thank you for your message concerning the requests we made in our meeting with Mr. Ibraheem and other CFSA staff on August 29, and that I reiterated in a follow-up email to them on September 5. As a reminder, the purpose of our meeting was to notify CFSA about unnecessary burdens to access the caregiver subsidies so that CFSA could work to address them.

Regarding the first question about the calculation of the subsidy daily rate, even apart from the issue of why there is a difference in the daily rate based on age, which you have said CFSA is still investigating, we would like to understand the method or formula used to calculate the subsidy. This method should be readily available to share.

Regarding the second question about having to provide a lease to prove DC residency, you state that "there has been no evidence of a barrier for caregivers to comply with the current requirement," when in fact, we provided such evidence to CFSA staff in our August 29 meeting. To reiterate, those barriers that our clients have experienced include the difficulty and cost of copying and uploading what is often a 10-20 page lease, and the problem of month-to-month leases not being accepted by CFSA when the initial year-long lease term has "expired." Given these barriers, we again request that CFSA permit other less burdensome options to prove residency. DHS accepts a utility bill for TANF applicants to prove residency, which is much easier for applicants to find and reproduce. Alternatively, a paystub or proof of benefits letter from a government agency are easy to provide and would serve the same purpose. Moreover, a utility bill was accepted previously by CFSA, so we would like to understand why there was a need to change the requirement in this regard.

As for the third question about having to provide a school enrollment form: again, we presented evidence at the August 29 meeting of the barrier this has caused our caregiver clients. We are glad to hear that a school enrollment form is no longer required when the applicant has a court order specifying the relationship, as some of our clients were being told they had to provide both. But there are circumstances when a caregiver has recently

taken a child into their home and does not yet have a custody order laying out the caregiving relationship, and a school record showing their address can be difficult to obtain quickly, especially if they have taken in the child over a summer or other school break and would not have the most recent school record. We query why CFSA is requiring that the caregiver prove the child is in school, as that is not an eligibility requirement under applicable law or policy. For TANF applications, DHS now accepts a self-attestation to prove the caregiving relationship, which is obviously much easier to provide. We have attached for your review a copy of the new DHS policy. Accordingly, we are again requesting that this requirement be removed or that other more reasonable options be made available.

In conclusion, we would still like to know what the calculation method is for the daily subsidy so we can guide our clients about what to expect, and request that CFSA provide this immediately, as it should be readily available to the public. We also request that CFSA implement less burdensome alternatives to its documentation requirements so that caregivers do not have to go to multiple places to obtain such documentation and can obtain the subsidy as quickly. As an overall matter, we are asking CFSA to reduce rather than increase barriers to access these benefits in the future.

Marla P. Spindel (she/her/hers)
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IF YOU ARE A RELATIVE CAREGIVER RAISING A DC CHILD, CALL OUR HELPLINE FOR ADVICE ON YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS AT 202-505-5803

On Monday, December 2nd, 2024 at 3:13 PM, McKinley, Yolanda (CFSA) <yolanda.mckinley@dc.gov> wrote:

> Marla Spindel
>
> Executive Director
>
> DC Kincare Alliance
>
> Hello Ms. Marla Spindel:
>
> The Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) received the following inquiry below from Sebastian Weinmann, Deputy Director and Interim Director, DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, on behalf of the DC Kincare Alliance. On behalf of Sharafdeen Ibraheem, CFSA Deputy Director for the Office of Thriving Families, please find responses to the inquiry below.
>
> - Responses to Questions/Issues Raised
>
> 1. Provide the calculator/formula used to determine the subsidy daily rate; Understand why there is a difference in the daily rate based on age as reported in the 2023 GCP and CRCP Annual Report when it is tied to the foster care rate that was changed to be the same for all ages as of 2020.

As it relates to the inquiries regarding the subsidy daily rate, thank you for bringing this matter to CFSA's attention. CFSA has identified a potential discrepancy and are currently investigating the matter. CFSA will respond to your inquiry once the internal review is complete.

2. Add the option for proof of residency or providing a recent utility bill in lieu of a lease.

CFSA does not plan to add the option for proof of residency in lieu of a lease. There has been no evidence of a barrier for caregivers to comply with the current requirement, and it has not impacted subsidy eligibility determinations. New applicants are required to provide a lease as proof of residency. Utility bills are acceptable forms of proof for recertifying caregivers. In the future, if CFSA determines that this requirement becomes a barrier, CFSA will reevaluate this suggestion.

3. If the caregiver furnishes a court order granting them custody, they should not also have to provide a school record showing the caregiving relationship, which is often requested by staff. Obtaining school records can take time and is often impossible during the summer or school breaks.

CFSA does not plan to change this requirement. There has been no evidence that this requirement has been a barrier for caregivers to comply or that it has impacted subsidy eligibility determinations. If a court order specifies the relationship, it serves as proof. School enrollment forms for new applicants and proof of school attendance for recertification are used to confirm that school-aged children are enrolled and/or attending school. During school breaks, the most recent document is accepted. In the future, if CFSA determines that this requirement becomes a barrier, CFSA will reevaluate this suggestion.

> If CFSA can be of further assistance on this matter, please contact Mr. Ibraheem at sharafdeen.ibraheem@dc.gov or at (202) 531-9065.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Yolanda McKinley | Intergovernmental Affairs | Office of the General Counsel | DC Child and Family Services Agency | www.cfsa.dc.gov | 202-442-6100 (main) | yolanda.mckinley@dc.gov (email) | | 202-442-6003 (office)

359.65 KB 3 files attached

LW_PR_Memo 10-16-24 (004).pdf 177.50 KB

LW_PR_SelfAttestation_Memo Attachment A.pdf 64.44 KB

LW_PR_SelfAttestation_Memo Attachment B.pdf 117.72 KB

DC KinCare Alliance
Supporting Kin and the Children they Raise

1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW
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September 17, 2024

**PROPOSAL FOR EXPANSION OF
GRANDPARENT CAREGIVER PROGRAM (GCP) AND
CLOSE RELATIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM (CRCP)**

Expand Age Eligibility To Be Consistent With Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and General Assistance for Children (GAC) Requirements

According to its legislative history, the purpose of the DC Grandparent Caregiver Program (GCP) and Close Relative Caregiver Program (CRCP) is to acknowledge the lack of support for grandparent and other caregivers in light of the important role they have risen to accept, and the disparity of financial assistance provided to foster parents who care for the District's adjudicated children versus caregivers who do so outside the foster care system.

Among other things, the GCP and CRCP restrict eligibility for payments to applicants caring for a child under the age of 18. See DC Code §§ 4-251.03(d) and 4-251.23(e). However, many young adults remain in the care of a grandparent or relative after they turn 18 because they are still in high school or vocational school. Children typically turn 18 during their senior year of high school. Further, it is not uncommon for the trauma that caused children to come into kinship care to also have negatively impacted their education. In such instances, children may turn 18 as juniors and 19 as seniors. The COVID-19 pandemic further resulted in children being held back or having to retake certain classes.

Losing the subsidy after a child has reached the age of majority but is still in high school places a serious hardship on the kinship family. Moreover, this age cut-off is inconsistent with other benefits programs, like TANF and GAC, that reflect the need to support young adults long enough to give them the chance to become self-sufficient.

Accordingly, we are proposing a revision to the GCP and CRCP to make the age cutoff consistent with TANF/GAC requirements. A caregiver can receive TANF or GAC when caring for a person who has not attained 18 years of age, or has not attained 19 years of age and is a full-time student in a secondary school (or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training). Accordingly, a caregiver can receive TANF or GAC longer than they can receive the GCP or CRCP subsidies.

To make the GCP and CRCP subsidy age eligibility requirements consistent with TANF/GAC, this proposal recommends that DC Code §§ 4-251.03(d) and 4-251.23(e) be revised to read as follows:

> Eligibility for subsidy payments under this section may continue until the child reaches the age of 18, or until they reach 19 years of age if they are also a full-time student in a secondary school (or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training).

This proposal makes sense in light of the deduction of TANF or GAC from the monthly amount received under the GCP or CRCP. These benefit programs go hand in hand, and together provide reliable support for the kinship family. Accordingly, so long as a recipient is receiving TANF or GAC for the child, they should also be entitled to receive the GCP or CRCP.

Testimony before the Office of Youth Affairs

DC Child and Family Services Agency Oversight Hearing

Yesmine Holmes

Mother's Outreach Network

Thursday, February 13th, 2025

Good morning Councilmember Parker and Committee members. My name is Yesmine Holmes, and I am a single mother of five boys, all under the age of five. I was born in DC, live in Ward 8, and grew up in the foster care system. I am a member of Mother's Outreach Network's Moms Empower group, a MON Advocacy Fellow, and a participant in the MON Mother Up Guaranteed Income Program.

The Mother Up program will provide me with much-needed financial support for three years, with no strings attached. However, my time in the program will end in a year and a half, and I am deeply concerned about what comes next.

I am here today to speak for many moms like me who are involved with or have been involved with CFSA. When our children are taken from us, we lose the benefits that help us survive, like food assistance and housing. Without a home, it becomes even harder to rebuild our lives. The court tells us we must get a job, become financially stable, and prove we can care for our children. But when we get them back, we often have to quit our jobs because they don't fit with our kids' school schedules. I used to

work at night and odd hours, but now, as a mother, I can't do that. Finding childcare is nearly impossible, leaving many of us stuck in an endless cycle of instability.

Young Black mothers like me who don't have enough child care options, especially those of us who grew up in broken homes, struggle to provide a better life for our children. When a mother is dealing with postpartum depression and CFSA involvement at the same time, it becomes overwhelming. Moms struggling with severe anxiety who have no support system also need help. The system should not take away our benefits when our children enter foster care. We need real solutions that help mothers reunite with their children without setting them up for failure. CFSA should continue providing financial support to parents while their children are in foster care. If they don't, once children are returned, there isn't enough money for food or rent, and families must wait for benefits to restart.

We need programs that help with the cost of raising children, so families don't keep falling back into crisis. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.

Good Morning/Afternoon,

Distinguished members of Congress. My name is Zlena Addison, and I stand before you today as a testament to the life-changing impact of Smart from the Start. I am deeply honored to share my journey and how this program has transformed my family's life."

"First and foremost, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported this initiative—your commitment to strengthening families and communities is invaluable. The support from every state, staff member, and volunteer has been phenomenal."

"When I first connected with Smart from the Start, I faced numerous challenges—navigating pregnancy, securing resources, and ensuring a stable environment for my children. Through the unwavering support of Smart from the Start staff like Ms. Takeithia, Ms. Kendra, and Ms. SherRhonda, I could receive essential resources like baby clothes, food, transportation, and a support system that felt like family."

"Ms. Takeithia walked with me through my pregnancy, attending doctor's appointments, providing home care, and ensuring I had everything I needed postpartum. Ms. Kendra became a mentor to my children, offering guidance that has helped me grow as a parent. Ms. SherRhonda ensured my family never went without food, sending meals daily during tough times."

"Beyond the immediate support, Smart from the Start empowered me with long-term solutions. Mr. Doug helped me explore workforce development programs, guiding me toward launching my own nonprofit. Ms. Willeisha assisted in navigating services across the district, ensuring my family had access to essential resources."

"Smart from the Start is not just about meeting immediate needs—it's about long-term transformation. This program provides:"

• Food Assistance – A pantry open to the public, ensuring no family goes hungry.

• Homeless Support & Community Outreach – Helping individuals rebuild stability.

• Education & Child Development – From early childhood programs to college preparation for preteens.

• Family Fun & Engagement – Programs like Tuesday Family Fun Night bring families together.

• Workforce & Life Skills Development – Résumé writing, workforce training, financial literacy, and more.

• Holiday and Community Events, such as Party with a Purpose, ensure that children experience joy during the holidays.

“This isn’t just a program—it’s a lifeline, a foundation, and a future for families like mine.”

“Today, I urge each of you to continue supporting Smart from the Start and other Family Success Centers. The investment in these initiatives is an investment in stronger families, thriving communities, and brighter futures. I am living proof that with the right support, resilience can turn into success.”

“Imagine the impact we can make if we expand these efforts—more families lifted out of hardship, more children given opportunities, and more communities strengthened. Your leadership and advocacy can ensure that countless others receive the same support that changed my life.”

“Thank you for your time, commitment, and belief in the power of community-driven programs. I am grateful to stand before you today—not just as a beneficiary of Smart from the Start, but as a voice for every family that still needs our help.”

Sincerely

Zlena Addison

Good Morning, Chairman Parker and members of the Committee on Youth Affairs'. Thank you for taking time this morning to listen to my story and recommendations.

My name is Zyarre Prince, and I am 18 years old. I currently attend The North Carolina Central University. I entered foster care at the age of 14 and have endured many trials and tribulations that have shaped the person I am today. However, if I could go back in time, I wouldn't change a thing. Despite the challenges, I also had many positive experiences in care, such as meeting my now-adoptive parents, connecting with other foster youth on a personal level, and forming lifelong relationships.

Today, I am a youth advocate for children in foster care while also balancing my royal court position at college and my academics. Foster care has taught me that no matter the struggle, nothing is impossible to achieve if you are truly dedicated.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Child and Family Services Agency for the life lessons I have gained through my experiences. Without them, I wouldn't be the person I am today. However, I do have a few recommendations for the agency.

Foster children are deeply familiar with the transient nature of the system. The constant switching of homes and social workers every few months causes many of us to develop severe attachment issues. Over time, we begin to realize that anything we try to hold onto may not be stable or permanent. This instability often leads to self-isolation and a self-reliance complex, where foster youth hesitate to seek help even when they need it most. My recommendation is to provide foster children with at least one reliable, consistent source of support, whether that be a stable placement or a long-term social worker, so they don't constantly feel like their world is shifting beneath them.

Additionally, I strongly believe that all foster children should have access to a personal cellular device, regardless of their foster parent's preferences. Many foster youth experience abuse or neglect and have no direct way to contact their designated social worker. While the agency offers youth-sponsored phones, foster parents can deny a child access to this resource, leaving them without a secure way to report issues or seek help. This lack of communication can result in cases going unreported, leading to severe mental and physical health consequences. Ensuring that every foster child has a direct line of communication to their social worker is crucial for their safety and well-being.

Finally, I encourage the continued empowerment of foster youth to advocate for themselves. Foster care has taught me the power of advocacy, and I wouldn't have discovered this if I hadn't been given the opportunity to speak up for myself.

Thank you again for allowing me to share my story and recommendations.

Testimony before the Youth Affairs Committee
of the DC City Council Performance Oversight Hearing
Melody Webb, Esq.
Mother's Outreach Network
Thursday February 13, 2025 11 a.m.

Good morning, Chairperson Parker and Committee members. My name is Melody Webb, and I'm the Executive Director of Mothers Outreach Network, which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. We convene the DC Guaranteed Income Coalition, which advocates citywide for basic income strategies to eliminate poverty. We provide direct representation and know your rights education and advocacy to parents who are facing the permanent termination of their relationship with their child. Our mission is to engage impacted mothers, primarily Black, in the struggle for family preservation through policy advocacy and community organizing to transform governmental systems from punitive to empowering. Among the frames that ground our work are 2Generation family preservation and multigenerational preservation.

Introduction.

Washington, D.C.'s[1] racial income and wealth gap[2] has consequences, too often poverty is the driver that results in a family's involvement with CFSA. In 2023, nearly 9 out of 10 open cases[3] at CFSA involve neglect; and 4 out of every 5 D.C. cases in foster care, stemmed from neglect-based allegations alone.[4] Neglect, defined by statute, includes poverty factors. MON's Mother Up Guaranteed Income Pilot provides cash to mothers in the face of evidence that increasingly reveals the power of cash assistance

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[1] The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated long-standing racial inequities in D.C.; pre-pandemic, 1 in 4 Black DC residents lived in poverty: as did 13% of Latinx residents and 6.4 % of non-Hispanic whites; pre-pandemic, 26% of children in DC lived in poverty; and most of color; Black D.C. households are 13.5 times more likely to report they experience some food insecurity than White D.C. households Whereas, pre-pandemic, on average, 35% of Black families headed by single mothers were impoverished, as were 34 percent of Hispanic headed households; and 22% of Asian-women headed households; Black women face disproportionately high unemployment rates -in January 2020, there were 4.8% fewer Black women in the labor force than a year before, and a 3.1% fewer white women; Black and Latinx women possess disproportionately greater caregiving responsibilities, work in lower paying jobs than their counterparts; experience health insecurity; are disproportionately essential workers; and due to Covid-19, between February and April, 18.8% of Black women workers lost their jobs and 20% of Latinx women were unemployed; women suffered all 140,000 of the job losses in December 2020; During the Pandemic the unemployment rate for Black workers has been as high as 16.7 % and 14.2% for White workers; 18.9% for Latinx workers and 13.6 for non-Latinx workers.

[2] https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/09/26/income-inequality-america-highest-its-been-since-census-started-tracking-it-data-show/.

[3] https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2020.pdf

[4] Child Maltreatment 2019 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2019.pdf See also the figure is national, 75% (Children's Defense Fund, The State of America's Children 2020 report)

in both ameliorating family instability and in addressing the disproportionately Black family involvement.

CPS Due Process Issues: Investigations and the Mandate for the Right to Counsel

Today, I will focus my comments on due process issues that are embedded in the family policing system that are widely known as child welfare or family regulation. According to the leading scholar on these Dorothy Roberts, in the United States, 52% of children will experience an investigation by their 18th birthday. Upon information and belief, 40% of the families entangled in the child welfare system in the District of Columbia have a family member with a disability.

Due to the DC Council's unfortunate recent passage of the Investigations Completion Amendment Act of 2023, CPS investigations in the District of Columbia are now allowed to occur over a 45 day period. But from our legal practice we know of investigations that appear to have extended for 6 months to a year. And how do we know the duration? We encounter parents who are unsure of when the investigations have come to an end. And when there's a finding and in-home surveillance occurs, we learn about abuse of discretion, personal disagreements, and use of power by social workers using the tools of the agency to make life more challenging under threat of removal. This will fall even more harshly on families with a parent with learning disabilities. All too often it does, without legal counsel for that parent.

The moms that we represent, who are predominantly Black and impoverished, live in terror of these investigations. Few middle class families would want their family lives held up to such scrutiny. In fact, in 2022 a division of the ABA adopted ABA Resolution 606, which calls on all legal professionals to recognize how over-surveillance of and underinvestment in Black families has shaped the child welfare field for centuries.

Mother's Outreach Network initiates representation at the initial stages of a CPS case being opened. While parenting is a fundamental constitutional right, parents are not entitled to representation in DC at the outset of an investigation, nor during the course of a case where they are under the Agency's supervision, known as in-home services cases. While legal representation can address the basis of the government finding of neglect, government removal of the child from their parents' care, and the harms of it, there is no right to representation, which leads to many harms. One such harm is that of the "hidden foster care" system, in which the child welfare agency uses an extrajudicial process and causes a parent to transfer custody of the child to a relative or other caregiver, without any court oversight or counsel for the parent.

Longer investigation periods set the stage for increased removals due to hidden foster care, which is defined as the government's coercive placement of a child with a

relative or caregiver that does not receive court oversight. In our current system, as Professor Josh Gupta Kagan states, “it is as if a police department investigated a crime, concluded an individual was guilty, did not file charges or provide him with an attorney, and told him he had to agree to go to jail for several weeks or months, or else it would bring him to court and things could get even worse.”[5] Parents require assistance at this phase to ward off removals due to coercion.

A Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigation, as described by my colleagues, is a traumatic process for the entire family. I ask that you explore the investigation framework, a process whereby parents do not have access to counsel though substantive and due process rights are at stake. The August 2022 ABA Resolution 606 condemning the harms of this system included in its report citing Meyer v Nebraska[6] “Today family integrity is a well-established fundamental liberty interest under the Fourteenth Amendment. It protects the interests of parents in directing the upbringing of their children and maintaining their families free from unwarranted government intrusion.”

This expansion of the timeline, we still believe, comprises unwarranted government intrusion that impedes parents’ rights in harmful and traumatic ways. Join us in opposing it. While parenting is a fundamental constitutional right - parents are not entitled to representation in DC at the outset of an investigation, even though representation can avert removal and the harms of it. Any state action that interferes with parental authority over children—and certainly state action that separates parents and children—raises substantive and procedural due process concerns. Parents have the fundamental right to the care, custody, and control of their children, as the Supreme Court has recognized in a long set of opinions for nearly a century.

As referenced earlier, the American Bar Association (ABA) Resolution 606, in the justice context, highlights a need for vigorous representation of parents in child welfare systems. The disproportionate impact on Black families gives this greater urgency. This urgency has only strengthened over time. Only a statutory right to representation can begin to address the miscarriage of justice to parents and their relationships with their children that an investigative process absent a right to counsel and family Miranda rights perpetuates.

In this vein, we encourage you to explore answers to these questions:

1. How many CPS investigations against individuals are currently open? How many are open past the timeframe allowed? Why?
2. What are the operational policies or procedures for CPS investigations?
3. What is the agency's practice when parents involved in the safety planning process request access to counsel?
4. How many referrals to outside counsel were provided to parents by CFSA staff who participated in safety plans and informal family plans?

[5] America’s Hidden Foster Care System, 72 Stan. L. Rev 841 (2020).
[6] 262 U.S. 390 (1923)

5. Are parents always given referrals to legal counsel when the agency enters into a safety plan with a parent?
6. How many diversion cases involve matters that are also before the DC Superior Court Domestic Relations Branch (DRB)?
7. How many diversion cases with the Agency go before the DC Superior Court Domestic Relations Branch (DRB) as custody matters subsequently?
8. Do CFSA social workers or other staff testify at DRB custody hearings?

We urge you to support a right to counsel for parents upon the initiation of CPS investigations and up through the point of a petitioned removal.

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing

Testimony of Kimberly Mitchell

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

I come to you with great faith that you will continue to take care of the cities, most vulnerable our senior citizens and our children by continue to make sure that children's family services received the funding need to continue to do the great work that has been done for the residence of the District of Columbia in not doing so will make you and me out to be liars in the eyes of our children when we promised to keep them safe and to take care of their well-being, where there is already so much disappointment, hurts misunderstandings and you can be sure it surely will show up in our school systems, our city streets and our city jails because if we fail them now we will say that it is the youth, and they will say that it is truly us the adults who hold all of the cards with all that is going on in our city and our world on Capitol Hill if this is one of the last things that the city council is charged with, then let it be this and let it be done.

Thank you.

Child and Family Services Agency, Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Performance Oversight Public Hearing,

Testimony of Cassandra Gentry

Committee on Youth Affairs

Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2025

Greetings DC Councilpersons,

My name is Cassandra Gentry, and I am one of many grandparents raising grandchildren in DC. I have been through the tragic loss of a daughter and a grandson due to violence.

I chose to become a kinship caregiver to keep my loved ones from going into foster care. It was a costly decision for me. Living on Social Security did not meet our needs. Even with TANF and suing food banks we were still not able to make ends meet.

In 2025, I was told about the Grandparent Caregiver Close Relative program (GCP) and I applied for assistance. I was able to get funding for my grandson and within three months. The GCP program also helped me with my granddaughter when her father got murdered and he was not on her birth record. The funding and support I have received from GCP has helped me provide a better quality of life for my family. Not only do they provide another source of income, but they also provide community outings that my children look forward to.

The GCP program is unique, and many states are looking at our model, as well as our outcomes. I'm proud to be a recipient of a program like this.

Attachment F

Testimony on Behalf of Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services
For the Committee on Recreation, Libraries and Youth Affairs
Agency Performance Oversight: Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

March 6, 2025

Good Morning, Chair member Parker and members of this committee. My name is Anya Kreider. I am an Attorney at Disability Rights DC. In my personal capacity I am a proud Ward 5 resident.

Disability Rights DC is the federally designated Protection and Advocacy Program for people with disabilities in the District of Columbia. Per Disability Rights DC's federal mandate, Disability Rights DC staff serves the District's residents with disabilities through individual representation, investigations of abuse and neglect, training, and systemic advocacy.

The DC Department of Health Care Finance reported in a recent publication that, "On average, in 2023, eighty-seven percent (87%) of youth placed at a DYRS secure facility have at least one mental health diagnosis, thus, placing DYRS well within the purview of Disability Rights DC's work.[1] As an organization mandated to investigate abuse and neglect, we are invested in the accountability of agencies, like DYRS, that routinely come to our attention as failing to meet their responsibility to keep youth safe.

In November 2023 Disability Rights DC wrote a report entitled *Youth at Risk: Dangerous Restraints and Excessive Seclusion at DYRS Facilities*.[2] This week we made public another report, *Youth Still at Risk*, detailing equally egregious and dangerous circumstances at the Youth Services Center.[3]

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[1] Department of Health Care Finance, District of Columbia Section 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Renewal Request: Draft Application for Public Comment (April 1, 2024) 17, https://dhcf.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dhcf/page_content/attachments/DRAFT%201115%20Renewal%20Application_For%20public%20comment_V2.pdf.

[2] Disability Rights DC, *Youth at Risk: Dangerous Restraints and Excessive Seclusion at DYRS Facilities* (Nov. 2023).

[3] Disability Rights DC, *Youth Still at Risk: A Supplement to Disability Rights DC's 2023 Youth at Risk Report* (Mar. 2025).

Dangerous Restraints at YSC.

Fundamentally, DYRS has an obligation to keep youth in their custody safe and at minimum follow DC Law and DYRS policy.

It is unacceptable that we have confirmation of, for example, youth being punched by staff with a closed fist[4], youth being pulled by the collar of their shirts,[5] and youth being restrained by means that inhibit their breathing, including chokeholds.[6] DC Law and DYRS policy support that assertion.[7]

The number of staff involved in the recent incidents is indicative of a culture at DYRS that fails to recognize the trauma of the youth they serve and a lack of appropriate training to maintain safety for youth and staff at their facilities. The concerns are two-fold: (1) Many staff do not appear to be able to consistently differentiate when physical intervention is necessary as opposed to when less physical means of de-escalation are possible and (2) if physical intervention is necessary, what practices are safe for everyone and within the boundaries established by DC Law and DYRS policy.

DYRS must live up to its policy mandate that "Staff shall receive regular training in conflict management, de-escalation of confrontations, crisis intervention, management of assaultive behavior, and the facility's continuum of methods of control."[8] Given these trainings do not appear to be resulting in effective outcomes, DYRS should be transparent about the content and regularity of these trainings.

For over a year Disability Rights DC has urged DYRS to commit specific resources to equip staff with the skills to engage youth through a trauma informed approach. [9] We encourage DYRS to finalize a contract for these services. However, the urgent task of appropriately training staff must be a sustained and comprehensive commitment, of which trauma-informed care training is only a part.

Excessive Seclusion at YSC.

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[4] Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, Youth Services Center, Incident Control Number: 08220250205210609114 (Feb. 2025); Office of Internal Investigations, Investigative Report: Youth Services Center, Case #24-YSC-04, 8 (Feb. 2024).
[5] Disability Rights DC, *Youth Still at Risk: A Supplement to Disability Rights DC's 2023 Youth at Risk Report* 12, 16, 19 (Mar. 2025).
[6] *Id.* at 13-16, 18-19.
[7] D.C. Code § 5–125.02; DEP'T. OF YOUTH REHAB. SERV., POLICY AND PROCEDURES Use of Physical Intervention (Mar. 13, 2019).
[8] DEP'T. OF YOUTH REHAB. SERV., POLICY AND PROCEDURES Use of Physical Intervention § VI.F. (Mar. 13, 2019).
[9] Disability Rights DC, *Youth at Risk: Dangerous Restraints and Excessive Seclusion at DYRS Facilities* 21 (Nov. 2023).

Disability Rights DC also continues to be concerned about the time youth spend secluded in their rooms. DC Law defines room confinement as "the involuntary restriction of a juvenile alone, other than during normal sleeping hours or facility-wide lockdowns, in a cell, room, or other area."[10] Disability Rights DC believes this practice is seclusion, and when such seclusion occurs outside of the strict guidelines laid out by DC Law, can lead to detrimental effects for youth.[11]

During multiple monitoring visits in 2024, Disability Rights DC observed that only one youth was out in the common area of one of the girls' units, while all of the other youth on the unit were confined to their rooms.[12] Disability Rights DC was regularly told by staff members that each youth would be given only about an hour out their rooms during the afternoon and evening hours, and would otherwise be confined to their rooms.[13] Thus, according to staff, the youth were alone in their rooms for most of the afternoon and evening hours, again violating DC law and DYRS policy.[14] Disability Rights DC's understanding is that DC Law does not allow for the seclusion of youth based on intake or orientation status or as a mechanism for accommodating separation orders.

Our understanding is that DYRS is obligated to provide a seclusion report annually on March 1 to the DC Council based on DC Code.[15] We hope that DYRS has provided this report and will make this report available to the public. This basic level of data keeping and transparency will provide accountability and can increase the level of trust between DYRS and the community they serve.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit testimony on these important issues. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further.

Please feel free to contact Anya Kreider at (202) 547-0198, ext. 142 or akreider@uls-dc.org with additional question

[10] D.C. Code § 24-911 (3).
[11] *See* Jo Wilton, *Briefing 54: Trauma, Challenging Behaviour and Restrictive Interventions in Schools*, CENTRE FOR MENTAL HEALTH 7 (Jan. 2020).
[12] DRDC Monitoring Visit (June 20, 2024); (July 2, 2024); (Nov. 21, 2024).
[13] *Id.*
[14] DEP'T. OF YOUTH REHAB. SERV., POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL Room Confinement V.B.2. (2024) ("The use of confinement is limited to when youth: a. Present an imminent threat of physical harm to themselves or other individuals; b. Have not responded to less restrictive methods of control or for whom less restrictive measures cannot reasonably be tried; or c. Have escaped or are attempting to escape."); D.C. Code § 24-912 (2018).
[15] D.C. Code § 24-912 (g) (2018).

Chernita Boyd

This is an email we had to send to Mr Russell due to the blatant lies on Khyrees termination letter from his wrongful termination. We have been seeking help about this situation for months, Mr Russell is now ignoring my sons emails and the termination letter has stopped him from getting unemployment

On Mon, Sep 30, 2024, 10:42 AM Khyree Feazell <kfeazell919@gmail.com> wrote:
Hello, Mr.Russel,

There are some huge discrepancies in my termination letter, I never engaged in a verbal altercation, I was never aggressive, I never even addressed ms mcleod, I actually was asking Mr. Newman if he knew the policy on someone constantly being called sexually derogatory names (gay, faggot), and racially degrading names (broke bitch ass nigga... etc), I was asking Mr Newman that because I have complained to mr.sanders multiple times about ms mcleod and being in a toxic work environment and requesting that I am treated in a professional and respectful manner while at work, my complaints were not handled and ms mcleod continued to speak to me in an unprofessional manner and I never returned the same unprofessional behavior, I simply asked her not to use profane language while speaking to me, so I asked mr sanders who else I can contact about this situation since he really didn't care to be honest, he gave me ms sanders number, I called her and she has yet to return my call, on one of the occasions that ms mcleod cussed me out and locked me out of the facility simply because I informed her that mr sanders said to keep the office door locked, she basically told me to shut the f___ up and listen and when I went outside to gather myself because being spoke to in that manner is very traumatizing especially when it's something that I dont engage in or have going on in my life , I have had to restrain ms mcleod from physically attacking a resident, she also called the resident the same names that she called me, I asked mr sanders if he could watch the cameras so that he can see who the aggressive unprofessional person is but he said we have to activate the cameras ourselves when something happens so ms mcleods behavior has not been recorded, I suggested that the facility should have the cameras constantly on so everything can be recorded, mr sanders got upset about my suggestion, and said in a aggressive manner don't tell him how to run his facility, I'm guessing because if the cameras were constantly on then it would show that when we are directed to write in the book that mr sanders entered the facility when he actually didn't and someone else that has not been cleared to work comes in to work (breach of security?) on September 9 at 6:30 am, ms mcleod was unprofessional and rude again, I informed mr sanders,he said he would handle it, on Sept 9th, same day on the night shift, I didn't even want to go back to work because by now I am traumatized and tired of being in that toxic environment with ms mcleod not knowing what will happen next and hoping that she does not get to the point where she attacks me like she tried to do gyonne cox(the resident) that I had to restrain her from attacking when she followed him to the room degrading him and sayin that she gives all them little niggas sheets and funnel (drug paraphernalia), I spoke to my mother and 2 sisters about my concerns having to go back to work,they assured me that if the situation was handled properly then ms mcleod should not be on my shift, my sister who is employed for over 10 years by a very prominent law firm, and has never been in a fight her entire life 31 yrs , would never jeopardize her job, her safety the safety of anyone or threaten anyone with violence!!!, and she definitely knows better than to act in such an immoral way when there are juveniles present,we were raised with morals and integrity it's in our souls and not just on paper,so to defame me and my sisters character is unacceptable and very disrespectful, I understand that mr sanders and ms mcleod have their personal relationship and it's a lot of personal relationships and family within the company,but with integrity you do whats right,not concoct a lie to protect you and your friend, as I stated before I was concerned for my safety and returning to work on Sept 10, so my mom and my sister was on the phone when my sister who also had her 11 year old daughter in the car dropped me off and we didn't think ms mcleod would be there if the situation was handled, but she was,so I ask Mr Newman his opinion on policies when constantly being called derogatory names and being locked out of the facility, without mentioning ms mcleods name, and ms mcleod interrupted and called me those derogatory names amongst other things in front of the residents and Mr Newman again ,the other female Sade didn't know what was going on,and I didn't return her energy at all then my sister was at the door I didn't even know that she turned around and came back to check on me and get some type of contact information of someone who can handle the situation with morals and integrity because my sister and mother

heard my conversation with Mr Newman and heard ms mcleod interrupt and proceed to degrade me in a aggressive manner!!!, ms mcleod talked to my sister at the front door,my sister didn't even know that ms mcleod was the one who was being rude ,she asked the first person who answered the door for some type of higher up number and if I was ok,she never fully entered the facility she was never hostile or threatening and never put anyone in danger she is in fact willing to take a polygraph test and or speak with someone, so am I,.. I am requesting my termination letter without the false allegations today, and I would like to know what is going to be done to rectify the situation because I was in fact degraded and disrespected being called homophobic and racially derogatory names and no one has addressed that yet,while working for umbrella therapeutic,and being wrongfully terminated , you informed me that you would have put me back on the schedule and I appreciate that, but it is now being said that the age limit is 25 to be employed by umbrella therapeutics although I have worked there since 2/23... also on Sept 11 when mr sanders called to terminate me for breach of security because my sister came to his facility to check on me not to fight or threaten anyone, he never acknowledged his friend ms mcleods behavior or anything about my sister threatening anyone with violence,he simply said he couldn't handle my latest complaint about ms mcleod due to his birthday and that he was not going to fire ms mcleod over an argument, I'm not sure what argument he was referring to because I have never engaged in an argument to be very clear, so I don't know why mr sanders would downplay me being degraded and disrespected and label it as an argument? ,no one has yet to mention anything about me being degraded and traumatized,and the blatant lies on my termination letter has further added to the stress and mental strain that this entire situation has had on me, and that is very disheartening based on the core values of umbrella therapeutics!!!.

also I'm sure if ms mcleod informed mr sanders that I behaved half as bad as her he would have terminated me on her first complaint had it been me actually acting in the same manner as ms mcleod.because mr sanders has labeled me as confrontational because I speak up for myself and the unprofessionalism of his facility.

I appreciate your time patience and help Mr. Russell,

Khyree Feazell,

PS, while working at umbrella therapeutic, I spoke to the residents about having a positive future and helping them with their career goals giving them resources for classes, also speaking to them about self control and mental health...I would NEVER put them in a situation that would jeopardize their safety or mental health!!!. their safety is more jeopardized having uncleared workers in the facility..~

Claire Mills - Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Testimony to Urge Progress on the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act

Dear Councilmember Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Services, and Department of Youth and Rehabiitation Services -

My name is Claire Mills, and I am a resident of Ward 1 and the DC Campaigns Manager at the Chesapeake Climate Action Network. Today, I write because of the opportunity of the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act, and support this agency's adoption of climate-friendly food that benefits our city.

The Food & Climate Connection

Food is the second largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions after fossil fuels. In cities like New York, food systems make up 20% of their climate pollution—comparable to all vehicle exhaust emissions. Most food-related emissions come from livestock, especially methane from cattle. Eating more plant-based foods is one of the most effective ways to reduce emissions, and plant-based proteins have far less impact on global warming compared to animal-based proteins.

Overview of the DC Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act

The Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act, passed in 2021, aims to reduce the carbon footprint of food bought with public funds by 25% by 2030, with interim goals of 10% this year and 18% by 2027.

Recommendations

1. Contracts: Ensure vendors have clear guidelines and timelines to meet the Act’s goals.
2. Plant-Based by Default: Serve plant-based meals as the default option, while keeping conventional meals available on request.
3. Adopt Friendly Nudges: Use tools like highlighting plant-based dishes, reducing meat portions while increasing plant-based proteins, and blending plant and animal proteins to promote climate-friendly meals.
4. Taste Testing: Let people try and provide feedback on plant-forward meals to increase buy-in.
5. Education & Awareness: Share information about the benefits of climate-friendly meals and ensure staff are trained to prepare and promote them.

Councilmembers and agency leaders, I ask for your support in adopting the practices outlined by the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act. By emphasizing nutritious, delicious food that supports our local economy and helps make healthy eating accessible, we can build a more sustainable future for DC.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Claire Mills

Juvenile Justice
MEMORANDUM

Date: March 6, 2025
From: Dante' Daniel
To: Committee on Youth Affairs
Subject: Addressing Systemic Barriers in Youth Rehabilitation and Advocacy

Empty Promises:

Cultural Inclusion. Safety. Family Engagement. Rehabilitation. Diversity. Ethical Education Practices. Equity.

Words that sound good. Words that feel good. Words we all claim to champion as initiators, participants, and advocates for DC's youth. But what do these words truly mean?

Too often, they are paraded in the public sphere—pledged, promoted, and performed—yet the reality for our youth tells a different story. The disconnect is glaring. The outcomes do not match the rhetoric. So, what we are witnessing is not true advocacy but Youth Advocacy Hypocrisy.

There seems to be a collective hesitation to fully commit to these so-called values. Why?

- Public relations optics
- Maintaining rapport with influential figures
- Fear of disrupting the status quo
- Apathy disguised as bureaucracy
- A lack of genuine empathy

What will it take to summon the moral fortitude to turn these ideals into reality?

- Federal intervention?
- Transfer to the COW?
- A complete agency reset?
- Parents flooding the Capitol in protest?

Parents are being told to wait. To trust a system that has consistently failed their children. To accept that problems are inevitable, while leaders request patience, understanding, and deference—at the expense of the very youth they claim to serve.

I am calling for an unfiltered, unapologetic examination of every granular detail—from the moment of arrest to sentence completion. Scrutinize, analyze, and amend. Strip away political self-preservation. Ignore the need for a particular endorsement, a key constituent's vote, or the comfort of alliances. Do what is right for the forgotten, the afterthoughts, the "they deserved it" population of the District.

This is not an indictment of a single person but a call to everyone embedded in this system. Tangible problems and evidence-based solutions have been presented repeatedly—since Jerry M. Yet, we are still here.

Have the courage to act. To pursue meaningful change at all costs.

Best,

Dr. Dante' Daniel

WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Testimony of the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
Ellie Driscoll, Legal Fellow
Performance Oversight Hearing: Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services
Before the Committee on Youth Affairs
March 6, 2025

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs ("Washington Lawyers' Committee") urges the Committee on Youth Affairs to ensure that young people with disabilities committed to the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services ("DYRS") receive the special education and services they need to break out of cycles of incarceration, learn, work, and thrive.

The Washington Lawyers' Committee is dedicated to creating legal, economic, and social equity, primarily through litigation, but also through client and community education as well as public policy advocacy. We pursue our goals of anti-racism and anti-discrimination in areas that affect people's ability to flourish: housing, employment, accessibility for people with disabilities, education, the criminal legal system, and, more broadly, fair treatment by the government. Among our priorities is ensuring that students with disabilities in D.C. receive the special education and transition services they need and are entitled to under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA").

Because students with disabilities are overrepresented in the juvenile legal system, DYRS has a large role to play in ensuring that young people with disabilities receive the promise of the IDEA. While only 18.3% of D.C. students have a disability,[1] approximately 87% of young people in DYRS secure facilities have at least one mental health diagnosis.[2] Once in contact with the juvenile legal system, youth with disabilities are also more likely to recidivate than their nondisabled peers and face additional barriers adjusting back to work and school.[3]

The IDEA can help these students exit the juvenile legal system, graduate, find work, and reintegrate into the community. Under the IDEA, students with disabilities are entitled to special education and related services.[4] Youth with disabilities are also entitled to "transition services"—services that help students transition to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.[5] This applies equally to students committed to

[1] *DC Overall*, D.C. School Report Card, https://schoolreportcard.dc.gov/state/report#measure-107 (scroll to "Enrollment by Student Group") (last visited Mar. 4, 2025).
[2] *District of Columbia Section 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Renewal Request*, D.C. Dep't of Health Care Finance (June 6, 2024), https://dhcf.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dhcf/page_content/attachments/DC%201115%20Renewal%20Application_20240606.pdf.
[3] Wendy Mitchell & Malarie Deardorff, *Similarities in Reentry Planning of Students Involved in the Juvenile Justice System and Postsecondary Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*, J. of Applied Juvenile Just. Servs., 21, 22 (2024).
[4] 20 U.S.C. §§ 1401(9), 1412(a)(1)(A); 5-A D.C.M.R. §§ 3001.1, 3001.6.
[5] 20 U.S.C. §§ 1401(34), 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII).

DYRS, whether they are in New Beginnings, the Youth Services Center, or in the community. For students committed to DYRS, special education and transition services are critical. For instance, providing educational opportunities to incarcerated young people is proven to reduce recidivism and can increase their future chances of employment.[6] The same is true for transition services; students with disabilities who receive robust transition services are less likely to recidivate.[7]

Despite the necessity of special education and transition services for young people with disabilities, we are concerned that system-involved students are not receiving the education and services to which they are entitled. DYRS is not solely responsible for providing these services; the Office of the State Superintendent of Education ("OSSE"), local educational agencies including District of Columbia Public Schools ("DCPS"), and agencies such as Rehabilitation Services Administration ("RSA") also have a role to play. Our testimony today is intended to make sure that the Council is aware of the supports that are available to students committed to DYRS and that can support DYRS to leverage its role to ensure that the young people in its care and custody receive the full benefits of the IDEA.

The IDEA Requires D.C. Agencies to Provide Special Education and Transition Services to Students Committed to DYRS

The IDEA entitles young people with disabilities to a "free appropriate public education" that both meets their individual needs and prepares them for "further education, employment, and independent living."[8] Young people with disabilities remain entitled to a "free appropriate public education" even if they are committed to DYRS or incarcerated.[9]

A "free appropriate public education" under the IDEA includes special education and the related services—such as transportation, speech therapy, and assistive technology—that students with disabilities need to be able to advance, learn, and grow.[10] For students between the ages of 16 and 21 years old, a "free appropriate public education" under the IDEA also includes "transition services," or services tailored to the student's

[6] *See, e.g.*, Diana Brazzell, et al., *From the Classroom to the Community: Exploring the Role of Education During Incarceration and Reentry*, The Urban Inst. & John Jay Coll. of Crim. Just. 18-19 (2009), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED508246.pdf; Ben Stickle & Steven Sprick Schuster, *Are Schools in Prison Worth It? The Effects and Economic Returns of Prison Education*, 48 Am. J. of Crim. Just. 1263, 1271-74, 1282 (2023).

[7] Heather Griller Clark, et al., *Transition Services for Juvenile Detainees with Disabilities: Findings on Recidivism*, 34 Educ. & Treatment of Children 511, 523, 526 (2011).

[8] 20 U.S.C. § 1400(d)(1)(A).

[9] 5-A D.C.M.R. § 3001.6; *see also id.* at 3001.16 (excluding from eligibility only children with disabilities between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two who are incarcerated in adult correctional facilities and, prior to incarceration, were not identified as having a disability or having an Individualized Education Plan ("IEP")).

[10] 20 U.S.C. §§ 1401(9), 1401(26); *see also Endrew F. v. Douglas Cnty. Sch. Dist. RE-1*, 580 U.S. 386, 402-03 (2017) (explaining that the IDEA requires school districts to provide special education to students with disabilities that is both tailored to meet their unique needs and gives them the opportunity to "meet challenging objectives").

individual needs, that will help them transition from secondary school to further education, employment, independent living, and community participation.[11] D.C. regulations extend eligibility for transition services to students between 14 and 22 years old.[12]

Multiple agencies are responsible for ensuring that system-involved young people receive the special education and transition services they are entitled to under the IDEA. DYRS acts as the local educational agency ("LEA") for students at Youth Services Center and New Beginnings.[13] Thus, DYRS must provide students at Youth Services Center and New Beginnings special education and transition services in accordance with the IDEA. For students committed to DYRS who are in community placements, residential treatment centers, psychiatric residential treatment facilities, and out-of-state placements, DCPS or charter LEAs are responsible for providing education in accordance with the IDEA.[14] OSSE is responsible for ensuring that D.C. agencies, including DYRS, DCPS, and charter LEAs, fully comply with IDEA requirements.[15]

The transition services provisions of the IDEA and District regulations lay out specific processes that LEAs must follow. By the time a child is fourteen years old, LEAs must develop an Individualized Education Program or "IEP" for the student, updated annually, that describes (1) the student's goals related to training, education, employment, and independent living skills and (2) the transition services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.[16] The LEA must invite the student with a disability to attend IEP meetings about the student's transition services and goals.[17] The LEA must also, to the extent appropriate, invite agencies that are likely to be responsible for providing transition services—such as RSA—to participate in a student's IEP meeting.[18]

To develop a student's transition goals, LEAs must use "age appropriate transition assessments."[19] These assessments should include formal assessments such as vocational skills assessments, interest inventories, social skills inventories, and intellectual

[11] *See* 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII); 34 C.F.R. § 300.43(a).
[12] 5-A D.C.M.R. §§ 3001.1, 3026.1.
[13] Memorandum of Agreement Between Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, and the District of Columbia Public Schools Related to: Educational Services for Youth Committed To and/or In the Custody of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (2021), https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/MOA%20for%20Educational%20Services%20for%20Youth%20Committed%20to%20or%20in%20the%20Custody%20of%20DYRS.pdf.
[14] *Id.*
[15] 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(11); D.C. Code § 38–2601.
[16] 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(a)(i)(VIII)(aa)-(bb); 5-A D.C.M.R. § 3026.1.
[17] 34 C.F.R. § 300.321(b)(1); 5-A D.C.M.R. § 3026.3.
[18] 34 C.F.R. § 300.321(b)(3); 5-A D.C.M.R. § 3026.4.
[19] 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(a)(i)(VIII)(aa); 5-A D.C.M.R. § 3026.1(a).

functioning assessments that gather information about a student's strengths, interests, and abilities.[20] The assessments must also be appropriate for the student's grade level.[21]

The student's IEP team must then use the assessments to help the student develop goals for post-secondary or vocational education, employment, independent living, and community participation.[22] The student should also develop annual goals about the skills they wish to learn to reach their postsecondary goals.[23] Importantly, the goals must be both individualized to the student and "measurable" to be able to test whether the student makes progress year-to-year.[24] For students who turn fourteen while in middle school, D.C. regulations require that their IEPs include at least one goal that addresses "readiness for and transition to high school."[25]

After a student develops transition goals, their IEP team should work to identify the services and classes that students will need to reach their goals and transition into adulthood.[26] Examples of transition services include: vocational counseling, job placement, connections to mentors, training on how to build a resume, help researching and applying for college, apprenticeships, or training programs and financial aid, connections to housing and transportation supports, and training on self-advocacy and independent living skills like budgeting and financial literacy.[27] The student's IEP should also list the courses that the student will need to complete to enroll in postsecondary education or on-the-job training leading to a postsecondary credential.[28] And their IEP

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[20] Dr. Christina Grant, et al., *Planning for Post-School Success: Local Education Agency Secondary Transition Assessment Toolkit*, D.C. Off. of the State Superintendent of Edu. 17 (2023), https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/ST%20Assessment%20Toolkit.pdf; *Hill v. District of Columbia*, No. 14-cv-1893 (GMH), 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 114924 at *61-62 (D.D.C. Aug. 26, 2016) (concluding that DCPS violated the IDEA by failing to conduct a proper vocational assessment in developing a student's transition plan); *Gibson v. Forest Hills Local Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ.*, 655 Fed. App'x 423, 440-41 (6th Cir. 2016) (concluding that a school district violated the IDEA when, among other things, it did not conduct age-appropriate transition assessments to evaluate a student's readiness for employment until she turned eighteen years old).

[21] *Hill*, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 114924 at *61 (explaining that the IDEA requires "'age appropriate,' not grade appropriate, transition assessments" (quoting 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(b)(1)) (emphasis omitted)).

[22] 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)(aa); 5-A D.C.M.R. §§ 3026.1(a), 3099.

[23] Dr. Christina Grant, et al., *Secondary Transition Process: Local Education Agency Toolkit*, Off. of the State Superintendent of Educ. 6, 36 (2023), https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/ST%20Process%20Toolkit%20.pdf.

[24] *See* 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(a)(i)(VIII)(aa); 5-A D.C.M.R. § 3026.1(a); *see also, e.g.*, *Marple Newtown Sch. Dist. v. Rafael N.*, No. 07-0558, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 62494, at *32-33 (E.D. Pa. Aug. 23, 2007) (explaining that a school district violated the IDEA where the student's IEP contained only "generic goals that have remained static from year to year").

[25] 5-A D.C.M.R. § 3026.1(b).

[26] 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)((bb).

[27] *See, e.g.*, Grant, et al., *Secondary Transition Process: Local Education Agency Toolkit*, *supra* note 23 at 32.

[28] *Id.* at 33.

should list any agencies that will be responsible for providing the student with services after they leave the school setting.[29]

As with a student's IEP goals, the services they receive should be specific and measurable.[30] A student's transition services plan must also be tailored to meet their individual needs. As the Supreme Court has explained,"[a] focus on the particular child is at the core of the IDEA."[31] Accordingly, each child's IEP "must be specially designed to meet a child's unique needs" based on "careful consideration of the child's present levels of achievement, disability, and potential for growth."[32] An LEA may violate the IDEA if the transition services in a student's IEP (1) include only services that are generally available to all students;[33] (2) remain the same from year to year;[34] or (3) are generic and do not adequately reflect the student's strengths, needs, or preferences.[35]

Lastly, students must receive the transition services outlined in their IEPs; an LEA denies a student their rights under the IDEA if it deviates from the student's IEP and does not provide the full range of services the IEP includes.[36]

Transition Services Are Essential For Students With Disabilities, Particularly Those Who Are Involved With the Juvenile Legal System

Transition services are critical in helping students with disabilities progress to post-secondary education, work, and independent living.[37] But they are especially important for young people involved in the juvenile legal system. Youth in the juvenile legal system face additional barriers to accessing postsecondary education, employment, housing, and public benefits that transition services can help address.[38] By facilitating their transition

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[29] 5-A D.C.M.R. § 3026.1(c).
[30] For instance, courts have found that transition plans violate the IDEA if they contain only vague statements such as the student will practice "[f]unctional living tasks," *Gibson*, 655 Fed. Appx. at 439-41, or engage in "Daily Living Skills Instruction," *E.G. v. Anchorage Indep. Bd. of Educ.*, No. 3:19-cv-220-CHB, 2021 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 20572, at *43-44 (W.D. Ky. Feb. 3, 2021).
[31] *Endrew F.*, 580 U.S. at 400.
[32] *Id.*
[33] *See Jefferson Cnty. Bd. of Educ. v. Lolita S.*, 977 F. Supp. 2d 1091, 1122 (N.D. Ala. 2013); *aff'd* 581 Fed. Appx. 760 (11th Cir. 2014); *S.G.W. v. Eugene Sch. Dist.*, No. 6:16-cv-01612-AA, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 37902 at *18 (D. Or. Mar. 16, 2017).
[34] *See Marple Newtown Sch. Dist.*, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 62494, at *32-33.
[35] *See id.*; *Lolita S.*, 581 Fed. Appx. at 765.
[36] *See, e.g.*, *Joaquin v. Friendship Pub. Charter Sch.*, Civ. A. No. 14-01119, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 117579, at *26-27 (D.D.C. Sept. 3, 2015) (explaining that schools deprive students of a free appropriate public education under the IDEA by failing to provide a "material" portion of the transition services in the student's IEP).
[37] *See, e.g.*, *Transition Planning for Students*, The Arc@School, https://thearcatschool.org/supports/transition-planning-for-students/ (last visited Mar. 5, 2023) (explaining that, without adequate transition planning, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities may not go to college, may struggle to find a job, and may not be connected to necessary services).
[38] *See, e.g.*, Blakely Simoneau, *Special Education in American Prisons: Risks, Recidivism, and the Revolving Door*, 15 Stan. J. C.R. & C.L. 87, 133 (2019); Heather Griller Clark & Deanne Unruh, *Transition Practices for Adjudicated Youth with E/BDs and Related Disabilities*, 36 Behavioral Disorders 43, 43 (2010); *State*

into adulthood, transition services also help lower recidivism rates for youth with disabilities. For instance, one study found that youth who received enhanced transition services were 64% less likely to recidivate within 30 days of release than youth who received basic services.[39]

Despite the importance of transition services for youth in the juvenile legal system, we are concerned that young people committed to DYRS are not receiving adequate or appropriate services. Data from the Department of Education and OSSE indicate that the percentage of young people in D.C. with appropriate transition services in their IEPs steadily dropped between 2018 and 2023.[40] In 2018, 76% of students aged 16 and above had appropriate transition services plans in their IEPs.[41] By 2020, only 65% of D.C. students' IEPs complied with secondary transition requirements.[42] OSSE's Performance Oversight Responses show that, in 2023, only 58% of IEPs complied and in 2024, only 64% complied.[43] While OSSE attributed part of the drop in 2023 to a change in methodology,[44] these numbers raise significant concerns. Moreover, it is unclear from OSSE's data how, exactly, it assessed whether IEPs were in compliance, leaving open the possibility that even the transition plans it reported as "appropriate" were not adequately ambitious or tailored to meet students' needs.

While OSSE has not published specific data on the provision of transition services for students committed to DYRS, our investigation into this issue indicates several trends. First, students are not consistently receiving age-appropriate transition assessments that evaluate the full range of their skills and needs. Second, students are not consistently receiving individualized or meaningful transition goals and services. For example, rather than providing targeted support, some students' transition plans list only that they will research comedy or music lessons and complete a handful of job applications. Third, students are not consistently included in IEP meetings about their transition goals and services. Lastly, D.C. agencies such as RSA and the Department on Disability Services ("DDS"), are not adequately coordinating with DYRS, attending IEP meetings, or linking students with the supports they offer.

Strategies to Address the Needs of Justice-Involved Youth Impacted by Collateral Consequences, Nat'l Governors Assoc. (Feb. 2023), https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/Nga_Statestrategies_2023.pdf.

[39] Griller Clark, et al., *Transition Services for Juvenile Detainees with Disabilities: Findings on Recidivism*, *supra* note 7 at 523.

[40] *State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report: Part B*, U.S. Department of Educ. 63-64 (June 1, 2024), https://sites.ed.gov/idea/spp-apr-letters; Dr. Christina Grant, *Responses to Fiscal Year 2023 Performance Oversight Questions*, D.C. Off. of the State Superintendent of Educ. 55 (Feb. 23, 2024), https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/FY23%20OSSE%20Performance%20Oversight%20Hearing%20Council%20Responses_0.pdf.

[41] *State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report: Part B*, *supra* note 40 at 63-64.

[42] *Id.*

[43] Grant, *Responses to Fiscal Year 2023 Performance Oversight Questions*, *supra* note 40 at 55; Dr. Antoinette Michelle, *Responses to Fiscal Year 2024 Performance Oversight Questions*, D.C. Off. of the State Superintendent of Educ. 62 (Feb. 28, 2025).

[44] *Id.* at 57.

These issues impact students committed to DYRS broadly. For students detained at Youth Services Center and New Beginnings, DYRS is acting as the LEA and should ensure that the transition services provided are individualized, robust, and supported by the appropriate other D.C. agencies. For students who are committed to DYRS in community placements, we urge DYRS to leverage its role to make sure that all eligible students under its supervision receive the transition services that they are entitled to under the IDEA.

We thus ask DYRS to: (1) track and share publicly data on the provision of transition services to system-involved young people to enhance transparency and accountability,[45] (2) further coordinate with agencies such as RSA and DDS, (3) review the provision of transition services within its schools and make certain that it is fully complying with the IDEA, and (4) take additional steps to ensure that students committed to DYRS who are educated in the community receive their full IDEA rights. By taking these steps and providing robust transition services to students in its care, DYRS can help young people with disabilities in the juvenile legal system reintegrate into the community, learn, work, and thrive.

[45] We are in the process of requesting this data through Freedom of Information Act requests but ask that DYRS make this information publicly available.

Franchita Eborn - District of Columbia Public Schools- Simon Elementary School

Simon ES has been in partnership with the Office of Attorney General's ATTEND Program since the 2022-2023 SY. The support from this program has been more than value-add in our efforts to reduce Chronic Absences. At the conclusion of SY 2021-2022 Simon's Chronic Absence Rate was above 60%. Currently, our Chronic Absenteeism Rate is 46%, which shows a significant decrease, but still leaves room for much improvement. The supports provided to us from the OAG-ATTEND program such as support of school community events, attending weekly school attendance team meetings, facilitating mediations between the school and parents of chronic absent students, providing resources to teachers and families, etc. have been instrumental in helping us in our efforts to ensure our students come to school every day, and on time. Students who receive support through this program have shown improvement in their attendance. However, it seems that for every student/family we are successful with gettting off our Chronic Absent List, we have another student/family that presents with a need for support. The work that the OAG-ATTEND program does is critical to supporting schools when their resources/options run out and/or are unsuccessful with getting to the root causes of why students don't come to school. Simon ES is humbled and grateful for the partnership and hopes to be able to continue with it moving forward.

Regards,

Mrs. Franchita Eborn (Principal, Simon ES)

March 3, 2025

My name is Jane DeMarines and I'm the Executive Director of Climate Diet, a not-for-profit national organization based in the DC metropolitan area promoting green/plant based foods to impact our climate. I've recently worked for two years with students at Basis High School in the District, supporting their Green Club activities, including content and production oversight of 40 demonstration videos on plant-based cooking, which are distributed through social media and their Green Club.

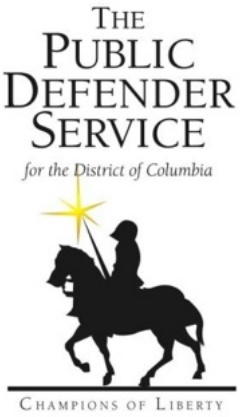
Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for the Green Food Purchasing Act.

As we face the growing challenge of climate change, we must recognize that the global food system accounts for over 25% of emissions, with much of this stemming from livestock methane and land-use changes. Reducing our reliance on meat and shifting toward more plant-based options is a proven climate solution. The U.S. consumes more meat per capita than any other nation, and changing our dietary habits can have a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions from food production, processing, transportation, and consumption.

The Green Food Purchasing Act, passed in 2021, mandates that all DC agencies spending over $10,000 on food—such as DHS, DCPS, DOC, and DYRS—adopt practices that reduce food-related emissions. To help vendors align with this goal, clear frameworks and guidelines are necessary. This includes shifting food selection practices to emphasize plant-based meals and integrating strategies like friendly nudges, taste testing, and staff education to encourage sustainable choices.

Agencies serving youth must be especially mindful of food's impact on health. Studies show that omega-3 deficiencies (caused by eating all forms of meat) are linked to increased aggression. Youth need nutrient-dense, plant-based meals that increase omega-3 consumption. Through careful action and engagement, we can reduce methane emissions while improving the health and well-being of our youth.

I appreciate your consideration of these facts. Thank you.
Jane DeMarines
Executive Director, Climate Diet



COMMENTS OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICE
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

concerning

Oversight Hearing: Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AFFAIRS
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Chairperson Zachary Parker

March 6, 2025

Heather N. Pinckney, Director
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Good morning, I am Katerina Semyonova, Special Counsel for Policy and Legislation at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia. With me today is Clare Kruger, an experienced attorney with PDS's Juvenile Services Program (JSP). Since it was started at the request of the D.C. Council in 1982, JSP has been providing support and legal assistance to youth by staffing legal rights offices in the District's youth detention facilities.[1] Staff at JSP, including lawyers and law students, have daily interactions with youth and are able to help them with matters such as understanding their rights, filing grievances, and seeking help with matters that come up during the course of their detention. We were last before the Committee in November 2024 for a DYRS roundtable and unfortunately, PDS does not have any improvements to report since that last appearance.

PDS's testimony today will focus on the following areas: youth languishing for far too long in awaiting placement status at YSC, DYRS's failure to provide detained youth at YSC with the rehabilitative services they need, extensive delays in moving youth out of New Beginnings after they have successfully completed programming, and DYRS's care coordination staff's failure to collaborate with youth advocates in contravention of the agency's mission and its goals for youth.

Awaiting Placement Status at the Youth Services Center

The Youth Services Center has been over capacity for much of 2025. On Monday, March 3rd, there were 112 youth in the 98-bed facility. When the facility is over capacity the consequences include the increase of cell confinement and safety concerns, and the decrease of instruction, programming, and recreation. A large part of the reason why

[1] The role of the Juvenile Service Program is now codified at D.C. Code § 2-1515.05a.

YSC is over capacity is DYRS's failure to move committed youth to appropriate rehabilitative placements. DYRS has repeatedly taken the position that YSC is a temporary holding facility and not a rehabilitative placement – and yet the agency fails to take the necessary steps to move youth to long-term placements. This failure then results in forcing youth, who could be moved elsewhere in order to receive treatment and rehabilitative services, to stay at YSC.

The problem is exemplified by the average length of stay, which DYRS's own data shows was more than 70 days in awaiting placement status during 2024.[2] The total awaiting placement population at YSC during 2025 has fluctuated from 23 to 31 youth. It is important to note that DYRS has ample time to act to move youth to appropriate placements. Prior to commitment, OAG files a notice of intent to commit, which DYRS receives. DYRS should be using that time after it receives the notice of intent to commit to meet with the youth and family, retrieve relevant information from the Court Social Services Division and other providers, assess the youth's service needs, and find the most appropriate placement. Instead, DYRS is continuing to waste the time that it should be using to find youth an appropriate placement. The real-life consequence of DYRS's failure to act is that youth are housed at the over-crowded YSC where they become despondent and decompensate, rather than getting the care they need.

Lack of Programming at the Youth Services Center

The harm of long lengths of stay in awaiting placement status at YSC is exacerbated by the lack of programming there. PDS testified about this issue extensively at the November 2024 roundtable and during the 2024 oversight hearings. Despite the fact that

[2] DYRS presentation, page 17, D.C. Council Oversight Hearing, Committee on Youth Affairs, March 6, 2025. Available at: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/699.

youth spend months at YSC, DYRS views it as a temporary detention facility where, apart from school, there are few intensive services or programs implemented with fidelity. Many of the programs that DYRS touted in its 2024 testimony were one-off occurrences or took the form of worksheets supplied to youth by Youth Development Representatives (YDRs), who are essentially guards, not trained therapists or program managers. On a positive note, it appears that a music production program just started this week and is expected to run on Mondays for the next six months. But youth have reported that there is generally very little programming outside of school and the programming that does exist amounts to a YDR leading group discussions on topics such as life skills, hygiene, and accountability. Youth consistently report that there was no rehabilitative programming on weekends and that they spend the entire weekend watching tv.

Failure to Transition Youth Out of New Beginnings

Like the ballooning awaiting placement population at YSC, the number of youth held at New Beginnings after completing the entire New Beginnings program continues to grow. PDS identified this problem at the November 2024 roundtable and it has only gotten worse. Youth spend additional weeks and months at New Beginnings, after completing the program, because DYRS's care coordination team is failing. Care coordinators are not planning for reentry at the time of admission, or even within 60 days of admission.[3] Instead, DYRS only begins planning for transfer to home after youth have completed all six levels of the New Beginnings program and successfully made it to

[3] DYRS's Care Coordination Handbook (2017) provides that DYRS staff are required to start discharge planning from the moment a youth enters DYRS care. Pursuant to the ROAD Act, discharge planning must start within 60 days of admission. DYRS is not meeting either benchmark.

Home Petition, the final stage in the program.[4] The New Beginnings behavior modification program is based on a "Success Plan" with three target areas identified by the youth and the DYRS care coordinator. Youth must make progress in those specific areas in order to advance through the levels. Youth who have made it through the six levels and through Home Petition have completed those goals and have remained focused on their rehabilitation. Having them sit in custody after completing the program is counter-productive and demoralizing. These youth express frustration about having done everything that was asked of them to complete the New Beginnings program and have been held accountable for their actions, yet they receive no transparency or clarity from DYRS about the timeline for their release. Further, despite spending additional weeks and months at New Beginnings, the planning for their discharge is still inadequate, and sometimes non-existent, with youth returning home without school enrollment or appropriate support services in place.

Failing to Work Collaboratively on Case Planning

PDS lawyers and other members of the juvenile defense bar consistently complain about the lack of responsiveness and communication from the DYRS case management and care coordination team. The DYRS Care Coordination manual describes that care coordinators should be "collaborative" and that they must understand that "they are a part of a team of professionals serving the youth and the youth's family and to that end, must support the other team members including community service providers, colleagues

[4] New Beginnings is a secure residential treatment facility focused on behavioral modification. In order for a youth to successfully complete the program, youth go through the orientation level, matriculate through levels 1 through 6, and lastly successfully complete the final level called "Home Petition." Each level of the program focuses on a variety of values such as accountability, empathy, and temperance.

within DYRS and other government agencies to develop the best plan of action and support for the youth that they serve."[5] Within the directive to be collaborative must surely be a mandate to "collaborate" with the youths themselves. However, despite this directive for care coordinators, PDS and other attorneys are finding time and again that DYRS is refusing to collaborate with the youths' attorneys, who are the legal representatives of the youth with authority to speak on their behalf, even to the point that DYRS will refuse to respond to basic questions or concerns raised by the attorneys. For youth who are in the community or in out-of-District placements, the youth's lawyer may be DYRS's best point of contact for the youth. The lawyer may help facilitate the youth's participation in programming and explain the importance of working with DYRS. The lawyer may also be the first to know about the youth's or the family's placement or service-related concerns. DYRS's failure to provide timely, adequate, or responsive information to attorneys' correspondence regarding their clients is detrimental to the youth's rehabilitation and treatment. In order to serve youth, DYRS should truly work collaboratively, instead of merely claiming this goal in its manuals and public materials.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and we welcome any questions and look forward to working with the Committee.

[5] Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, Care Planning and Coordination Handbook (Effective April 2017), page C-3. DYRS conveys the same message on its website: According to DYRS's website, "The DYRS Care Coordinator plays a pivotal role in the success of the youth committed to the Agency. Throughout a youth's commitment, this professional has multiple responsibilities to ensure that the needs of the youth are met. This professional serves as: Youth and family advocate, Communicator of decisions regarding the youth, Developer of success plans, Monitor of youth progress, Bridge between the youth, DYRS and service providers and more."

Khyree Feazell

This is an email between me and Mr Russell that explains some of the trauma I have had to endure while employed by umbrella therapeutics

On Mon, Sep 30, 2024, 10:42 AM Khyree Feazell <kfeazell919@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello, Mr.Russel,

There are some huge discrepancies in my termination letter, I never engaged in a verbal altercation, I was never aggressive, I never even addressed ms mcleod, I actually was asking Mr. Newman if he knew the policy on someone constantly being called sexually derogatory names (gay, fa____), and racially degrading names (broke bi___ a__ni___... etc), I was asking Mr Newman that because I have complained to mr.sanders multiple times about ms mcleod and being in a toxic work environment and requesting that I am treated in a professional and respectful manner while at work, my complaints were not handled and ms mcleod continued to speak to me in an unprofessional manner and I never returned the same unprofessional behavior, I simply asked her not to use profane language while speaking to me, so I asked mr sanders who else I can contact about this situation since he really didn't care to be honest, he gave me ms sanders number, I called her and she has yet to return my call, on one of the occasions that ms mcleod cussed me out and locked me out of the facility simply because I informed her that mr sanders said to keep the office door locked, she basically told me to shut the f___ up and listen and when I went outside to gather myself because being spoke to in that manner is very traumatizing especially when it's something that I dont engage in or have going on in my life , I have had to restrain ms mcleod from physically attacking a resident, she also called the resident the same names that she called me, I asked mr sanders if he could watch the cameras so that he can see who the aggressive unprofessional person is but he said we have to activate the cameras ourselves when something happens so ms mcleods behavior has not been recorded, I suggested that the facility should have the cameras constantly on so everything can be recorded, mr sanders got upset about my suggestion, and said in a aggressive manner don't tell him how to run his facility, I'm guessing because if the cameras were constantly on then it would show that when we are directed to write in the book that mr sanders entered the facility when he actually didn't and someone else that has not been cleared to work comes in to work (breach of security?) on September 9 at 6:30 am, ms mcleod was unprofessional and rude again, I informed mr sanders,he said he would handle it, on Sept 9th, same day on the night shift, I didn't even want to go back to work because by now I am traumatized and tired of being in that toxic environment with ms mcleod not knowing what will happen next and hoping that she does not get to the point where she attacks me like she tried to do gyonne cox(the resident) that I had to restrain her from attacking when she followed him to the room degrading him and sayin that she gives all them little niggas sheets and funnel (drug paraphernalia), I spoke to my mother and 2 sisters about my concerns having to go back to work,they assured me that if the situation was handled properly then ms mcleod should not be on my shift, my sister who is employed for over 10 years by a very prominent law firm, and has never been in a fight her entire life 31 yrs , would never jeopardize her job, her safety the safety of anyone or threaten anyone with violence!!!, and she definitely knows better than to act in such an immoral way when there are juveniles present,we were raised with morals and integrity it's in our souls and not just on paper,so to defame me and my sisters character is unacceptable and very disrespectful, I understand that mr sanders and ms mcleod have their personal relationship and it's a lot of personal relationships and family within the company,but with integrity you do whats right,not concoct a lie to protect you and your friend, as I stated before I was concerned for my

safety and returning to work on Sept 10, so my mom and my sister was on the phone when my sister who also had her 11 year old daughter in the car dropped me off and we didn't think ms mcleod would be there if the situation was handled, but she was,so I ask Mr Newman his opinion on policies when constantly being called derogatory names and being locked out of the facility, without mentioning ms mcleods name, and ms mcleod interrupted and called me those derogatory names amongst other things in front of the residents and Mr Newman again ,the other female Sade didn't know what was going on,and I didn't return her energy at all then my sister was at the door I didn't even know that she turned around and came back to check on me and get some type of contact information of someone who can handle the situation with morals and integrity because my sister and mother heard my conversation with Mr Newman and heard ms mcleod interrupt and proceed to degrade me in a aggressive manner!!!, ms mcleod talked to my sister at the front door,my sister didn't even know that ms mcleod was the one who was being rude ,she asked the first person who answered the door for some type of higher up number and if I was ok,she never fully entered the facility she was never hostile or threatening and never put anyone in danger she is in fact willing to take a polygraph test and or speak with someone, so am I,.. I am requesting my termination letter without the false allegations today, and I would like to know what is going to be done to rectify the situation because I was in fact degraded and disrespected being called homophobic and racially derogatory names and no one has addressed that yet,while working for umbrella therapeutic,and being wrongfully terminated , you informed me that you would have put me back on the schedule and I appreciate that, but it is now being said that the age limit is 25 to be employed by umbrella therapeutics although I have worked there since 2/23... also on Sept 11 when mr sanders called to terminate me for breach of security because my sister came to his facility to check on me not to fight or threaten anyone, he never acknowledged his friend ms mcleods behavior or anything about my sister threatening anyone with violence,he simply said he couldn't handle my latest complaint about ms mcleod due to his birthday and that he was not going to fire ms mcleod over an argument, I'm not sure what argument he was referring to because I have never engaged in an argument to be very clear, so I don't know why mr sanders would downplay me being degraded and disrespected and label it as an argument? ,no one has yet to mention anything about me being degraded and traumatized,and the blatant lies on my termination letter has further added to the stress and mental strain that this entire situation has had on me, and that is very disheartening based on the core values of umbrella therapeutics!!!.

also I'm sure if ms mcleod informed mr sanders that I behaved half as bad as her he would have terminated me on her first complaint had it been me actually acting in the same manner as ms mcleod.because mr sanders has labeled me as confrontational because I speak up for myself and the unprofessionalism of his facility.

I appreciate your time patience and help Mr. Russell,

Khyree Feazell,

PS, while working at umbrella therapeutic, I spoke to the residents about having a positive future and helping them with their career goals giving them resources for classes, also speaking to them about self control and mental health...I would NEVER put them in a situation that would jeopardize their safety or mental health!!!. their safety is more jeopardized having uncleared workers in the facility..~

Laura Cascada - Better Food Foundation

I'm submitting testimony today to offer encouragement as you work towards meeting the goals of DC's Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act. In the global food system, animal agriculture uses 77% of all farmland and produces 57% of emissions, yet provides only 37% of the protein. If cattle were their own nation, they would be the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gasses. Clearly, this issue is urgent—and you now have a critical opportunity to address it.

Fortunately, transforming the food you serve can be easy, cost-effective, and inclusive, simply by using behavioral "nudges." Used by hundreds of universities, hospitals, schools, conferences, and companies around the world, nudges make plant-based the easy choice, without sacrificing freedom of choice. The most effective way to nudge people is by making plant-based food the default on menus, while allowing diners to request animal products if they wish. Because we naturally gravitate towards foods that feel normal and accessible, most people simply stick with the plant-based option, drastically reducing your food's carbon footprint. Since New York City's hospital system switched to a plant-based default, more than half of patients are sticking with the veggie option, which has reduced food's carbon footprint by 36% and saved over half a million dollars every year. There are other nudges for every kind of dining setting. For example, on a buffet, you can make sure that there are twice as many plant-based as animal-based dishes, and place the plant-based dishes more prominently on the line with larger serving spoons. Sprinkle plant-based options throughout your main menus, rather than separating them out at the bottom, and label them with enticing, flavorful descriptors. For baked goods, you can make subtle swaps without sacrificing taste, like the Cherry Creek School District in Denver, which swapped out eggs and dairy in baked goods with their plant-based counterparts, saving nearly 23,000 kg of CO2-eq and 14,000 dollars per year. Every small change you make adds up.

Plant-based nudges will make your food more equitable and inclusive. This approach includes everyone by default, including the 30-50 million Americans (predominantly people of color) who are lactose intolerant, those with religious or cultural dietary restrictions, and young people who are increasingly requesting plant-based foods. Centering healthier options is also a key strategy in combating our major health crises, including heart disease and diabetes.

Thank you so much for paving the way towards a more sustainable and resilient food norm for the DC community and youth.

2024-2025

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Improving Justice for the Community

Statement of the Council for Court Excellence
Before the Committee on Youth Affairs

Performance Oversight Hearing on
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS)

March 6, 2025

Thank you, Chairperson Parker and members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to present this testimony. My name is Magdalena Tsiongas and I am Policy Manager at the Council for Court Excellence (CCE). CCE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission to enhance justice in the District of Columbia. For more than 40 years, CCE has worked to improve the administration of justice in the courts and related agencies in D.C. through research and policy analysis, convening diverse stakeholders, and creating educational resources for the public. Please note that in accordance with our policy, no judicial member of CCE participated in the formulation or approval of this testimony. This testimony does not reflect the specific views of, or endorsement by, any judicial member of CCE. Today I wanted to touch on two youth justice issues of current importance – that is, youth languishing in the Youth Services Center while awaiting DYRS placement, and the importance of DYRS improving continuity of health care by implementing the recently enacted changes to Medicaid coverage for youth in custody.

CCE has been actively working to improve youth justice in the District for many years. Currently, CCE is supporting the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) in addressing the ongoing and significant problem of many D.C. youth being held at the Youth Services Center (YSC) – which is designed for short-term, pre-adjudication detention – for long periods while awaiting placements after commitment to DYRS. Currently, approximately 25% of the YSC population—27 youth—are committed youth awaiting placement. Youth in YSC will often times spend months, with limited programming, waiting to go to their placement sites, which may include therapeutic foster care, residential treatment centers, or psychiatric residential treatment facilities. Additionally, youth held at YSC without placement face serious secondary consequences. Since time spent at YSC does not count toward their placement duration, these youth effectively serve longer sentences than the judge deemed necessary. Prolonged confinement in a short-term facility also leads to mounting frustration, especially given YSC's limited programming.

As part of our work with the JJAG, CCE sought to understand the experiences of youth who are or were recently held in YSC post-commitment while awaiting placement. A survey conducted by CCE, in partnership with support of attorneys who currently or previously represented the youth, was

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completed by 23 youth who previously spent time at YSC awaiting placement, and by 18 youth currently at YSC in January of 2025.

Of youth previously awaiting placement while at YSC: Most (58%) said they did not know the reason they were still held at YSC post commitment, and only 4 of 19 (21%) knew the reason for the delay. While all youth currently at YSC awaiting placement reported they knew they were awaiting placement, only a fourth (25%) reported knowing why.

Combined with information we heard in our two workgroup meetings with agency staff in the Fall that were discussed in November's oversight hearing, these findings highlight both systemic inefficiencies in the placement process, and youth left in limbo without clear communication about their situation or next steps once their active case was finished in court.

Compounding these challenges, many youth also reported poor living conditions. Unlike those previously detained, who cited placement delays as their primary frustration, currently detained youth pointed to issues such as inadequate food, ill-fitting or dirty clothing, understaffing, and excessive time spent in confinement. In total, 64% of currently detained respondents identified living conditions as a major challenge, compared to just 5% of those previously held. These concerns highlight the broader impact of placement delays, extending beyond legal and procedural issues to directly affect the well-being of incarcerated youth.

While nearly all surveyed youth reported attending school daily, alternative programming was sparse—81% of previously detained youth and 44% of those currently held participated in no activities beyond school. Even when programs were available, many noted they were infrequent or inadequate, leaving committed youth with little to do as they wait(ed) indefinitely. indefinitely.

We are now producing a report that clearly summarizes the issue, identifies the significant barriers contributing to the long waits, and proposes pragmatic solutions and practice improvements that could decrease the number of youth being held post-commitment without proper placements. So far in our research, a range of reasons for delayed placement have emerged, including payment, assessment, abscondence, and interstate compact issues.

When fully enacted, the recently passed ROAD Act included a provision that should help to address one cause of these delays - that is, the need to develop individualized rehabilitation plans before dispositional hearings, implement them upon placement, and update them regularly. These plans must assess risk factors, protective factors, and specific needs to reduce recidivism, with a predisposition meeting ensuring input from the youth, their family, attorneys, and relevant agencies. Additionally, the legislation mandates that DYRS begin developing a discharge and reentry plan within 60 days of placement.

Turning now to the lack of continuity in healthcare for youth in custody, health records from correctional settings are often not transferred to community providers, creating barriers to care and confusion for youth, their parents, guardians, or caregivers. Additionally, advocates and agency staff have raised concerns that even non-crossover youth in the current system are not always immediately connected to Medicaid upon placement.

Moving forward, continuity of care must be prioritized by DYRS. Until January 1st, youth at New Beginnings (NB) and YSC could not access Medicaid due to rules related to

people who are incarcerated not being eligible. However, the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) which was passed by Congress last year will – hopefully – change this. With the implementation of the CAA, Medicaid coverage should seamlessly transfer from YSC to placement centers or third-party providers to ensure uninterrupted access to necessary services. Moreover, recipient individuals or families are required to renew their healthcare coverage annually.[i] It is imperative that youth and families be educated on the Medicaid process, as the CAA is implemented. For youth at YSC who are eighteen years old or crossover youth without family able to help, the responsibility for renewal falls on the detained youth. This highlights the need for informational programs or accessible educational materials provided at YSC to guide them through the renewal and transition processes, ensuring their uninterrupted access to essential medical care. Finally, with potential federal cuts to Medicaid, the District must focus on this issue in particular and work to ensure continued access to Medicaid and related services for these youth.

To create a truly fair and equitable system focused on rehabilitation, we must prioritize stability, transparency, and continuity of care for justice-involved youth. This includes minimizing placement delays, improving living conditions at YSC, and ensuring seamless healthcare transitions, especially Medicaid access. With the implementation of the ROAD Act and the CAA, the District has a crucial opportunity for meaningful progress, but it will require sustained oversight, proper YSC facility maintenance, cross-agency collaboration, and direct engagement with the youth and families affected. While much work remains, we appreciate this Committee and the Council's commitment to these critical issues and the opportunity to share these concerns today.

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[i] District of Columbia Department of Health Care Finance**.** "Medicaid Renewal." *District of Columbia Department of Health Care Finance.* Accessed February 22, 2025. https://dhcf.dc.gov/medicaid-renewal.

Sarah Backer

Dear Councilmembers and the Department of Youth Affairs,

My name is Sarah Backer, and I am a resident of Ward 1. Today, I write because of the opportunity of the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act, and support this agency's adoption of climate-friendly food that benefits our city.

With federal inaction on climate change, it is up to cities like DC to lead on climate action. Advancing climate-friendly foods is an incredibly simple yet impactful way to make inroads on emissions reductions. This also presents an opportunity for DC to provide its residents with expanded and more nutritious food options, which have the potential to prevent chronic disease related to the consumption of red and processed meats.

Food is the second largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions after fossil fuels. In cities like New York, food systems make up 20% of their climate pollution—comparable to all vehicle exhaust emissions. Most food-related emissions come from livestock, especially methane from cattle. Eating more plant-based foods is one of the most effective ways to reduce emissions, and plant-based proteins have far less impact on global warming compared to animal-based proteins.

The Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act, passed in 2021, aims to reduce the carbon footprint of food bought with public funds by 25% by 2030, with interim goals of 10% this year and 18% by 2027.

The following recommendations will help make progress on the goals of the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act:

1. Contracts: Ensure vendors have clear guidelines and timelines to meet the Act’s goals.
2. Plant-Based by Default: Serve plant-based meals as the default option, while keeping conventional meals available on request.
3. Adopt Friendly Nudges: Use tools like highlighting plant-based dishes, reducing meat portions while increasing plant-based proteins, and blending plant and animal proteins to promote climate-friendly meals.
4. Taste Testing: Let people try and provide feedback on plant-forward meals to increase buy-in.
5. Education & Awareness: Share information about the benefits of climate-friendly meals and ensure staff are trained to prepare and promote them.

Councilmembers and agency leaders, I ask for your support in adopting the practices outlined by the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act. By emphasizing nutritious, delicious food that supports our local economy and helps make healthy eating accessible, we can build a more sustainable future for DC.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Sarah Backer

Resident Ward 1

Testimony to Urge Progress on the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act

Dear Councilman Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs, and Representatives of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services,

My name is Sophie Cazares testifying on behalf of Friends of the Earth. I'm also a resident of Ward 3. Friends of the Earth worked with Former Councilmember Cheh to pass the Green Food Purchasing Act in 2021, which sets a goal of reducing DC's food-related GHG emissions by 25% by 2030. Since then we have been providing technical assistance to the Department of Energy and Environment to implement this policy, and we are available to support any DC agencies that need support implementing best practices for climate-friendly menus.

The Food & Climate Connection

Food is the second largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions after fossil fuels. In cities like New York, food systems make up 20% of their climate pollution—comparable to all vehicle exhaust emissions. Most food-related emissions come from livestock, especially methane from cattle. Eating more plant-based foods is one of the most effective ways to reduce emissions, and plant-based proteins have far less impact on global warming compared to animal-based proteins.

Overview of the DC Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act

The Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act, passed in 2021, aims to reduce the carbon footprint of food bought with public funds by 25% by 2030, with interim goals of 10% this year and 18% by 2027.

Recommendations

1. **Contracts**: Ensure vendors have clear guidelines and timelines to meet the Act's goals.
2. **Plant-Based by Default**: Friends of the Earth was pleased that DYRS shared their menus with DefaultVeg for an analysis of opportunities to shift toward more climate-friendly options and we hope you prioritize piloting more climate-friendly menus this year.
3. **Adopt Friendly Nudges**: Use tools like highlighting plant-based dishes, reducing meat portions while increasing plant-based proteins, and blending plant and animal proteins to promote climate-friendly meals.
4. **Taste Testing**: Let people try and provide feedback on plant-forward meals to increase buy-in.
5. **Education & Awareness**: Share information about the benefits of climate-friendly meals and ensure staff are trained to prepare and promote them.

Councilmembers and agency leaders, I ask for your support in adopting the practices outlined by the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act. Climate action like this is imperative. As a

member of Gen Z, I urge you, my local policy makers, to consider the impact you can make on younger generations and those to come when considering this Act. The time is now.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Sophie Cazares
Resident of Ward #3

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Young E Class, founder of Mob Ish Entertainment and Lighthouse Love LLC. I am a recording artist, philanthropist, and proud returning citizen from Washington, D.C. At the age of 15, I was sentenced to 40 years in prison. However, through the programs I created to mentor younger incarcerated individuals and the impact I had in reaching them, I was granted a sentence modification and paroled after 13 years.

Upon my release, I dedicated myself to both my music career and community work, collaborating with Life Enhancement Services to provide mental health support. My passion lies in engaging and uplifting the youth through music, entertainment, and direct community outreach.

With my lived experience, I consider myself an expert in this field, uniquely positioned to connect with and support underserved communities. My goal is to be in spaces where resources can be directly funneled into the communities that need them most. Unfortunately, bureaucratic red tape often limits access to critical programming, creating the false perception that resources are scarce. In reality, they exist—but they are often tied up in processes that remove grassroots leaders from hands-on community work, forcing them behind desks instead of keeping them on the ground where they are most effective.

I am committed to breaking down these barriers and ensuring that support reaches those who need it in a way that is accessible, impactful, and sustainable.

Sincerely,
Young E Class
Mob Ish Entertainment | Lighthouse Love LLC

Sarah Backer

Dear Councilmembers and the Department of Youth Affairs,

My name is Sarah Backer, and I am a resident of Ward 1. Today, I write because of the opportunity of the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act, and support this agency's adoption of climate-friendly food that benefits our city.

With federal inaction on climate change, it is up to cities like DC to lead on climate action. Advancing climate-friendly foods is an incredibly simple yet impactful way to make inroads on emissions reductions. This also presents an opportunity for DC to provide its residents with expanded and more nutritious food options, which have the potential to prevent chronic disease related to the consumption of red and processed meats.

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The following recommendations will help make progress on the goals of the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act:

1. Contracts: Ensure vendors have clear guidelines and timelines to meet the Act’s goals.
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5. Education & Awareness: Share information about the benefits of climate-friendly meals and ensure staff are trained to prepare and promote them.

Councilmembers and agency leaders, I ask for your support in adopting the practices outlined by the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act. By emphasizing nutritious, delicious food that supports our local economy and helps make healthy eating accessible, we can build a more sustainable future for DC.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Sarah Backer

Resident Ward 1

Attachment G

Ana Torres

Buenos días. Mi nombre es Ana Torres, y quiero hablar un poco a cerca de la Georgia Avenue Family
Support Collaborative. Quiero expresar que es un gran apoyo para la comunidad y a mí en lo personal me han brindado ayuda cuando yo estaba pasando por un momento difícil con mi hijo. Gracias a que acudí a ellos ahora puedo seguir avanzando. Quiero agradecer a el personal de trabajo que tienen porque son muy comprometidos en su trabajo. No me queda más que decir gracias.

Good morning. My name is Ana Torres, and I want to talk a little about the Georgia Avenue Family
Support Collaborative. I want to say that it is a great support for comfort, and they have helped me when I was going through a difficult time with my son, and thanks to the fact that I went to them, now I can continue to move forward. I want to thank the staff; they are very committed to their work. All I have to do is say thank you. (Translated by Yoselin Munoz).

Anderson Betancourt

Testimonio Revisado en Español (para lectura pública o escrita)

Buenos días a todos los Miembros del Comité y del Consejo. Gracias por brindarme la oportunidad de testificar hoy. Mi nombre es Anderson Betancourt, soy residente del Distrito 8 y estoy aquí para compartir mi experiencia como padre participante en el programa de Visitas al Hogar de Mary's Center.

Participar en este programa ha tenido un impacto profundamente positivo en mi vida y la de mi familia. Como inmigrante que llegó a este país buscando un mejor futuro, enfrentar una nueva cultura, idioma y sistema ha sido un gran reto. Sin embargo, gracias al acompañamiento constante de este programa, he podido aprender a ser un padre más presente, un mejor esposo, y una persona emocionalmente más fuerte. Me han enseñado a manejar mejor mis emociones, a comunicarme con respeto y empatía, y sobre todo, a ser un apoyo real para mis hijos.

Las visitas semanales, ya sean presenciales o virtuales, siempre son espacios de crecimiento. He aprendido cosas que antes no consideraba importantes, como formas de interactuar con mis hijos, o maneras de apoyar mejor a mi esposa. Además, mi trabajadora social me ha conectado con recursos esenciales: alimentos, pañales, chaquetas para el invierno, asistencia legal, y más. Estas ayudas han marcado una gran diferencia en momentos difíciles.

Más allá de los recursos, la guía que recibo cada semana me ayuda a entender mejor el desarrollo de mis hijos y a construir una relación de respeto y amor con ellos. La visitadora del programa no solo es una profesional; es una aliada que conoce nuestras necesidades, nos escucha sin juzgar y nos ofrece herramientas útiles para avanzar como familia.

Estoy convencido de que este programa tiene un impacto duradero. Padres como yo estamos aprendiendo a criar niños sanos, felices y con valores sólidos. Con el tiempo, esto se reflejará en una comunidad más fuerte y un futuro más prometedor para nuestros hijos.

Por eso les pido, con todo respeto, que sigan apoyando y financiando este tipo de programas. Las Visitas al Hogar no son solo un servicio: son una inversión en el bienestar de nuestras familias y nuestra ciudad.

Gracias al Consejo de DC y a los miembros del comité por el apoyo que han brindado hasta ahora. Gracias al equipo de Mary's Center y a mi visitadora del hogar. Este programa funciona gracias a ustedes. Que tengan un excelente día.

Anderson.

Testimony of Anderson Betancourt

District 8 Resident | Participant, Mary's Center Home Visiting Program
Budget **Hearing – CFSA FY26 Budget | May 29, 2025**

Good morning to all Committee Members and Councilmembers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Anderson Betancourt, I am a resident of Ward 8, and I'm here to share my experience as a father participating in the Home Visiting Program through Mary's Center.

This program has had a deeply positive and meaningful impact on my life and my family. I came to this country in search of a better future for my loved ones. As an immigrant, it has not been easy adjusting to a new language, culture, and system. But the support I've received through this program has helped guide me through that transition — and more importantly, has helped me grow into a better father, husband, and provider.

The fatherhood-focused visits, whether in-person or virtual, have become a trusted space for learning and growth. I've gained knowledge and tools I never knew I needed — how to be more present for my children, how to communicate better with my wife, and how to regulate emotions during stressful times. These lessons have made a real difference in our home.

The support is not only emotional — it's practical, too. My home visitor connected me with resources like food, diapers, jackets during the winter, and even legal referrals when I needed them most. These services helped me stay on my feet as I worked hard to rebuild my life from scratch.

Each week, we explore my children's development and how I can be more engaged as a parent. My home visitor has been a consistent guide — someone who listens, respects my experiences, and offers real strategies that I can use. Through her support, my relationship with my children and my wife has grown stronger and healthier.

This program doesn't just serve individual parents. It strengthens entire families and communities. When fathers are supported, children thrive. We're not just raising kids — we're building future leaders who will grow up with values, confidence, and love.

That's why I respectfully ask the DC Council to continue supporting and funding programs like this one. Home Visiting services are more than just visits — they are a lifeline for families like mine. They empower parents, promote child well-being, and build stronger communities.

Thank you again to the DC Council, to the Committee, to Mary's Center, and especially to my home visitor. This program works — and it works because of the people and the support behind it.

Thank you for your time, and I wish you all a wonderful day.

Anderson.

Testimony on the Child and Family Services Agency
FY26 Proposed Budget
Before the Committee on Youth Affairs
May 29, 2025

My name is Anonsee Storyweaver. I'm a volunteer member of the Bellevue Family Success Center's Community Advisory Council, living in the Bellevue Neighborhood of Ward 8.

"FSCs are critically important to the communities they serve - not just to families with children, but often to non-traditional families such as single parents, queer groups, multi-parent families, and more. In my case, while I may not have children, I'm able to refer those I care about with children to a place I know can help and support them with children, especially being able to point stay-at-home or housing insecure moms to a place they can bring their children for a range of support and services geared towards them in an area with a dearth of support.

Additionally, I've been able to help my found queer family access services through Community of Hope that they significantly struggled with on their own, such as accessing/applying for Medicare and other benefits while chronically or mentally ill, finding community members they can bond with, and participating in civic engagement through events hosted within the space such as the monthly ANC meeting.

I believe that in areas that struggle with surviving due to under-interest and under-investment from DC government in the past decade, such as Bellevue neighborhood where Community of Hope's headquarters and family center are, FSCs are helping bridge significant existing gaps for residents often forgotten by the rest of the city, and could do even more with more financial support.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

Brandon Cuevas Monterroso

Testimonio de Brandon Cuevas Monterroso

Hola, mi nombre es Brandon Cuevas y hoy me gustaría compartir mi experiencia y el impacto que Jaime y el Programa de Padres han tenido en mí como individuo y en mi familia.

Quiero comenzar expresando lo agradecido que estoy por la existencia de este programa. Como joven y padre soltero, este programa me ha guiado en la dirección correcta para enfrentar mi situación y trabajar por un futuro mejor para mí y para mi familia. Siento que puedo confiar plenamente en Jaime y en el programa; cada vez que hablo con él, me siento escuchado y comprendido. Jaime me brinda una sensación de seguridad al momento de tomar decisiones importantes para dar el siguiente paso como padre y como familia.

Este programa y personas como Jaime son un gran apoyo para mí y para otros padres que atraviesan situaciones similares. Desde que entré al programa en septiembre del 2022, todo ha cambiado. Veo mi rol como padre de una forma completamente diferente. He aprendido a tener más paciencia, a desarrollar conocimiento práctico en la crianza de mis hijas, en mis relaciones familiares, y también en el trabajo personal conmigo mismo. Me han ayudado a crecer tanto emocional como espiritualmente, además de apoyarme en mi desarrollo profesional.

Gracias al apoyo de Jaime y los recursos a los que me ha conectado —como el programa para obtener el GED— mis metas se sienten mucho más alcanzables. Hoy en día, tengo la oportunidad de trabajar en mis objetivos y acceder a recursos esenciales para el bienestar de mi familia, como ayuda con la búsqueda de empleo, educación, salud mental, víveres y productos frescos. Todo esto ha sido de gran ayuda para mí y para mis hijas.

Estoy profundamente agradecido por el apoyo que he recibido durante todo este tiempo en el Programa de Padres. Gracias por apoyar a personas y padres que realmente necesitamos esta ayuda esencial; por guiarnos, aconsejarnos y acompañarnos en este papel tan importante que es ser padre, parte de una familia y de una comunidad. Es el mejor programa

para papás solteros que he conocido. Nuevamente, muchas gracias y espero que este programa siga estando presente en nuestra comunidad por muchos años más.

Testimony of Brandon Cuevas Monterroso

Hello, my name is Brandon Cuevas, and today I'd like to share my experience and the impact that Jaime and the Fatherhood Program have had on me as an individual and on my family.

I want to begin by saying how grateful I am for the existence of this program. As a young, single father, it has guided me in the right direction when it comes to managing my situation and working toward a better future for myself and my family. I feel that I can trust Jaime and the program with anything I need. Every time I speak with Jaime, I feel heard and understood. He helps me feel a sense of security when it's time to determine the next step for us as a family and for me as a father.

This program — and people like Jaime — are incredibly valuable to me and to other fathers who may be going through similar situations. Everything changed since I joined back on September 2022. I now see my role as a father differently. It's teaching me to have the necessary patience and understanding when it comes to raising my daughters, relating to my family, and also in how I care for myself. They have helped me grow emotionally, spiritually, and professionally.

With Jaime's support and the resources he's connected me to — like the GED program — my goals feel within reach. I'm now able to actively work toward those goals and access essential support for my family's future. That includes resources for job searching, education, mental health, food, and fresh produce — all of which have been a huge help to both me and my daughters.

I'm deeply grateful for the support I've received throughout my time in the Fatherhood Program. Thank you for helping people and parents who truly need this kind of essential support — for guiding us, advising us, and standing beside us in this incredibly important role of being a father, a family member, and a part of the community. This is the best program

for single dads that I've seen. Once again, thank you, and I hope this program continues to be part of our community for many years to come.

Charlekia Hayes

My name is Charlekia Hayes
mostly known as Charlie (iykyk) ??. I've always been
intrigued by parenting classes to learn different perspectives on parenting
styles , while strengthening skills and exploring different techniques. I was
apprehensive to reach out (not knowing what to expect or thinking will this
may imply I am a inadequate parent) however I pushed through the fear of the
unknown to make the decision to reach out to East river family strengthening
collaborative. To support me and others throughout this process. I've gained a
safe space to ask questions while never feeling incompetent , with any
questions I've asked. The linage I've experienced was very one sided which was
stern and the adult always speaks also always right. Never giving me as a child
a voice. When I birthed my children I was adamant to provide a safe space to
communicate about what's on there mind. As brave as I was to implement
something new (while breaking the silence cycle) my family would comment
negatively and I became extremely doubtful in my decision making. However I
proceeded with what I felt to be an healthier choice for my household and this
class was confirmation you can adjust , and parenting never stops also its
never ever to late to continue learning to strengthen your family. I am
extremely grateful I joined this family community. I've learned an abundance of
knowledge, techniques, positive feed back and gained an extension to my village
because of this I am truly honored, blessed and grateful. Shout out to Ms.
Rayford you are someone to remember and acknowledge! God places you in the
right place at the right time. I may want to pause here as the water works may
appear! We are the OG class , as I can confirm you will continue to reach lives
and better our families. As our children will be our future leaders and
carriers of the new generation. Feel proud of yourselves everyone we made it 15
weeks of dedication , resilience and determination to breakthrough all
obstacles, set fourth to prevent you from learning you are enough and your best
is your best even if you seek support class of 2025 out !!!!!

Testimony by Clarence Miles, Founder and Executive Director of Uniting our Youth, Inc.

on Behalf, of

Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative

Before the DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs, Chairperson Zachary Parker

Child and Family Services Agency Budget Hearing

May 29, 2025

Good morning Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs and staff. My name is Clarence Miles. I currently serve as a member of Community Advisory Council for the Carver/Langston Family Success Center. In unity with the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative, I'm here today to offer testimony on the importance of the vital services and supports provided through the Family Success Center.

With a heartfelt drive to combat juvenile crime with models of success and life skills that empower young adults to go out and become leaders in their own communities, I founded Uniting our Youth Inc. Since 2008, we have been situated in the heart of Langston Dwellings. Our core program areas include a drop-in center for young people between the ages of 12-24 (Monday-Friday), after-school and summer camp programs, and a summer youth program for people ages 14-24 through the Mayor Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program.

The Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative has been a well-established neighborhood-based provider for Ward 5 residents since 1996. I've had the privilege of collaborating with E/BFSC throughout the years, and more recently with the Carver/Langston Family Success Center. The Center provides invaluable resources that previously did not exist in Langston; such as a community meal program in partnership with DC Central Kitchen, a diaper bank that includes a variety of baby essentials, the DC Health Safe Sleep program, and critical Service Navigation support such as; advocacy and navigation with DCHA housing subsidy programs, referrals for emergency utility assistance, and food insecurity services for home bound residents.

Soon after its inception in February, the Family Success Center gained notoriety in the community. Their presence in Langston has garnered the attention of residents, and I view them as an essential partner and collaborator in establishing meaningful relationships with residents across the Carver/Langston and Kingman Park communities.

From January through March 31st, the Family Success Center has served 55 residents through the Community Meal Program, 19 individuals through Service Navigation, and 6 residents through the Diaper Bank program. They also hosted a Mother's Day celebration which was attended by 30 Langston residents, and sponsored a Cinco De Mayo event in the Carver community which was attended by over 100 residents.

I'm proud to serve on the Community Advisory Council for the Family Success Center. We're currently working towards formalizing our membership practices, and we are strategizing on methods to recruit members from the Carver and Kingman Park communities. The Community Advisory Council is an essential mechanism designed to shape the Family Success Center programs, and ensure services align with the needs of the community.

In closing, I want to emphasize the importance of continuing to invest in programs such as the Family Success Center. Our residents deserve this critical investment in their well-being, as well as the daily continuity in programs that the Family Success Center provides. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today.

Date of Testimony: Friday May 30th, 2025.

My name is Danielle Howard, and I came to the Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative at one of the lowest points in my life. I was in crisis — my electricity had been shut off for an entire month. I was scared, overwhelmed, and didn't know where to turn. When I shared my situation with the Collaborative, I broke down in tears. But they didn't hesitate — they stepped in immediately and paid my electric bill. The lights and heat came back on, and with it, a sense of hope and relief returned to my home.

The support didn't stop there. The Collaborative also connected my two children with mentors, which made a big difference in their lives. These mentors provided guidance, encouragement, and positive role models that my children could look up to. Through the program, they were able to visit different places in the community, attend holiday events like Christmas parties, and participate in activities that helped build their confidence and social skills. It gave them a chance to simply be kids and feel seen and supported.

When I had to move to a new home, the Collaborative again came through for us by paying the security deposit, allowing me and my children to have a safe and stable place to live.

Finally, I attend the monthly Parent Café, which has been a blessing. It gives me the opportunity to connect with other parents who understand my journey. We share experiences, learn from each other, and support one another. The sessions have helped me grow as a mother and build stronger relationships with my children.

The Georgia Avenue Collaborative has truly been a lifeline for me and my family

Donte Massey
5021 Benning Road, SE
Washington, DC 20019
May 29, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairperson Parker and members of the Committee. My name is Donte Massey and I live in Ward 7. You might remember me from when I testified in favor of allowing close relatives to receive the caregiver subsidy, not just grandparents. I want to start by saying thank you for making that change! During the past 6 years, I have faced a lot of hurdles caring for my 4 younger siblings, but the caregiver subsidy has really helped.

It all started in July of 2018, when I got a text message from my mom saying "don't let them take my kids!" There had been a CPS call because the kids had missed some school. My mom was overwhelmed, and she was getting evicted and couldn't keep the kids. It turns out she has bipolar and major depression. So just like that, I went from having zero kids to four kids!

I didn't have room for them in my apartment, so we had to move. Virginia Williams sent us to two different emergency shelters, each with only two beds, so I had to sleep on the floor. We were finally placed in a three-bedroom apartment that I found in South East DC. It was a very rough area, but it was the only place I could afford with the housing voucher. Being new to the responsibility for my siblings, I tried to keep them away from things that could harm them. But there were gangs right outside my building, shooting at each other day and night. Two of my family members got shot when they came to visit.

It was summer when I took in my siblings, so they weren't in school. I didn't have anyone to help me take care of them, so I ended up losing my job. It was overwhelming trying to pay for everything they needed. When I started receiving the caregiver subsidy, it was only

for 3 kids because the oldest had just turned 18. But I still had to feed 4.

Last year was probably the most terrifying year of my life. My home was broken into several times while I slept. I called for help from the police and other government officials, and got nothing; they just looked at me like I was a mental case. So we were forced out of our home because it wasn't safe to stay there any longer, and nobody was doing anything about it.

Which brings me to the topic of foster parents and kinship parents getting equal resources. The caregiver subsidy is only about half of the amount that foster parents receive. And foster families receive so many extra supports, such as housing help, exit strategies for teens who age out, a social worker and mental health support, respite care, money for camps, college counseling, driver's ed, phones– so many things that could have helped us, but aren't available to kinship families. Also, foster parents get their subsidy until the child turns 21, while in my case, I was cut off from the caregiver subsidy once my brother turned 18. I feel that if I'd had the extra boost that foster parents get, I possibly could have moved to a less hard area, who knows? Then my siblings wouldn't have been subjected to squatters and gangs. I want them to know that they don't have to end up like these people. I tried to do everything I could for the children in my care, but I lost the quality of life I had, and ended up exposing them to things that may have hindered them.

I recommend equality for all, but especially between foster parents and relative caregivers. Thank you for listening.

Testimony on the Child and Family Service Agency's
Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget
Before the Committee on Youth Affairs
May 29, 2025

Good morning, Chairperson Parker and members and staff of the Committee on Youth Affairs. I am Dr. Dawn Sherman, Vice President of Community Impact and Evaluation at Community of Hope (COH) and a Ward 7 resident. Community of Hope is a Federally Qualified Health Center, offers services to families and individuals experiencing homelessness, and operates the Bellevue Family Success Center (FSC) at our Conway Health and Resource Center in Ward 8.

We are a proud member of the Families First DC 2.0 network, and look forward to seeing the work of our family success centers expand, providing increased access to services for families in Wards 7 and 8. As one of ten Family Success Centers funded by the Office of Thriving Families under Families First DC, we are pleased that the Mayor's proposed FY26 budget does not decrease funding for FSCs.

Through the Family Success Center, Community of Hope connects families with existing community and government resources to address their needs. Our on-site Family Success Specialists support DC residents with referrals to rental assistance, TANF/SNAP/SSI application assistance, job application assistance, and grocery gift cards for emergency food assistance. We also provide referrals for residents to Community of Hope's medical, dental, emotional wellness, WIC, and homelessness prevention programs.

In addition to these direct client supports, we have recently expanded our community safety and violence prevention programming with the guidance of our Community Advisory Council. On March 15 the Bellevue FSC hosted its first Community Love Day, a combined resource fair and town hall, where community members were able to come together and discuss safety concerns, and provide resident-focused solutions for community violence. Tomorrow, May 30th, we will host our second community resource fair, 'Let's Talk About It' focused on mental health and community safety at our Conway Health and Resource Center. Through our service navigation assistance, on-site supports, specialized programs, and community safety events, the Bellevue Family Success Center served over 550 households in 2024, and we expect to surpass this number in 2025.

We do see a lot of client requests for emergency supports, and we are concerned that these will increase in a more difficult economic situation. We would love to see additional funding of $10,000 per center to support direct client needs. One of our Community Advisory Council members, and Ward 8 resident, Mx. Anonsee Storyweaver will also provide testimony to the committee today about the important services that FSCs provide, and how these services bridge significant gaps for residents in need.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Mayor, the DC Child and Family Services Administration, and its Office of Thriving Families to create and fund programs that promote family success and wellbeing and thank the Agency for its continued collaboration in investing in DC's families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today, I am available to answer any questions.

Ebony Coward

To Whom It May Concern,

Hello and greetings to all, my name is Ebony Coward. I'm a sister , an aunt a niece and a single mother of 3 children ages 14,9, and 6 Born and raised in the DMV this is my home. Although currently divorced, In 2019 I experienced one of the most life changing events I think I ever faced trying to celebrate my divorce from an abusive husband of 5 years. I took a trip to the Bahamas to celebrate my divorce and I got stuck in hurricane Dorian for 2 months and two days one of the Bahamas biggest hurricanes during that time. I was forced to sit in my urine had knives to my back and even swim in high waters with dead bodies to survive Thanks to the good hearted nurses doctors here in Washington d.c who volunteered their doctorial and nurse services with fema, I was sent here to d.c to have a chance at life once it was known I was an American citizen. As I traveled back to the DMV it wasn't easy to get re established. Having a child with disabilities makes it hard to stay employed. Having no support challenges what's already hard. Thanks to the good people here at Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative, They used their funding to help supply the needs of my familie's rental emergency clothing and Christmas needs. They've connected me to resources within their personal obtained community network to help me regain entry as a Washintonian. Please don't take funding away from this program and others just like it as it is detrimental to my stability.

FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING

Child and Family Services Agency

Before the Committee on Youth Affairs
Councilmember Zachary Parker

May 29, 2025
Testimony of Eric Goulet
D.C. State Board of Education, Ward 3

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, Councilmembers _____, and Council staff. My name is Eric Goulet, Ward 3 Representative for the DC State Board of Education. I am delighted to join you at today's Committee on Youth Affairs Fiscal Year 2026 budget oversight hearing on the DC Child and Family Services Agency, known as CFSA. I will be testifying in my individual capacity as a Ward 3 representative today, and not on behalf of the collective Board.

In its Fiscal Year 2026 budget, CFSA states that its mission is to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of abused and neglected children in the District of Columbia and to strengthen their families. The budget chapter further states that CFSA investigates reports of child abuse and neglect and provides child

protection. As with any agency, the capacity of CFSA to carry out its mission is constrained by finite fiscal and staffing resources. Thus, it is particularly concerning that DC Public School Chancellor Lewis Ferebee and DCPS leadership are making frivolous reports to CFSA for truancy and educational/child neglect to retaliate against families who were advocating for the best interests of their young children. This distracts CFSA from using its limited resources to help children who are actually experiencing child neglect in the District.

DCPS recently abruptly changed deferral policies related to the kindergarten age of enrollment, without any advanced notice to parents or to private and parochial pre-k programs. DCPS has informed families whose children have birthdays prior to September 30th that their children must skip kindergarten and go directly to first grade, and it has voided previously approved developmental waivers issued by DCPS. DCPS has offered to assess children and says it will consider demoting them back to kindergarten, but only in the fall, after the children struggle in first grade.

In at least two instances, DCPS ordered families to leave pre-k 4 programs with approximately two months remaining in the school year and said they must enroll their children in DCPS kindergarten, and when the families rightfully refused to do so, DCPS retaliated by reporting the families to CSFA for educational neglect. A five-year-old attending a five-day-per-week pre-k4 class is neither truant nor a victim of educational neglect. Chancellor Ferebee justifies his actions by saying that DCPS doesn't consider a pre-kindergarten program in a private or parochial school to be a "school", and that since DCPS is a mandatory reporter, he has no choice but to report families for truancy. I do not find this explanation credible.

Intimidation of parents advocating for their children cannot be tolerated. This retaliation is designed to scare parents into accepting an ill-conceived policy change that DCPS implemented without proper notice. I would respectfully request the Committee inquire how many families attending pre-k4 have been reported by DCPS to CFSA, because other impacted families may have been scared into silence. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. I am available to answer any questions that you may have.

Gladys Mathis

CFSA DC City Council 5/29/25 Testimony

I Am, Fari Ghamina Tumpe. A Native Washingtonian, 3rd of 5 generations raised in the Historic District of Capitol Hill. I'm the matriarch & steward of the home where I was born. Sustaining family through faith & kindness are my core values. My everyday purpose is to bring awareness, organize, mobilize and build community. My grandmother raised me in this home and now I am raising three of my differently abled grandchildren and a family in this home. I've never had the urgency to move, though my dignity…ripped away many times by structural colonialism & capitalism…I lead community actions by organizing with love at the center.

The Grandparents Kinship Program is indeed a lifeline that otherwise prevent children going into foster care. Nevertheless, the stipend disparity is roughly 50% less than foster parents. In your response, pls note if you will fight for parallel pay on our behalf. Will you hold folk accountable to a reasonable deadline of reviewing the budget for this allocation?

I fathom what life would be like without this stipend. Imagine a life where equal pay would mean we're less likely to need a part time job. Imagine how self-preservation would be more fruitful, mental anguish would diminish, meaningful experiences can be funded. I implore you to consider the crucial & dire need for the same case management services that foster families receive! Grandparents sacrifice a most vulnerable but cherished time in our lives and receive the least regard and reward.

We're your greatest living resource-rich in culture, history & tradition…and we deserve to be honored as such. We feel undervalued in several ways but hoping to shift that narrative by collectively sharing our stories and moving our votes to help those that help us.

I am the mother of 4 adults, my only girl suffers with frequent bouts of psychosis and co-occurring disorders. I'm raising her 3 children: 1 in foster care and 2 in the Grandparents Program. This program has covered shortfalls in my budget. I am very grateful and well aware of my unique perspective; it causes unrest and the need to seek progressive change. The Grandparents Program has a cohort but lags far behind the foster care program in organizing with technical assistance.

No Cuts, in fact-double our budget, we are over qualified for equal pay & resources! Move some money around in the budget from ineffective programs & brochures that are trashed because your grandparents & caregivers are

effective beyond measure.

Thank you and I appreciate your service.

Happy to answer any questions.

Grace Birht

Hello Chair Parker and members of the Youth Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Grace Birth. I'm a newly licensed graduate social worker and a proud resident of Ward 5. I'm here to urge the Committee to maintain the seven hundred seventy thousand dollar grant allocation for community-based home visiting services provided through the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). These services are vital in supporting safe and healthy family environments across the District.

Currently, I work in school-based mental health, and my past experiences include providing community support at Catholic Charities and interning in parenting education at Community Family Life Services. Through these roles, I've witnessed the impact that consistent, compassionate, in-home support can have on families.

This evidence-based model is proven to strengthen parent-child relationships, reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect, and help families create safe, stable home environments.

Unfortunately, funding for home visiting in D.C. remains vulnerable. The one hundred eighteen thousand dollar cut to DC Health's home visiting programs, coupled with the removal of $400,000 in recurring grant funds from CFSA's budget, threatens the stability of services that families with the greatest needs rely on. These unpredictable cuts make it difficult for organizations to retain skilled staff, weaken program quality, and ultimately harm the very families we are working to support and protect.

Home visiting is not only cost-effective; it's relational and transformative. These services equip caregivers with the tools, knowledge, and emotional support they need to raise thriving children. During my time with Community Family Life Services, I observed caregivers actively and enthusiastically participating in the home visitation process. As case managers and social workers, we're no strangers to client ambivalence—but I saw how a respectful, passionate home visitor could overcome that barrier by building authentic, trusting relationships.

Meeting families in their own homes is a powerful approach. It's accessible to clients. But it also reducing inherent power imbalances often present in traditional service settings. It fosters mutual respect and collaboration. In this space, caregivers feel empowered to identify their own needs, shape their goals, showcase their strengths, and ask for support when needed, and ultimately be themselves.

I've seen home visitors become a trusted part of a family's village—helping parents navigate developmental milestones, connect with health and social services, and work toward greater economic stability. It transcends office visits which can at times feel distant. Home visitation infuses a support person directly into the family's day-to-day life. It allows us, as social

workers, to meet people both literally and figuratively where they are at.

For all these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to preserve and continuously maintain CFSA's grant allocation for home visiting services. These programs are a lifeline for many families and a wise investment in our city's future.

Thank you for your time and commitment to our communities.

Henry Cabano

East River Family Strengthening Collaborative
Parenting Class Feb-May 2025 Class
I was Court Ordered by the Civil Family Court in Washington DC to attend a Parenting Class. I was initially ordered to attend CFSA Court's Parenting Class. I refused to attend their Parenting Class. I said I would take the Parenting Class, but it had to be at East River. The Judge agreed. I had a problem with my 14 year old daughter Lying, Stealing from stores, and drinking at school. The behavior got worse in the summer after the 8
th grade year. One night, catching her stealing rings I
spanked her with a belt left red marks and a bruise. My daughter was placed with CFSA. They could not control her. They let her do what she wanted she ended up getting charged with Armed Robbery and Assault while in their care.
While I started the East River Parenting Class. I was not wanting to attend but I did want to see if there was anything a 56-year-old can learn raising a teenager in these times of Social Media. Every week there was a new lesson in engaging Teens in these times. Lesson's like " How to Reward your child's good Behavior," "The rules of your household," "Young Children & Drugs." Engaging with other Parents I was not the only one dealing with a teenager at risk. I was not the only one dealing with CFSA here in Washington DC. The feedback from other Parents to me in disciplining my daughter was enough that I see that spanking a child with a belt in these times is not the right option but non-conducive. Going forward I will use the methods I learned at East River Parenting Class to be a Better Parent, a Better Person, and a Better Father to Both My daughters going Forward.
I would Like to Thank the Parenting Instructor Ms. Rayford for being insightful and understanding of Parents Faults and teaching methods to being a good parent. Her experiences as a Parent helped me to understand I am not the only Parent going through the Social Media Internet Craze.
I also would like to Thank my fellow Parents/Classmates who opened my eyes to see my generation thinking is not the same thinking as these Teens in 2025. The way I was brought up is not working with these Teens. My East River parents in my Class helped me and not judged me as a "at risk parent." I Thank Them all for that.
Henry S cabano

Isnael Rodriguez

Testimony of Isnael Rodriguez

District Resident | Participant in the Father-Child Attachment Home Visiting Program at Mary's Center
Oversight Hearing – CFSA FY26 Budget | May 29, 2025

Versión en Español

Buenos días a los Miembros del Comité y del Consejo de DC. Gracias por darme la oportunidad de hablar hoy. Mi nombre es Isnael Rodríguez. Soy padre, esposo, y orgulloso participante del Programa de Visitas al Hogar de Apego entre Padre e Hijo de Mary's Center.

Soy un hombre sencillo que ha pasado por muchas dificultades. No pude terminar la escuela porque desde joven tuve que trabajar para ayudar a mi familia. En diciembre de 2024, mi esposa, mis hijos y yo tuvimos que vivir en un refugio. Fue un momento muy duro para nosotros.

Gracias al programa, hemos podido atravesar momentos muy duros con fe y resiliencia. Con el apoyo de mi trabajadora de apoyo familiar, pude contactar con otras perdonas y con recursos para encontrar un trabajo, y así pude conseguir un hogar para mi familia. Recibimos ayuda de Wider Circle, que nos trajo camas, muebles y artículos para el bebé. Por fin, nuestro hogar volvió a ser un lugar seguro y estable para nuestros hijos.

Pero lo más poderoso de este programa ha sido lo que me ha enseñado como padre. He aprendido a estar más presente con mis hijos, a ser más paciente y a involucrarme en su crecimiento. Yo nunca tuve eso cuando era niño, y ahora yo se lo puedo dar a mis hijos. Este programa no es solo ayuda práctica; es una oportunidad para formar padres más fuertes y crear vínculos saludables entre padres e hijos.

También me conectaron con recursos legales, los cuales que me sigue ayudando. Empecé clases de inglés en Briya, algo que nunca pensé que podría hacer. Lo hago por mí, pero también por mis hijos, para enseñarles que siempre se puede seguir adelante y aprender.

El Programa de Apego entre Padre e Hijo ha cambiado mi vida. Nos ayudó a levantarnos, pero sobre todo, me ayuda a conservar el enfoque de ser un padre presente que le quiere dejar un buen legado a sus hijos a través de sus comportamientos. Ahora sé quién soy, y sé que mis hijos están tienen y tendrán un padre presente en cualquier momento de la vida sea duro o no.

Les pido, de todo corazón, que sigan apoyando y financiando este programa. Hay muchos padres como yo que solo necesitan una oportunidad, alguien que crea en ellos. Este programa lo hace. Este programa forma familias. Este programa construye futuros.

Gracias por su tiempo y por creer en padres como yo.

Isnael Rodriguez

Testimony of Isnael Rodriguez

Participant in the Father-Child Attachment Home Visiting Program at Mary's Center
DC Council – CFSA FY26 Budget Oversight Hearing
May 29, 2025

Good morning to the Members of the Committee and the DC Council. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Isnael Rodriguez. I am a father, a husband, and a proud participant in Mary's Center's **Father-Child Attachment Home Visiting Program**.

I am a simple man who has gone through many hardships. I wasn't able to finish school because I had to start working at a young age to help support my family. In December 2024, my wife, our children, and I had to move into a shelter. It was a very difficult time for us.

Thanks to this program, we've been able to get through those hard times with faith and resilience. With the support of my Family Support Worker, I was able to connect with people and resources that helped me find a job. Soon after, I was able to secure a home for my family. We also received help from Wider Circle, who brought us beds, furniture, and baby items. Our home finally became a safe and stable place for our children again.

But the most powerful part of this program is what it has taught me as a father. I've learned to be more present with my children, to be more patient, and to be actively involved in their growth. I never had that growing up — but now, I can give that to my kids. This program is not just about practical help; it's an opportunity to build stronger fathers and create healthy bonds between fathers and their children.

I was also connected to legal support resources that continue to help me today. And recently, I started taking English classes at Briya — something I never imagined doing. I'm doing it for myself, but also for my children, to show them that it's always possible to keep going and keep learning.

The **Father-Child Attachment Program** has changed my life. It helped us get back on our feet, but most importantly, it helps me stay focused on being a present, loving father who wants to leave a strong legacy for his children through his actions. Now I know who I am — and I know that my children have, and will always have, a father who is present, in good times and in hard times.

From the bottom of my heart, I ask you to continue supporting and funding this program. There are many fathers like me who just need a chance — someone to believe in them. This program does that. This program strengthens families. This program builds futures.

Thank you for your time and for believing in fathers like me.

OPEN CITY ADVOCATES

BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING

Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

May 29, 2025

Committee on the Youth Affairs
Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chairperson

Testimony of Joshua A. Miller, PhD
Research & Advocacy Director, Open City Advocates

Who We Are

Open City Advocates is a small organization with a big impact. We model an innovative solution in juvenile defense in Washington, DC, and nationwide. Founded to address the racial inequities and unjust incarceration practices in DC's juvenile system, Open City Advocates provides youth-centered legal defense and holistic advocacy for young people after sentencing in the juvenile system.

Who We Serve

All of our clients have been committed to the care and custody of the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) by DC's Family Court. "Commitment" to DYRS means that a young person is a ward of the city, oftentimes until age 21, and that their placement may change several times with little or no court oversight—including placement at home or in a carceral facility.

There are extreme racial disparities in the youth delinquency system nationwide, with Black and Latino/a children being committed and incarcerated at 4.7 times the rate compared to their white peers.[1] It is even more extreme in the District of Columbia, where 100% of all committed children are children of color, and 96% are Black, while Black youth comprise only 51% of the DC youth population.[2]

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[1] OJJDP Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement.

[2] DYRS Demographics, https://dataviz1.dc.gov/t/OCTO/views/PublicSafety/YouthDemographics; DC Kids Count, 2023.

Open City Advocates' clients have had extensive contact with the delinquency system; most have also been in DC's child welfare system, and all are at high risk for entering the DC Jail or being harmed or killed by street violence. The majority of our clients hail from DC's Wards 7 and 8, where 35% of children live in poverty.[3] Over the last two years, 46% of violent crimes committed with guns in the city occurred in these two wards.[4] In our 20-year history, we have lost six clients to gun violence and one to a drug overdose. Open City Advocates works to help our clients envision and actualize a healthy adulthood instead of accepting death or incarceration by age 25.

OFC Testimony

Good morning. My name is Joshua Miller, I am the Research & Advocacy Director at Open City Advocates, which provides legal representation, holistic advocacy, and mentoring to youth who have been committed to the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services or DYRS

For many years and in many settings, Open City Advocates has been fighting to include a mechanism for the investigation and adjudication of complaints by children under the care of CFSA and those committed to DYRS and their families. Once again, the proposed budget offers both to eliminate the Ombudsman for Children and to remove the Deputy Auditor position that succeeded the Office of Independent Juvenile Justice Facilities Oversight, which was charged with ensuring compliance with the *Jerry M.* consent decree after DYRS facilities were found to be grossly unsafe. (Notably DYRS no longer complies with many of the consent decree's provisions.) While the revenue forecast is difficult, we must not respond to difficult times by withdrawing oversight and protection for young people.

We advocate for the restoration of funding for the Office of the Ombudsman for Children at $1.2M. As with the Deputy Auditor, the restoration of funding for this Office would provide an essential independent voice for system-involved youth struggling with abuse and neglect. Failing to restore this office would mean that this nascent body for investigating complaints about children in District care will cease to exist, and the District's agencies (both CFSA and DYRS) will once again take children out of abusive and neglectful situations and drop them

[3] DC Kids Count, 2023.
[4] *See* crimecards.dc.gov.

into similar and worse ones. Combined with other budget cuts, it would soon lead to escalating horrors that could hit the pages of the *Washington Post,* and could easily lead to litigation and loss of autonomy in these matters. A dedicated watchdog bolsters Council's oversight abilities and can help prevent tragic and costly errors in the care of the District's most vulnerable youth. Preserving this office is a key investment in our city's future and the protection of our young people.

Open City Advocates continues to work with OFC on the issue of crossover youth, who often fall between the cracks of the delinquency and abuse/neglect systems. The full power of OFC's systemic recommendations have only just begun to be of use; now is not the time to cut it.

In many states, the neglect and delinquency agencies work closely together under shared oversight. This is because these states recognize the parallels between neglect and delinquency: most young people committed to the juvenile rehabilitation agencies have multiple adverse childhood experiences including abuse, and most cases of delinquency are not personal failures on the part of the child requiring accountability, but rather are tied to systemic failures by adults to support children's needs. Many children committed to DYRS who do not have a CFSA case file are nonetheless "crossover youth" according to this principle.

Nationwide, crossover youth suffer more severe consequences in the juvenile justice system and experience poorer long-term outcomes. There is still too little data about crossover youth in DC and there are few effective formal procedures outlining how CFSA and DYRS work with crossover youth. OFC is now well-placed to encourage data collection, facilitate collaboration, enable greater family engagement, and work to disrupt the pathway from foster care to juvenile delinquency.

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has yet to begin making the kind of systemic recommendations that we now regularly see from the Deputy Auditor on Juvenile Facilities Oversight, but they're also a much younger agency. We believe that they are now ready to begin this crucial work, and that the timing could not be worse to abolish them.

We regularly notice a lack of coordination between CFSA and DYRS around dual-jacketed crossover youth. In a time of tight budgets, cost-shifting is inevitable, but asking young people to navigate bureaucratic comedies of responsibility-shifting is a tragedy.

It remains essential for OFC to root their systemic recommendations in the investigation and resolution of individual complaints from youth and families. This rootedness in experiences of vulnerable children is the best way to monitor systemic practices in order to encourage reforms. In order to effectively investigate and mediate complaints from families, the ombudsperson must be an independent, neutral body, not subject to supervision by CFSA or DYRS.

The ombudsman's office should also work with the Deputy Auditor to collect and evaluate data from DYRS to identify gaps in service provision and recommend improvements to daily practices. In the very best case scenario, this would also significantly implicate children's experience in in-patient care in DBH facilities and contractors.

As we watch the proposed budget threaten to zero out the office whose hard work we still hope to build on, I think it is important to imagine clearly what it needs to become to keep our children safe and their families confident in their treatment.

Thank you for your time. I'm available to answer any questions.

Hi, my name is Kay Kay. I am testifying today to voice my support for establishing SOUL, a new permanency option for older youth in foster care.

SOUL stands out as a transformative initiative in the child welfare system because it was led by lived experts – people like me who have had direct, personal experience with the system. I helped design the concept of and draft the legislation creating SOUL, along with other current and former foster youth, and in partnership with CFSA and OAG. *Although I am disappointed that the proposed legislation is not included in the current FY26 Budget Support Act, I still believe this legislation is critical to support older youth in foster care.*

This approach has been a game-changer because it ensured that the solutions we created are informed by the real needs of youth and young adults, not just theoretical ideas. By prioritizing lived expertise, SOUL provides a unique opportunity to make changes that have an authentic, lasting impact on the lives of young people.

I believe SOUL has the potential to be magnificent in D.C., a city with many young people in need of meaningful support as they transition out of care.

In co-developing the proposed legislation, we were intentional about creating solutions that work for youth in D.C., particularly by fostering interdependent family dynamics, connections and relationships that youth can rely on as they build their own futures. Our vision is to ensure that every young person who engages with SOUL can establish a network of support that is personalized to their needs and sustainable over time.

I am deeply committed to this work because I believe in the potential of every young person. When we give youth the tools, guidance, and resources they need, we empower them to become:

- First: Self-sufficient by giving them the tools to navigate their independence confidently.
- Second: Self-reliant by equipping them to make decisions and manage challenges on their own.
- And third: Knowledgeable by giving them skills to be informed, prepared for adulthood, and set them up for success.

I truly believe youth will thrive if we invest in them and give them a clear path to follow. My goal is to help them not just survive, but flourish.

Being a part of SOUL isn't just about helping others – it was also a meaningful experience to grow into the advocate I aspire to be. This work is helping me clarify my direction in advocacy while reinforcing my commitment to making a lasting difference for youth in foster care.

I believe SOUL in DC will have an incredible and lasting impact, one that changes the way we support older youth and youth who are transitioning out of foster care. It will ensure that these young people are not just surviving but thriving, equipped with the skills and support they need to become self-sufficient, self-reliant, and knowledgeable.

At its core, SOUL is about people with lived experience leading the way. When lived experts are part of the team, they bring authenticity and valuable insights that ensure the work reflects the realities of youth in care.

It's about moving forward with intention, grounded in love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice. These principles are essential to making sure SOUL becomes a transformative force in the foster care system.

I ask this Committee to please move the proposed SOUL legislation forward as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Suggest cutting this paragraph as it gets more into the implementation and not necessary for this testimony:

To bring this vision to life, we need to ensure that everyone involved in SOUL has the right training and a clear understanding of its mission. It's not enough to create the framework; we must also provide quality guidance and resources to support youth on their permanency journeys. Every resource must be used intentionally and made accessible-not just to the youth, but also to their SOUL families- so they can build lasting, interdependent relationships.

Child and Family Services Agency

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)

Budget Hearing

Written Testimony/Kenji Collins

Thursday, May 29, 2025

Good afternoon, my name is Kenji Collins. I am a Single Father of 5, with my oldest child being 27 years old and my youngest being 8 years old. I reside in Washington, DC in Ward 8.

I learned about the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative through my youngest child's mother, who participated in workshops and activities on property in the Barry Farm Dwellings Community. My interest to learn about the Far Southeast Collaborative's different programs came after being introduced to IAMPROME/I Am a Product of My Environment, who partner with the agency. They told me about Quenching the Father Thirst (QFT) and the Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP). My interest was sparked, so I agreed to check them out.

With my journey through Quenching the Father Thirst and the Nurturing Parenting Program, I can say they have helped me become a more patient and understanding parent to my children. I believe I have acquired skills like being more observant and paying more attention to all of my children, especially when we are all together as a family. QFT and NPP has helped me reflect more on the things I do and how I can improve myself every day as a father of 5 children.

I remember dealing with challenges like depression, and how I didn't want to leave the house and interact with people because of it. I believe the bonding with the facilitators and participants of these parenting classes empowered me, supported me, and gave me a strong sense of community. Their encouragement and willingness to stay connected helped me through some dark times, and I regained the courage and confidence needed to show up for my family and myself.

The facilitators and staff are a great fit for the people they serve. They are relatable and see the good in the participants of the programs. Throughout the sessions, I was encouraged to reflect, grow, and apply what I learned to my daily life. I love them and feel it's a blessing to connect with them.

I continuously recommend Quenching the Father Thirst and the Nurturing Parenting Program to my family, friends, and others. These parenting classes are beneficial. They help us learn more about ourselves and aid in our journey of becoming better parents.

TESTIMONY OF DR. KINAYA C. SOKOYA

ON BEHALF OF THE

DC CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND

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MAY 27, 2025

Need for Support

The DC Children's Trust Fund is asking you to help us maintain strong families where children can remain in their homes safe and nurtured. Since its establishment, the Trust Fund has received approximately $200,000 a year from the federal government and $125,000 from private sources. This core funding was federal dollars received for the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect that funded the lead agency for the District. For the past five years, the Mayor has designated the Child and Family Services Agency as the Title II Lead Agency for the District of Columbia. The role of the Trust Fund was diminished from the role of Lead Agency to a grantee of CFSA. As a grantee, the former administration of CFSA reduced DCCTF funding from $200,000 to $159,000 to $66,650. These reductions have crippled the Trust Fund and eliminated services.

Restoration of CFSA funding to $200,000 is requested to fund the following programs/services.

The mental wellbeing of parents is critical during this period of heightened stress due to federal funding cuts and service reduction. This stress may negatively affect the safety of their children in their homes. Parents need more support for their families, not less. The difference between DCCTF and other service providers is DCCTF reaches out to families rather than wait to be contacted by them for help. Investment in this support for primary prevention will reduce the funding that may be necessary to serve the increased number of families who go into crisis and children who are placed in foster care because of parental stress.

Current Programs and Services

The Trust Funds Program Goals are to:

1. To facilitate the development of family strengthening programs and practices in partnership with community-based organizations.
2. To develop programmatic and in-kind resources to support prevention efforts
3. To increase public and professional awareness of the benefits and cost-effectiveness of family strengthening policies, programs, and practices for the prevention of child maltreatment.

The Trust Fund's programs are organized in 4 Pillars:

• Parent Education:	$ 30,000
• Parent Support:	$ 100,00
• Parent Leadership:	$ 50,000
• Community Capacity Building:	$ 20,000
	$200,000

Parent Education: $30,000
(For training materials and publication costs)

In August 2021, the DCCTF transitioned to a national Parent Education organization. These programs include the Effective Black Parenting Program, Los Ninos Bien Educados Program, and the New Confident Parent Education Program. In the Parent Education Center, the Trust Fund's expert trainers train and certify instructors from across the country to educate parents in their local areas using the curriculums.

Parent Support: $100,000
(For funding and managing five parent support groups and sponsoring activities for Family Strengthening Month)

Through Parent support groups that are embedded in the community throughout the District of Columbia, parents receive support to enhance their parenting skills and respite services to reduce stress. This resource is especially needed at this time to help parents manage stress due to the impact from the reduction in funding and support on the federal level. The Trust Fund leads a network of organizations that offer parent support groups throughout the District of Columbia. Using the national *Circle of Parents* model the Trust Fund manages the network through forging a partnership with selected community organizations to house and operate the groups. The Trust Fund provides funding, training and technical assistance to these organizations. Funding for this program was totally cut by CFSA.

Parent Leadership; $50,000
(For Parent Leadership Month, Family Strengthening Month Activities, and the Parent Leadership Academy)

Each February, the Trust Fund promotes National Parent Leadership Month to recognize parent leaders in the District of Columbia. Organizations nominate parents to be recognized as parent leaders and an event is held.

April is Family Strengthening Month. Each year, the Trust conducts general and targeted public awareness campaigns on child-wellbeing addressing topics on child safety and nurturing. The Trust Fund serves as a lead agency in activities to promote National Parent Leadership Month (February) and Family Strengthening Month (April). The Trust Fund partners with the DC Primary Prevention Network to plan a series of events and activities during April. Before the program was cut, each year targeted messages were created and disseminated throughout the District of Columbia. In 2023, bus banners thanked residents (villagers) for supporting parents and children. Banners were placed on 20 public service buses on diverse routes during the month. There were over 2 million views. This public messaging was cut by CFSA.

The Trust Fund also conducts a Parent Leadership Academy one to two times per year. Through the Parent Leadership Academy, parents develop leadership and advocacy skills. The Academy consists of 20 hours of training that is offered in 10 two-hour sessions. Parents are given a certificate and stipend for completing the Academy and are referred to leadership opportunities that contribute to community development, including the opportunity to meet with their local elected representatives. In preparation for the visit, a parent summit is held.

Community Capacity Building: $20,000
(For Professional Development Training and Public Education)

To increase parent support by enhancing community organization capacity, the Trust Fund offers training for community-based organizations on the Circle of Parents Model (parent groups and

children's programs), a model for a life skills program, non-violent conflict resolution education program (for 4th grade elementary school youth), domestic violence), infant massage, primary child abuse prevention, DC's laws on child abuse and neglect, healthy relationships, stress management, domestic violence prevention and intervention, and cultural competence.

For **Public Education**, the Trust Fund:

- Develops public education materials that promote primary prevention.
- Develops messages that emphasize and promote ways to strengthen families and develop healthy children.
- Conducts outreach to businesses, funders, and national organizations headquartered in D.C. to provide resources that support primary prevention.
- Serves as a resource on primary prevention models, programs, strategies, and materials.
- Conducts outreach to policymakers and advocates to insist that primary prevention be a component of human service provision.
- Establishes relationships with local organizations.

2025 Schedule of Events

ACTIVITY	DATES
Coat Distribution	12/20/24 – 2/28/25
Kwanzaa Essay Contest	2/14/25
Parent Leadership Month Luncheon	2/27/25
Parent Summit	3/12/25
Parent Legislative Day	3/27/25
Family Strengthening Month	4/3/25 – 4/30/25
Parent Leadership Academy	5/1/25 – 6/17/25
2025 Needs Assessment	6/30/25

History of the DC Children's Trust Fund

The D.C. Children's Trust Fund for the Prevention of Child Abuse (The Trust, DCCTF) was established in October 1993 as a public private-private partnership because of legislation passed by

the District of Columbia City Council and authorized by the Mayor. In 1998, the Trust was incorporated as a 501(c)3 private non-profit agency. The mission of the Trust Fund is to prevent child abuse and neglect by providing funding and technical assistance to local groups for the establishment and/or expansion of primary prevention activities and services to strengthen families. Until recently, each year, the Mayor has designated the Trust Fund as the Title II Lead agency in the District of Columbia for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. National partners include the Alliance for Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, Circle of Parents, the Children's Bureau, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

The Trust Fund promotes primary prevention promoting the five protective factors for strong families and following the social ecological public health approach, developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which recognize the importance of addressing the environment as well as individuals and families in the environment. Prevention is pursued by promoting parental resilience, increasing parents' knowledge of parenting and child development, connecting families to obtain concrete support in times of need, promoting social connections with a support system and services, and promoting the social and emotional development of children.

- *On the Individual Level*, the Trust Fund promotes parent education and support and provides services for the social and emotional competence of children.
- *On the Relationship Level*, the Trust Fund promotes the development of parental resilience, social connections for families, provision of services to enhance parents' and caregivers' knowledge of parenting and child development, and mentoring programs.
- *On the Community Level*, the Trust Fund promotes safe and nurturing neighborhoods with adequate green spaces and where services are available that provide families with concrete support in times of need.

- *On the Societal Level*, the Trust Fund promotes public policies and practices that support families. Through our Parent Leadership Academy, the Trust Fund trains parents so they can better advocate for their children and themselves. The Trust Fund is the national training and credentialing center for the Effective Black Parenting Program, Los Ninos Educados Bien, and the New Confident Parenting Program.

Organizational Qualifications

The mission of the Trust Fund is to prevent child abuse and neglect by providing funding and technical assistance to local groups for the establishment and/or expansion of prevention activities and services to strengthen families. Our vision is that all children will grow up in strong nurturing families where they will be able to thrive and succeed.

The Trust Fund is a small organization with 1.5 FTE staff and 10 consultants, which relies on three funding sources and a program that generates revenues. We are striving to enhance our infrastructure, diversify our funding, and expand our programs.

The Trust Fund is led by Dr. Kinaya C. Sokoya, the Executive Director, who is a certified social work manager, holds a doctorate in Higher Education Administration, holds a master's degree in Public and Business Administration and holds an undergraduate degree in Social Work. She has been an executive leader of non-profit organizations for over forty years. Financial Management is provided by a certified public accounting firm; and, payroll is managed by ADP. An audit is completed each year. The management group is responsible for all aspects of program, policy, and fiscal management for the D.C. Children's Trust Fund. Consultants are contracted to assist in accomplishing goals in selected areas of the Trust Fund's work, such as publishing and public relations.

Following is our proposed budget for 2026. For more information on the Trust Fund's activities and programs, please go to the Trust Fund's website, www.dcctf.org.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kinaya C. Sokoya

Kinaya C. Sokoya
Executive Director
DC Children's Trust Fund

DCCTF 2026 PROPOSED BUDGET				
Budget Line #	**Budget Activity Title**	**Specific Services Provided**	**Detail**	**Budget Total**
1	**Personnel Costs**			
	Administrative			**$ 110,000.00**
	Executive Director	Administrative/Program Oversite	$50,000.00	
	Program Coordinator	Managing Programs	$50,000.00	
	Contract Support	Accounting/Auditing, Etc.	$10,000.00	
	Non-personnel Costs			
2	**Capacity Building**			**$ 5,000.00**
	Landscape of EBP Services	Building capacity around evidence-based programming and what is needed for child abuse prevention in the City	$5,000.00	
3	**Parent Leadership**			**$ 85,000.00**
	Parent Support	Coordinate Circle of Parents	$50,000.00	
	Parent Leadership Month	Parent Leadership Dinner	$6,000.00	
	Parent Education	Parent Leadership Academy	$3,000.00	
	Technology	Virtual Support/Internet/Phone	$6,000.00	
4	**Public Awareness**	Family Strengthening Month/Training	$20,000.00	
				$ 200,000.00

TESTIMONY

District of Columbia Council's Committee on Youth Affairs
Child and Family Services Agency

Thursday, May 29, 2025

Hello, Chairperson Parker and Members of the Committee on Youth Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Kristina Flemming. I am a former foster youth, a proud mother, and a parent trainer with the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC). I'm here today to share why funding for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Programs is not just important — it is life-changing.

I entered foster care at the age of 15 due to my parents' struggles with substance abuse and neglect, and I aged out of the system at 21. When I became a mother at 14, I made a promise to myself — that I would be the kind of parent I never had, that I would break the cycle, and that my daughter would grow up safe, supported, and loved. But I couldn't do that alone.

Thanks to the DC Child and Family Services Agency, DC127, and every person who believed in me and my child, I received the resources I needed to build a stable foundation for our future. After aging out of care, I met Ms. Najiba, the Executive Director of FAPAC. She told me about their Child Abuse Prevention Program for young mothers — a program funded by CFSA and the District.

I enrolled, and for several months, I learned about child development, effective parenting strategies, and healthy discipline methods. One lesson that stuck with me was this: ***Parents are their child's first and***

most important role models. That idea changed everything for me. I realized that I couldn't change my past, but I could shape my daughter's future.

After completing the program, FAPAC empowered me to become a parent trainer myself. So far, I have delivered 27 hours of child abuse prevention training to mothers across the District — and I plan to continue supporting and educating families for as long as I'm able. I'm also pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Psychology to take it to another level.

My lived experience taught me about what children and families need. The abuse prevention program gave me the tools to become the parent I want to be. And FAPAC gave me a platform to bring it all together and to uplift others.

So today, I ask you to please continue to support and fund Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Programs through CFSA. These programs work. They empower parents, strengthen families, and help prevent the need for foster care before it begins. I am living proof of that. Thank you for investing in me and for the opportunity to share my story.

Kristina Fleming
Parent Trainer
FAPAC
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Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council
Committee on Youth Affairs
May 29, 2025

Public Hearing:
Budget Oversight Hearing
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

Leah Castelaz
Senior Policy Attorney
Children's Law Center

Introduction

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, and members of the Committee. My name is Leah Castelaz. I am a Senior Policy Attorney at Children's Law Center and a resident of the District. Children's Law Center believes every child should grow up with a strong foundation of family, health and education and live in a world free from poverty, trauma, racism and other forms of oppression. Our more than 100 staff – together with DC children and families, community partners and pro bono attorneys – use the law to solve children's urgent problems today and improve the systems that will affect their lives tomorrow. Since our founding in 1996, we have reached more than 50,000 children and families directly and multiplied our impact by advocating for city-wide solutions that benefit hundreds of thousands more.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Mayor's proposed FY2026 budget for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children ("Office"). We are deeply concerned by the Mayor's decision once again to defund the Office and repeal the legislation establishing this critical Office.[1] While it is true that the District is facing a difficult budget reality, the Mayor's hostility to this Office is longstanding and predates the current budget crisis. In fact, the Mayor has opposed the creation of this Office from the beginning and has repeatedly sought to override the Council's legislative powers in establishing this Office. The Mayor's desire to cut the Office is not about cost savings and will instead cause harm to children and families. During these uncertain and difficult

times, as District agencies are pulling back services and support, the vulnerable children and families that the Office serves need help and support more than ever. The Office plays a critical role in listening to families when their needs are not met and helping them navigate the District systems that are supposed to be serving them.

We thank the DC Council for their decisive action in the past and once again call on them to fully restore funding to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children and strike the repeal language from the Budget Support Act. Thank you, Councilmember Parker, for your direct statements of support during both performance oversight and the budget hearings.[2] We understand that it is critical for this Committee to hear more about the work of the Office and the tangible impact it is having on children and families in the District. To this end, my testimony today will: (1) discuss the current work of the Office and how it will support District children and families during uncertain, stressful times, (2) highlight the need for the Office during a time of a precarious budget by helping to ensure proper oversight of child and family facing agencies; and (3) underscore how the Mayor's continued attempted evisceration of this Office is a direct challenge to Council's oversight power.

The Office plays a critical role in facilitating both oversight, systemic review, and constituent services across the District. We cannot afford to lose the progress that has already been made by the uniquely positioned Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. We look forward to working with the Committee on Youth Affairs, the whole DC

Council, the Office, and child welfare system agencies to strengthen the important and crucial work of the Ombudsperson for Children.

The Office, While Still in its Infancy, Has Proven to Be a Critical Tool Across the District for Children, Families, Community Organizations, and Government Agencies

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has Been a Valuable Resource for Children's Law Center's Work in the Child Welfare System

Children's Law Center knows both the need for and value of this Office because we see firsthand how children in foster care and their families and caregivers struggle to navigate the child welfare system on their own. Each year, Children's Law Center attorneys serve as guardians-ad-litem for several hundred children in foster care and protective supervision – over half of all children in the care and custody of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).[3] And each year, we see our clients fail to have their needs met by the child welfare system in the District – a system that encompasses many agencies beyond just CFSA.[4] The Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Health (DC Health), the Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF), the Office of the Superintendent of Education (OSSE), District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), the DC Housing Authority (DCHA), and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), to name a few, all have a role to play in ensuring the District fulfills its responsibilities to foster children and their families. In the past year, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has begun to assist in holding relevant city

agencies accountable for meeting the needs of child welfare-involved families and actively facilitate interagency communication and coordination.[5]

During the performance oversight hearing in February 2025, we were able to discuss the significant progress of the Office in two short years as well as highlight opportunities for advancement.[6] The Ombudsperson for Children has continued to grow its capacity to problem-solve on behalf of individuals and families involved in the child-welfare family, deepen its connections to and impact in the community, and provide valuable insights to the Council in support of its oversight of the child welfare system. The Ombudsperson for Children helps children and families navigate the complexities of the child welfare system through its many functions.[7]

Earlier this year, we recognized that there was a gap in connecting our attorneys with the Office. We reached out to the Office to navigate how to strengthen their relationships not just with Children's Law Center's attorneys, but attorneys across the city representing child welfare involved youth and families. As part of this work, the Office has come to the Children's Law Center offices twice to present on their work and connect with our attorneys. Being community facing and spending time doing this level of outreach is critical for building trust in a system riddled with distrust. Being public facing and spending time building relationships with Children's Law Center and across the District has allowed this Office to deepen its connections and be more impactful in its work. The Office has worked directly with several guardians-ad litem in their cases to

help navigate persistent issues. Our attorneys have noted the value of being able to reach out to the Office, even if they are not filing a formal complaint, they see it as a space to access critical resources and information. The Office has agreed to come to Children's Law Center on a more regular basis to create an easier touch point for the guardians-ad litem and clients. While still in its pilot phase, we look forward to reporting to this Committee on how this level of commitment and engagement by the Ombudsperson has an impact on our work by helping to navigate complicated systems and resolves issues that do not require court involvement.

As part of these more regular touchpoints the Office will also be spending time with guardians-ad litem on key systemic issues that the guardians-ad litem see across their cases. We believe this will be an excellent opportunity to support the Office's other critical function – to independently investigate systemic concerns relating to CFSA children, including issues relating to interagency communication and coordination. Children's Law Center is acutely aware of trends across the clients we serve. For example, during Performance Oversight, we touched on CFSA's failure to properly implement the Social Security Income requirements in the Preserving Our Kids' Equity Through Trusts and Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Amendment Act of 2022 ("POKETT").[8] This is deeply impacting Children's Law Center clients. Being able to connect with the Ombudsperson on this wide-spread systemic issue will help many of our clients in the long run. For example, the POKETT Act requires CFSA to screen every child in care for

social security benefit eligibility. However, this is not happening consistently and as a result clients are missing out on benefits they should have received. The Ombudsperson is in the right position to further investigate where the gaps are in the system that are causing these failures. This is just one example of the deeper systemic work that we hope to engage in with the Ombudsperson for years to come.

The Ombudsperson Serves a Critical Role of Connecting Across the Community and Government Agencies to Ensure Vulnerable Families are Heard

This deep level of systemic work is not just happening with Children's Law Center, but across the District. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children is in a critical position to provide interagency coordination. The Office has hit many speedbumps trying to engaging executive agencies – an issue this Council is all too familiar with. However, the Office has persisted in opening up numerous opportunities for engagement, including focus groups that bring together community-based organizations and government officials as well as attending events and facilitating one-on-one conversations across both community stakeholders and the government.[9]

Across the two and half years of operation, the Ombudsperson has prioritized engagement with a variety of stakeholders. The Ombudsperson continues to make significant efforts to do outreach to the community to share the mission and goals of the Ombudsperson. In FY2024, the Ombudsperson engaged in monthly and quarterly child welfare advocate meetings, presented at Foster and Adoptive Parents Advocacy Center (FAPAC) Youth and Parent Summit, and facilitated a town hall for the Mayor's Advisory

Committee on Child Abuse & Neglect (MACCAN) – just to name a few examples of engagement.[10] Being community facing is a critical component to help DC residents see the Ombudsperson as a tool to help resolve concerns and issues arising in the child welfare system.

Moreover, the Ombudsperson deepened their connections with government stakeholders. It is particularly important to highlight that CFSA and the Ombudsperson have a strong relationship as evidenced by: the Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson has an established office within CFSA;[11] the Office meets with the CFSA Director, Chief of Staff and Special Assistant to the Director on a bi-weekly basis;[12] and the Office has been able to directly engage with CFSA staff, including social workers.[13] It is also important to note that in response to the establishment of this Office, the agency eliminated its internal ombudsman. If the Ombudsperson is defunded in FY26 there will be no Ombudsperson overseeing CFSA at all. This is extremely alarming and closes a door on vulnerable children and families, especially during a time when District agencies are pulling back services and supports. The Office plays a critical role in listening to families when their needs are not met and helping them navigate the District systems that are supposed to be serving them.

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children is the Only District Agency Making Progress on Tracking and Systematically Reporting on Crossover Youth

The level of engagement is needed not just with CFSA but across the District. The Ombudsperson has been working on strengthening its relationships with other

government agencies and supporting interagency coordination. In particular, we have seen the Office expend significant resources to improve the systems engaged with District's crossover youth – children who experience both the foster care system and juvenile justice system.[14]

Crossover youth experience significant challenges to their well-being and stability, too often rolling from one system into the next – from foster care to DC's homeless or juvenile justice systems, for example. They face even greater barriers to positive outcomes in adulthood – including more difficulties in school and higher unemployment rates – than foster care youth involved in only one system.[15] From Children's Law Center's own internal data, we see a significant number of our youth become involved in the juvenile or adult criminal legal system – on average, over the last four years, 85 percent of our clients ages 14 years and older have had some involvement in a criminal case, signifying a significant overlap between the child welfare and the criminal legal system. We also know that over 40 percent of Children's Law Center crossover youth clients experienced placement issues or problems with receiving services from CFSA due to their juvenile or adult criminal legal system involvement.[16]

Currently, no District agency comprehensively tracks crossover youth or conducts systemic analyses on factors affecting their outcomes. As a result, these youth and their problems have remained largely invisible to the Council and the agencies responsible for

their well-being. The Ombudsperson for Children is explicitly tasked by law to report annually on crossover youth and identify systemic issues impacting their outcomes.[17]

For years, the District has struggled to even identify this population let alone understand the systemic challenges this population faces. This is rooted in the fact that responsibility for this population is spread across multiple agencies including courts and federal agencies that do not answer to the District government. In establishing data collection on crossover youth, the Office encountered several obstacles including differing data collection process by CFSA and Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), working with the courts and the Office of the Attorney General to access records, and confidentiality concerns of juvenile records which limited full data collection.[18]

Despite these persistent barriers, the Office has made substantial steps in collecting data on crossover youth in the District. We commend the Office's persistence and ongoing collaboration with both agencies to establish entry level data for the District's crossover youth population.[19] Without the Office's tenacity and relationship-building, the District would not even have a baseline of data on crossover youth including the number of youths in dual status, the placement type, and pathways to involvement trends.[20]

While the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children still has more work to do to establish data for crossover youth – we cannot afford to lose the progress that has already been made. The Office has been at the center of partnering, developing, and instituting

data sharing agreements between the two agencies to understand the full scope of the crossover youth population. Additionally, the Office has been directly working with the courts, speaking with the administration staff, and judges to better understand how to access the records of crossover youth. The Ombudsperson should continue to work with the integration of STAAND with Odyssey, the court's data system, to ensure they are able to better capture data on crossover youth. There are clear continued opportunities to deepen this work, and the Office is in the best position to serve as a convening for the various groups working on crossover youth in the District given their unique position and legislatively mandated requirements.

If the District loses the Ombudsperson, it will lose the progress being made on crossover youth in the District. Without an Ombudsperson, there will no longer be oversight on a population that no one else is monitoring or supporting – sending a clear message that this population will continue to be deprioritized despite a growing need for investment and support. Investment in the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children is investment in the District's crossover youth population.

We acknowledge there is room for improvement, and look forward to working with the Office, the Council, and the community to continue to strengthen the Office, we must also note that the Office has built a strong foundation to continue to its impact on the District. Cutting the Office would end their already significant investments and disallow opportunity to further grow. The Office is still in its infancy – two years is not a

long time to set up an Office from the ground up. We are committed to this Office and see the immense need and value for the Office in the District.

The Office is Needed, Now More Than Ever, to Support District Families Navigating Difficult and Uncertain Times

As a result of the District's current budget challenges, many of the government agencies and programs focused on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable District children and families are facing drastic cuts. The Office is needed to ensure this Committee, and the Council can fully understand the scope and impact of these cuts, and exercise oversight accordingly. There also needs to be significant communication between child and family-serving agencies to identify opportunities to share resources and ensure residents are connected with the appropriate support and services. The Office is in the best position to provide this much needed level of monitoring and cross-agency coordination.

The Goal of Creating the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children was to Ensure Transparency and Accountability in the Child Welfare System

To provide a little further context on the critical role of the Ombudsperson during difficult times, we need to go back thirty-one years. Beginning in 1989, CFSA was under the supervision of a court-appointed monitor as a result of *LaShawn A. v. Bowser* ("*LaShawn*") – a federal class action lawsuit filed in 1989 on behalf of abused and neglected children in the District of Columbia.[21]

In September 2022, the Mayor announced the official exit from the federal court oversight.[22] The exit meant an end to the Center for the Study of Social Policy ("CSSP") monitoring and reporting on the District's progress in implementing the extensive remedial order imposing numerous requirements, changes, and reforms in every area of the child welfare system. As the court monitor, CSSP was able to collect data, documents, and other information from CFSA. CSSP, in turn, provided this information to the public and the Council in the form of regular reports and testimony.[23]

CSSP reports were essential to creating transparency and accountability within the District's child welfare system. CSSP's work went far beyond just collecting data from CFSA. CSSP had access to case records in CFSA's FACES.NET to collect supplementary data and verify performance on activities across the agency.[24] As part of its monitoring, CSSP would present it to a panel consisting of CFSA representatives and other CSSP staff to ensure reliability of the information and better inform data collection practices for the agency. Per CSSP, over its time as the court monitor the data reporting by CFSA improved significantly due to CSSP involvement.[25]

Understanding the significant impact CSSP had on improving the District's child welfare system, the Council agreed that it could not afford to lose this level of oversight. The Council recognized that while there were other existing sources of systemic accountability of CFSA – the Citizen Review Panel on Child Abuse and Neglect ("CRP"), Council performance oversight, and the court monitor for LaShawn – these entities did

not have the deep access necessary to provide sufficient oversight of CFSA and are not designed to consider broader systemic issues affecting children.[26]

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children fills gaps left by the end of the court monitor's reporting. Per the enacting legislation, the Office has access to relevant records and databases, CFSA facilities and staff, as well as holds subpoena power to fulfill its duties.[27] The Ombudsperson for Children has direct access to CFSA data in the same way as the court monitor and is responsible for regularly reporting data trends and analysis to the Council, just as the court monitor did.[28] Because of this, the Office is uniquely positioned to support and inform the Council's oversight of CFSA and other government agencies working with District children and families.[29] Similarly, DYRS was under a court monitor for an extensive period of time and the Office is well positioned to support DYRS oversight as well.[30]

The Office Can and Should Play a Role in Helping Government Agencies Navigate Difficult Budget Decisions to Ensure Minimal to No Impact on Children and Families

The reality is that budget cuts may result in cuts to staff and services at CFSA or DYRS for example, and we must do everything to ensure that these agencies and others do not backtrack in their services and support for District children and families. Harsh budget realities will require difficult decisions. The Office can provide a critical third party to help navigate those decisions and bring folks to the table. The Office can also monitor the impact of those cuts and ensure that agencies do not engage in past actions that lead to significant harm to children and families. Maintaining funding for the Office

is a critical investment in prevention. The District, as do many jurisdictions, often defer maintenance and do not invest in prevention. If investments are not made now in the Office, this is where we will be heading. The Office will help us weather this storm and grow the District's strength to fight off future storms.

It is clear that the Office has already been an incredible support to families navigating the complicated child welfare system.[31] Given the connections the Office has already made with residents, community-based organizations and other government agencies, elimination of the Office would be strongly felt across the District.

In addition to the impact on families, there will be consequences for the District's economy in the long run. Just as eviction is a short-term fix that is ultimately more costly than prevention services like rental assistance, it is ultimately better to sustain programs through a tough budget year than to try to rebuild them later. The District has already invested a significant number of resources – time, energy, and money – into the Office. To walk back on this investment would result in a loss of trust and reputation built within the community, further financial implications, and missed opportunities.

The Mayor Continues to Impede on the Council's Legislative Power By Defunding the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

The defunding of the Office is a clear dismissal of the Council's authority, undermines the Council's role, and demonstrates serious disregard for legislative entities in the District. Children's Law Center has been a staunch supporter of the Council's

extraordinary efforts to establish this Office for many years – through unanimously voting to establish the Office in 2020[32] and unanimously overriding the Mayor's veto in 2021,[33] to fully funding the Office in FY2022[34] and fully restoring funding for the Office when the Mayor defunded it the first time in FY2023 and FY2025.[35]

The Mayor has, for the third year in a row, imperiled accountability and transparency for DC's most vulnerable families. Moreover, her primary objection of continuing to cut this Office focuses on the power dynamics with the Council and not supporting District children and families. Her political machinations demonstrate a callous disregard for children and families across the District, especially those connected to the child welfare system.

The Office is a legislative agency and much like the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, the DC Auditor, and the Council itself – the Mayor does not have authority over the Office, the Council does. The Office was specifically put under the legislative branch to ensure independence and impartiality while supporting the Council's oversight of government agencies. The Mayor's continued decision to cut this Office is a clear dismissal of the Council's authority, undermines the Council's role, and is a serious disregard for legislative entities in the District.

As a part of the legislative branch, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has the ability to conduct impartial and independent investigations which are critical to address the very real structural power differential among the child welfare-involved

children, youth, and caregivers and the case-carrying social workers and agency leadership. Although CFSA has made significant efforts in recent years to focus on prevention services that aim to keep families together and avoid removals whenever possible, the fact remains that families involved with DC's child welfare system are facing the possibility that their children may be taken away from them.[36] This is a terrifying prospect that inevitably creates a significant power imbalance between CFSA and the families it serves. The Ombudsperson for Children can be an essential tool for re-balancing this power dynamic, providing families with a safe place to get information and raise concerns – but only if families believe the Ombudsperson for Children is an independent entity that can be trusted to help them.

Conclusion

It is clear the Office plays an important role in resolving the day-to-day problems, addressing the systemic concerns of the District's children and families, and building Council's capacity to have effective oversight – and is why the Council must act to preserve the Office. Therefore, we ask that the Council stand up to the Mayor, protect its authority, and fully restore funding to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children and strike the repeal language from the Budget Support Act.[37] Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we welcome any questions the Committee may have.

[1] Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Fiscal Impact Statement – "Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Support Act of 2025," May 27, 2025, available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bbd09f3d74562c7f0e4bb10/t/6835dee493ad9c1c05cb325c/1748360932599/FIS+Fiscal+Year+2026+Budget+Support+Act+of+2025+as+introduced+May+27+2025.pdf; Mayor's Proposed FY 2026 Budget and Financial Plan, Volume 4 Agency Budget Chapters – Part 3, Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, p. E-99.

[2] Committee on Youth Affairs, Councilmember Parker, Performance Oversight – Office on African American Affairs, CFSA, and Ombudsperson for Children, (February 13, 2025), *available at*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgFMIYKk0nw&t=18771s; Committee on Youth Affairs, Councilmember Parker, Budget Oversight Hearing: CFSA, and Ombudsperson for Children, (May 29, 2025), *available at*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTbCrAbDjhA&t=25397s.

[3] Children's Law Center attorneys represent children who are the subject of abuse and neglect cases in DC's Family Court. CLC attorneys fight to find safe homes and ensure that children receive the services they need to overcome the trauma that first brought them into the child welfare system. DC Children's Law Center, About Us, available at: https://www.childrenslawcenter.org/content/about-us. The term "protective supervision" means a legal status created by Division order in neglect cases whereby a minor is permitted to remain in his home under supervision, subject to return to the Division during the period of protective supervision. D.C. Code § 16-2301(19).

[4] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 25, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TWeerasinghaCote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-25-2021-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Human Services, (February 27, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_ChildrensLaw-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-17-2022-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, Children's Law Center, Testimony before the District of Columbia Council Committee on Human Services, (September 22, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/09/TWeerasingha-Cote_CLC-Testimony-for-Sept.-22-2022-Hearing-on-B24-0857B24-0941_FINAL.pdf. Sharra E. Greer, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 24, 2023), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sharra-E.-Greer_Childrens-LawCenter_Performance-Oversight_FY2022-23-CFSA_final.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-21-2024-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-002.pdf. Leah Castelaz, testimony before DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs, (February 13, 2025), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/2024-25-oversight-testimony-office-of-the-ombudsperson-for-children/.

[5] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, January 11, 2024, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf.

[6] Leah Castelaz, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 13, 2025), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/2024-25-oversight-testimony-office-of-the-ombudsperson-for-children/.

[7] First, the Ombudsperson works to resolve everyday problems by providing the space for children, families, and agency staff to work through and resolve these conflicts together or ensure children and families can connect with the right person to meet their needs in a timely manner. Additionally, the Ombudsperson is a critical resource for information and referrals which provides the Office with additional insights into what District families may be looking for with regards to resources, services, and supports. Second, the Ombudsperson plays a crucial role in making connections across the community and the government that help to facilitate information sharing as well as improved communication, coordination and connectiveness in the District. Finally, the Office is responsible for identifying trends and systemic issues impacting children and families involved in the child welfare system and developing recommendations based on this analysis.

[8] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs, (February 13, 2025), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/2024-25-oversight-testimony-child-and-family-services-agency/.

[9] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[10] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, January 11, 2024, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf; District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, FY2024 Annual Report, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/page_content/attachments/OFC_FY2024_Annual_Report.pdf.

[11] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, January 11, 2024, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf.

[12] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Fiscal Year 2023 Mid-Year Report, July 31, 2023, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_ofc_mid-year_report_fy2023_rev.pdf.

[13] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, January 11, 2024, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf.

[14] Council of the District of Columbia Committee on Human Services, Committee Report on Bill 23-0437, the "Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Act of 2020," p. 15, (November 24, 2020), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/43171/Committee_Report/B23-0437Committee_Report2.pdf?Id=114187.

[15] *Id.* at p. 17.
[16] Internal Children's Law Center Data Collection, "GAL Deep Dive," June 2022 through May 2023; Internal Children's Law Center Data Collection, "GAL Deep Dive," June 2023 through May 2024.
[17] D.C. Law 23-270. Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020.
[18] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, January 11, 2024, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf.
[19] *Id.*
[20] *Id.*
[21] *LaShawn A v. Kelly*, 887 F. Supp. 297, 298 – 300 (D.D.C. 1995). *See* Children's Law Center, *Overview of the LaShawn A. Litigation,* Practice Kit, *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/files/attachments/resources/PK4_II.%20LaShawn%20A.%20Information_0.pdf.
[22] Executive Office of the Mayor, *With the End of a Three-Decade Class Action Lawsuit, Mayor Bowser Announces a New Era for the DC Child and Family Services Agency*, September 9, 2022, *available at*: https://mayor.dc.gov/release/end-three-decade-class-action-lawsuit-mayor-bowser-announces-new-era-dc-child-and-family.
[23] Center for the Study of Social Policy, Class Action Litigation: Washington DC's Child and Family Services Agency Reports, *available at*: https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/our-projects/class-action-litigationwashington-dcs-child-and-family-services-agency/.
[24] Examples of the activities the Monitor reported on include: (1) the quality and timely initiation of investigations; (2) collaborative referrals for low or moderate risk families; (3) visits between parents and workers and parents and children; (4) CFSA's case load; (5) quality service reviews; (6) social worker and supervisor training; and (7) timely licensure of foster and adoptive parents. *See* Center for the Study of Social Policy, LASHAWN A. V. BOWSER PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD January 1 – December 31, 2020, (March 31, 2021), *available at*: https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LaShawn-A-v.-Bowser-Report-for-Period-Jan-Dec-2020.pdf.
[25] A 2015 report found that CFSA was responsible for data irregularities in reporting to the Court Monitor. *See* A Better Childhood, *LaShawn A. V. Mayor Bowser, available at*: https://www.abetterchildhood.org/washington-dc. At the time of the Settlement Agreement, CFSA had made significant strides in their reporting. Judith Meltzer, CSSP president and one of the original members of the monitoring team. "CSSP has been instrumental in the District's changes through its independent research and data tracking, technical assistance, and problem-solving approach to monitoring the District's reform efforts." *See* Center for the Study of Social Policy, Final Settlement Agreement in *LaShawn A v. Bowser* Approved, (June 4, 2021), *available at*: https://cssp.org/about-us/connect/press-room/final-settlement-agreement-in-lashawn-a-v-bowser-approved/.
[26] Committee on Human Services, Report on Bill 23-0437, the "Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020," (November 24, 2020), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/43171/Committee_Report/B23-0437-Committee_Report2.pdf?Id=114187.
[27] D.C. Act 23-617. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Sec. 106. Powers. (a)(1)-(8). ((1) records from agency, an agency-licensed or contracted service and placement provider, or an entity that must operate under or comply with guidance from an agency; (2) log-in directly to CFSA's web-based case management and electronic data systems that service CFSA children without having to first obtain CFSA's consent or provide notice; (3) conduct inspections of the premises, or any part thereof, without prior notice, of CFSA and licensed or contracted placement providers, including secure facilities and

group homes and without prior notice, of single-family foster homes and contracted or licensed service providers; (4) issue a subpoena, enforceable in Superior Court of the District of Columbia, to compel the attendance and testimony; and (5) communicate privately with CFSA child (who wishes to speak with the Ombudsperson) and agency employee.).

[28] D.C. Act 23-617. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Sec. 108. Reporting.

[29]D.C. Act 23-617. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Sec. 108. Reporting. The Office is required to produce an annual report which is an important avenue for the Office to share out this critical reporting. However, recognizing a need for greater transparency, the Office has gone further and produced a mid-year report as well. We commend the Office for taking this extra step. The reporting done by the Office thus far serves as a solid foundation from which to expand future reporting on the full child welfare system. In the second annual report, the Office highlights the unique position of the Ombudsperson to help children and families, provide critical data, and inform systemic reform. The second annual report highlights issue pertaining to placement, kin caregiver supports, and safety measures, which reflect some of the same concerns Children's Law Center has for our own clients. We are glad to see these issues being highlighted by the Ombudsperson as it helps amplify the issues and provide solutions to long-term, persistent concerns. *See* Leah Castelaz, Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council, Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), *available at:* https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Leah-Castelaz_Testimony-before-the-Committee-on-Facilities-and-Family-Services_Ombudsperson-for-Children_2.21.24_final.pdf; District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, January 11, 2024, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/downloads/LIMS/54520/Introduction/RC25-0115Introduction.pdf?Id=182575.

[30] DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, et al., Appellants, v. JERRY M., et al., Appellees. No. 96–CV–1408. Decided: September 03, 1998; Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, *Mayor Bowser Announces the End of Court Oversight of the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services,* (December 1, 2020), *available at*: https://dyrs.dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-announces-end-court-oversight-dc-department-youth-rehabilitation-services.

[31] District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, January 11, 2024, *available at*: https://ofc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ofc/publication/attachments/dc_office_of_the_ombudsperson_for_children_annual_report_fy_2023_final2.pdf; Petrina Jones-Jesz, Testimony Before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/253.

[32] Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Establishment Amendment Act of 2020, Legislative History, *available at*: https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B23-0437.

[33] *Id*.

[34] Judith Sandalow, Children's Law Center Testimony before the DC Council Committee of the Whole, (June 7, 2021), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/JSandalow_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-June-7-2021-Committee-of-the-Whole-Budget-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-1.pdf.

[35] Judith Sandalow, Children's Law Center Testimony before the DC Council Committee of the Whole, (April 8, 2022), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/JSandalow_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-April-8-2022-Committee-of-the-Whole-Budget-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-Exhibits-A-and-B-1.pdf; Leah Castelaz, Children's Law Center Testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (April 25, 2024),

available at: https://childrenslawcenter.org/resources/fy25-budget-testimony-office-of-the-ombudsperson-for-children/.

[36] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, Testimony Before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-21-2024-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-002.pdf.

[37] Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Fiscal Impact Statement – "Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Support Act of 2025," May 27, 2025, available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bbd09f3d74562c7f0e4bb10/t/6835dee493ad9c1c05cb325c/1748360932599/FIS+Fiscal+Year+2026+Budget+Support+Act+of+2025+as+introduced+May+27+2025.pdf; Mayor's Proposed FY 2026 Budget and Financial Plan, Volume 4 Agency Budget Chapters – Part 3, Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, p. E-99.

Hello, my name is Leidy Vigil Hernandez, and I would like to share my experience with the Brightwood Family program. I was fortunate to be assigned Miss Ayala as my social worker, and she was incredibly welcoming to my family. I am truly grateful for all the support we received, and everything went very well. My children received excellent care from Miss Ayala, and I appreciate the valuable advice she provided to both me and my children. Thank you, Brightwood Family team! Leidy Vigil Hernandez and I want to talk about my experience with the Brightwood Family Success Center. The team is great women, and I was connected to Mistie Ayala, the community engagement coordinator. The site was very welcoming to my family. I'm more than grateful for all the support they gave me and everything went very well. My children received excellent care from Miss Ayala. I'm very grateful to her for the good advice she gave me and my children. Thank you, Brightwood Family team. Thank you.

Leidy Vigil Hernández

Leidy Vigil Hernández (May 27, 2025 15:29 EDT)

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Luisa Millan - Mary's Center

Testimony of Luisa Millan
Program Supervisor – Father-Child Attachment Home Visiting Program at Mary's Center
CFSA FY26 Budget Oversight Hearing – May 29, 2025

Good morning Members of the Committee and the DC Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Luisa Millan, and I am the Program Supervisor for the Father-Child Attachment Home Visiting Program at Mary's Center — a program made possible through CBCAP funding.

I've worked in the field of family support for many years, but supervising this program has been both professionally transformative and deeply personal.

The Father-Child Attachment Program works directly with fathers — many of whom are navigating poverty, language barriers, personal challenges, and family transitions — to support them in becoming more emotionally present, nurturing, and consistent in their children's lives. Each week, our family support workers meet with these fathers in their homes or virtually, building trust and providing resources that many of them have never had access to. Through this work, we witness fathers grow into themselves — with patience, love, and pride.

What makes this program unique is its culturally responsive approach. The majority of our fathers are Spanish-speaking. Many have experienced significant hardship, and yet they show up with an open heart, ready to learn, to grow, and to lead with love for their children. We don't just see behavioral change — we see personal growth and identity development.

This program not only changes the lives of the fathers we serve — it has changed mine.

As a single mother, this work has helped me truly understand the complexity and vulnerability of fatherhood. It has given me insight and tools that I've applied in my own life, especially in co-parenting dynamics that are sometimes difficult. I now engage with my child's father differently — with more empathy, clearer communication, and a stronger commitment to our child's well-being above all else. That shift is something I attribute directly to the values and practices I've absorbed through this program.

Every time I guide a staff member or meet with a father, I do it with profound respect. I have seen men — many of whom never had strong parental role models — become the very fathers they wished they had. I've watched fathers process grief, advocate for their children's education, learn how to play again, and say "I love you" to their kids for the first time. These are moments of deep human impact — and they are made possible because this program exists.

I urge you to continue funding and supporting programs such as the Father-Child Attachment Home Visiting Program from Mary's Center. Fathers matter. Their growth, presence, and involvement have a generational impact. Investing in fathers is investing in the future stability and well-being of our families, our children, and our communities.

Thank you for your time, and for believing in this work.

Sincerely,

Luisa Millan
Program Supervisor
Father-Child Attachment Program
Mary's Center

2024-2025

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Council for Court Excellence
Improving Justice for the Community

Testimony of the Council for Court Excellence
Before the Committee on Youth Affairs
Council of the District of Columbia

Budget Oversight Hearing for the
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

May 29, 2025

Thank you, Chairperson Parker and members of the Committee, for this opportunity to present testimony. My name is Magdalena Tsiongas, and I am the Policy Manager at the Council for Court Excellence (CCE). CCE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission to enhance justice in the District of Columbia. For nearly 40 years, CCE has worked to improve the administration of justice in the courts and related agencies in D.C. through research and policy analysis, convening diverse stakeholders, and creating educational resources for the public. Please note that in accordance with our policy, no judicial member of CCE participated in the formulation or approval of this testimony. This testimony does not reflect the specific views of, or endorsement by, any judicial member of CCE.

My testimony today concerns the proposed operating budget for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC), which zeroes out the budget and would abolish the agency in FY 2026. I will be focusing on the Office's critically important duties relating to crossover youth, and the continued justification for funding.

Per the statute establishing the OFC, a crossover youth is an individual who is 21 years of age or younger and involved with, previously involved with, or otherwise known to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), who is currently or has previously been the subject of a petition alleging delinquency filed by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), pursuant to or by another jurisdiction. In other words, these are youth who have been maltreated and who are accused of or are found to have engaged in delinquent behavior; these involvements can be consecutive or concurrent.

The OFC is statutorily charged with producing an annual report on crossover youth that includes:

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"(**A**) The number, demographics, and other relevant characteristics of the crossover-youth population;

(**B**) Data, metrics, and trend analyses related to outcomes for crossover youth;

(**C**) Assessment of interagency communication and coordination related to crossover youth and its impact on outcomes for crossover youth; and

(**D**) Any other information the Ombudsperson considers relevant to the outcomes for crossover youth."

The OFC annual report is required to include conclusions and policy recommendations based on the information provided, including that regarding crossover youth, and a status update on policy recommendations from prior annual reports, if applicable.

In its most recent report, covering the 2024 fiscal year, the OFC highlights critical gaps in data sharing that hinder efforts to effectively identify and support crossover youth in the District. While the report reflects expanded efforts by the Office, it also emphasizes that a lack of accessible data from key agencies continues to restrict the District's ability to fully assess and improve outcomes for this vulnerable population. While the OFC Director has tried to overcome roadblocks to data access by reaching out to D.C. Superior Court, she has been told that the authorizing legislation currently does not include the Courts as an entity that can share data with her office.

Additionally, the Council for Court Excellence released a report in 2024 entitled *A Broken Web: Improved Interagency Collaboration is Needed for D.C.'s Crossover Youth*, which provides an in-depth analysis of the challenges these youth face and outlines specific, actionable recommendations for policy reform.[i] Drawing on data from D.C. Superior Court and interviews with crossover youth and service providers, the report confirms that many crossover youth are not included in official counts and that their experiences remain under-recognized by policymakers and therefore insufficiently considered in policy decisions.

Both CCE's and the OFC's reports underscore the urgent need for continued support of the Ombudsperson's office—not only to improve interagency coordination but also to incorporate the perspectives of crossover youth and families into oversight efforts and evaluations of service delivery.

This need is supported by current findings. Youth who are simultaneously involved in both systems are commonly referred to as "dual-jacketed youth." The data available to the OFC has only allowed for reporting on a small portion of dual-jacketed youth, as the data excludes those whose delinquency petitions resulted in outcomes other than DYRS commitment, such as probation or diversion. For example, the OFC's FY2024 Annual Report identified only **six youth** with concurrent CFSA and DYRS involvement, suggesting both the limitations of available data and the likelihood that many crossover youth, who are often victims of abuse and neglect and later become involved in the delinquency system, are being significantly undercounted. CCE's 2024 report supports this conclusion, showing that the actual number of crossover youth is far higher than the OFC's data indicates.

Additionally, a 2022 report by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, *A Study of Factors that Affect the Likelihood of Juvenile Justice System Involvement*, reaffirms a strong correlation between childhood maltreatment and justice system involvement.[ii] The report found that youth with documented histories of abuse are **1.68** times more likely to enter the juvenile justice system, while those with histories of neglect are **1.2** times more likely. Notably, youth who had been removed from their homes by the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) were **3.06** times more likely to become justice-involved. These findings illustrate the long-term impact of trauma and instability on youth trajectories, pointing to a high rate of dual-system involvement and an imperative for coordinated interventions across systems.

Data from other jurisdictions corroborates much higher rates of dual-system involvement as well. A study in New York City found that 70 percent of youth in the juvenile justice cohort were also involved with the child welfare system. Similarly, in Cook County, Illinois, and Cuyahoga County, Ohio, 69 percent and 45 percent of justice-involved youth, respectively, had prior or concurrent child welfare involvement. Building on this research, the National Institute of Justice concluded in its 2021 report, *Dual-System Youth*, that half or more of youth entering the juvenile justice system may be dual-system youth with histories of child welfare involvement.[iii]

Why does counting these youth and documenting their outcomes matter? Because it helps the District understand how early adversity, including abuse, neglect, and family instability, shapes future involvement in the justice system. Researchers have identified a set of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that significantly increase the risk of behavioral and mental health challenges. A systematic review by Columbia University found that the vast majority of U.S.-based studies confirmed a strong link between high ACE scores and juvenile justice contact.[iv] Furthermore, a 2023 national study published in *Children* reinforced this connection, showing that as ACE exposure increases, so does the likelihood of substance use, violent offending, and other delinquent behavior.[v] Youth in the child welfare system are particularly affected. A 2025 study of adolescents with child welfare involvement found that higher ACE scores were associated with internalizing symptoms, dissociation, and social difficulties.[vi] Collectively, the research affirms that youth with prior CFSA involvement should be included in any count of crossover youth, as the impact of early trauma can shape outcomes for years to come.

Second, communities have found that they can take meaningful steps to reduce the risk of youth crossing over and to improve outcomes for those who do. These efforts include expanding access to positive childhood experiences—such as building strong, supportive relationships with adults and encouraging participation in school and recreational activities—and improving how systems work together. However, without reliable data on how many young people are crossover youth or at risk of becoming so, along with information on their educational, justice system, and other outcomes, the District cannot develop targeted, evidence-based interventions or evaluate their effectiveness.

Finally, it is worth noting that crossover youth are a particularly vulnerable population. The Child Fatality Review Committee (CFRC), housed within the Office of the D.C. Chief Medical Examiner, reviews the deaths of youth who were known to the child welfare system within four years or to the juvenile justice system within two years of their deaths. In its 2020

report, the CFRC found that eight of nine non-infant child deaths between 2018 and 2020 were classified as homicides and all involved youth with histories in both systems. The committee identified child welfare and delinquency involvement as the two primary risk factors for youth homicide.[vii] Data from the 2023 Annual Child Fatality Review Report show these risks persist: 29 percent (n=12) of the 41 reviewed fatalities were homicides, most involving teenagers who died of gun-related causes in the community. Several had prior system involvement, and 20 percent (n=8) had active CFSA cases at the time of death.[viii] While the report does not explicitly label these youth as crossover, the continued overlap between child welfare contact, juvenile justice involvement, and fatal violence remains deeply concerning.

In establishing the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OFC), the D.C. Council created an entity tasked with working across agencies to improve outcomes for abused and neglected youth who are at greater risk of entering the delinquency system as a result of their victimization. However, stronger cross-agency collaboration is still needed to ensure that OFC can report on ALL crossover youth, not just those formally identified as concurrently involved with CFSA and DYRS. In order to satisfy this need, the OFC's FY2024 report calls for greater transparency, interagency agreements for data sharing, and additional staff to manage caseloads and outreach. These recommendations align with those made in CCE's 2024 crossover youth report.

Zeroing out the OFC's budget would not only jeopardize its important work but would also undermine the District's ability to identify and protect some of its most high-risk youth. It is in the best interest of these young people, and the District as a whole, to maintain the Office at its current funding level so it can continue to fulfill its critical duties. It also will maintain the existence of an Office that in future years, may be able to take a wider lens on how well the District is more generally meeting the needs of vulnerable young people.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the District's youth. I hope you will continue to support this vital office, and I'm happy to take any questions.

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[i] Council for Court Excellence, *A Broken Web: Improved Interagency Collaboration is Needed for D.C.'s Crossover Youth*, May 2024, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/659c0df344c9c8325dd821ca/673caf1772f0ea16a294172a_Crossover.Youth.Report.5.28.24.Final.pdf

[ii] Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. (2022, October). *A Study of Factors that Affect the Likelihood of Juvenile Justice System Involvement*. Washington, D.C.: Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

[iii] Kelley, B. T., & Haskins, P. A. (2021, August 10). *Dual System Youth: At the Intersection of Child Maltreatment and Delinquency*. National Institute of Justice. Retrieved from https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/dual-system-youth-intersection-child-maltreatment-and-delinquency.

[iv] Graf, G. H. J., Sacks, R., & Chapman, J. (2021). Adverse childhood experiences and justice system contact: A systematic review. *Pediatrics, 147*(1), e2020021030. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-021030.

[v] Lee, Y., Mersky, J. P., & Oreskovic, N. M. (2023). Adverse childhood experiences and adolescent delinquency: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Children*, 10(2), 252. https://doi.org/10.3390/children10020252.

[vi] Weiler, L. M., Pineda, J., Layland, E. K., & Mazza, J. (2025). The association between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the mental health of adolescents with child welfare involvement. *University of Minnesota Experts Portal*. https://experts.umn.edu/en/publications/the-association-between-adverse-childhood-experiences-aces-and-th.

[vii] Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. (2022, February 4). *2020 Child Fatality Review Committee (CFRC) Annual Report*. District of Columbia Government. https://ocme.dc.gov/publication/2020-child-fatality-review-committee-cfrc-annual-report.

[viii] Child and Family Services Agency. (2025, January 28). *2023 Annual Child Fatality Review Report*. District of Columbia Government. https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/annual-child-fatality-review-report.

Maria Jackson - Mother's Outreach Network

Testimony before the DC Council

Youth Affairs Committee

Child and Family Services Agency Oversight Hearing

Maria Jackson

Mother’s Outreach Network

Thursday May 29, 2025

My name is Maria Jackson. I am an advocate for Mother’s Outreach Network’s. I am here today to speak for parents that did not know they had the opportunity to speak.

Today I would like to speak about some things dealing with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).

My first concern is dealing with housing vouchers. If CFSA recognizes that stable housing is key to keeping families together, why is it not prioritizing housing support? Many families in Wards 8,7, and 5 live in unsafe or unstable conditions, yet CFSA has authority over them without ensuring they have access to better housing.

When CFSA enters a home and sees multiple children crowded into a single room, the response should not be to blame the parent– it should be support. Instead of questioning parents or attributing children’s behavior to household struggles, CFSA could help families move to environments that provide stability. If only one child is struggling in a family, it's not parental failure.

CFSA’s budget already has funding set aside for housing, yet it is being underutilized. In the fiscal year 2025 budget, CFSA had $100,000 for housing collaboration, but as of December 31, 2024, only $2,000 had been spent, leaving $97,000 untouched. Meanwhile, housing instability remains one of the most frequently substantiated factors in child welfare investigations—ranking 7th out of 10 in 2024 and moving up to 6th in 2025. CFSA must investigate why families who need housing support aren’t receiving it.

Too often, CFSA removes children instead of helping families escape poverty. Families need real support, housing, financial aid, and job programs, and not judgment.

If a child is taken and later returned, CFSA must ensure that the family has a safe place to live. Providing housing vouchers can help. If CFSA isn’t using funds to help, DHS should step in to make sure children get what they need, like furniture and other essentials.

If CFSA truly has the best interests of children, why are those with diagnosed mental health conditions not consistently receiving the treatment they need? Why does funding for group homes fail to cover basics like clothing, leaving children without essential resources? These are not abstract questions—I ask them based on my experience. My child was placed in both a group home and foster care, and I saw firsthand the gaps in stability, and support. While some children leave the system better than when they entered, many do not. CFSA must ensure that every child in its care is protected, given basic resources, and supported in a way that allows them to thrive in their care.

Another big change in policy that would help is ensuring parents have a lawyer when CFSA contacts them. CFSA should tell parents they have a right to legal help before any decisions are made. Many parents don’t know their rights or that they might be listed in a child welfare database. CFSA often promises to send paperwork but doesn't follow through. Legal representation would help parents navigate the system and protect their families.

I ask the Council to take action to keep families together by addressing these housing, basic necessities and legal support issues. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.

Testimony at the
Budget Oversight Hearing
on the Child and Family Services Agency
Committee on Youth Affairs
Melody R. Webb, Esq.
Mothers Outreach Network
Thursday, May 29, 2025, 10:30 a.m.

Good afternoon, Chairperson Parker and Committee Members. I'm Melody Webb, head of Mothers Outreach Network, and the DC Guaranteed Income Coalition. I am also a native Washingtonian, and resident of Ward 6. I'm honored to appear with mom advocates on this panel. We're an advocacy and legal services organization that works for policies that keep marginalized families in DC together including through engaging Black moms in our work to transform government income and child welfare systems using legal, community, and policy advocacy. and a cash transfer pilot for families with CFSA involvement.

How CFSA involvement reflects poverty.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Child Maltreatment 2023 report, nearly 84% (83.6%) of child maltreatment cases handled by CFSA in the District were due to neglect alone[1]. When examining

[1] U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2025). *Child maltreatment 2023*. Available from here

caregiver risk factors, 11% of the families involved lacked adequate housing, making them housing insecure[2]. This means a significant portion of open CFSA cases involve families struggling with housing instability. Please also note that children living with their own parents can receive up to $490 per month[3] for the first child and a portion thereof for each child thereafter, and children living with strangers in foster care receive, up to $1,995[4] per child, substantially more.

Financial precarity puts families in crisis, often forcing them into impossible choices that undermine their stability and leads to CFSA involvement. However, when families receive direct financial support, they can overcome structural barriers to wellbeing. The 2021 federal child tax credit demonstrated this impact, cutting child poverty nearly in half and improving family stability nationwide. The District must continue building on this progress, rather than turning away from proven solutions.

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[2] U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2025). *Child maltreatment 2023*. Available from here

[3] See Department of Health and Human Services, District of Columbia TANF Income Limits and Maximum TANF Benefits Amounts https://dhs.dc.gov/service/tanf-district-families

[4]Spindel, M. P., Stekler, B. A., McClellan, S. R. (2018). Kinship Diversion in the District of Columbia: A Review of Local Practice to Inform National Policy. GrandFamilies: The Contemporary Journal of Research, Practice and Policy, 5 (1). Available at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/grandfamilies/vol5/iss1/4, p. 7.

I trust that the committee overseeing youth affairs understands that programs designed to reduce poverty and build wealth for young people are at stake. I urge Chairman Parker to stand with mothers and support the restoration of funding for the Child Tax Credit. I also urge Councilmember McDuffie to stand up for the Child Wealth Building Act, ensuring that DC's children have the financial foundation they need to thrive.

The Mayor's FY26 proposed budget raises critical questions about this agency's priorities— which we believe is another example of poor prioritization of the needs of children and their parents. The budget should prioritize keeping families together.

Flex Funds

Dollars should be deployed as prevention and mitigation measures. Yet, instead of fully utilizing available resources, the city has failed to spend the CFSA's allocated flex funds for families. For example, in Fiscal Year 2024, the city significantly underspent its flex fund for childcare and other essential services.

Despite an approved allocation of $687,677, only $323,389[5] was spent—leaving critical support untapped while families continue to struggle.

	Approved	Expenses
Child Care - Clothing	141,918.00[1]	$93,927.27
Child Care - Furniture	$177,583.16	$188,558.65
Child Care - Other Services	$687,677.83	$323,389.03
Food Vouchers	$115,000.00[1]	$156,028.05
Emergency Funds (CPS - Collaborative Managed)*	$70,000.00	$70,000.00

[5] District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency, *Performance Oversight Hearing Fiscal Year 2022-2023*, February 17, 2023, 9, https://dccouncil.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CFSA-FY22-Performance-Oversight-Hearing-Pre-Hearing-Responses-to-Questions_2-17-2023-FINAL-1.pdf.

Question for the Council

CFSA reported 38 Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers were expended in FY24 and stated there were zero unused vouchers for the fiscal year. However, CFSA's own breakdown in their pre hearing response shows[6]:

- 6 parenting youth received vouchers
- 11 youth were served FUP vouchers
- 5 families received vouchers

This accounts for just 22 vouchers, leaving 16 unaccounted for. Can CFSA provide a full breakdown of where the remaining vouchers were allocated? Were any reallocated, placed on administrative hold, or distributed under a different category? How does CFSA ensure equitable and efficient voucher distribution?

Additionally, CFSA's January 2025 status report in their prehearing responses states that, according to the DCHA's monthly voucher utilization report, 27 HUD Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers were available[7]. However,

[6] Government of the District of Columbia, Child and Family Services Agency (2025, February 10). *Responses to pre-hearing questions: Performance oversight hearing, fiscal year 2024–2025*.
[7] Government of the District of Columbia, Child and Family Services Agency (2025, February 10). *Responses to pre-hearing questions: Performance oversight hearing, fiscal year 2024–2025*.

DCHA's report does not explicitly list HUD's FUP vouchers, raising further transparency concerns.

Meanwhile, HUD's HCV Data Dashboard reports Special Purpose Voucher Utilization, showing that, as of March 2025, 421 total FUP vouchers were awarded, and 363 were leased—leaving 58 FUP vouchers available[8].

This discrepancy raises an important accountability issue: How does CFSA reconcile these figures with its own reporting?

Recommendations

- CFSA should be divested of responsibility for these funds and they should be transferred to a different agency. In recent years the agency has underspent one or more of the flex funds despite the needs of their families in in-home cases.
- Similarly, the Council should create a study for administering FUP vouchers and FLEX Funds through a different agency. It is unacceptable for housing vouchers to go unused when families are in desperate need.

[8] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). *Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Data Dashboard*. HUD.gov. Available from here

Spending on in-home case management

CFSA's Family Services in FY24 and FY25

In addition CFSA purports to provide services to families through two primary pathways: in-home clinical case management, which helps families remain intact through supportive interventions, and out-of-home placements, which involve foster care and adoption when children are removed from their homes.

However, CFSA's budget allocation does not align with the actual number of families served in each category. While in-home case management supports more families, the agency continues to dedicate significantly larger financial resources to out-of-home placements.

Total Children and Families Served (FY24 vs. FY25)

Service Type	FY24 Children Served	FY24 Families Served	FY25 Children Served	FY25 Families Served
In-Home Case Management	4,885	1,893	2,483	983

Foster Placements	**Care**	2,263	1,620	1,186	865

Even as CFSA serves fewer children in foster care, its budget continues to prioritize out-of-home placements over family preservation services. Despite in-home case management supporting more families overall, CFSA allocates only $1 million to in-home services, while over $47 million is directed toward foster care placements (FY26 proposed budget).

This discrepancy raises critical questions about whether CFSA is truly investing in family preservation and preventive care, or continuing its reliance on foster care despite decreasing caseloads.

There's more of this pattern.

Washington, DC has been on the cusp of creating a guaranteed income for all. This Agency should help move DC in this direction by fully deploying resources for families in the Flex Fund and in the Housing Choice FUP Voucher

program. With proper investment in a larger and broader guaranteed income program across the city, we can in fact reach that destination.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Reference:

1. Government of the District of Columbia, Child and Family Services Agency (2025, February 10). *Responses to pre-hearing questions: Performance oversight hearing, fiscal year 2024–2025*.
2. District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency, *Performance Oversight Hearing Fiscal Year 2022-2023*, February 17, 2023, 9, https://dccouncil.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CFSA-FY22-Performance-Oversight-Hearing-Pre-Hearing-Responses-to-Questions_2-17-2023-FINAL-1.pdf.

3. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2025). *Child maltreatment 2023*. Available from here
4. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). *Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Data Dashboard*. HUD.gov. Available from here

2023 Appendix A.

Housing Vouchers and Flex Funds Underspending[9]

Housing Vouchers

Wayne Place - CFSA and DBH provide transitional, supportive housing (18 months) for youth who are aging out of the foster care system or youth transitioning from psychiatric residential centers/require intensive services to stabilize in a community environment.

- Youths served in FY22 - 33
- Youths served in FY23 - 15

Genesis - Intergenerational community residence where older adults provide mentorship/social support to vulnerable individuals and families. Consists of 27 units of affordable rentals where young moms who grew up in foster care live alongside seniors on fixed incomes. (Permanent)

- Youths served in FY22 - No new referrals
- Youths served in FY23 - No new referrals

Chaffee - Aftercare supports former foster youth in D.C. after all other resources have been exhausted. (12 months up to the age of 23)

- Youths served in FY22 - 5
- Youths served in FY23 - 0

Family Unification Program/Fostering Youth to Independence Vouchers - FUP vouchers to youth who are between 18 and 24, who left foster care after 16, or who will leave foster care within 90 days and are homeless/at risk of homelessness. Time-limited (36 months) vouchers to help provide assistance for individuals to transition to safe housing. Recent policy changes have extended FUP and FYI programs for additional 2 years (a total of 5 now) if certain criteria are met.

- Youths served in FY22 - 21
- Youths served in FY23 - 7

HUD Family Unification Program Housing Choice Vouchers

- At the start of FY22, the allocation of 36 HCV remaining under FUP

[9] DC Child and Family Services Oversight Pre-Hearing Questions and Answers. Pp. 9,195-196

- FY22 - 4 FUP vouchers allocated to DC parents with children in foster care to support reunification
- FY23 - (Oct 22 - Dec 22) - 1 FUP voucher allocated to DC parents with children in foster care to support reunification
- HUD originally awarded CFSA 48 vouchers to give to DC parents when a family was at risk of homelessness with a child in the home
- FY22 and FY23 - 1 family allocated voucher due to the risk of homelessness with a child in the home and an open CFSA case

Flex Funds

- Line items for parents vs. foster parents?
    - The below amounts are flex funds for children and families served by the In-Home Administration and those in foster care
- What percentage of dollars is actually spent on families for furniture or rental arrears? Lack of clarity on what goes to actual families and what latitude they have.
    - Childcare (other services)
        - FY22 approved budget - $687,677.83
        - FY22 expenses - $550,577.10
            - Unspent - $137,100.73
        - FY23 approved - $687,677.83
        - FY23 to-date expenses - $128,612.93
    - Emergency funds
        - FY22 approved budget - $145,000.00
        - FY22 expenses - $63,299.71
            - Unspent - $81,700.29
        - FY23 approved - $70,000
        - FY23 to-date expenses - $1,900
    - Food vouchers
        - FY22 approved budget - $115,000
        - FY22 expenses - $90,669.42
            - Unspent - $24,330.58
        - FY23 approved - $115,000
        - FY23 to-date expenses - $0
    - Childcare - clothing
        - FY22 approved budget - $141,918
        - FY22 expenses - $83,875.00

        - Unspent - $58,043
    - FY23 approved - $141,918
    - FY23 to-date expenses - $0
- Childcare - furniture
    - FY22 approved budget - $177,583.36
    - FY22 expenses - $128,045.48
        - Unspent - $49,537.88
    - FY23 approved - $177,583.16
    - FY23 to-date expenses - $0
- Sources:
    - Page 10 for FY22 approved
    - Page 9 for FY22 expenses, FY23 approved, FY23 to-date

- FY = Oct 1 – end of December (Based on page 195 which says that FY23 covered the period of October 2022 – December 2022)
    - The document does not explicitly define fiscal periods, but based on other sections, I figured this was the time period.
- The chart providing the flex funds numbers does not provide a breakdown of in-home vs. foster care amounts. It provides only one amount and, as a result, combines both types of spending.

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TESTIMONY

District of Columbia Council's Committee on Youth Affairs
Fiscal Year 2026 Local Budget Act of 2025

Thursday, May 29, 2025

Good Day, Chairperson Parker and Members of the Committee on Youth Affairs. My name is Najiba Hlemi, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC). At FAPAC, we are committed to supporting children and families involved in the foster care system. Since our founding, we have expanded our efforts to include a wide range of programs for foster families, as well as preventative services for birth parents. Our close collaboration with the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and other partners ensures that our direct work with families informs our broader systemic advocacy.

This current year has brought unprecedented challenges. Many of our foster families have faced job losses and economic instability. While we understand that difficult budget decisions must sometimes be made, we strongly urge you to preserve essential services that support the foster care community. Programs such as the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBCAP) — primarily funded by the District, managed by CFSA, and administered by many organizations like ours. Child abuse prevention programs are critically needed to safeguard the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of vulnerable children. Every year, thousands of children suffer from abuse and neglect, often in silence, leading to long-term trauma, developmental delays, and even fatal outcomes. This program plays a vital role in identifying at-risk families, providing support, education, and interventions to caregivers to prevent the need for foster care. A previous parent participant of our program wrote, "*The*

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most helpful part about the program was learning different parenting techniques and hearing about others' experiences. Additionally, being held accountable for the changes within my own home." Another parent participant wrote, "*Everything has helped me so much! I feel like I understand my children a lot better*." By promoting safe, stable, and nurturing environments, the program not only protects children from immediate danger but also helps break the cycle of abuse across generations. Investing in prevention is not only a moral imperative but also a cost-effective strategy that strengthens families and communities.

Another critical new program is the 211 warm line, which serves as a crucial lifeline for families and provides everyone with easy access to direct services for families in need.

Next is the Office of the Ombudsman, which is essential for ensuring transparency, accountability, and fairness in government and public services. The Office of the Ombudsman has provided a safe and confidential avenue for individuals and organizations to voice complaints without fear of retaliation.

These programs must be protected from budget cuts. In fact, beyond preserving these services, we see a pressing need for increased support, particularly for DC children placed in foster homes across the Maryland border. Nearly 50% of DC's foster youth are currently placed in Maryland. According to DC Code and CFSA policy, these children are entitled to the same standard of care as those residing in the District. Unfortunately, our experience shows this is not consistently happening.

We have documented numerous concerns over the past three years. Teenagers in Maryland placements are reaching out for help, to report inadequate transportation to medical appointments and school, a lack of involvement in their educational planning, and even the repeated loss of personal

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belongings for young mothers who are moved from home to home. These are systemic issues that demand greater oversight and accountability. We ask for your help in addressing them.

Last year, we came to the Council seeking support for youth aging out of foster care and at risk of homelessness. Thanks to your commitment and our strong partnerships with DCHA and CFSA, we've seen tangible progress. Youth are now successfully accessing FUP vouchers, receiving assistance with applications, and benefiting from a dedicated DCHA staff person coordinating this work. This effort has made a real difference, and it shows what's possible when we work together.

Today, we again ask for your support to ensure that critical services are funded and that children placed in Maryland foster homes receive the same level of care as DC children. At a time when the number of children entering foster care is rising, this is not the moment to reduce critical services. It is time to strengthen them. Thank you for your attention and continued commitment to DC's children and families.

Najiba Hlemi
Executive Director
Najibah@dcfapac.org

Community Family Life SERVICES

4860 Fort Totten Drive, NE Washington, DC 20011
Phone: 202-347-0511 | Fax: 202-347-0520

Chair and Members of the Committee,

At Community Family Life Services (CFLS), we believe strong families build strong communities. As a Parent Educator, I have the honor of walking alongside parents as they work to break cycles of trauma and build new legacies for their children.

For more than 50 years, CFLS has provided children, families, and returning citizens with the tools to move beyond poverty and homelessness. Our Parent Support and Home Visitation Program has served hundreds of families across Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8 since 2013 through a long-standing partnership with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) under the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grant.

We use the Nurturing Parenting Program for Parents and Infants, an evidence-based curriculum designed to reduce child abuse and neglect by promoting protective factors such as nurturing and attachment, parental resilience, social connections, and knowledge of child development. This curriculum helps caregivers learn, grow, and respond with intention, building confidence in their parenting and in their children's potential.

Recently, we've started expanding into school settings, particularly at the preschool level. This is a new step for our team, rooted in the belief that prevention must begin early. Meeting families where they are, whether at home or in schools, allows us to support them before issues become crises and to ensure that caregivers feel equipped, not overwhelmed.

But this model only works if it's stable.

Unpredictable or reduced funding threatens the consistency families count on. They don't experience budget cuts as policy. They experience them as canceled home visits, lost access to resources, fewer check-ins, and missed opportunities for early support. The ripple effect is real and immediate.

Developmental concerns may go undetected. A caregiver who was beginning to trust and engage may shut down. A child may miss out on crucial support, not because of a lack of love or effort, but because the consistency of the system dissipated.

Home visitation works because it's personal. Families build real relationships with their home visitors. We talk, we listen, we educate, and we guide with empathy and understanding. This kind of connection takes time, trust, and consistency. That can only be maintained with adequate, reliable funding and fair wages for those doing the work.

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Cutting this funding is like pulling emergency responders from a neighborhood before the fire trucks even arrive. We don't wait for a home to go up in flames before training firefighters. We should not have to wait for a crisis before investing in families. Our parent education and home visitation programs are the early responders, equipping families with the tools to prevent trauma before it takes root. When that lifeline is removed, the ripple effect is immediate and deep. Children suffer, families lose trust, and the cycle continues.

We're proud of the progress our families make every day. Without continued funding, the losses won't just be felt by providers. They will be felt most deeply by the families we serve.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to prevention, equity, and the wellbeing of all children in Washington, D.C.

Nicole Mims
Parent Educator
Community Family Life Services
4860 Fort Totten Drive NE
Washington, DC 20011

Testimony Before DC Council's Committee on Youth Affairs
05/29/2025

Good Afternoon Chairman Parker. Thank you for this opportunity to come before to advocate for the budget of the Grandparent Caregivers' Program of the District of Columbia. A program that is essential in assisting grandparents raising grandchildren in our city. In many cases, we are some of the farthest removed from positive opportunities that would enhance young people's lives.

I am a grandparent raising a now 16 year old lifeguard for DC's Department of Parks and Recreation. Without the assistance of the Grandparent Caregivers' Program the road to the victory would have been even more challenging. This victory is partially the result of swimming lessons, participation as a member of multiple swim teams and a stipend that assisted in making participation affordable. As I ponder the safety issues our city is facing as it relates to our young people, I realize on an even deeper level, if I don't provide avenues for my grandson to move in a positive direction, no matter the costs, the streets will happily provide opportunities for negativity and could even take his life.

Affordability always comes into question when it comes to performance in activities of daily living. Housing costs have skyrocketed, food costs have skyrocketed, clothing costs and maintenance of clothing has skyrocketed. With the mere raising costs of activities of daily living extracurricular activities definitely creates a heavier lift as it impacts lifestyle decisions.

Nevertheless, with all of
the challenges, the Grandparent Caregivers' Program offers relief. While the stipend certainly doesn't cover monthly

expenses, it does provide a relief valve from what can often feel like a whirling dervish. I can recall my own grandmother's saying "half a loaf is better than none."

As grandparents raising grandchildren, we realize we have saved the system untold amounts of money. We receive less than half of what foster parents receive. While this is bothersome to many grandparents, it reinforces the fact that we don't raise our grandchildren for the money. We do it because we love our grandchildren and are dedicated to having them have a life far beyond their dreams or imaginations. This stipend assists us in forging their dreams and could go as far as saving their lives.

The support also goes far beyond financial. The staff of this tremendous program offers hours upon hours of support. This can be through outreach, education or just understanding our plights and rendering a listening ear. They have streamlined processes that have made access more accommodating and less stressful. This is a program that benefits thousands of lives and of which Washington, DC can be very proud to model across the United States.

Our budget needs all of its resources and even more than has been allocated. Thank you for all you have done and are doing and will continue to do in ensuring this program continues to thrive and grow in reaching one of the district's most vulnerable populations. We realize the children are our future. Therefore, we all do our best in preparing them for leadership in the ever changing world.

Olivia A. Chase
Grandmother of
Richard L. Sowell

Olivia A. Chase

Testimony Before DC Council's Committee on Youth Affairs
05/29/2025

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Olivia A. Chase

Grandmother of

Richard L. Sowell

Fellowship Baptist Church

May 27, 2025

Re: Brightwood Family Success Center

It has been an honor and privilege to be a part of the new Brightwood Family Success Center. From our very first gathering to our most recent event, the professionals at the Center have demonstrated a genuine commitment to the betterment of our neighborhood. Each staff member has brought the sensitivity and understanding needed to address some of the systemic challenges our community faces.

As the coordinator for Ward 4 Faith Leaders, it has been a blessing to collaborate with the Center. Their presence provides real-time access to vital services that have often been overlooked in our area.

I am confident that, given the challenges facing our city, the Center will continue to extend its reach to residents. I pray that they will remain a much-needed resource in our community and a shining beacon of hope and light in our city.

With gratitude,

Rev. Patricia H. Fears, Pastor

Fellowship Baptist Church

NCCF
The National Center For Children and Families

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social current
Activating the Power of the Social Sector

Testimony of Ralph D. Belk, LICSW, LCSW-C
Executive Director, The National Center for Children and Family (NCCF)
Child and Family Services Agency Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2026
Council of the District of Columbia - Committee on Youth Affairs
The Honorable Zachary Parker, Chair
May 29, 2025 – 10:30AM

I am Ralph Belk, the Executive Director at the National Center for Children and Families (NCCF). Thank you, Chairperson Parker for the opportunity to speak today. NCCF is a nationally accredited child and family serving organization incorporated in 1915. We currently operate 22 programs in the region, importantly serving as a provider of family-based foster care for DC since 1988.

I come before you today to advocate for continuity within the NCCF and CFSA partnership and to urge you to maintain this proven and cost-effective approach to serving the District's children. We recognize that the District is facing hard fiscal decisions, but this is not the time to defund mandated services, particularly now that the city is facing a new Federal Child and Family Services Review, and outcomes will be directly connected to the potential risk of the loss of Federal dollars.

Over the last eight years, NCCF has redesigned and redeveloped the Temporary Safe Haven model to focus on the full wellness of the child, preparing foster families to care for them, and prioritizing the inclusion and healing of birth families. At every step, NCCF has met the challenges in partnership with CFSA including leading the District out of court oversight in 2022. We strive to exemplify best practices in terms of public-private partnership with outstanding results. NCCF has been continually responsive and always maximized the need for efficiency and efficacy at the lowest cost possible. Our budget has been downsized year after year and at this point, we are as lean as we can get for this cross-jurisdictional partnership. NCCF brings the necessary child-placement license for Maryland that the District relies on and has perfected a model with our current bare bones budget, that continues to produce outcomes for the Mayor and her vision to Grow DC.

I'd like to share with you a few important highlights demonstrating NCCF's impressive model.

95% of NCCF's exits are positive permanency exits.

Close to half of NCCF's census of children are placed with relative kin.

- 15 youth were adopted with another sibling
- 5 youth were adopted into a home where another sibling resides
- 2 guardianships were with another sibling
- All guardianships were with kin
- 13 youth reunified with another sibling
- 6 youth reunified with dads

NCCF's high school graduation rate in 2023, 2024 and 2025 was 100% with each youth moving on successfully to a college, trade school, or permanent employment.

- 4 graduates from 2023 – 3 out of 4 went to college, 1 was employed. All went to HBCUs
- 4 graduates from 2024 – 3 out of 4 went to college, 1 went to trade program (received certificate and graduated). All went to HBCUs
- 1 graduate from 2025 – currently working on earning their CNA.

As NCCF concludes the final year of its contract and anticipates the release of a new solicitation, we ask that the City maintain these critical program components that have led to the outcomes that the District has come to expect from our agency.

- Educational Supports and Education Specialists
- Birth Parent Engagement
- In-house Kinship Navigation
- In-house Mental Health Therapists
- Foster Parent Coaching
- Behavioral Specialists
- Youth Outreach Workers
- Professional Foster Parenting

We look forward to maintaining these crucial program elements and continuing our role in keeping the District's children safe.

In addition to our advocacy surrounding our partnership, NCCF also urges this council to consider two important requests that would ease the financial burdens for our foster parents and remove barriers that prevent prospective foster parents from joining our mission.

1) Increase in the Foster Parent Reimbursement Rate.

The current rate for resource parents serving District youth is $38 a day. If a foster parent serves a youth in their home who has documented intensive needs, the foster parent can get a temporary Difficulty of Care Stipend (DOC) of $49.50 which is also referred to as a Determination of Intensive Needs and Support rate (DINS). Despite the dramatic increase in inflation, this reimbursement rate has remained the same since 2017. The costs associated with feeding, clothing, housing, and educating children have skyrocketed and the compensation rate has not matched the reality that our foster parents must work within. In comparison, NCCF foster parents who serve youth from the State of Maryland receive a daily rate of $58.85. I am urging you to increase the rate of reimbursement to our resource families. Our families are a critical partner in this work. We would not have family based foster care without our resource parents.

2) Address the Childcare Reimbursement Crisis.

NCCF has seen a marked decrease in foster parents' willingness to accept daycare aged youth in their home due to childcare affordability challenges as well as identifying childcare facilities that will accept our youth. CFSA only reimburses a certain amount per week for childcare services. These rates have not increased in over a decade (2014), leaving foster parents to spend the majority, if not all of their stipend, on childcare costs. NCCF has utilized our Education Specialists to help foster parents identify childcare centers that are more affordable and willing to take youth on short notice. Despite identifying more affordable options, they

still cut into the foster parents' stipend significantly, leaving little funding remaining for the actual care of the child.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak. I welcome your questions and am happy to engage in deeper conversations regarding our requests.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Ricky Bryant, and I am the founder of The Streetline, an organization dedicated to helping our community members who are in need of support. Streetline is a hotline that connects individuals who want to transition off hanging on the streets, speaking with them and connecting them to resources and networks available within the community.

Through my established connections, I was introduced to the Brightwood Family Success Center, and I immediately saw the potential for collaboration to strengthen our community ties. As a result, I have taken on the role of chairman of the Brightwood Family Success Center Community Advisory Council. Together, we have been working diligently to provide resources and support through outreach events, actively engaging the Brightwood community.

My experience as chairman has been incredibly rewarding. The positive and welcoming atmosphere of the center, along with the team members, makes it a pleasure to be involved. Although Brightwood Family Success Center is new to the area, it is making strides to raise awareness of its services and ensure that it meets the needs of community members.

Being part of this initiative has fostered awareness among families about the support available to them, which they have been seeking for years. I believe that the Brightwood Family Success Center offers exciting opportunities, and I look forward to contributing to its ongoing growth and success. Thank you.

Sincerely
Ricky Bryant

Ricky Bryant
05/29/25

Good morning Councilmember Parker,

My name is Roger Scott. I am a proud resident of Ward 4, a dedicated 20-year employee of the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), and the President of AFSCME Local 2401, representing over 2,000 employees across 16 human service agencies throughout the District.

I am here today to raise an urgent alarm about a crisis at CFSA that demands immediate attention—the agency's persistent struggle to recruit and retain social workers. This workforce shortage is placing immense strain on CFSA's ability to fulfill its core mission: protecting children and supporting families vulnerable to abuse and neglect. If unaddressed, this challenge could lead to dire consequences reminiscent of the LaShawn case, which kept CFSA under court oversight for nearly 30 years.

Currently, CFSA has 60+ vacant social worker positions, with the majority concentrated in the Office of Hotline and Investigations (OHI). That equates to 13 five-member investigative units sitting empty—units that should be actively responding to reports of child abuse and neglect. Despite temporary measures, such as reassigning staff across divisions and streamlining some procedures, these vacancies have left existing workers overwhelmed, overburdened, and more inclined to seek employment elsewhere.

The exodus of social workers from CFSA accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, with many leaving due to inadequate safety protections for field staff. Post-pandemic, the problem only worsened. Employees who proved their ability to meet—and often exceed—productivity targets while working remotely were not only denied expanded telework options but were instead subjected to stricter in-office requirements. This rigid approach, driven by priorities unrelated to employee well-being or operational efficiency, has made CFSA an unattractive employer compared to private agencies and nonprofits that offer better work-life balance, even at lower pay.

CFSA has, unfortunately, become a stepping-stone agency where talented social workers gain experience before moving on to organizations that recognize the importance of flexibility and employee satisfaction. This is a preventable issue. To stabilize CFSA's workforce and retain skilled professionals, we urge the Council to support the following measures:

1. **Expanded Telework and Flexible Schedules:** Providing more remote work opportunities will improve morale, reduce burnout, and make CFSA more competitive in the labor market.
2. **Quality Salary Increases for High Performers:** Social workers who achieve "Effective Performer" or "Role Model" ratings on their annual evaluations should be rewarded with step increases or financial incentives, similar to practices in other District agencies.
3. **Enhanced Recruitment Strategies:** CFSA must proactively market itself as an employer of choice by emphasizing professional development opportunities, workplace flexibility, and competitive benefits.

The work of CFSA social workers is critical, often life-saving. It is imperative that we take immediate action to ensure they receive the support, compensation, and workplace conditions they deserve. The stability of our child welfare system—and the well-being of the children and families we serve—depends on it.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Roger Scott
President, AFSCME Local 2401

Santiago Cruz Trujillo

Testimonio de Santiago Cruz Trujillo

Residente del Distrito 5 | Participante del Programa de Visitas al Hogar de Mary's Center
Audiencia de Supervisión del Presupuesto CFSA – Año Fiscal 2026 | 29 de mayo de 2025

Buenos días a los miembros del Comité y del Consejo de DC. Muchas gracias por brindarme la oportunidad de testificar hoy. Mi nombre es Santiago Cruz Trujillo, soy residente del Distrito 5, y vengo a compartir mi experiencia como padre participante en el Programa de Visitas al Hogar de Mary's Center.

Este programa ha sido fundamental para mí. Me ha ayudado a ser un mejor padre, una mejor pareja para la madre de mis hijos, y una mejor persona en general. Desde que ingresé al programa, he crecido mucho emocionalmente. Me siento más conectado con mis hijos, y ahora sé cómo equilibrar mi trabajo con el tiempo que dedico a mi familia. Antes, el trabajo siempre iba primero. Hoy, mis hijos son mi prioridad, y me siento feliz de poder estar presente en su crianza.

Cada visita dura alrededor de una hora y se enfoca en mí y mi hijo, junto con mi trabajadora de apoyo familiar. Prefiero que las visitas sean presenciales, pero a veces, por motivos laborales, las hacemos por llamada telefónica. Durante estas visitas, trabajamos en cuestionarios de desarrollo, en temas del currículo de paternidad, o simplemente utilizo el espacio para hablar sobre los retos que estoy enfrentando. Siempre sé que es un espacio donde puedo hablar con honestidad, sin ser juzgado.

Mi trabajadora de apoyo familiar, Luisa Millan, ha sido una persona muy importante en este proceso. Ella me ha ayudado a resolver cosas que no sabía cómo manejar solo. Me ha apoyado en procesos de inscripción, me ha ayudado a entender mejor ciertas situaciones con respecto a la crianza compartida cuando es retante. Me ofrece tiempo, su paciencia y su compromiso genuino con mi bienestar y el de mi familia. Tener una trabajadora de visitas al hogar como ella es vital, porque fortalecen a las familias. Nos dan fortaleza cuando sentimos que no la tenemos. Como padre, ahora me siento más seguro y más preparado gracias a este programa.

En mayo de 2024, viví la pérdida de mi hijastro. Fue una experiencia increíblemente dolorosa. No pude llorar junto a mi familia porque sentía que tenía que ser el fuerte — el pilar. Me uní al programa en julio de ese mismo año, y no fue hasta que comencé a trabajar con Karen, quien era mi Trabajadora de Apoyo Familiar en ese momento antes de Luisa, que pude empezar a procesar ese dolor. Con ella, encontré un espacio seguro para hablar sobre mi pérdida. Poder expresar ese dolor que había llevado por tanto tiempo me trajo un inmenso alivio. Como hombres, a menudo sentimos que no podemos mostrar nuestras emociones, pero este programa me dio un lugar donde pude ser vulnerable y sentirme apoyado.

Me gustaría que todos los padres del programa pudiéramos reunirnos algún día y formar una comunidad donde compartamos nuestras experiencias. Y por eso hoy les pido que sigan invirtiendo en programas como este. No se trata solo de visitas al hogar: se trata de fortalecer a las familias, unirlas y darles esperanza. Me dolería mucho que este tipo de apoyo desapareciera. Este programa nos da fuerza como padres y como seres humanos.

Agradezco sinceramente al Consejo de DC por apoyar programas como el de Visitas al Hogar, y especialmente por asegurarse de que trabajadores como Karen y Luisa puedan seguir brindando ese apoyo esencial a las familias de nuestra ciudad. Gracias por su tiempo y por todo lo que hacen.

Santiago Cruz

English

Good morning to the Committee Members and DC Councilmembers. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Santiago Cruz Trujillo, I am a resident of Ward 5, and I'm here to share my experience as a father in Mary's Center's Home Visiting Program.

This program has been essential for me. It has helped me become a better father, a better partner to the mother of my children, and a better person overall. Since joining the program, I've grown emotionally. I feel more connected to my children, and I've learned how to balance my work with family time. Before, work always came first. Now, my children are my priority, and I'm happy to be present in their lives.

Each visit lasts about an hour and focuses on me and my child, together with my family support worker. I prefer in-person visits, but because of my work, sometimes we do them over the phone. During these visits, we go over developmental questionnaires, parenting curriculum, or I use the space to talk about life's challenges. I always know it's a space where I can speak honestly without judgment.

My Family Support Worker, Luisa Millan, has been a very important person in this process. She has helped me handle things I didn't know how to manage on my own. She has supported me with registration processes and helped me better understand certain situations related to co-parenting when it becomes challenging. She offers me her time, her patience, and her genuine commitment to the well-being of both myself and my family. Having a home visitor like her is vital, because they strengthen families. They give us strength when we feel like we don't have any. As a father, I now feel more confident and better prepared thanks to this program.

In May 2024, I experienced the loss of my stepson. It was an incredibly painful experience. I couldn't grieve with my family because I felt I had to be the strong one — the pillar. I joined the program in July of that same year, and it wasn't until I began working with Karen, who was my Family Support Worker at the time before Luisa, that I was able to start processing that pain. With her, I found a safe space to talk about my loss. Being able to express that pain I had carried for so long brought immense relief. As men, we often feel like we can't show our emotions, but this program gave me a place where I could be vulnerable and feel supported. I would love to see all the fathers in the program come together someday to build a community and share our experiences. That's why I'm asking you to continue investing in programs like this. Home visits are not just services — they are opportunities to strengthen, unite, and empower families. It would hurt deeply if this support were taken away. This program gives us strength — not just as parents, but as people.

I sincerely thank the DC Council for supporting home visiting programs and especially for ensuring that dedicated workers like Karen can continue providing essential care to families like mine across

the city. Thank you for your time, and for all that you do.

Santiago Cruz

Horton's Kids CBCAP Program
May 29, 2025

Good morning, Chairperson and Committee Members. My name is Shandell Richards and I represent Horton's Kids, a CBCAP grantee serving families in underserved and under-resourced communities throughout the District.

While Horton's Kids has long been recognized for our work with children, the CBCAP grant has enabled us to be recognized for our holistic approach—working simultaneously with both children and their parents. This strategic funding has allowed us to allocate critical resources directly to parents, recognizing that strong families create strong children.

In our first cohort alone, we served 11 parents who were eager to strengthen their families. Through the CBCAP-funded program, these parents gained access to training in restorative justice approaches to family conflict, education about cyber bullying and digital safety for their children, CPR and AED certification to protect their families, and new parenting approaches and strategies. They also gained links to vital community resources, a network of other parents facing similar challenges, and ongoing support beyond the formal program period.

The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Parents consistently report that the program is "informative" and "helpful." Most importantly, they've told us that the program taught them "different approaches to parenting" and helped them "understand what their children."

Perhaps most significantly, these parents are becoming advocates and educators themselves—sharing what they've learned with other families in their communities. This ripple effect multiplies the impact of every CBCAP dollar invested.

The families we serve come from communities that are already navigating significant challenges with limited resources. The CBCAP grant doesn't just provide services—it provides tools. Tools that help parents navigate the complex challenges they face daily while strengthening their ability to support their children's growth and development.

Without CBCAP funding, these parents could remain disconnected from the resources and knowledge they need to thrive. The strategic investment in parent education and support creates stronger families, which in turn creates stronger communities.

We respectfully urge the Committee to maintain robust funding for CBCAP programs. Every dollar invested returns exponentially through stronger families, better outcomes for children, and more resilient communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions about our program and the families we serve.

Shandell Richards
Chief Program Officer
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DC KinCare Alliance
Supporting Kin and the Children they Raise

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Testimony Before the Council of the District of Columbia

Committee on Youth Affairs

Budget Oversight Hearing
Child and Family Services Agency
May 29, 2025

Stephanie McClellan

Deputy Director

DC KinCare Alliance

Good afternoon, Chairperson Parker and Members of the Committee on Youth Affairs.

My name is Stephanie McClellan, and I am Deputy Director of DC KinCare Alliance. Our mission is to support the legal, financial, and related service needs of relative caregivers who step up to raise children in their extended families in times of crisis when the children's parents are not able to care for them due to hospitalization, mental health and substance use disorders, incarceration, death, abuse and neglect, and/or deportation. Approximately 22,000 Black and brown DC children are living in kinship care arrangements, representing about 20% of all DC children of color.[1] In the 8 years since our founding, we have helped over 1,000 relative caregivers raising more than 1,000 DC children in more than 1,000 legal matters. DC KinCare Alliance is a member of the Fair Budget Coalition, and we support budget priorities and policies that alleviate poverty in the District of Columbia.

I am testifying today concerning Grandparent Caregiver and Close Relative Caregiver Programs ("GCP" and "CRCP"), administered by the DC Child and Family Services Agency ("CFSA"). These programs make an enormous positive difference in the lives of our kin caregiver clients, and we are truly and humbly grateful to the Council for its past support of them. With looming cuts to federal benefits, and many local employers laying people off, these programs are more important than ever, and we respectfully urge the Council to continue its support of these programs at at least FY2025 funding levels.

As CFSA relies more and more heavily on relatives to raise children who have experienced abuse and neglect outside of the foster care system, it must work to ensure the

[1] United States. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey, *available* at https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html.; this is consistent with national statistics, where "the likelihood that African-American children will experience kinship care is more than double that of the overall population, with 1 in 5 black children spending time in kinship care at some point during their childhood." Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Stepping Up for Kids," *available* at https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-SteppingUpForKids-2012.pdf

safety and stability of these kinship families. DC's relative caregivers are primarily women of color who live in Wards 5, 7 and 8. Most live at the economic margins of our society, even before they are called upon to raise a relative child. The GCP and CRCP subsidies are vital and often make the difference so that a relative caregiver can maintain their housing and put food on the table.

Given that every dollar counts in these kinship households where resources are so tight, transparency around eligibility for the caregiver subsidies, how they are calculated, and the timing for when they will be received is very important.

1. Lack of Transparency Around How Subsidies are Calculated

As we have helped relative caregivers apply for the subsidies, it has not been easy to advise them on how much they are likely to receive, as we have noticed a wide variance in subsidy rates received by caregivers, even when their household circumstances are very similar. Try as we might, we have not been able to reconcile these differences. Each time a client is approved for a subsidy, we look at their subsidy agreement and try to calculate how CFSA arrived at the amount, but we are not able to do it. In a meeting with CFSA's Office of Thriving Families in August 2024, we asked them to provide the formula, so that we can prepare clients for what they are likely to receive and confirm that the amount is correct when they start receiving their subsidy. We still have not received the formula, despite having asked for it several more times since. Here are some of our specific concerns about the daily subsidy rates and how they are calculated:

a. Possible Deviation from the Governing Statutes

The governing statutes for the GCP and CRCP state that the subsidy shall be at least 66%, but no more than 105%, of the regular daily rate for a long-term permanent Level 1 guardianship (the foster care rate) established under § 29-6103.3 of the District of Columbia

Municipal Regulations ("DCMR").[2] Although the DCMR states the daily foster care rate as $23.93 for children under 12 and $26.37 for children 12 and over, the CFSA General Counsel's office told us that the foster care rate as of 2020 is $38, irrespective of age. A comparison of the daily caregiver subsidy rates (before offsets) cited in the FY24 Annual Report for the GCP and CRCP to the $38 daily foster care rate, shows that, for children under 12, the daily rate of $24.79 is 65.2% of the foster care daily rate, and the daily rate of $27.92 for children 12 and over is 73.47% of the foster care rate. We are concerned that for the younger age group, the daily rate appears be below the statutorily required amount of at least 66% of the daily foster care rate.

b. <u>Possible Deviation from the Regulations Governing the Programs</u>

The regulations governing the caregiver subsidies specify that the subsidy an applicant is eligible to receive shall be within 5% (no less than 95% and no more than 105%) of the regular daily rate of the foster care subsidy ($38), less any TANF benefits received for the child.[3] The subsidy agreement caregivers sign states in paragraph 9 the amount they will receive per day, and further states that this amount is no less than 66% of regular daily rate for a level 1 permanent guardianship subsidy, less any TANF benefits received for the child, (and it provides in parenthesis the dollar amount that the caregiver receives in TANF *per month*). This language is confusing because it appears to run counter to the rule that the daily rate shall be within 5% of the foster care daily subsidy rate, is not clear as to whether TANF has already been deducted from daily rate quoted, and does not provide the information needed to verify that the daily rate meets the "within 5%" rule.

[2] D.C. Code Sections 4-251.04(b) and 4-251.24(b).
[3] DCMR 29-6806.

c. Questions about the Average Daily Subsidy Rates Cited in the Annual Reports

A review of the FY23 and FY24 annual reports for the subsidy programs shows a decline in the average daily subsidy rates. For the GCP in CY23, the average daily rate was reported as $20.90 per child, or $627 per child for a 30-day month, whereas it fell to $20.41 per child, or $612 per child over a 30-day month for CY24. There is a larger drop for the CRCP, from $648.92/child over a 30-day month in CY23 to just $593/child for the same 30-day month in CY24.

2. Confusion about the Start Date, Timing and Amount of Subsidy Payments

As it stands now, many caregivers tell us they are confused about the amount they will receive and when they will receive it. The subsidy agreement does not provide these details. Just last month, we received calls from two caregiver clients on April 7 concerned that they had not received their subsidy payment for the month. The previous month, which was the first month each of them had received the subsidy, the payment was reflected on their ReliaCard on March 6, so they were concerned when that did not occur on April 6. Caregivers receiving their first payment have also been confused when it does not include a full month's payment. They often do not understand that they will be paid in arrears, not for the month in which they receive the payment, as is the case for TANF and SNAP payments. They are also perplexed when they receive smaller payments for shorter months, not understanding that the subsidy rate is a daily rate, rather than a monthly rate. Written and verbal explanations of these details would be important in assisting caregivers to anticipate cash flow and plan for when they will have funds for various expenditures.

The governing statutes for the GCP and CRCP state that the amount of the first subsidy payment shall be calculated from the date the caregiver "is deemed eligible to receive

the subsidy."[4] That date is not disclosed in the subsidy agreement and, from what we can determine, subsidies have been calculated from the date the agreement is signed. As the date the caregiver is deemed eligible almost certainly occurs before the date they sign the agreement, their first subsidy payment is likely lower than it should be.

3. Need for a Clear, Written Explanation of Subsidy Details

We propose that CFSA attach an addendum to each subsidy agreement disclosing how the daily rate was calculated, along with other important details about how and when the subsidy is paid. Providing an explanation of the calculation should not be difficult as it is something that CFSA must do for each application. The proposed addendum should include the following:

a) a breakdown of how the caregiver's daily subsidy rate was calculated;

b) the date the caregiver was deemed eligible for the subsidy;

c) how much the caregiver will receive for the first partial month and how that amount was calculated;

d) a statement that following the first partial month, the total amount received will vary slightly depending on the number of days in a given month;

e) disclosure that payments are made to the card between the sixth and the twelfth of each month; and

f) a statement that monthly payments will be "made in arrears" and an explanation of what that means.

4. Unnecessary Documentation Requirements that Complicate the Application Process

In times of shrinking resources, it is imperative that the process of applying for caregiver subsidies be efficient and streamlined, so that caregivers can begin receiving their

[4] D.C. Code § 4-251.04(d), § 4-251.24(e)

subsidies as soon as possible to be able to feed and clothe the children in their care. We know that there are devastating impacts for children growing up in poverty.[5] Advancements in neuroscience have made it possible to demonstrate that poverty disrupts the developing brain architecture, which leads to significantly lower educational achievement, earnings, and overall health, as well as a disproportionately higher rate of developmental delays and learning disabilities.[6] And, research has found that there is a a "dose-response" pattern, such that outcomes are worse the longer children are exposed to poverty.[7] These studies posit that interventions aimed at increasing the income of families with children can alter the link between childhood poverty and deficits in cognition and academic achievement. This underscores the need to reduce, not enhance documentation requirements for these subsidy programs, so children benefit from them as soon as possible.

There are two documentation requirements that we highlighted in our budget oversight testimony last year, and have raised numerous times with CFSA staff, which are unnecessarily burdensome and slow down the process.

a. **School Enrollment Form**

Program staff now require that applicants furnish a school enrollment form to prove that the child is presently enrolled (and with recertifications, they must furnish an attendance record to prove that the child is attending school). This causes delay because there are circumstances when a caregiver has recently taken a child into their home, and a school record showing their address can be difficult to obtain quickly, especially if they have taken

[5] Toxic Stress Key Concepts," Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/.
[6] Perry Firth, "Homelessness and Academic Achievement: The Impact of Childhood Stress on School Achievement," Firesteel: The Network of Washington YWCAs Washington. (September 8, 2014). http://firesteelwa.org/2014/09/homelessness-and-academic-achievement-the-impact-of-childhood-stress-on-school-performance/
[7] Hair NL, Hanson JL, Wolfe BL, Pollak SD. Association of Child Poverty, Brain Development, and Academic Achievement. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2015;169(9):822–829. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.1475. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2381542.

in the child over a summer or other school break. Moreover, we question why CFSA layered on this additional requirement, when proof that the child is in school is not an eligibility requirement under applicable law or policy.

For applicants who do not have a custody order, CFSA requires that they provide documentation from a third party, such as a school or medical form showing the caregiver as the primary contact, or proof that they are receiving SSI or TANF for the child. If the child has just recently come to live with the caregiver, the applicant may not be able provide these documents quickly. We have suggested to CFSA that in cases where an applicant does not have a custody order, the Agency should accept a self-attestation to prove the caregiving relationship, which is what DHS now accepts for TANF applications.

b. Copy of Lease

During budget oversight last year, we also spoke about the difficulty of having to provide a lease, in addition to a District-issued ID, to prove DC residency. Most of our caregiver clients do not own computers and struggle with copying and uploading what is often a 10-20 page lease on their cell phone. If the concern is really about proving that the applicant still lives in DC, a recent utility bill showing their name and DC address should be sufficient. This is what DHS accepts to prove residency for TANF applications, so we do not understand the purpose of this onerous lease requirement.

We have asked CFSA for a sensible easing of these unnecessary documentation requirements, but as yet, they have not taken action. We implore CFSA to eliminate these requirements for the benefit of the cargeivers and the children they raise.

5. Inaccuracies on the Website and in the Annual Report

We note some inaccuracies concerning the operation of the GCP and CRCP programs in some of CFSA's public-facing messaging, which can reduce program efficacy and discourage some eligible caregivers from applying. On the kinship navigator website, under

"Proof of Household Income," it states: *"The household income must be below 200 percent of the federal poverty level."* As the Programs' own 2024 Annual Report states, the eligibility for the programs was expanded to 300% of the federal poverty level in CY2024.[8] Also on the website, under "New Application Requirements," it states under under "Proof that you applied for TANF benefits on behalf of the children," that GCP applicants are *"required to provide proof that an eligibility determination has been made prior to being approved for a subsidy."* This is no longer the policy; rather, for both subsidy programs, the applicant need only prove that they applied for TANF, not that they have received a TANF determination. This error remains on the website despite the Programs' 2024 Annual Report correctly reporting on that the TANF determination requirement for the GCP was removed in November of 2024.

Further, the 2024 Annual Report for the Programs incorrectly states in footnotes 11, 12, and 23 that *"SSI is deducted from the full subsidy rate a caregiver receives."*[9] This used to be the case, but as of Oct. 1, 2023, SSI is no longer deducted.

We request that CFSA make the necessary corrections to the kinship navigator website as soon as possible, and ensure its reports are accurate. These are simple fixes which will promote program efficacy.

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In summary, with federal dollars shrinking, the challenge for caregivers to provide for children who suddenly arrive in their households is more daunting than ever. The caregiver subsidy programs are a vital defense against kinship families descending into food, housing, and job insecurity. We ask the Council to continue funding the GCP and CRCP at 2025 levels at minimum. From CFSA, we demand heightened sensitivity around transparency and respect

[8] See 2024 Annual Report at p.6.
[9] See 2024 Annual Report at pp. 5, 15.

for program applicants by providing them with a clear and complete explanation of how their subsidy is calculated, and disclosures of the timing and fluctuations they can expect in their payments month over month. We urge common sense around documentation requirements, with an eye toward reducing complication and delay. We ask CFSA to take greater care to be sure that all public-facing information is accurate and up-to-date so that no eligible persons will be discouraged from applying. These requests will also assist the Council as it considers funding levels for the caregiver subsidy programs. Knowing the formula that CFSA employs to calculate the subsidy rate, and seeing the true number of applicants after misleading information has been removed from the website, will give the Council a much more accurate picture of how much money is needed to adequately fund the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to take any questions.

connecting teens • creating families • changing lives

District of Columbia Council
Committee on Youth Affairs
Child and Family Services Agency Budget Hearing
May 29, 2025

Chairman Parker and members of the Youth Affairs committee,

My name is Susan Punnett. I am a District of Columbia resident and Executive Director of Family & Youth Initiative. DCFYI is a small DC non-profit that brings together teens who are in foster care and adult volunteers to forge lasting relationships and thus help teens achieve permanency. We are proud of the work we have done over 14 years of helping some teens find adoptive families and other teens connect with adults who have stayed in their lives through foster care and into adulthood. We believe ALL young people deserve to have adults they can trust and count on no matter what.

Our core work aligns fully with the new permanency option being created for older youth in foster care as it will ensure that more youth achieve permanency rather than aging out, often without lasting support. I am here today in DCFYI's capacity as the community partner supporting the insightful group of Lived Experts, or LEx Leaders, who are leading the design of this new permanency option. These individuals share the experience of having been in DC foster care. You have heard from some of these Lived Experts today. Others have shared their perspective with committee members separate from this hearing.

As you know, we had hoped the Mayor would include the new permanency option called SOUL that the LEx Leaders have helped create in the fiscal year 2026 Budget Support Act. SOUL will give older youth who are in foster care the ability to exit care to a family they have chosen and which meets their own unique circumstances.

SOUL will allow youth to achieve permanency without having to choose between services and lasting relationships and without having to choose between maintaining birth family connections and building connections with a new family.

An incredible amount of work has gone into designing SOUL and working through the many decisions required for implementation. While the perspective of the LEx Leaders is prioritized, this has been an actively collaborative process with much open and honest back and forth and discussion. It has been inspiring to see the collaboration and working through of difficult issues.

We are grateful to the many organizations that are actively involved and committed to seeing SOUL come to life, starting with Child and Family Service Agency, which convened the group to start this work and whose many staff members have devoted countless hours to meetings and planning. Also actively involved are staff from the Office of the Attorney General and Children's Law Center. Other individuals and entities have provided feedback as well.

We believe that the collaborative work being done by the LEx Leaders, CFSA, CLC, OAG, and others will also create practice changes that will result in better outcomes for all youth who are in foster care.

Best of all, implementing SOUL will not cost the District of Columbia additional money. In fact, over time CFSA will spend less for each youth who leaves foster care to a SOUL family rather than remaining in care until they age out. A fiscal analysis conducted a year ago documented that the costs of SOUL would be more than offset by the cost savings from not having those youth remain in foster care.

I hope you will listen to and read the words of the LEx Leaders as they make a compelling case for why a new permanency option is desperately needed for young people currently in foster care.

In closing, we look forward to working with you to moving the SOUL legislation so more youth can leave foster care to real permanency, meaning they will have the family that all of us need and deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council
Committee on Youth Affairs
May 29, 2025

Public Hearing:
Budget Oversight Hearing
Child and Family Services Agency

Tami Weerasingha-Cote
Policy Director
Children's Law Center

Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Parker and members of the Committee. My name is Tami Weerasingha-Cote and I am the Policy Director for Children's Law Center. I am also a Ward 4 resident and the parent of three children here in the District.

Children's Law Center believes every child should grow up with a strong foundation of family, health, and education and live in a world free from poverty, trauma, racism, and other forms of oppression. Our more than 100 staff – together with DC children and families, community partners, and pro bono attorneys – use the law to solve children's urgent problems today and improve the systems that will affect their lives tomorrow. Since our founding in 1996, we have reached more than 50,000 children and families directly and multiplied our impact by advocating for city-wide solutions that benefit hundreds of thousands more.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Children's Law Center regarding the Mayor's proposed FY26 budget for the Child and Family Services Agency. Children's Law Center attorneys serve as guardians-ad-litem for children in the care and custody of CFSA.[1] Currently, we represent approximately half the children involved with CFSA – several hundred children in foster care and protective supervision each year.[2] Children's Law Center also has teams of attorneys dedicated to helping families secure special education services for their children, address unhealthy housing conditions, and obtain custody or guardianship of children in their extended

family.[3] As a result, we not only have expertise in the issues impacting children who are already in the care and custody of CFSA, we also have insight into systemic issues affecting the broader population of families most likely to be impacted by CFSA's policies and practices.

In this extremely challenging budget year, we are largely relieved to see the Mayor's proposed operating budget for CFSA includes only a modest cut of 3.5 percent, and no FTE cuts.[4] My testimony today will: (1) highlight several important investments included in the proposed budget; (2) discuss the importance of restoring full funding to Safe Shores; (3) flag the potential impact of proposed cuts to prevention services; and (4) urge the Committee to take the lead in moving forward proposed legislation designed to help older youth in foster care.

CFSA's Proposed FY26 Budget Includes Increased Investments in Critical Areas

The Mayor's proposed budget for CFSA includes the following important investments:

- A slight increase of $412,000 for out-of-home placements, which includes living arrangements for children who must enter foster care, including family foster homes, group care, and independent living programs.[5]

- A slight increase of $30,000 for clinical health services, which includes the provision of medical and behavioral health screenings for children in foster care, and other health services and supports.[6]

- An increase of $264,000 for In Home clinical case management and support, which includes the provision of social work support and services that ensures the safety and well-being of children while they remain in their homes with their families.[7]

- An increase of $370,000 for older youth empowerment, which provides targeted programming and support services for older youth in foster care.[8]

We have previously testified regarding the need for CFSA to expand its placement array,[9] to increase the availability of clinical services,[10] and to improve the supports provided to older youth in care[11] – so we are very pleased to see increased investments in these areas. It's also our understanding that there is an increased need in the community for In Home services and supports, so we are glad to see additional investments there as well.

Funding for Safe Shores Must be Restored

Further, it's our understanding that the proposed budget eliminates CFSA funding for Safe Shores, a critical organization that provides services and support for children affected by abuse in DC.[12] Safe Shores serves as the District's statutorily designated child advocacy center.[13] Children's Law Center strongly urges the Council to secure funding for Safe Shores, even in the difficult budget landscape that FY26 presents.

DC is required by law to review and investigate every instance of child sexual abuse with a multidisciplinary investigation team ("MDT") with representatives of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), CFSA, and the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), and to adopt a written child abuse protocol to ensure coordination and cooperation among all involved agencies to increase their efficiency and effectiveness in

handling their investigations and ensuring the child's safety and treatment needs are met.[14] Since 1995, Safe Shores has coordinated teams of federal and local authorities to serve DC children believed to be in harm's way.

Our attorneys, who represent more than half of the District's foster children, have witnessed Safe Shores' deft and sensitive coordination of authorities and clinicians to minimize the impact of forensic investigations on our clients. When a child comes forward with an allegation of abuse, the last thing they need is to have to tell their story repeatedly to the police officer, then the assigned detective, the Child Protective Services (CPS) investigative social worker, the assigned CFSA social worker, their attorney, their therapist, and so forth. Our attorneys have reported to Safe Shores to observe one clinician interview with our client in a child-friendly environment that is equipped with toys and technology that enables our attorneys, CPS investigators, and law enforcement to observe the interview, ask questions, and use the same recording in family or criminal court proceedings. This evidence-based approach avoids retraumatizing the child, improves investigatory effectiveness, and maltreatment substantiation rates, and increases the referral rate of cases for prosecution.

Failing to allocate funding for Safe Shores would not eliminate the District's obligation to utilize the multi-disciplinary aspect of child abuse allegations, but it would eliminate the District's ability to utilize the one provider with the experience and expertise to do this difficult job well and immediately. Restoring this funding is

essential to meeting the needs of children in the care and custody of CFSA, and we strongly urge the Committee and the Council to ensure this is done.

Proposed Cuts to Prevention Services May Undermine CFSA's Goal of Keeping District Families Together

Unfortunately, the proposed cuts to CFSA's budget includes several cuts that will hamper CFSA's ability to keep District families together, causing us great concern. Specifically, the proposed budget includes cuts to kinship support, the Grandparent and Close Relative Caregiver subsidy and support programs, as well as CFSA's primary prevention and housing and community support services.[15] All of these programs and service areas provide direct support for struggling and vulnerable families, which is at the heart of CFSA's stated goal of keeping families together safely whenever possible. We fear that decreased investment in these vital prevention efforts will result in increased numbers of children entering foster care.

Moving SOUL Legislation Forward Will Create More Pathways for Stability and Success for Older Youth in Foster Care

Finally, as you know, Children's Law Center has been working in close partnership with a group of current and former DC foster youth (known as our LEX Leaders), CFSA, the Office of the Attorney General, and others to develop proposed legislation for SOUL, a new permanency option for older youth.[16] Although we are disappointed that SOUL was not included in the BSA as we had hoped, we remain invested in moving this legislation forward. We hope that this Committee under your

leadership, Chairman Parker, will take the steps necessary to move this legislation forward as quickly as possible.

Conclusion

There are a few additional line items in CFSA's proposed budget that raise questions for us, and we will be seeking the assistance of the agency and this Committee over the coming weeks, to fully understand the implications of the proposed budget and address any concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome any questions the Committee may have.

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[1] Children's Law Center attorneys represent children who are the subject of abuse and neglect cases in DC's Family Court. CLC attorneys fight to find safe homes and ensure that children receive the services they need to overcome the trauma that first brought them into the child welfare system. DC Children's Law Center, About Us, *available at*: https://www.childrenslawcenter.org/content/about-us. The term "protective supervision" means a legal status created by Division order in neglect cases whereby a minor is permitted to remain in his home under supervision, subject to return to the Division during the period of protective supervision. D.C. Code § 16-2301(19).

[2] DC Children's Law Center, About Us, *available at:* https://www.childrenslawcenter.org/content/about-us.

[3] DC Children's Law Center, Our Impact, *available at:* https://childrenslawcenter.org/our-impact/.

[4] Mayor's Proposed FY 2026 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan, Volume 4 Agency Budget Chapters – Part III, Human Support Services, Operations and Infrastructure, Financing and Other, and Enterprise and Other, p. E-1.

[5] *Id.* at p. E-4, Table RL0-4, Line H03705, Out-Of-Home Child Placement.

[6] *Id.* at p. E-5, Table RL0-4, Line H04101, Clinical Health Services.

[7] *Id.* at p. E-4, Table RL0-4, Line H03903, In Home Clinical Case Management and Support.

[8] *Id.* at p. E-5, Table RL0-4, Line H03707, Older Youth Empowerment.

[9] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), p. 12-15, *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-21-2024-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-002.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs, (February 13, 2025), p. 9-12, *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/T.Weerasingha-Cote__Childrens-Law-Center__FY24-Performance-Oversight-Hearing-for-CFSA_FINAL-1.pdf.

[10] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), p. 15-16, *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-21-2024-CFSA-

Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-002.pdf; Tami Weerasingha-Cote and Amber Rieke, testimony before the DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (December 6, 2023), *available at*: Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Dec-6-2023-Hearing-on-B25-0500-and-Foster-Youth-Behavioral-Health_FINAL.pdf.

[11] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Facilities and Family Services, (February 21, 2024), p. 17-18, *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TWeerasingha-Cote_Childrens-Law-Center-Testimony-for-Feb.-21-2024-CFSA-Oversight-Hearing_FINAL-002.pdf.

[12] Although we cannot identify an explicit explanation in the FY2026 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan, it is our understanding that the proposed budget does not include the one-time budget enhancement included in the FY2025 budget to continue funding for Safe Shores to serve as the District's statutorily designated child advocacy center.

[13] Code of the District of Columbia § 4–1301.02. Definitions. (2B).

[14] Code of the District of Columbia § 4–1301.51. Mandatory investigation of child abuse and neglect cases by multidisciplinary team.

[15] Mayor's Proposed FY 2026 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan, Volume 4 Agency Budget Chapters – Part III, Human Support Services, Operations and Infrastructure, Financing and Other, and Enterprise and Other, p. E-4, Table RL0-4, Lines H03704, H03602, H03604, H03802, and H03803.

[16] Tami Weerasingha-Cote, testimony before DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs, (February 13, 2025), p. 7-9, *available at*: https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/T.Weerasingha-Cote__Childrens-Law-Center__FY24-Performance-Oversight-Hearing-for-CFSA_FINAL-1.pdf.

Dear Councilman Parker,

My name is Tracy Quarrelles, and it is a privilege to stand before you today as a proud resident of Ward 8, a senior citizen, and a participant in the Knox Hill-Buena Vista Family Success Center. Over the last four years, I have been deeply involved in this initiative, and for the past two years, I have had the honor of serving on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). In this role, I have committed myself to ensuring that our community's voices and needs are acknowledged and actively addressed.

As a member of the CAC, I have embraced the role of ambassador for the Knox Hill-Buena Vista Family Success Center. This position has empowered me to identify the urgent needs within our community and collaborate on programs that foster meaningful change in Ward 8. Alongside the team, we have developed initiatives that truly make a difference, and I am eager to share our progress and vision for the future. Some programs and support include:

• Support single seniors with healthy eating courses, ensuring they have the knowledge and resources to maintain their well-being.

• Provide computer literacy training, helping residents gain essential digital skills to navigate today's world.

• Offered economic development programs, including budget training, that helped me clear my credit card debt and achieve financial stability.

• Encourage fitness and wellness programs like Zumba and our 90-day challenge, which kept many seniors active and engaged.t

Through the support of the Success Center, I have completed four certification programs, including literacy, economic development, and healthy living courses. These programs have shaped me into a well-rounded individual and allowed me to become a resource for others.

I have recruited seniors from Ward 8 to ensure they can access critical services, such as food assistance and financial support.

• I have volunteered with back-to-school and coat drives, ensuring families and children have what they need to thrive.

• I have led efforts to utilize and expand food pantry services, ensuring no senior or family goes hungry.

When seniors in our community need help, they know they can come to me. With Smart from the Start, I have helped navigate countless individuals toward resources like food, financial aid, and health services. This is more than just a program—it's a lifeline for Ward 8 residents.

The Knox Hill- Buena Vista team has empowered adults and significantly benefited our youth, keeping our children engaged and safe from the pitfalls of violence in our community.

• Youth Programs at the Youth Empowerment Success (Y.E.S.) Center:

The Y.E.S. Center has provided a safe and nurturing environment for our children. Through organized trips, engaging activities, and structured tutoring sessions, the center helps keep our kids away from violence and negative influences. This program assists with homework, offers tutoring, and exposes children to enriching experiences outside their usual environment, broadening their horizons and fostering a sense of responsibility and achievement.

Ward 8 is a vibrant, resilient community that faces challenges. Access to resources, financial empowerment, and senior engagement must remain a priority. That is why I stand here today, urging you, our lawmakers and decision-makers, to continue investing in programs like Smart from the Start.

• By continuing to fund and expand the Family Success Centers, we can reach more seniors, families, and youth who deserve opportunities.

• We can provide critical literacy and workforce development programs, ensuring economic stability for future generations.

• We can expand food assistance programs, ensuring no one in our community has to go without a meal.

This program has boosted my morale, given me purpose, and kept me motivated—and I know it can do the same for countless others.

Today, I urge you to continue supporting Knox Hill- Buena Vista and other Success centers like it. The investment in these initiatives is an investment in stronger families, thriving communities, and brighter futures. I am living proof that with the proper support, resilience can turn into success."

"Imagine the impact we can make if we expand these efforts—more families lifted out of hardship, more children given opportunities, and more communities strengthened. Your leadership and advocacy can ensure that countless others receive the same support that changed my life."

Congress, I ask for your continued support. Not just for me, but for the seniors, the families, and the future of Ward 8.

Tracy Quarrelles

DC KinCare Alliance
Supporting Kin and the Children they Raise

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Testimony Before the Council of the District of Columbia

Committee on Youth Affairs

Budget Oversight Hearing
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children
May 29, 2025

Victoria Taplin

Managing Attorney, Policy & Advocacy, DC KinCare Alliance

To Chairperson Parker and Members of the Committee on Youth Affairs:

My name is Victoria Taplin, and I am a Managing Attorney with DC KinCare Alliance. Our mission is to support the legal, financial, and related service needs of relative caregivers who step up to raise children in their extended families when the children's parents are not able to care for them. In the six years since our founding, we have helped over 1,000 relative caregivers raising more than 1,000 DC children. Today I am testifying in support of restoring the funding for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children ("OFC"). DC KinCare Alliance was one of the original proponents of the OFC and were pleased to see it established, and seek to ensure it can continue its important work.

Despite its critical mission, the OFC has always faced an uphill battle, and this year is no different. I We do not pretend that finding a way to fund the OFC will be easy in this leaner year but it can be done. It HAS to be done because District children and families who are hurt by CFSA will have nowhere else to turn if it is not. There is no court monitor in the *LaShawn* case anymore. If the OFC is not funded, for the first time in more than 30 years, there will be no one to help District children and families who are negatively impacted by CFSA. There will be no one to review whether CFSA is complying with its own policies and procedures or to assess the efficacy and advisability of those policies. If Council oversight of CFSA is to be informed by what is really going on and the impact it is having on District residents, the OFC is absolutely necessary.

DC KinCare Alliance sees the impact of CFSA actions and policies every day. We can and do testify about our clients' experiences at performance oversight hearings, but the information we can provide is limited to our clients' cases; Unfortunately, the realities faced by the majority of children and families impacted by CFSA remain hidden from public scrutiny due to D.C.'s strict confidentiality laws.

In contrast, the OFC operates without those same restrictions. Its ability to access CFSA records and case management software is vital. This access, combined with its investigative powers, is essential for providing the Council with timely, relevant information about the well-being of children in our city, and whether CFSA is effectively fulfilling its mission to protect them. This need is particularly urgent in cases of child fatalities—where CFSA's reporting and that of the Child Fatality Review Committee often provide information years after the tragic events, making them less effective for preventing future incidents of child maltreatment. Additionally, neither body adequately reports near fatalities, despite federal law requiring it.

The Council need look no further than the OFC's FY 24 Annual Report under "Trend Analysis" to see the importance of OFC's work. The report highlights three significant trends: 1) CFSA's failure to remove children promptly and when necessary to ensure their safety and well-being; 2) Instances of missing or untimely documentation, which contradicts policy; and 3) CFSA's inadequate support for relative caregivers who step in to provide care, including a lack of information on kinship options for subsidies, foster parent licensing, and ensuring those caregivers are equipped to care for the children after CFSA's involvement ends. The OFC report effectively showcases these trends by providing invaluable case summaries that would otherwise remain concealed. This transparency is crucial for informed decision-making.

To have a mechanism by which trends like these, which bear directly on the safety of the children involved with CFSA, are brought to light and reported to the Council, is of vital importance. Each of these trends mirrors common and deeply concerning problems that our caregiver clients report to us about their interactions with CFSA. We have heard from anguished grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents, and close family friends about CFSA investigations that have been closed with children left in dangerous situations in their parents'

homes, and those situations resulting in near fatalities of the children. We have heard frustrations about the length of time it takes for investigators to come to the home, while the children are continuing to be abused or neglected. And, we are intimately familiar with kinship diversion (also known as Hidden Foster Care), a practice regularly used by CFSA when it determines that abused or neglected children cannot remain safely in their homes even with services. Rather than remove the child to kinship foster care, the social workers coerce and pressure those same relatives to take in the children infomally without any information of what that means or the differences between foster care and infomal care. Often, the relative is advised by CFSA to file for custody, which can take months, pits relatives against each other, and provides no supports or reunificaiton services to the family. CFSA is so intent on keeping children out of foster care, that they force relatives to enter into these arrangements, and do not inform them that they can become licensed as foster care parents, and in so doing, receive a higher subsidy, a case worker, assistance in court, and all the other services and supports that they are denied in informal kinship arrangements.

For this Committee to effectively conduct its oversight of CFSA, it needs objective information about CFSA's actions and/or failures to act on behalf of the children it is supposed to protect. If the OFC is not funded, the Council risks losing its vital source of independent insights, undermining the ability to conduct meaningful oversight and ensure the welfare of D.C. children.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Yesmine Holmes - Mother's Outreach Network

Good morning Councilmember Parker and Committee members,

My name is Yesmine Holmes, and I am a single mother with five boys ages 5 and under.

I was born in DC, I live in Ward 8, and I grew up in the foster care system.

I am a Mother's Outreach Network Moms Empower group, an Advocacy Fellow, and I am also in the Mother Up Guaranteed Income Program.

This pilot is a private program that provides me with extra income with no strings attached that my family needs, for three years. Unfortunately, the program will come to an end for me in another year.

I'm speaking with you today because I want to speak on behalf of many moms like myself who are involved with CFSA. Or who have been involved with CFSA.

- When our children are taken from us we lose the benefits that help us survive, like food assistance.
- We also lose our homes, making it even harder to rebuild our lives
- The court requires us to get a job, become financially stable and prove we are fit to have our children back.
- After following the court's orders and getting our children back, many of us must quit our jobs because they don't fit with our kids' school schedules. I used to work at night and at all kinds of hours, but with children I can't work that way. So now I have to quit my job or struggle to find a babysitter.
- This puts us back in the same unstable situation, making it feel like an endless cycle.

My questions are:

- What are young Black mothers supposed to do when we don't have enough child care, especially those of us who grew up in broken homes and are trying to do better for our children?
- Being involved with CFSA makes the situation worse. What happens when a mom is going through postpartum depression and is dealing with CFSA? That's a lot.
- How does a mom get help when she is struggling with severe anxiety even when CFSA is not in the picture and has no support system?
- Why does the system take away our benefits while our children are in

foster care?

- We need real solutions that help mothers reunite with their children without setting them up for failure.
- CFSA needs to keep providing funds to parents while the children are in foster care.
- If they don’t once the children are returned then you don’t have enough to pay for their food and you have to wait for your benefits to start up again.
- We need programs that help us with the cost of raising children.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, I WOULD BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE FOR ME

Dear Councilman Parker,

My name is Zlena Addison, and I stand before you today as a testament to the life-changing impact of Smart from the Start. I am deeply honored to share my journey and how this program has transformed my family's life."

"First and foremost, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported this initiative—your commitment to strengthening families and communities is invaluable. The support from every state, staff member, and volunteer has been phenomenal."

"When I first connected with Knox Hill Family Success Center, I faced numerous challenges—navigating pregnancy, securing resources, and ensuring a stable environment for my children. Through the unwavering support of Smart from the Start staff like Ms. Takeithia and Ms. Kendra, I could receive essential resources like baby clothes, food, transportation, and a support system that felt like family."

"Ms. Takeithia walked with me through my pregnancy, attending doctor's appointments, providing home care, and ensuring I had everything I needed postpartum. She has also become a mentor to my children, offering guidance that has helped me grow as a parent. The team ensured my family never went without food, sending meals daily during tough times."

"Beyond the immediate support, Smart from the Start empowered me with long-term solutions. Mr. Thomas helped me explore workforce development programs, guiding me toward launching my nonprofit. The team has assisted in navigating services across the district, ensuring my family had access to essential resources."

"Knox Hill-Buena Vista Success Center is not just about meeting immediate needs—it's about long-term transformation. This program provides:"

- Food Assistance – A pantry open to the public, ensuring no family goes hungry.

- Homeless Support & Community Outreach – Helping individuals rebuild stability.

- Education & Child Development – From early childhood programs to college preparation for preteens.

• Family Fun & Engagement – Programs like Tuesday Family Fun Night bring families together.

• Workforce & Life Skills Development – Résumé writing, workforce training, financial literacy, etc.

• Holiday and Community Events, such as Party with a Purpose, ensure children experience joy during the holidays.

"This isn't just a program—it's a lifeline, a foundation, and a future for families like mine."

"Today, I urge each of you to continue supporting Knox Hill-Buena Vista and other Family Success Centers. The investment in these initiatives is an investment in stronger families, thriving communities, and brighter futures. I am living proof that with the right support, resilience can turn into success."

"Imagine the impact we can make if we expand these efforts—more families lifted out of hardship, more children given opportunities, and more communities strengthened. Your leadership and advocacy can ensure that countless others receive the same support that changed my life."

"Thank you for your time, commitment, and belief in the power of community-driven programs. I am grateful to stand before you today, not just as a beneficiary of Knox Hill-Buena Vista Success Center, but as a voice for every family that still needs our help."

Sincerely

Zlena Addison

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs, and Committee Staff. My name is Shirley R. Smith, and I was born and raised in Washington, DC. I've been in the Grandparent's Caregiver Program for several years now.

I never thought that I would be raising my grandkids at the age of 66 and having stage three kidney disease. I have a 16-year-old grandson, who is looking forward to driving and going to college and a 10-year grandson, and a 12-year-old granddaughter who is diagnosed with ADHD.

The Grandparents Caregiver Program has been incredibly beneficial for me and my grandchildren and a crucial lifeline allowing me to be able to afford the daily living expenses like housing, utilities, food, car and car insurance, clothes, shoes sizes are very expensive for a 16-year-old, school uniforms, school supplies, a computer, printer, after school activities, etc.

Having a computer and printer in the home have shown so much improvement in their academics, they are receiving awards certificates, honor roll and Student of the Month, etc.

It takes a village to raise a child, and the Grandparent Program is that village that helps us raise our grandchildren. Without the Grandparent Caregiver Program, it will affect me and my grandkids tremendously in so many ways. Our basis day-to-day needs will change, including our housing which means we will have to downsize to a smaller apartment. I would no longer be able to afford a car note, and car insurance, school activities, etc. The loss of support will be a major financial hardship educationally and physically. To be honest, my feelings is that I have failed my grandkids with that dramatic change.

Mr. Dion Jackson, you and your team deserve the highest recognition because you and your team go above and beyond for the grandparents and the kids. Every year you have a computer training class for grandparents to assist with the recertification process.

In October for the kids there was Trunk for Treats. In December Holiday Celebration for the grandparents. In December there are toys giveaway for the kids.

The hard work, dedication creative ideas do not go unnoticed. I truly appreciate all that you and your team do every month. You all have a platform for the grandparents to come and socialize and bring our ideas to the table and you have different guest speakers that bring us new ideas and valuable information that we can benefit from.

I have to continue to say thank you to you and your team for the positive attitude and giving us motivation.

Attachment H

Alicia Swanson Canty

Testimony for the DC Council Youth Affairs Hearing – DYRS Budget Oversight

Submitted by: ALICIA SWANSON CANTY, Former DYRS Employee

Date: JUNE 11, 2025

Chairperson and Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak truthfully and transparently about the state of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS). My testimony is not rooted in resentment—it is born of responsibility. For just under one year, I had a front-row seat to the internal dysfunction that, in my opinion, directly fuels the revolving door of recidivism among court-involved youth in the District of Columbia.

Let me be clear: the scrutiny DYRS faces is not unwarranted.

The system is not simply flawed—it is broken at its roots. Internally funded programs, no matter how well-intentioned or evidence-based, are rendered ineffective because the very culture of DYRS contradicts its own mission of rehabilitation. The vision may be restorative, but the internal execution remains deeply punitive. And at the heart of this contradiction are long-standing staff who operate under outdated, toxic, and often dangerous practices that endanger both youth and fellow professionals.

I have personally witnessed:

- Staff suspected of smuggling contraband and drugs.
- The use of abusive and degrading language towards youth.
- Physical aggression by staff members.
- Known associations with drug kingpins whose influence continues to shape the choices of vulnerable youth inside these walls.

These individuals are still employed. Meanwhile, new, passionate staff—those who bring trauma-informed approaches, emotional intelligence, and transformative mentorship—are pushed out. Why? Because they disrupt the status quo. Because they expose the rot.

I was one of those staff members.

I came to DYRS with integrity, passion, and a proven work ethic. I was never late. I received high performance reviews. I poured myself into the work—volunteering extra hours, building real connections with youth, and actively advancing the mission of rehabilitation.

But behind closed doors, I experienced:

- Gender discrimination.
- Workplace bullying and harassment.
- Physical assault by a staff member.
- Seven months of reporting these documented violations—with no meaningful action taken.

Instead of addressing the very real and dangerous concerns I raised, DYRS chose to remove **me**—the whistleblower—from the environment. The message was clear: silence protects the system. Truth disrupts it.

Management claims to promote “professional courage,” yet when staff demonstrate that courage by calling out injustice, they are dismissed, discredited, or discarded. Meanwhile, youth witness staff-on-staff violence, staff disrespecting youth, and youth harming one another—with no meaningful intervention. This sends a message to them: survival trumps change, and silence equals safety.

Councilmembers, if this budget is to have any impact, it must be tied to **radical cultural reform**. Throwing money at programs without addressing the **toxicity in**

personnel and leadership is like planting seeds in poisoned soil.

I urge you to:

1. Mandate third-party investigations into DYRS internal operations, staffing practices, and abuse reports.

2. Implement independent oversight for HR and complaint processing.

3. Require annual psychological and ethical evaluations for direct-care staff.

4. Allocate budget toward protecting and retaining staff who align with the agency’s rehabilitative mission.

5. Create a clear, protected path for whistleblowers within DYRS.

Our youth deserve better. And so do the people who show up every day to serve them with integrity.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of the truth—and in honor of every young person still waiting for a system that works.

ALOIS RICKY CLEMONS

For the past two summers under the direction of the Health Human Performance and Sports Management department at Howard Unversity, ARC Connections has produced a week long sports management camp for more than 30 local youth. The camp includes visits to the Convention Center, Nationals Park, Capital One Arena and Audi Field to explore job opportunities behind the scenes in the world of sports. With the assistance of the Councilman we would like to expand the program an additional week to host a Sports Media bootcamp featuring Howard University School of Communications graduates and local journalists to introduce and train DC youth in sports reporting, producing, digital, radio, print and television job opportunities in the field of sports journalism.

DMV Academy (DMVA) Public Testimony for Chairperson Parker

Greetings Chairperson Parker and committee members.

My name is Larry Greenhill Jr. I am the executive director of the DMV Academy (DMVA), located at The Yard: Eastern Market 700 Pennsylvania Avenue SE Office 2047 WDC 20003. On behalf of our DMVA board of directors, we would like to thank you for your leadership and giving us an opportunity to speak before your budget oversight hearing for the Committee on Youth Affairs.

Recently, our DMVA board members and I watched your video and learned a lot from your video conducted during your youth services center visit at the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS). For the DMVA, one of the key statements you addressed was “support needed for young people, namely around education” at DYRS.

Our DMVA is a 501 c 3 non profit with a mission to provide the educational support needed for young adults/adults to become pre apprentices, occupational licensed apprentices, and ultimately occupational licensed journey workers/master occupational licensed journey workers in the construction trades. Along with our community business partners and sponsors we assist with the educational support needed for construction project management opportunities, as well.

In closing, our DMVA board members sincerely hope that funds will be allocated in the DYRS FY 2026 budget to specifically prepare the youth with educational support focused on apprenticeships that place young people on a pathway to the middle class and business ownership, after leaving DYRS. I can personally say educational support for apprenticeships helped my Father become a DC electrical licensed journeyworker electrician in the 1970’s and helped me to become a DC electrical licensed journeyworker electrician in the 1990’s, too.

Chairperson Parker, again we thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee.

2024-2025

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Council for Court Excellence
Improving Justice for the Community

Testimony of the Council for Court Excellence
Before the Committee on Youth Affairs
Council of the District of Columbia

Budget Oversight Hearing for the
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

June 11, 2025

Thank you, Chairperson Parker and members of the Committee, for this opportunity to present testimony. My name is Magdalena Tsiongas, and I am the Policy Manager at the Council for Court Excellence (CCE). CCE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission to enhance justice in the District of Columbia. For more than 40 years, CCE has worked to improve the administration of justice in the courts and related agencies in D.C. through research and policy analysis, convening diverse stakeholders, and creating educational resources for the public. Please note that in accordance with our policy, no judicial member of CCE participated in the formulation or approval of this testimony. This testimony does not reflect the specific views of, or endorsement by, any judicial member of CCE.

My testimony today concerns the proposed operating budget for the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), with a focus on fulling funding the implementation of the *Recidivism Reduction at DYRS Amendment Act of 2024* (previously the ROAD Act) and ensuring the continuum of care for system impacted youth. This new law was passed in late 2024 and became effective in March 2025.

Currently, CCE is supporting the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) in addressing the ongoing and significant problem of many D.C. youth being held at the Youth Services Center (YSC) – which is designed for short-term, pre-adjudication detention – for long periods while awaiting placements after commitment to DYRS. Full implementation of the Recidivism Reduction Act is likely to positively impact the issue many now refer to as "youth awaiting placement" at the Youth Services Center. On behalf of the JJAG, we are helping to produce a report that clearly summarizes the youth awaiting placement problem identifies the significant barriers contributing to the long waits, and proposes pragmatic solutions and practice improvements that could decrease the number of youth being held post-commitment without proper placements. So far in our research, a range of reasons for delayed placement have emerged, including healthcare payments, assessments, abscondence, and interstate compact issues. As you will likely recall, we have discussed some of those issues with this Committee earlier this year, and remain happy to work with the members of this Committee and other key stakeholders to collaboratively explore and develop systemic solutions to address those challenges.

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www.courtexcellence.org

But there is one key step that can be taken as part of the FY26 budget that can help decrease the youth awaiting placement problem. When fully funded and, therefore, fully enacted, the *Recidivism Reduction Act* includes a provision that should help to address one cause of these delays – that is, the need for DYRS to develop individualized rehabilitation plans *before* dispositional hearings, implement them upon placement, and update them regularly. These plans must assess risk factors, protective factors, and specific needs to reduce recidivism, with a predisposition meeting ensuring input from the youth, their family, attorneys, and relevant agencies. Additionally, the law mandates that DYRS begin developing a discharge and reentry plan within 60 days of placement.

In looking at the feasibility of implementation given the proposed budget, the Mayor has proposed an increase of roughly $12 million in the FY25 budget for DYRS and a 3.6% increase in DYRS's FY26 operating budget as compared to the approved FY25 budget. Even given this proposed increase in funding, it is unclear if funding is included for the implementation of *Recidivism Reduction Act*. The Fiscal Impact Statement for the bill indicated the implementation of the Act requires $207,000 from DYRS in FY25 and $283,000 in FY26, which would allow DYRS to hire an additional Management Analyst and an additional Attorney.

Recidivism Reduction, Oversight, and Accountability for DYRS Act of 2024 (ROAD Act) Total Cost ($ thousand)					
	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	Total
DYRS Costs	$207	$283	$290	$297	$1,077
ODCA Costs	$710	$1,680	$1,717	$1,755	$5,862
DMPSJ Costs	$50	$50	$0	$0	$100
Total Cost	$968	$2,013	$2,007	$2,052	$7,040

Figure 1: ROAD Act Total Cost; Source: Fiscal Impact Statement, Office of the Chief Financial Officer

However, in their pre-hearing responses to Council for this hearing, DYRS indicated the need for more staff beyond what was described in the FIS. DYRS detailed:

> *"Currently, DYRS has one Pre-Commitment Unit that has 5 dedicated staff members (care coordinators) and 1 supervisor (social service officer). To meet this statutory timeline, DYRS requires additional staffing for the current Pre-Commitment Unit and requires the creation of an additional Pre-Commitment Unit. A list of the staffing required is below:*
>
> • *Current Pre-Commitment Unit – Additional Staffing Needed*
> - *1 Management Analyst (CS-11): This position is responsible for the coordination and tracking of the pre-disposition meetings.*
> • *New Pre-Commitment Unit – Additional Staffing Needed*
> - *1 Social Service Officer (MS-13): This position is responsible for supervising the unit.*
> - *1 Management Analyst (CS-11): This position is responsible for the coordination, scheduling and tracking of the pre-disposition meetings.*
> - *5 Care Coordinators (CS-12): These positions are responsible for completing the risk and needs assessment.*

We hope the Committee will get additional clarity on their position on the original Fiscal Impact Statement as compared to the staffing plan put forth by the Agency. CCE recommends that the full number of FTEs needed to implement the Act be funded as an important step to reduce the number of youth awaiting placement and their time in YSC, and ensure young people quickly are linked to needed programs and treatment.

Oversight. Beyond the improvements to case management, the *Recidivism Reduction Act* also provides for permanent oversight of DYRS under the Office of the D.C. Auditor (ODCA). This requires $710,000 in costs in FY25 for ODCA and roughly $1.7 million in FY26. This funding would allow for the hiring of four employees to inspect juvenile justice facilities and complete compliance reviews. Ensuring the funding of this section of the Act is vital given the proposed elimination of the current oversight body, the Office of Independent Juvenile Justice Facilities Oversight (OIJJFO), in FY26. The OIJJFO has provided valuable oversight since 2021, including maintaining publicly available data dashboards on population data at DYRS facilities and reports, such as their recent report detailing serious concerns with the fire safety systems at the juvenile justice facilities.

Unifying the System. Another aspect of the *Recidivism Reduction Act*, is Section 5, which requires the Mayor to submit a plan to Council about unifying the juvenile justice system. This piece of the Act relies on the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ) to hire an outside consultant for a total of $100,000 and submit a plan on unification to Council by January 1, 2026. Exploring the ways in which D.C. can have full oversight over all agencies that interact with youth is a vital step to improving outcomes for system involved youth. While not clear if this specific funding line is included in DMPSJ's FY26 budget (which includes a proposed 5.5% decrease from the FY25 approved budget), this section of the bill should also be funded.

1115 Medicaid Waiver. Justice system involved youth have high levels of medical needs, with about two-thirds of these youth having a mental health or substance abuse disorder.[1] As a result, one of the most significant barriers to successful rehabilitation and reentry is the disruption of healthcare services, particularly Medicaid-funded care. To ensure continuity of care, DYRS indicated in their oversight hearing responses that they have applied for the 1115 Medicaid waiver, which will grant youth access to essential healthcare services up to 90 days before placement. This effort will require additional staff time and strategic planning, and the budget must account for these needs to better support long-term stability for justice-involved youth. In their pre-hearing responses to Council for this hearing DYRS indicated they and DHCF "are currently finalizing an MOU that will allow the grant funds to be issued to DYRS". While it is unclear whether the federal government is moving forward with Medicaid waivers, the District should continue to budget funds to ensure DYRS is prepared for implementation.

In sum, CCE requests that the Council ensures DYRS's budget prioritizes system enhancements that improve case management to connect impacted youth to placement faster, ensure continued access to healthcare and allow for permanent DYRS oversight.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I will take any questions.

[1] Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission, "Access in Brief: Health Care Needs and Use of Services by Adolescents Involved With the Juvenile Justice System," report, August 2021, https://www.macpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Access-in-Brief-Health-Care-Needs-and-Use-of-Services-by-Adolescents-Involved-with-the-Juvenile-Justice-System-1.pdf.

Patricia Stamper

??? Testimony

RE: FY26 Local Budget Act of 2025
Submitted by: Patricia Stamper, Commissioner ANC 7C06

Chairman and Members of the Council,

My name is Patricia Stamper, and I proudly serve as the elected Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for 7C06 in Ward 7, representing the Deanwood and Burrville communities. I submit this testimony on behalf of my constituents who continue to carry the weight of disinvestment—while watching resources flow elsewhere in our city.

The Fiscal Year 2026 budget, as currently proposed, offers some targeted wins—but leaves far too many of our Ward 7 families behind.

?? Housing

I commend the $20.2 million investment for the Lincoln Heights and Richardson Dwellings redevelopment under the New Communities Initiative. But residents are still waiting—some for over a decade—for true housing stability. Meanwhile, this budget includes no direct funding for homeownership or down payment assistance, such as HPAP, which could help Ward 7 renters build wealth and remain rooted in their community.

?? Education & Childcare

We appreciate the $91.2 million allocated for Ron Brown College Preparatory High School. But this budget fails to fund modernization projects at Kelly Miller Middle School or HD Woodson High School, both of which serve large populations of Black students from under-resourced communities. There's also no investment in early childhood facilities or after school recreation expansion in Deanwood, where youth need safe and enriching spaces to grow.

?? Seniors & Health Equity

Ward 7 has one of the highest concentrations of seniors in the District. Yet this budget provides no new funding for senior wellness centers, aging-in-place supports, or health clinics in our ward. We are still waiting for accessible, walkable health options east of the river.

?? Transportation

The proposed $95 million for Benning Road reconstruction is a much-needed step toward transit equity. Still, critical gaps remain. The budget includes no pedestrian safety investments around schools, no upgrades for the Capitol Heights Metro Station, and no improved infrastructure for safe walking and biking—especially for youth and elders.

?? Food Access & Economic Opportunity

Ward 7 remains a food apartheid zone. Yet this budget allocates zero dollars for a new full-service grocery store. There is no funding for economic development along Sheriff Road, Division Avenue, or Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue. These corridors represent the heartbeat of our small business community, and they need urgent support.

? What’s Missing

-

No community benefits plan attached to the proposed $800M Commanders stadium investment.

-

No targeted workforce development or violence interruption funding for our youth.

-

No robust investment in job training, summer jobs, or teen programming.

?? Closing & Call to Action

Ward 7 deserves a budget that centers equity, safety, and opportunity. I urge this Council to amend the FY26 budget to address these glaring omissions—because budgets are moral documents, and this one falls short of our values.

Let us not tell residents to wait another year for what others receive as a given. Invest in Ward 7 like our lives depend on it—because they do.

Thank you.

?? Contact: 7C06@anc.dc.gov

Councilmember Zachary Parker
Chair - Committee on Youth Affairs
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services
Budget Hearing

June 11, 2025

Dear Chair Parker and Members of the Committee on Youth Affairs -

My name is Sophie Cazares, I am the Community Organizer for DC Veg Week, a non-profit focused on plant-based nutrition and the veg-forward economy in the nation's capital.

When the DC Council passed the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act of 2021, you set our city on a course to reduce emissions from food – the second largest source of carbon pollution after fossil fuels – with a goal of cutting food-related emissions 25% by 2030. The first milestone is FY25, so now is a critical moment to assess progress and ensure agencies have the support they need to succeed.

Request for DYRS: Create a Roadmap for Green Food

We appreciate Councilmember Parker for including a question on Green Food Procurement in agency oversight. Your engagement has elevated this issue and will assist in agency, Council, and community partnership to help this law and the people it benefits succeed.

In response to your question, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) stated that "The Environmentally Preferable Products and Services (EPPS) program for sustainable purchasing is managed by OCP in collaboration with the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). DYRS' culinary teams work to comply with DOEE on recommendations from the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act." The next step is to develop a clear, actionable plan.

Our top recommendation: offer a plant-based by default approach. This maintains choice for those who prefer animal products while consistently increasing the selection of climate-friendly eats. Evidence from Plant-Based by Default trials shows that people choose the plant-based option significantly more when offered first, increasing from less than 10% of the time to as high as 89% of the time. Since New York City's hospital system switched to a plant-based default, more than half of patients are sticking with the veggie option, which has reduced food's carbon footprint by 36% and saved over half a million dollars every year. DYRS can also implement this easy behavioral nudge to help shift consumer behavior.

Furthermore, offering good food that is healthy can truly change the diner's experience. Dishes like nachos are already a fan favorite and a great way to incorporate beans as a high fiber and high protein ingredient. Foods like soy chorizo —voted favorite protein by Trader Joe's shoppers—demonstrate how plant-based meals can be fun, familiar, and culturally relevant.

A Smart Investment: Strengthening Procurement Capacity Across Agencies

We recognize that feedback has surfaced regarding satisfaction with DYRS meals, and we share your commitment to creating a food system that meets the needs of young people in DYRS custody. A recent report by the Redstone Center at GW found that agencies like DYRS would benefit from centralized procurement support.

That is where the Office of Food Policy (OFP), housed within the Office of Planning, can play a transformative role.

We ask that the Council designate $150,000 annually to the Office of Food Policy to strengthen values-based food procurement citywide. This funding would allow OFP to assist food-purchasing agencies with:

- Developing effective solicitations informed by best practices;
- Reaching high-quality vendors;
- Monitoring contract compliance post-award;
- And creating standardized procurement templates that reflect sustainability and equity goals.

This support will be essential in helping DYRS and other agencies succeed in implementing sustainable purchasing that brings dividends back to our city in jobs, environmental protection, and equity.

To Councilmember Parker and the Committee: thank you for your continued leadership on this issue. Your investment in smart, sustainable food policy will help DYRS and other agencies deliver healthier, more climate-friendly food that meets the needs of the people they serve.

Sincerely,
Sophie Cazares
Community Organizer
DC Veg Week

Attachment J

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Tanya Torres Trice
Interim Director

Before the Committee on Youth Affairs
Zachary Parker, Chair
Council of the District of Columbia

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
May 29, 2025

Good morning, Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs, Committee Staff, and residents. I am Tanya Torres Trice, Interim Director for the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), a social worker, and proud Ward 5 District resident. I'm honored to testify before you today on our budget plans for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 2026). Joining me this morning is Chief of Staff, Dedrick Wilson, and Agency Fiscal Officer, Justin Kopca.

I want to start by thanking Mayor Bowser for her leadership and her unwavering commitment to the children and families of the District of Columbia. This year's proposed budget remains firmly centered on our core mission; directing our resources to the children and families we serve, with a clear focus on enhancing CFSA programs and improving services for children and families. This strategic direction forms the bedrock of this year's proposed budget. Our goal is to continue fulfilling our organizational mission of protecting abused and neglected children, supporting those at risk, helping families connect to the right resources, and advancing our vision of "Keeping DC Families Together." A critical component of this work is our commitment to integrating feedback from individuals with lived experience into our program development and service delivery, ensuring our approaches are truly effective and responsive.

On May 27, 2025, Mayor Bowser presented the FY 2026 Budget and Financial Plan, the District's 29th consecutive balanced budget, with a focus to "Grow DC". Her budget continues to make major investments to support the city's most vulnerable communities, including the children and families CFSA directly serves and those who benefit from our prevention and early intervention work. The Mayor's proposed budget for CFSA demonstrates her commitment to ensuring the agency is resourced to:

- Offer preventative, supportive, and community-based services that help families keep children out of foster care;

- Provide a robust placement array for children who must come into foster care; and
- Create forever homes and positive, lifelong connections for children who cannot be reunited with their birth families.

This support is critical as CFSA transitions from a child welfare agency to leading the nation as a child and family well-being system our community deserves.

Proposed Budget Overview

CFSA continues to follow a rigorous, mission-focused budgeting process. For FY 2026, CFSA's budget will decrease by 3.5%, and will have a built-in 14.5% vacancy savings factor. Despite a challenging fiscal environment, we remain dedicated to providing the best possible services to the District's children and families. My testimony today will outline what CFSA's FY 2026 proposed budget supports and where the agency has made strategic investments.

The overall FY 2026 budget request for CFSA is $216,406,350, representing a net decrease of $7,964,089 million from our FY 2025 approved budget. The FY 2026 proposed budget includes a decrease of $720,323 across multiple areas, primarily attributed to cost savings in contractual services related to information technology. Additionally, the proposed budget reflects a reduction of $758,137 in the Agency Management division, anticipated from savings in occupancy-related fixed costs like rent and utilities. Furthermore, a proposed Local fund net reduction of $2,141,689 across several divisions reflects cost savings in government subsidies and grants for placement services within the In-Home and Out-of-Home Care division.

CFSA's proposed Local funds budget includes a one-time increase of $529,908 in the Well-Being division to cover transportation costs for school related travel. CFSA offers temporary

transportation assistance for children who need to commute to and from school when their school district or program cannot provide these services.

Additionally, CFSA's Local budget proposal reflects a one-time increase of $97,151 in non-personnel services to support the agency's core operational costs across multiple divisions. This adjustment is comprised of $32,470 for out-of-city client related travel, $25,000 for IT hardware acquisitions, $20,000 for furniture and fixture purchases, $8,631 for supplies and materials, $8,350 for office support costs, and $2,700 for equipment and machinery purchases.

FY 2026 Focus and Priorities

CFSA’s proposed FY 2026 budget continues to reflect the District’s longstanding commitment to child welfare prevention and early intervention, quality services for children in foster care, and support for program performance improvements. Our ongoing commitment to learning from the experiences of families and youth shapes these priorities, ensuring our efforts are grounded in real-world needs.

For FY 2026, CFSA will work to "Keeping DC Families Together" by:

- Providing prevention options for children and families.
- Continuing to focus on retention of resource parents and CFSA staff.
- Strengthening our public and private partnerships.
- Diversifying our placement array.
- And sunsetting FACES, our 30-year-old data tracking system, and launching STAAND.

Sustained Investment in Prevention

In the FY 2026 budget, CFSA significantly reinforces its commitment to prevention and early intervention. We are sustaining and strengthening our vital investments in programs that keep families together and children safe at home. These include:

- The Collaboratives and Family Success Centers
- The Grandparent Caregivers Program
- The Close Relatives Caregivers Program
- And the Home Visiting programs

These strategic investments underscore our proactive approach to child welfare, focusing on building strong, resilient families and reducing the need for children to enter foster care.

Placement Array Investments

We are continuously assessing and fine-tuning our range of placement options, striving to meet the unique and evolving needs of the children and youth in our care. Our focus extends beyond simply the number of beds available; we prioritize placements that come with the necessary resources and support to ensure stability and well-being for the children who come into our care.

Since 2023, CFSA has observed a four percent year-over-year increase in our foster care population, leading to a corresponding rise in the cost of appropriate placement options. As of March 31, 2025, we have served 638 youth in foster care and supported 1,595 youth in-home with their families.

CFSA remains committed to prioritizing kinship placements, keeping children and youth within the District when they are separated from their families, and ensuring siblings remain together. We firmly believe that children and youth thrive in family settings and thus prioritize foster home placements. To achieve this, we continue to contract with the National Center for Children

and Families, PSI Family Services, and Lutheran Social Services for foster home placements and case management. Additionally, we partner with Maximum Quest, Sasha Bruce, Umbrella, and G.A.N.G. to provide congregate care beds for a limited number of teens. We anticipate having a vendor manage the BRIDGE program available in FY 2025 Q4.

Providing this diverse array of placements comes with significant cost considerations. The challenging economic environment, including inflation and the rising cost of living, is creating significant strains on our providers' ability to staff and retain qualified personnel. This directly impacts the availability and cost of the appropriate placements our children and youth need. We are actively working with our partners to troubleshoot and mitigate these challenges.

Our objective is to maintain a diverse range of placement options that meet the specific needs of every child and youth who enters our care. I remain committed to continuously assessing our placement options to achieve this crucial goal.

Technology Investment

In FY 2019, CFSA received federal approval to implement a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS), a foundational initiative for our work. We then initiated "Stronger Together Against Abuse and Neglect DC" (STAAND) in FY 2021 to drive this project forward.

To truly protect and serve, we must have a state-of-the-art system like STAAND that tracks every detail, interaction, and critical decision for families involved in our system.

This level of precision is non-negotiable for accountability and ensuring the best outcomes for children and families.

We began integrating STAAND in FY 2023 with the activation of its resource parent recruitment, licensing, relicensing, and service referral components. FY 2024 saw further progress with the rollout of our Training Portal and Mandated Reporter Portal.

I am excited to share CFSA is preparing for the full launch of STAAND and by June 2025 our legacy system (FACES) will sunset, signaling a complete transition to a system built for the complexities of modern child welfare. This transition will not only replace all current functionality but also significantly improve data quality, enhance accessibility, and create a superior user experience. Looking ahead, five more sub-releases are scheduled through mid-FY 2026, introducing advanced features like a new family assessment support tool, expanded artificial intelligence capabilities, simplified navigation, and more seamless connections to vital services. STAAND is indispensable for maintaining oversight and delivering responsive care at every single step of every case.

Prevention Investment and Community Collaboration

The 211 Warmline, initially established to support the "Keeping DC Families Together" initiative, has rapidly grown into a comprehensive resource for all District residents, extending beyond CFSA's core mission of preventing child maltreatment. By enhancing inter-agency collaboration and data sharing within the human services sector, the Warmline simplifies access to essential supports, helping DC residents find the help they need more easily. We continually solicit feedback from Warmline users and community partners to ensure its services are impactful and accessible.

CFSA leverages its network of community-based prevention providers and its extensive history with the Healthy Families/Thriving Community Collaboratives. These "Community Responders"

are highly knowledgeable about a wide range of services, including mental health, housing, employment, and education supports. Now co-located with the Department of Behavioral Health Access HelpLine, both agencies are working toward the common goal of cross-agency collaboration to effectively address the high-risk needs of District residents and families.

Since its launch in October 2023, the 211 Warmline has received over 19,000 calls from individuals in Washington, D.C., and beyond. Monthly call volume consistently ranges from 900 to 1,200 calls. Callers' needs vary widely, from housing and shelter to food assistance, income support, employment, and utilities, with housing and shelter identified as the most prevalent need in almost half of all service requests. This initiative currently operates without a dedicated line item outside of personnel services, relying on strong partnerships with District agencies and community organizations to meet the diverse needs of its callers.

Conclusion

Thank you, Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee, and Committee Staff, for your time today. The FY 2026 budget for CFSA is a testament to our profound commitment to "Keeping DC Families Together." We are strategically investing in critical prevention services, closely monitoring our diverse placement options, and strengthening vital community lifelines like the 211 Warmline. This budget ensures CFSA continues its vital transition into a leading child and family well-being system, one our community truly deserves.

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of every single team member at CFSA. Despite every obstacle, they show up each day with unwavering dedication to our mission. Their relentless commitment is the true driving force behind our ability to protect

children, support families, and build a brighter future every family in the District deserves. This concludes my testimony, and we look forward to answering any questions you may have.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Budget Oversight Hearing on

The District of Columbia Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

Testimony of

Sam Abed
Director

Before the

Committee on Youth Affairs
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Zachary Parker, Chairperson

June 11, 2025
12:00 pm
John Wilson Building
Room 123

DRAFT

Good afternoon Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs, and members of the community. I am Sam Abed, Director of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding DYRS' Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget. I am joined today by members of my executive team and the agency's financial team from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO). They are available to respond to budgetary questions if needed.

I want to begin by expressing my continued gratitude for the leadership of Mayor Bowser and Deputy Mayor Appiah. Even during times of challenge, the Mayor remains laser focused on ensuring that public safety and more specifically youth safety remains a top priority. Mayor Bowser's FY26 proposed budget and financial plan reflects the changing circumstances of the District's financial picture. In building the *Grow DC* budget, the Mayor was guided by our goals: growing DC's economy, rightsizing government spending, cutting red tape and making it easier to do business in DC, and investing in shared priorities.

Looking Back: DYRS' Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 (FY24 and FY25) Budget

During DYRS' 2024 Budget Oversight Hearing, I shared my priorities for the agency's FY25 budget. Today, I can report that DYRS has made progress even in the context of shared budgetary sacrifice, using the resources that we have, to best serve the rehabilitative needs of our youth.

From FY24 to FY25 to date, we have utilized our resources to:

- **Hire additional critical secure programs staff.** In FY25, DYRS welcomed 21 new Youth Development Representatives and Supervisory Youth Development Representatives. These direct service roles are critical to ensuring safe facilities and high-quality direct supervision and care of DYRS committed youth at New Beginnings Youth Development Center (NBYDC) and the Youth Services Center (YSC). DYRS currently has very few vacancies for Youth Development Representatives and Supervisory Youth Development Representatives. Although our vacancies are low, we continue to tackle the challenges of bringing unavailable staff back to work to maintain a well-staffed workforce in this critical area.

- **Build the Office of Policy and Quality Assurance (OPQA).** Currently, OPQA includes two policy officers, two quality assurance specialists, and the licensing and monitoring unit. DYRS is currently completing the hiring processes to fill the open positions in the office, but the work of OPQA has already begun to enhance DYRS' ability to strengthen our internal policies and procedures.

- **Invest more than $9.6 million in community-based residential programs to expand the DYRS continuum of care.** As I shared during our Performance Oversight Hearing earlier this year, this significant investment:

    - Increased the capacity at three current local shelter and group homes by six beds as the shelter population has increased.

    - Added two new local homes, for a total of 14 flexible local shelter and group home beds.

- Expanded our out-of-state placements, for a combined total of seven beds in enhanced treatment settings to be responsive to the individualized rehabilitative needs of our youth.

Looking Forward: DYRS' Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Budget

In DYRS' FY26 budget, we continue to focus on building upon the progress we have made to strengthen safety and security, address staffing challenges, and upgrade the agency's internal infrastructure in service of our youth. This is reflected in our FY26 budget through specific strategic investments, including modernizing our IT systems and moving forward with critical capital projects. Investing in these areas of our FY26 budget, DYRS will be able to:

- **Modernize our internal IT systems.** The $2,039,047 in resources will be used to ensure reliable communication for youth and staff, the protection of sensitive data, and will equip staff with the tools they need to meet the demands of compliance, care, and operational efficiency.

- **Initiate critical capital improvement projects.** In our FY26 budget, DYRS has received resources to be able to move forward with making much-needed improvements to our properties and fleet that are critical to enhancing the agency's infrastructure, ensuring the safety of staff and youth, and supporting rehabilitative services for youth. These capital projects **focus on the following strategic areas of investment:**

  - *$1,512,000 to upgrade network switches at YSC and NBYDC.*

  - *$500,000 to renovate the housing unit bathrooms at NBYDC.*

- **Continue critical capital improvement projects.** DYRS will continue to move forward with existing capital improvement projects, which include ongoing HVAC repairs, network control relocation, and the installation of tamper-proof light fixtures.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to testify. I am grateful to Mayor Bowser for her ongoing investments in DYRS. These targeted investments not only *Grow DC* but also contribute to a clean and safe District. They reinforce her commitment to reducing crime and ensuring that youth are held accountable while receiving the rehabilitation they need to ensure public safety.

I welcome your questions.

Attachment K

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES

DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs
Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair
Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Oversight Pre-Hearing Questions
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

General

1. **Please provide a detailed crosswalk between the agency's FY 2025 and FY 2026 Budgets, including any division structure changes, realignment, or consolidation within the agency.**

   Please refer to information provided by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) for response.

2. **Staffing**

   a. **Provide an updated Schedule A as an Excel attachment.**
   Please refer to Appendix A.

   b. **What is the current vacancy rate for the agency?**
   6%

   c. **How many FTE positions has DYRS transitioned from permanent to term-limited positions in FY 2025, to date?**
   None.

3. **Please list any Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) DYRS has either entered, or is planning to enter, during FY 2025 and FY 2026. In addition, please list what agency the MOU is with, how much the MOU is for, and what programs or services the MOU will support.**

   In FY25 to date, DYRS has executed several memoranda of understanding with other District agencies. Please see the chart below outlining the FY25 MOUs:

FY25 Memoranda of Understanding					
Buyer	**Seller**	**Title**	**Effective Date**	**Total**	**Program or Services**
DYRS	Department of Human Resources (DCHR)	DCHR Suitability Screening	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$85,223.70	Supports DYRS employment compliant services.

FY25 Memoranda of Understanding					
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ)	DYRS	DMPSJ Public Safety Community Events	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$100,000	Supports public safety efforts by engaging communities most impacted by gun violence with events and activities aimed at reducing crime.
DYRS	Department of Health (DC Health)	DC Health Annual Safety Inspections of Juvenile Detention and Correctional Facilities	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$5,853.27	Supports annual health and sanitation inspections at secure detention facilities.
DYRS	Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE)	OSSE GED Exam Services	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$24,000	Supports the administration of GED testing via mobile lab.
OSSE	DYRS	OSSE Child Nutrition Programs	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$365,121	Supports DYRS with federal funds from OSSE to support eligible Child Nutrition Programs.
OSSE	DYRS	OSSE Title I Part D	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$352,176.89	Supports free appropriate public education programs and services to youth housed at New Beginnings Youth Development Center and Youth Services Center (YSC).
DYRS	Office of Unified Communications (OUC)	OUC Citywide Radio Services	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$144,248.71	Provides access to the District's Citywide Radio System that is maintained and managed by the

FY25 Memoranda of Understanding					
					Office of Unified Communications.
Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)	DYRS	CFSA Credible Messenger Services	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$150,000	Supports a cooperative relationship that expands the DYRS Credible Messenger program that will be provided to youth and families connected to CFSA.
Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE)	DYRS	ONSE Gun Violence Victims Support Services	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$186,450	Supports crisis support services, using DYRS' administrative services partner grantee, for families and individuals experiencing trauma, housing emergencies, safety needs, nutritional needs, clothing and hygiene needs, and other self-care needs.
DC National Guard (DCNG)	DYRS	Challenge Academy Meal Service	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$350,645.90	DYRS provides daily meals for youth attending Challenge Academy and supports new culinary staff to support the service.
DYRS	Department of Behavioral Health (DBH)	DC Opioid Response Initiative	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025	$500,000	Supports the implementation of a continuum of prevention and intervention services through

FY25 Memoranda of Understanding					
					the State Opioid Response (SOR) grant.
Department of Transportation (DDOT)	DYRS	DC Urban Forestry Division	May 20, 2025 – September 30, 2025	$216,000	Supports the installation of a canopy classroom, interpretive signage, a Food Forest, a composting system, river access to the Little Patuxent River, and infrastructures to support urban wood reuse youth education program at the Oasis Reserve.
OSSE Office of Career and Technological Education (CTE)	DYRS	Career and Technical Education	Date of signature – September 30, 2025	$38,185.52	Anticipated MOU from OSSE for Career Technical Education.

In FY26, DYRS plans to execute several memoranda of understanding with other District agencies. Please see the chart below outlining the anticipated FY26 MOUs:

FY26 Memoranda of Understanding					
Buyer	**Seller**	**Title**	**Effective Date**	**Total**	**Program or Services**
DYRS	DCHR	DCHR Suitability Screening	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$92,482.95	Supports DYRS employment compliant services.
DYRS	DOH	DOH Annual Safety Inspections of Juvenile Detention and Correctional Facilities	October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2026	$10,000	Supports annual health and sanitation inspections at secure detention facilities.

FY26 Memoranda of Understanding					
DYRS	Department of Human Services (DHS)	DHS Transitional Housing	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$370,000	Supports housing for DC youth in the community.
DYRS	Department of Public Works (DPW)	Fleet Assessment	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$264,799.38	Supports maintenance of vehicles in DYRS fleet.
DYRS	DPW	Disposal and Recycling Services	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$1,600	Supports disposal and recycling services.
DYRS	Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO)	OCTO DC network phone support and services	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$10,000	OCTO DC network phone support and services.
DYRS	OCTO	OCTO non-DC network phone support and services.	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$20,000	OCTO non-DC network phone support and services.
DYRS	OCTO	Individual Training Account (ITA)	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$119,797.89	Individual Training Account (ITA).
DYRS	OUC	OUC Citywide Radio Services	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$145,287.10	Provides access to the District's Citywide Radio System that is maintained and managed by the Office

FY26 Memoranda of Understanding					
					of Unified Communications.
DCNG	DYRS	Challenge Academy Meal Service	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$350,645.90	DYRS provides daily meals for youth attending the Challenge Academy and supports new culinary staff to support the service.
OSSE	DYRS	OSSE Child Nutrition Programs	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$350,000	Supports DYRS with federal funds from OSSE to support eligible Child Nutrition Programs.
CFSA	DYRS	CFSA Credible Messenger Services	October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026	$150,000	Supports a cooperative relationship that expands the DYRS Credible Messenger program that will be provided to youth and families connected to CFSA.
Anticipated FY26 MOU's					
DMPSJ	*DYRS*	*DMPSJ Public Safety Community Events*	*October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*	*$100,000*	*Supports public safety efforts by engaging communities most impacted by gun violence with events and activities aimed at reducing crime.*
DYRS	*OSSE*	*OSSE GED Exam Services*	*October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*	*$24,000*	*Supports the administration of GED testing via mobile lab.*
OSSE	*DYRS*	*OSSE Title I Part D*	*October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*	*$352,176.89*	*Supports free appropriate public education programs and services to youth housed at New Beginnings Youth Development Center and Youth Services Center (YSC).*

FY26 Memoranda of Understanding					
DYRS	*OUC*	*OUC Citywide Radio Services*	*October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*	*$144,248.71*	*Provides access to the District's Citywide Radio System that is maintained and managed by the Office of Unified Communications.*
ONSE	*DYRS*	*ONSE Gun Violence Victims Support Services*	*October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*	*$186,450*	*Supports crisis support services, using DYRS' administrative services partner grantee, for families and individuals experiencing trauma, housing emergencies, safety needs, nutritional needs, clothing and hygiene needs, and other self-care needs.*
DYRS	*DBH*	*DC Opioid Response Initiative*	*October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*	*$500,000*	*Support the implementation of a continuum of prevention and intervention services through the State Opioid Response (SOR) grant*
DDOT	*DYRS*	*DC Urban Forestry Division*	*October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*	*$216,000*	*Support the installation of a canopy classroom, interpretive signage, a Food Forest, a composting system, river access to the Little Patuxent River, and infrastructures to support urban wood reuse youth education program at the Oasis Reserve.*
OSSE CTE	*DYRS*	*Career and Technical Education*	*October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026*	*$38,185.52*	*MOU from OSSE for Career Technical Education.*

4. **Please provide a list of any projected surpluses or deficits for FY 2025, broken down by program, cost center, and account.**

   DYRS is sufficiently funded for FY25.

5. **Please identify the source, purpose, and amount of any funds, to be received by or transmitted by DYRS as part of the FY 2026 proposed budget, including any interagency projects in which DYRS is the buyer or seller agency.**

   Please refer to the agency response to Question 3 for a list of funds that meet the criteria outlined for this fiscal year.

6. **Please provide a list of federal grants for which DYRS requested carryover funds in FY 2023 and FY 2024. Please include the status of the grant, amount of the carryover, progress on spending down the grant, and the rationale behind DYRS's request for each grant.**

   DYRS utilizes Title 1 Part D federal funds to support education and workforce development programming and services. These federal funds are issued through OSSE.

   In FY23, the carryover amount was $164,020.02. The agency made progress in spending $51,915.43 on supplies for education programming. Carryover was requested due to the availability of funds for utilization occurring late in the fiscal year. This prevented the agency from full expenditure by September 30, 2023.

   In FY24, the carryover amount was $305,672.00. Carryover was requested due to the availability of funds for utilization occurring late in the fiscal year. This prevented the agency from full expenditure by September 30, 2024.

7. **DYRS stated in its POH responses that it is working to enhance the agency's Medicaid billing processes to maximize reimbursements for services provided. Please provide a status update on efforts to fully realize eligible reimbursements, including whether the funded FTE has been hired.**

   DYRS is partnering with the Department of Healthcare Finance (DHCF) to leverage Medicaid funding for eligible services provided. The targeted implementation date for the District is October 1, 2025. This is in recognition of the complexity of implementation and the truncated timeline given the delayed delivery of federal policy guidance. Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) assisted states on an individual basis to ensure the ability to meet requirements by January 1, 2025 (which no states have been able to meet). DYRS is currently in the process of finalizing standard operating procedures related to suspending and reinstating Medicaid for youth committed to DYRS, projecting discharge dates from secure facilities, identifying youth needing community-based services, and data tracking. DYRS is also in the process of reviewing its existing database to identify potential enhancements that will provide efficiencies in tracking the provision of services.

   In November 2024, DHCF submitted to CMS a proposal for grant funds to support the implementation of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA). As a result, DHCF and

DYRS are currently finalizing an MOU that will allow the grant funds to be issued to DYRS.

8. **A synopsis of the FY 2025 forecast for the period that ended December 31, 2024, indicated a spending pressure due to staff overtime. How has DYRS addressed the spending pressure? Do you foresee additional spending pressures based on the FY26 proposed budget?**

   The FY25 supplemental budget includes $11,780,952 which will address spending pressures.

   The FY26 proposed budget includes an increase of $2 million in the overtime budget to address spending pressures.

Agency and Management Program

9. **In FY24, DYRS established the Office of Policy and Quality Assurance. Please describe its staff structure, including FTEs responsible for its operations and any adjustments that will be made in FY26.**

   The Office of Policy and Quality Assurance (OPQA) is staffed by four FTEs:
   - Policy Officer, Secure Programs (In final recruitment stage).
   - Policy Officer, Non-Secure Programs (Filled).
   - Quality Assurance Specialist, Secure Programs (Currently recruiting).
   - Quality Assurance Specialist, Non-Secure Programs (Filled).

10. **During the DYRS performance oversight hearing in March 2025, DYRS highlighted a new initiative to establish an exit planning unit by January 2026. Please specify the projected budget allocation for the planned exit planning team, including any existing resources and FY26 resources that will be utilized.**

    DYRS is using current positions to create this team. The supervisor for the unit was hired on April 7, 2025.

11. **In DYRS's POH responses, it is noted that additional staff are needed to implement the ROAD Act. Please provide a detailed breakdown of existing FTEs that would supplement the additional FTEs requested and crosswalk the FY26 budget to highlight any discrepancies with this stated additional staffing need.**

    The new law requires DYRS to perform a risk and needs assessment within 10 days of receiving a notice of intent to commit, complete a predisposition meeting, and complete an Individualized Rehabilitation Plan (IRP) two days prior to a youth's disposition hearing. Currently, DYRS has one Pre-Commitment Unit that has five dedicated staff members (care coordinators) and one supervisor (social service officer). To meet this statutory timeline, DYRS requires additional staffing for the current Pre-Commitment Unit and requires the creation of an additional Pre-Commitment Unit. A list of the staffing required is below.

    - Current Pre-Commitment Unit – Additional Staffing Needed

  - One Management Analyst (CS-11): This position is responsible for the coordination and tracking of the pre-disposition meetings.
- New Pre-Commitment Unit – Additional Staffing Needed
  - One Social Service Officer (MS-13): This position is responsible for supervising the unit.
  - One Management Analyst (CS-11): This position is responsible for the coordination, scheduling and tracking of the pre-disposition meetings.
  - Five Care Coordinators (CS-12): These positions are responsible for completing the risk and needs assessment.

12. Please identify staff responsible for coordinating with CFSA on dually involved youth. Are there any plans to expand coordination in FY26 either as a standalone initiative or in coordination with CJCC efforts? If so, which staff or additional FTEs have been identified by DYRS?

DYRS and CFSA hold monthly reviews for at-risk dual-jacketed youth. These collaborative meetings are coordinated between existing staff, including care coordinators, placement teams, and administrative staff. DYRS continues to partner on the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's (CJCC) efforts to create a crossover initiative and has designated a DYRS point of contact with previous experience to participate in the efforts of the crossover initiative.

13. DYRS has stated that data sharing barriers have precluded the agency from effectively tracking recidivism. A February 2024 report by Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators recommends "an upgrade to the data collection system" due to a current state in which several different systems do not interact with one another (education system, case management system, BH information).

a. Have any upgrades to the data collection system been made to act on this recommendation?

b. Are any plans in place to upgrade this system in FY26? If so, what are the projected costs associated with the upgrade?

Currently, DYRS is in conversation with our database systems provider regarding enhancements and increased functionality in our client-based systems. In addition, DYRS will begin data optimization work across the agency in FY25 and continue in FY26.

The Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA) recommended upgrade would enhance DYRS ability to conduct research and capture data across the system more easily, not recidivism analysis.

<u>Contracts & Purchase Orders</u>

14. Have any contracts been terminated in FY24 and FY25, to date, due to unsatisfactory services or breach of agreement? If so, please describe.

DYRS does not have any contracts terminated due to unsatisfactory services or breach of agreement.

15. In DYRS POH responses, several purchase orders were made for emergency dental appointments in DC from a youth placement site. What is the agency protocol for youth flown back to the District from out of state for one-time services of any kind in lieu of seeking care in their placement city/state?

DYRS does not have purchase orders made for emergency dental appointments. Agency protocol for youth flown back to the District from out of state for one-time services of any kind in lieu of seeking care in their placement city/state is determined by youths' medical coverage. DYRS continues to collaborate with DHCF on any unique medical needs that arise when youth are in out of state placements.

16. Please confirm whether all contracts with Life Deeds are expired or will expire and not renew.

a. Has a replacement vendor for services provided by Life Deeds been identified by DYRS?

All contracts with Life Deeds concluded September 30, 2024.

Yes, DYRS has procured a replacement vendor for services provided by Life Deeds.

17. What percentage and what total dollar amount of contracts were competitively bid vs non-competitively bid in FY24 and FY25, to date?

DYRS is not an independent agency and therefore the Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP) is responsible for the procurement process of all goods and services for the agency, which includes ensuring compliance with D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR) Chapter 27, Procurement Practices Reform Act (PPRA) and D.C. Official Code.

Outlined below is a breakdown of the total dollar amount and percentage of contracts that were competitively bid vs non-competitively bid in FY24 and FY25 YTD.

	FY24		FY25	
	Total Dollar Amount:	Total Percentage:	Total Dollar Amount:	Total Percentage:
Non-Competitively Bid	$621,758.42	3%	$760,838.71	6%
Competitively Bid	$31,062,882.12	97%	$34,506,475.58	94%
Total:	$31,684,640.54	100%	$35,267,314.29	100%

18. Please outline steps DYRS has taken in FY25, to date, to work towards meeting the goals of DC's Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act.

The Environmentally Preferable Products and Services (EPPS) program for sustainable purchasing is managed by OCP in collaboration with the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). DYRS' culinary teams work to comply with DOEE on recommendations from the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act.

Youth and Family Programs

19. Please list all activities, including YDR-facilitated rehabilitation programs provided in FY24 and FY25, to date, broken down by site (YSC and NB).
   a. Provide the agency's total expenditures to provide each service, including compensated staff time and any supplies that were purchased.
   b. List the total number of unique youth serviced by each program.
   c. List any anticipated changes to each program and any anticipated fiscal impacts in FY26.

The FY24 and FY25 activities, including YDR-facilitated rehabilitation programs are outlined in Appendix B. In FY26, the Mayor's proposed budget includes a $40,000 increase to support additional programs and activities at New Beginnings and YSC.

20. Please list all contracts for vendor-provided rehabilitation programs in FY24 and FY25, to date, broken down by location site (YSC, New Beginnings).
   a. Include total expenses to provide the service and the number of youth provided each service in a given fiscal year.
   b. List proposed budgetary changes for each rehabilitative service anticipated in FY26, including any increases, decreases, enhancements, or reductions.

The FY24 and FY25 vendor provided rehabilitation programs are outlined in the chart below. In FY26, the Mayor's proposed budget includes a $40,000 increase to support additional rehabilitative programs and activities at New Beginnings and YSC.

NEW BEGINNINGS			
Program	**Vendor**	**FY24**	**FY25**
Animal Assistance Therapy	Summit Therapy	$47,355	$48,510
Art Therapy	Pending	N/A	$15,000
Art/Holiday/Recreational Supplies	Ink Systems	$15,966	$25,000
Automotive	Community Tech	N/A	$25,000
Carpentry	TreKnot	$20,400	$21,012
Chess Program	Community Tech	$2,000	$5,000
Cosmetology	Tumani	$5,000	$7,800
Creative Dance	Figure 8 Dance	$4,800	$5,000
Electronic Entertainment	Calvin Price	$4,754	$12,479
Graphic Arts	Community Tech	$15,000	$10,000
Gun Violence Prevention	TBD	N/A	$5,000
Hospitality/Customer Service	Community Tech	$33,000	N/A
Landscaping/Horticulture	TBD	N/A	$5,000

NEW BEGINNINGS			
Music Engineering	Vault Creative	$9,945	$10,000
Phone Services	NCIC	$5,400	$5,400
Religious Supplies	Bluebay	N/A	$5,000
Token Economy	Holder Enterprises	$25,986	$25,000
Transportation	Citi Concepts	$58,837	$59,670
Vocational Barbering	AHG Solutions	N/A	$10,400
Youth Drug Testing	B&W Stat	$12,500	$15,600
TOTAL		**$260,943**	**$315,871**
TOTAL YOUTH SERVED		**98**	**72**

YOUTH SERVICES CENTER (YSC)			
Program	**Vendor**	**FY24**	**FY25**
Animal Assistance Therapy	Summit Therapy	$47,355	$48,510
Art/Holiday/Recreational Supplies	Ink Systems	$15,966	$25,000
Chess Program	Community Tech	$2,000	$4,950
Cosmetology	Tumani	$3,300	$6,750
Creative Dance	Figure 8 Dance Fitness	N/A	$7,800
Culinary Arts	Bennett Career Inst.	N/A	$9,854
Dramatic Arts		N/A	$7,500
Drivers ED		N/A	$8,300
Electronic Entertainment	Calvin Price	$4,755	$11,036
Etiquette/Life Skills	Dolls and Dreams	$4,500	$7,800
Graphic Arts	Community Tech	$15,000	$9,600
Gun Violence Prevention	TBD	N/A	$5,000
Leadership Development	Reentry Consultant Services	$10,000	$9,800
Music Engineering		$8,000	$10,000
Phone Services	NCIC	$7,200	$8,100
Poetry Spoken Word	Urban Equity	$10,400	$6,374
Religious Supplies	Bluebay	N/A	$7,500
Token Economy	Holder Enterprises	$25,986	$25,000
Visual Arts	Saving Our Next Generation	$7,000	$5,000
Vocational Barbering	AHG Solutions	N/A	$5,200
Yoga and Mindfulness	JTM Solutions	$4,297	N/A
Youth Drug Testing	B&W Stat	$12,500	$24,600

YOUTH SERVICES CENTER (YSC)		
TOTAL	**$178,259**	**$253,674**
TOTAL UNIQUE YOUTH SERVED	**1,071**	**673**

21. Please provide a detailed description of the current operating status of the VOLT Academy and any changes to the program in FY25 and FY26 proposed budget.

The Vocational Opportunities Learning and Training (VOLT) Academy is currently in operation and is an avenue for providing workforce development programming for youth.

In FY25, the Academy is offering:

- Automotive Program: Basic Auto Mechanic nine-month course that offers fundamental automotive maintenance skills through classroom instruction and practical hands-on experience learning modules.
- Nail Technician Program: A 12-week intensive nail technology training course that prepares students to become licensed nail technicians.

In FY25, the VOLT Academy programmatic budget was $130,000 and will continue in FY26, with no anticipated changes to date.

22. Detail DYRS's resource allocations in FY25 and FY26 for the Credible Messengers Initiative, including any internal FTEs that monitor outcomes data related to the program.

In FY25, $4,493,705 is allocated in non-personnel services to support the Credible Messenger Initiative. The Grants Unit in collaboration with the Credible Messenger Unit collaborate on monitoring the fidelity of the model and contract compliance through two (2) FTEs.

The proposed FY26 budget includes a $6,130,000 allocation for personnel services (PS) and non-personnel services (NPS) to support the Credible Messenger Initiative.

23. Describe budgetary projections for any planned expansions of the OASIS Leadership program, including capital expenditures.

Through the FY25 MOU with DDOT, the Oasis Leadership Program plans to install a canopy classroom on the reserve, install a food forest and composting system, initiate an urban wood reuse youth education program, and build corridor access to the Littel Patuxent River, within the reserve and in Wards 7 and 8.

24. MBI, the provider of Multisystemic Therapy (MST) for DYRS, recently terminated services with the agency. Please provide an update on DYRS's ability to replace the provider and anticipated FY26 budget considerations for the replacement.

In mid-March of 2025, DYRS received notification that MST services would conclude. DYRS is working to identify strategies and explore partnerships to continue to provide community-based behavioral health service referrals to support our families. DYRS will continue to work with DBH to identify alternative (Medicaid) service providers.

25. Please provide a detailed budget overview of Behavioral health services at YSC and New Beginnings. Describe budgeting for psychiatric testing and services provided at intake and throughout DYRS care and custody of youth.

In FY25, Behavioral health services at YSC and New Beginnings fell within Health Services non-personnel budget. Included below is the Behavioral health services personnel budget:

Appropriated Fund Title	Account Category Description	Program Description	FY 2025 Approved Budget
LOCAL FUND	PERSONNEL SERVICES	BEHAVORAL HEALTH	$2,751,768.19

In FY26, DYRS proposed that Behavioral health services at YSC and New Beginnings be differentiated by establishing its own non-personnel budget. The request is outlined below:

Appropriated Fund Title	Account Category Description	Program Description	FY 2026 Approved Budget
LOCAL FUND	PERSONNEL SERVICES	BEHAVORAL HEALTH	$3,094,810.85

Appropriated Fund Title	Account Category Description	Account Group Description	Account Description	Program Description	Services Provided	FY 2026 Requested Budget
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	OFFICE SUPPLIES	BEHAVORAL HEALTH	Supplies for staff	$1,500.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	BEHAVORAL HEALTH (Restorative Justice Programming)	Restorative Justice Programming Supplies	$10,250.00

26. Provide a detailed budget overview of Health Services at YSC and New Beginnings for FY25 and FY26.

In FY25, the Health Services budget YSC and New Beginnings includes:

Appropriated Fund Title	Account Category Description	Account Group Description	Account Description	Program Description	Services Provided	FY 2025 Approved Budget
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	OFFICE SUPPLIES	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Medical supplies (equipment) to carry out job function, educational materials for medical and behavioral health team to utilize with youth, and uniforms for medical staff.	$7,500.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	EDUCATIONAL	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Biomedical waste pick-up, Juvenile Down Drills, GAIN	$3,300.00

Appropriated Fund Title	Account Category Description	Account Group Description	Account Description	Program Description	Services Provided	FY 2025 Approved Budget
					Chestnut Health System	
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	CLOTHING & UNIFORMS	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Medical supplies (equipment) to carry out job function, educational materials for medical and behavioral health team to utilize with youth, and uniforms for medical staff.	$5,400.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	TRAVEL - OUT OF CITY	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Continuing education credits for medical and behavioral health teams. Nurses, Doctor, Therapist, etc.	$5,000.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	PROF SERVICE FEES & CONTR	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Continuing education credits for medical and behavioral health teams. Nurses, Doctor, Therapist, etc.	$9,225.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	TUITION FOR EMPLOYEE TRAINING	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Continuing education credits for medical and behavioral health teams. Nurses, Doctor, Therapist, etc.	$9,480.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	PAYMENT OF MEMBERSHIP DUES	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Annual membership dues required for medical staff such as NCCH, APA, ACA, AANC, and NAAADAC. This also includes renewal of certifications and licenses.	$10,350.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES - OTHER	IT CONSULTANT CONTRACTS	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Software renewals for medical health record	$66,295.95

Appropriated Fund Title	Account Category Description	Account Group Description	Account Description	Program Description	Services Provided	FY 2025 Approved Budget
					systems including MAYSI and Fusion Software.	
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	Medical supply visits supply for youth (McKesson), Lab Corp, EKG reports, payments for youth medical procedures, contracts for direct care services for psychiatric services, medical staffing, eye care and eyewear, dental, mobile x-ray imaging, medical food and storage.	$1,175,700.00

In FY26, DYRS proposed that the Health Services budget at YSC and New Beginnings totaling $4,692,000 and 23 FTEs. The request is outlined below:

Appropriated Fund Title	Account Category Description	Account Group Description	Account Description	Program Description	FY 2026 Requested Budget
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	OFFICE SUPPLIES	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$7,500.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	EDUCATIONAL	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$3,300.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	CLOTHING & UNIFORMS	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$5,400.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	TRAVEL - OUT OF CITY	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$5,000.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	PROF SERVICE FEES & CONTR	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$9,225.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	TUITION FOR EMPLOYEE TRAINING	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$9,480.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	OTHER SERVICES & CHARGES	PAYMENT OF MEMBERSHIP DUES	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$10,350.00
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES - OTHER	IT CONSULTANT CONTRACTS	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$66,295.95
LOCAL FUND	NON-PERSONNEL SERVICES	GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES & GRANTS	MAINTENANCE OF PERSONS	HEALTHCARE - GENERAL	$1,475,140.68

27. Describe FY25, to date, and proposed FY26 investments and/or contracts issued in educational offerings for youth in care and/or custody of DYRS.

In FY25, investments with the See Forever Foundation, the contracted education service provider at YSC and NBYDC will total $7,104,430.

In FY25 to date, DYRS has invested $5,505,330 in educational offerings, which includes the contract for educational services at the secure facilities and the GED MOU with OSSE.

Through FY25's supplemental budget approval, DYRS received $1,736,323.95 to continue educational services and execute option year contracts.

In FY25 and in FY26, DYRS plans to make investments in educational and workforce development programming utilizing Title 1 Part D federal funds.

Supplier	FY25	FY26
See Forever Foundation YSC	$3,389,733	$3,412,895.38
See Forever Foundation NB	$3,714,697	$3,751,844.24
	$7,104,430	**$7,164,740**

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES

DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs
Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair
Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Oversight: Additional Pre-Hearing Questions
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

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1. **The Youth Services Center has consistently experienced overcrowding given its 98-bed capacity. Can you identify where the FY26 budget addresses this issue, whether in capital expenditures or outside placements?**
    a. **If there is not funding aimed at addressing this issue, please outline steps DYRS is taking to address the overflow of youth at YSC.**

    The FY26 Capital Improvement Plan includes a $2 million investment to improve the physical plant at YSC, including the construction of a dedicated dining area for youth and bathroom renovations.

2. **The FY25 Supplemental and the FY26 budget proposal both propose a surge in overtime pay at Youth Services Center and New Beginnings (net 66.7% increase or $2M for FY26). Describe steps DYRS is taking in FY26 to resolve staffing issues contributing to the need for overtime pay at these facilities. Please provide a month-by-month projection for anticipated overtime based on past trends.**

    One of the strongest causes of overtime is the number of staff who are unavailable for duty. The proposed changes to PFML will close policy loopholes that have contributed to the large number of staff unavailable to work. This, in conjunction with the efforts of our return-to-work coordinator and incentives in the FY 26 budget that reward attendance, will contribute to greater staff participation and reduced overtime.

    The chart below outlines the FY24 overtime expenditures, FY25 YTD overtime expenditures, FY25 overtime projection for the remaining months in the fiscal year, and a combined FY26 forecast based on the average YTD percent change year over year.

FY24/ FY25/ FY26 Overtime Forecast and Expenditures								
Month	**October - May**	**June**	**July**	**August**	**September**	**Sub Total**	**End of Year Total**	**FY26**
FY24 OT Data	$4,533,116.66	$574,305.31	$555,972.70	$506,214.13	$813,705.09	$2,450,197.23	$6,983,313.89	
FY25 OT Data and Forecast	$4,655,004.40	$594,635.72	$575,654.13	$524,134.11	$842,510.25	$2,536,934.21	$7,191,938.61	$7,446,468.90

3. **Please provide an overview of the IT security investments proposed. Do these investments require ongoing maintenance in future years? If so, provide an estimate of anticipated annual maintenance fees.**

In FY26, DYRS received funding in the amount of $2,039,047 to support IT security and infrastructure upgrades. This investment will support the following key items, including:

- Upgrading wireless access points; and
- Replacing IT equipment: laptops, desktops, docking stations, monitors, network printers, and 250 phones located throughout DYRS' secure facilities.

Additionally, the FY26 Capital Improvement Plan includes a $1,512,000 investment to upgrade network switches and adapters in both secure facilities to enhance data integrity, security, and connectivity.

Maintenance for these infrastructure upgrades in future years will be supported by OCTO.

4. The Committee on Youth Affairs recently hosted a roundtable examining a report by the Office of Independent Juvenile Justice Facilities Oversight on DYRS fire safety systems.

a. Please identify any FY26 budget line items that are meant to replace failing fire safety systems and their subparts.

DYRS coordinates with DGS on the replacement of fire safety systems. On June 5, 2025, DGS' procured vendor began replacing the fire alarm system at YSC. In addition, the fire dampers at New Beginnings YSC will be replaced in FY26 as part of DGS Capital Projects.

b. Please specify any necessary investments to have a fully code-compliant fire ITM system that are not included in the FY26 budget proposal.

DYRS coordinates with DGS on the replacement of fire safety systems. On June 5, 2025, DGS' procured vendor began replacing the fire alarm system at YSC. In addition, the fire dampers at New Beginnings and YSC will be replaced in FY26 as part of DGS Capital Projects. In FY26, all ITM services will be contracted, managed, and procured by DGS.

c. Please provide an update on the following outstanding deliverables identified in the report:

i. Deficiency Response Plan (Categorization and Tracking) by DYRS Risk Management Division - May 2025

DYRS' Risk Management Team has implemented a weekly risk register to rate each level of risk in the facilities. Critical or high-risk identifiers are a priority and reviewed by leadership in collaboration with DGS to address and abate safety issues.

ii. Fire Safety Contracts by DGS / DYRS - June 2025

DYRS collaborates with DGS on Fire Safety Contracts currently in the process of procurement finalization. Contracts are expected to be implemented in the month of June.

iii. **Fire Safety Equipment Inventory (Internal Audit) by DYRS Risk Management Division - August 2025**

The fire safety equipment inventory log will be updated after the new fire alarm system is installed and all required ITM services are completed.

iv. **Remediation Documentation System (Digital Archive) by DYRS Risk Management Division - August 2025**

Remediation work is documented and tracked in the risk register.

v. **Inspection Form Updates by DYRS Risk Management Division - September 2025**

Inspection forms are currently under review.

5. **DYRS noted that 8 additional FTEs are required to meet the timeline imposed by the ROAD Act. Are these additional FTEs included in the FY26 budget proposal? If so, please identify in the proposed FY26 Schedule A which positions, by position number, will be staffing these responsibilities.**

DYRS identified eight additional FTEs needed to support the ROAD Act and meet established timelines. However, the fiscal impact statement did not include these additional eight position. As such, there are no additional FTEs in the FY26 budget related to the ROAD Act.

6. **At the March 2025 DYRS Performance Oversight Hearing, DYRS testified that care coordinators and General Counsel are responsible for scheduling Team Decision-Making Meetings, or "TDMs".**
   a. **Please identify by position number in the FY26 proposed Schedule A, which positions are tasked with scheduling TDMs.**

Position Number: 00077124; 00097132; 00005853; 00109653

   b. **Currently, what is the average length of time for initial screening meetings?**

TDMs are sent to the scheduler within 10 days of placement.

   c. **Is it required for parents and legal representatives to be part of these meetings?**

Parents and legal representatives are invited to attend. When scheduling conflicts arise, DYRS prioritizes parents' availability. DYRS identified a dedicated scheduler

to assist in giving additional notice and to improve the process so that all parties may attend.

7. **The FY26 DYRS budget proposal includes a cut of roughly $1.8M in one-time funding for the Building Blocks gun violence prevention program. Please detail the general outcomes of this program and the rationale for making this cut.**

   Since FY22, the Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP) managed and monitored the Building Blocks DC Initiative. DYRS served as a pass-through entity for the initiative's funding and was not directly involved in its programmatic components. Programmatic data, such as outcomes and the rationale for this reduction, are in the purview of OGVP.

8. **There are several discrepancies between column J of the submitted Attachment 1 – Grants & Subsidies ("grant period total amounts") and the amounts associated with respective government grants and subsidy cost centers in the FY26 budget proposal. For example, cost center 70475 Grants and Subsidies is budgeted in FY26 at $7,879,559 but has a grant period total of $7,104,430 in attachment 1.**
   a. **Please identify any previously omitted grants and subsidies that account for the discrepancies between FY26 budget proposal amounts and actual grants and awards listed in Attachment 1.**

      The Grants and Subsidies budget of $7,879,559 is specifically for the Education Department to fund the education services contracts, and the MOU for DHS transitional housing that was moved to this budget. The value of the contracts listed in Attachment 1 will not equal the budgeted amount, but it also will not exceed that amount.

   b. **The FY26 budget proposal includes $1.9M for government grants and subsidies under cost center 70546 (residential treatment centers). However, Attachment 1 identifies grants totaling $9.98M beginning in October. Please explain how these grants will be funded given the major discrepancy between these two allocations.**

      The FY26 budget proposal of $1.9M for grants and subsidies in cost center 70546 is for community-based residential placements, including residential treatment centers. The grants totaling $9.98M in Attachment 1 are funded through the grants and subsidies account in other department cost centers.

9. **The budget projections anticipate eliminating the Credible Messengers program in future years. Please explain how existing staff will absorb these responsibilities.**

   The Credible Messenger Initiative provides transformative mentoring services to referred youth in DYRS custody. Eliminating the program from the budget would greatly reduce the breadth of these services, as existing staff will not be able to fully absorb these responsibilities.

10. Please provide an update on the following deliverables, which were discussed during the DYRS Performing Oversight Hearing:

a. Increased in-unit activities by June 2025

YSC Youth Activities	
Arts and Crafts	Tie Dye (Tee Shifts and socks), Epoxy, (figurines) Bracelet making
Opportunity Over Opps	Assists in reducing community beefs that arise in the facility. The community and facility Credible Messengers facilitate this program.
Life Skills	Identifying Emotions and Self Triggers
Game Room & Board Games	Arcade game nights
Positive peer relationships/how to cope with others	Expressive Coloring(art) and learning how to express emotions
Anger Management	Assist in teaching youth to regulate their emotions Mindfulness and Relaxation Sessions
Youth Advisory Board	Youth get to voice their concerns on all subjects related to the facility
Poetry slam	Youth compete on best poem written by youth and shared with the youth in the facility
Cooking classes	No Bake Delights
YMI – Young Men Incorporated	Programming for Title 16 youth only
Unit-based holiday/special programming	New Year's, Eid, Valentine's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th, Breast Cancer Awareness, Mother's Day, Father's Day

b. Exit planning protocols by January 2026, including TDM coordination.

A reentry team has been established at New Beginnings, and a reentry policy has been drafted and is under review.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES

DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs
Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair
Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Oversight: Post-Hearing Follow-Up Questions
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

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1. **Can the Director make a commitment to share weekly placement information (log) to align with information OAG or others receive?**

   Yes, please share the specific report you want to receive, and we will ensure you get the correct information.

2. **Please identify the source of the one FTE and $129,000 shifted to your Training budget and the specific trainings expected in FY26.**

   The increase of the one FTE is a reclassification of a position number into the correct activity group. The $129,000 is reflective of the salary and fringe related to that position, as well as $34,250 in supplies and services to support the Grants Department, which, according to DIFS structure, is included in the Training and Development Program.

3. **Please explain the Healthcare-General (H03507) budget increase of $648,000 compared to FY25.**

   The budget increase of $648,000 reflects the salary and fringe for the reclassification of two position numbers into this Program/Activity, an increase to support additional supplies for the Behavioral Health program, and an increase required for the medical staffing contracts.

4. **Provide the average length of time from arrival at YSC to initial screening in FY25, as of June 11, 2025.**

   When a youth is placed at YSC several screening tools are completed. A detention risk instrument is to be completed by the court social services division to aid in the detention recommendation, YSC completed mental health/behavioral health screenings, medical screenings, and educational screenings. These screenings assist the agencies in making recommendations for the youth. A youth may be at YSC for at least 30 days before the youth has an adjudication hearing. If the youth is found delinquent, a dispositional hearing is scheduled. There may be other assessments/evaluations ordered by the court (psychological, psychiatric, substance abuse) for the disposition hearing. At the adjudication hearing, parties may file a Notice of Intent to Commit (NOI) the youth to DYRS, and at that time, DYRS would start the process to complete a YLS and gather other social information. Currently, the goal for DYRS is to have a YLS completed for the disposition hearing when the disposition is scheduled 30 days after the adjudication. Currently, YLSs are completed within 30 to 45 days from the adjudication hearing.

When the NOI is filed, CSSD is required to provide DYRS with a social packet for the youth that includes information on the youth's prior contacts and history with CSSD. DYRS provides the court with a dispositional report, which includes a recommendation for the disposition hearing.

5. **If youth at YSC are not generally placed in classes by age or education level due to unit constraints, why do youth have to wait for an education plan to be in place (five days) to receive direct instruction?**

   It takes at least five days to receive the school records once a youth is placed at YSC. The youth are welcomed into the educational setting and are given daily assignments. Once the records are received, they are provided with grade level work for the duration of their stay at YSC. The five days are in place because youth do not always remain at YSC for five days. If the records are requested, the youth must be disenrolled from their home school. If the youth does not remain at YSC for five days, it can be challenging to get the student re-enrolled in their home school, delaying their ability to reengage in educational programming in the community.

6. **Please provide an update on progress to your knowledge of the Mayor's system unification plan.**

   To the best of our knowledge, there is no update to provide.

7. **How many DYRS new hires were DC residents vs non-district residents in FY25, to date?**

   FY25: 66 out of 99 new hires are DC residents
   FY24: 68 out of 126 new hires are DC residents

8. **Please provide an update on the progress, to your knowledge, of the Mayor's exploration of a new PRTF in the District and report to be submitted to the Council.**

   The CJCC is collecting cost information to support a cost-benefit analysis.

Additional Post-Hearing Follow-up Questions

9. Please submit an IT Breakdown

Equipment	Quantity	Cost
Network Printers	17 (All Facilities)	$187,000
WiFi Upgrade	NB	$1,374,547
Desktop PC upgrade	100(All Facilities)	$120,000
Laptop upgrade	150(All Facilities)	$225,000
Docking Stations	150 (All Facilities)	$45,000
Monitors	100 (All Facilities)	$25,000
Upgrade desk phones to Cisco phones	250 (YSC/NB)	$62,500
Total:		**$2,039,047**

10. How many policies have been created as a result of the Office of Policy and Quality Assurance (OPQA)?

The Office of Policy and Quality Assurance (OPQA) began its work in August 2024, focusing primarily on organizing, locating, and cataloging all existing agency policies. This foundational effort has been essential in establishing a clear and accurate baseline for future policy development.

OPQA has two designated managerial positions: one for a Secure Programs Policy Officer and another for a Non-Secure Programs Policy Officer. While both roles were initially filled in August 2024, the incumbent for the Secure Programs position went on extended leave in October 2024 and formally vacated the role in December 2024. Since then, the Non-Secure Programs Policy Officer has assumed a broader range of responsibilities, which has naturally slowed the pace of formal policy creation.

Despite these staffing challenges, OPQA- Non-Secure Programs has made meaningful progress. The Non-Secure Programs Policy Officer has actively collaborated with the Youth and Family Programs Divisions on four key policies currently in the formatting and routing stages. These include policies on Youth Level of Service (YLS) assessments, Team Decision-Making (TDM), Re-Entry Planning, and Placement Review Committee (PRC) process, among others. OPQA also continues to work closely with subject matter experts to draft and develop additional policies for Non-Secure Programs.

While no new policies have been fully published to date, several are in the advanced stages of development and review. The Office of Secure Programs likewise has several policies nearing completion, which will be prioritized once a new Secure Programs Policy Officer is hired.

11. Send data on substance abuse.

YSC Positive Drug Test Results (1/1/24-12/31/24)		
Date	**# of Positive Results**	**Type of Drug (s)**
3/12/2024	3	Cannabinoids (THC) (Marijuana) (2); Ecstasy and Cannabinoids (THC) (Marijuana) (1);
5/7/2024	4	Cannabinoids (THC) (Marijuana) and Fentanyl (2); Cannabinoids (1); Fentanyl (1)
5/14/2024	3	Cannabinoids (THC) Marijuana and Fentanyl (1); Cannabinoids (THC) (Marijuana) (1); Fentanyl (1)
6/7/2024	3	Cannabinoids (THC) (Marijuana) (3)
7/25/2024	1	Cannabinoids (THC) (Marijuana) (1)
8/19/2024	3	Cannabinoids (THC) (Marijuana) (3)
11/14/2024	3	Cannabinoids (THC) (Marijuana) (3)
TOTAL	**20**	

12. Please explain how eight new Care Coordinators would enhance operations (ROAD Act).

One position would be a supervisor to oversee the new pre-commitment unit and schedule the pre-dispositional meetings. Five new care coordinators (CC) would be assigned to complete the YLS assessments within the legislative time frame and are now required to schedule and participate in pre-dispositional meetings prior to the dispositional hearing. For youth committed to DYRS, the CC would be responsible for scheduling a PRC meeting with the placement office and following through to place all youth assigned to them at the time of the filing of the Notice of Intent to commit, and then to attend the initial TDM meeting within 10 days of the youth's placement. One position will be for a management analyst who will assist in scheduling the pre-dispositional meetings with all of the required parties per the legislation. One position is for an additional attorney in the Office of General Counsel to cover the additional review hearings that will occur with the change in statute to allow review hearings to occur every four months, versus every six months.

13. What programs currently exist in the VOLT academy?

Automotive Program and Nail Tech Program

14. Please share the current education/See Forever budget.

Supplier	FY25	FY26
See Forever Foundation YSC	$3,389,733	$3,412,895.38
See Forever Foundation NB	$3,714,697	$3,751,844.24
Total Budget	**$7,104,430**	**$7,164,740**

15. How many Credible Messengers does DYRS have?

62 Credible Messengers

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency

Child and Family Services Agency Responses to Pre-Hearing Questions
FY 2026 Budget Oversight Hearing
DC Council Committee on Youth Affairs
Councilmember Zachary Parker, Chair
May 27, 2025

General:

1. **Please provide a detailed crosswalk between the agency's FY 2024, FY 2025 and FY 2026 Budgets, including any division structure changes, realignment, or consolidation within the agency.**

   See Attachment Q1_ FY24-FY25-FY26 Crosswalk

2. **Please list any Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) CFSA has either entered, or is planning to enter, during FY 2025 and FY 2026. In addition, please list what agency the MOU is with, how much the MOU is for, and what programs or services the MOU will support.**

   See Attachment Q2_ FY25- FY26 MOUs

3. **Provide a list of any projected surpluses or deficits for FY 2025, broken down by program, cost center, and account.**

   See Attachment Q3_ Projected Surpluses or Deficits.
   Please note that per the submitted FY 2025 second quarter FRP for the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), the agency is projected to end the fiscal year in balance with no deficit or surplus.

4. **Identify the source, purpose, and amount of any funds, to be received by or transmitted by CFSA as part of the FY 2026 proposed budget, including any interagency projects in which CFSA is the buyer or seller agency.**

   See Attachment Q4_ Interagency budgets for FY26

5. **Provide a list of federal grants for which CFSA requested carryover funds in FY 2024 and FY 2025. Please include the status of the grant, amount of the carryover, progress on spending down the grant, and the rationale behind CFSA's request for each grant.**

   CFSA has no carryover funds in its Federal grants in FY 2024 and FY 2025.

6. **What percentage of FY25 contracts were competitively bid vs non-competitively bid?**

   For all contracts awarded and funded in FY 2025, there were 59% competitively bid and 41% non-competitive awards.

   For procurements solicited in FY 2025, there were 49% competitively bid and 51% non-competitive awards.

   NOTE: Non-competitive awards include the following:
   - Task Orders and Purchase Orders awarded against city-wide contracts
   - Cooperative agreements
   - Exempt from competition
   - Non-competitive awards for contracts under 10k; and
   - Court mandated placement contracts

7. **Please identify any agency managed programs with low utilization, and how support for those programmatic efforts may otherwise be provided with the use of flexible funding or other resource areas.**

   Courtney's House, a provider of services to address the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), is a contract that is underutilized. CFSA has given extensive technical support, yet the issues persist.

8. **In FY 2024, CFSA underwent an organizational realignment, what cost benefits has the agency continued to see in FY25 as a result of said realignment?**

   CFSA's organizational realignment was not initiated for cost benefits, rather it was intended to benefit practice and workflow, ultimately improving Agency efficiency. The realignment had four goals that were accomplished:

   - **Supported the creation of a district-wide Child & Family Well-Being System, with an emphasis on prevention:**

     Moved prevention-related efforts from across the agency under the Office of Thriving Families and shifted supportive efforts with older youth, conducted by the Older Youth Empowerment, to be within the Office of Well-Being.

- **Increased the agency's ability to provide a continuum of support to help Keep DC Families Together:**

  Moved the In-Home Administration from Entry Services to the Office of In-Home & Out-of-Home Support (renamed from the Office of Out-of-Home Support) to ensure alignment across all case management functions. This move placed all case-carrying case management functions in a single division, which facilitated increased standardization and quality across practice.

- **Aligned similar functions and put related work together:**

  Shifted the foster parent recruitment team to the Office of Planning, Policy, and Program Support to align it with our work to recruit and license Resource Parents. Shifted the Subsidy team to the Office of Deputy Director for Administration to align with the Business Services Administration.

- **Maintained equity among management regarding team size:**

  Moved other smaller units or teams to ensure a fair distribution of work among management.

9. **Have any of CFSA's programmatic offerings been affected by federal funding cuts?**

   No. CFSA programming has not been affected by federal funding cuts.

<u>Staffing</u>

10. **Please provide the following for every department within the agency:**
    a. **The total number of FTEs**

       See Attachment Q10_ HRA

    b. **Vacancy rate (including the number of months the role has been vacant)**

       On March 31, 2025, the vacancy rate was 18.8% (19%).

    c. **The number of individuals on leave**

       See Attachment Q10_ HRA

    d. **The lowest and highest paid position**

       See Attachment Q10_ HRA

e. The number of FTEs that have transitioned from permanent to term-limited positions in FY 2024 and FY 2025, to date

None.

f. The number of licensed social workers

a. The type of social worker (social worker, social worker program manager, supervisory social worker, etc.)

i. The level of certification attained by each social worker

See Attachment Q10_ HRA

Inter-Agency Collaboration

11. **Please identify staff responsible for coordinating with DYRS on dually involved youth.**

CFSA social workers, assigned to individual youth, coordinate on a case-by-case basis with their counterparts from the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), probation officers, and the courts. The Out-of-Home Care Administrator and Program Manager serve as the primary points of contact between CFSA and DYRS, when needed. Furthermore, the CFSA Director and Deputy Director over all case-carrying units maintain regular communication with DYRS senior leadership to address resource sharing, strategic planning, and best practice enhancements.

12. **What is CFSA's protocol for handling situations when youth in the care of CFSA are arrested or detained?**

When a youth with an open neglect court case is arrested, CFSA is informed by the Court Social Services Division (CSSD) and the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Family Services Division. Following notification, the assigned CFSA social workers engage with CSSD and OAG. Their responsibilities include attending court hearings as able, communicating with the youth's family and caregivers, and addressing the supports and services that are either currently available or necessary to promote the youth's increased stability and well-being.

a. What, if any, programmatic and/or staffing supports exist to support such protocols?

There are no supports specific to a youth arrest. The social workers' supervisors are the first, and most important, level of support along with the lawyers involved in the neglect case.

13. **Please provide data on the number CFSA families with youth who are:**

a. Chronically truant.

CFSA does not track data on truancy. This falls under the purview of the OAG.

b. Have been arrested.

CFSA does not currently track this data in aggregate. We do, however, have daily communication with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and OAG to discuss individual cases that come to their attention. We are working to formalize this process so that we can identify trends and use this data to inform resources.

c. Have participated in a DPP with OAG.

CFSA does not track this data.

d. Who have absconded.

A total of 49 youth have experienced an episode of abscondence between October 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025.

In Home and Out of Home Care

14. **What is the current rate offered for Adoption Subsidy support?**

Adoption Subsidy rates are aligned with foster care board rates:

Subsidy Category	**Rate per day**
Regular	$38
Determination of Intensive Needs and Support (DINS)	$49.50
Teen Parent +1 Child	$57
Teen Parent + 2 Children	$66.50

a. If the rate is variable, how is it calculated?

DINS determinations are made on a case specific basis with considerations for particular needs and challenges of the child.

b. How many Adoption Subsidies are currently being provided?

As of March 31, 2025, there were 1,199 adoption subsidy recipients.

15. **What is the current Guardian Subsidy rate?**

Subsidy Category	Rate per day
Regular	$38
Determination of Intensive Needs and Support (DINS)	$49.50
Teen Parent +1 Child	$57
Teen Parent + 2 Children	$66.50

a. If the rate is variable, how is it calculated?

DINS determinations are made on a case specific basis with considerations for particular needs and challenges of the child.

b. How many Guardian Subsidies are currently being provided?

As of March 31, 2025, there were 342 guardianship subsidy recipients.

16. **What is the current Kinship Support Subsidy rate?**

Subsidy Category	Rate per day
Regular	$38
Determination of Intensive Needs and Support (DINS)	$49.50

a. If the rate is variable, how is it calculated?

DINS determinations are made on a case specific basis with considerations for particular needs and challenges of the child.

b. How many Kinship Support Subsidies are currently being provided?

As of March 31, 2025, there were 115 Kinship providers.

17. **Please provide the agencies budget for out-of-home foster care placements for FY24 and FY25, to date.**

See Attachment Q17_ FY25-FY26 Out of Home – Foster Care Placement Budget

Office of Thriving Families

18. **How many FTEs are currently staffing the warmline?**

- One Supervisor.
- Four Customer Service Call Takers.

19. **The Warmline is not currently staffed 24/7, what would be the necessary budget enhancement required to increase Warmline operation hours?**

To operate the Warmline 24/7, two additional shifts would need to be added. It should be noted, however, that the warmline is not intended to be a crisis hotline, and, at this time, we have no plans for expansion.

20. **What is the current rate offered for Grandparent Subsidy support?**

The variable rate is $15.79 - $27.92.

a. **If the rate is variable, how is it calculated?**

The rate based on:
- If child receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- Number of children who applied for the Grandparent Caregivers Program (GCP) and Close Relative Caregivers Subsidy Program (CRCP)
- Age of child

b. **How many Grandparent Subsidies are currently being provided?**

As of March 31, 2025, 437 Families (695 Children) are being served through this program.

21. **What is the current rate offered for Relative Caregiver Subsidy support?**

The variable rate is $15.79 - $27.92.

a. **If the rate is variable, how is it calculated?**

The rate is based on:
- If child receives SSI or TANF
- Number of children who applied for the GCP/CRCP subsidy
- Age of child

b. How many Relative Caregiver Subsidies are currently being provided?

As of March 31, 2025, 101 Families (137 Children) are being served through this program.

Hotline and Investigations

22. **Please describe how CFSA works with Safe Shores to conduct investigations.**

DC Code requires that every instance of sexual abuse of a child be reviewed and investigated by a Multidisciplinary Investigation Team (MDT) that is comprised of experts and professionals from law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medicine, counseling, and related fields. The following entities must participate on the MDT: Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), Office of the Attorney General (OAG), U.S. Attorney's Office / United States Attorney's Office. (USAO), and the Children's Advocacy Center (Safe Shores). DC Code § 4–1301.51. D.C. Code § 4-1303.52 defines the District's "Children's Advocacy Center" (CAC) as Safe Shores.

CFSA and the entities listed in the code have memorandums of Agreement (MOA) for child sexual abuse and child physical abuse investigations. For those investigations that fall under the MOA, Safe Shores conducts forensic interviews of the children. In Q1 and of FY25, Safe Shores conducted 45 interviews with CFSA involved children, and 39 in Q2.

23. **Safe Shores previously received a one-time enhancement to their budget in FY25. Can you describe the impact on CFSA's ability to properly investigate child abuse cases if Safe Shores were to not again receive these funds?**

This would not have an impact on CFSA's ability to conduct our investigations as CFSA has its own investigative procedures separate from Safe Shores. The MOA suggests which children may benefit from a forensic interview based on guidelines from the National Children's Alliance. The interviews are recorded and may be used to aid in the prosecution of sexual or severe physical abuse. If Safe Shores were not to receive funding, the District would need to locate the funds to bring the proper equipment in-house.

24. **How many CFSA FTEs are dedicated to investigating cases related to truancy and educational neglect?**

CFSA does not investigate any matter related to truancy, as truancy falls under the purview of OAG. If an educational neglect referral is screened in for investigation, it is assigned to an Investigative Social Worker. There are currently

42 social workers who are responsible for conducting investigations into all allegations.

25. **What are the costs associated with and/or budget for the educational neglect response team?**

CFSA has an Educational Neglect Triage Team that consists of a Supervisory Social Worker and 8 Family Support Workers (FSW) who review and triage reports of educational neglect from the educational neglect reporting portal. This triage team determines if the report is a screen out/screen in, or if a CFSA Engage referral is needed for further support to the family but does not rise to the level of an investigation. The Engage referrals are assigned to another group of FSWs who support the Investigative teams (14 FTE).

See Attachment Q25

26. **Please provide an update on the amount of educational neglect and truancy cases screened out to date.**

CFSA does not track truancy referrals as they are managed through OAG.
For SY2024-2025 there have been 5,422 referrals screened out as of April 16, 2025.

State Policy and Planning Operations

27. **How many CFSA licensed foster parents are there in the District and outside of the District?**

As of March 31, CFSA had 113 licensed foster parents (180 beds) in the District. In Maryland, there were 155 licensed foster parents (and 273 beds). It is important to note that CFSA does not license homes outside of the District, as those homes are licensed by the contracted providers.

28. **How many CFSA licensed group homes are there in the District and outside of the District?**

CFSA has eight licensed group home programs in the District.
CFSA has three licensed group home programs outside of the District.

29. **How many CFSA licensed independent living facilities are there in the District and outside of the District**

CFSA has one licensed independent living facility program in the District.
CFSA does not have licensed independent living facilities outside of the District.

30. **How many applications for licensure are currently being processed across all three facility categories mentioned above?**

    CFSA has 20 potential resource parents being processed for licensure.

    a. **Is there a cost associated with licensure?**
        i. **If so, what is the cost?**
        Resource parents do not incur a cost.
            1. **Does it vary based on the entity applying for licensure?**
            N/A.

31. **How many FTEs are on the State Policy and Planning team?**
    a. **How many of those FTEs are solely dedicated to policy, planning, and analysis?**

    Six FTE's are solely dedicated to policy, planning and analysis. The unit includes one supervisor and five staff members. Three staff members are dedicated to planning and two staff members are dedicated to policy.

Well-Being

32. **What programs currently exist to support older youth within the system, and how are FTEs assigned to specific programs?**

    The Older Youth Empowerment (OYE) Administration currently provides independent living programming for older youth, to include:

- **Youth Villages LifeSet Program** is comprised of one supervisor and four resource development specialists helps youth, ages 17 to 20 years old to set and achieve goals regarding education, employment, relationships, and healthcare. LifeSet offers one-on-one intensive coaching, experiential learning, and monthly service planning support.
- **Education Services** is comprised of one supervisor and six education specialists. CFSA provides educational services to enhance educational outcomes and opportunities for children and youth in care. This includes direct 1:1 intervention for youth in need of attendance, behavioral and core academic support; support to social work teams to resolve educational barriers; school enrollment; graduation preparation and planning for high school youth; college retention supports.
- **Youth Aftercare** (YAC) program is comprised of one supervisor and two resource development specialists. The youth aftercare program is for young adults ages 21-23, connects transitioned aged youth with a resource development specialist to create individualized plans to facilitate access to services that support transition into adulthood. The YAC unit provides support to community resources such as housing, medical/behavioral health support, employment assistance, transportation stipend, life skills development and education/vocational training support.

- **Internship program** comprised of one program specialist to support youth with obtaining skills needed to obtain gainful employment.
- **Credible Messenger** program supported by Memorandum of Understanding with DYRS, provides older youth with mentoring support.
- **Making Money Grow** provides youth with financial literacy, education and an opportunity to participate in matched savings for specified items such as housing, tuition, vehicle expenses, starting a small business and medical and dental if needed

33. **How are older youth aging out of the system supported both prior to and after they age out?**

Older Youth Empowerment (OYE) provides support, consultation, technical assistance, and training, for older youth between the ages of 15 to 21. This unit works alongside the case-carrying social workers and provides life skills training, vocational and educational support, and transitional assistance to prepare them for independence after leaving foster care.

Older youth are supported after they age out through our Youth Aftercare Program (up to age 23 and optional) and are connected to a specialist to ensure they receive support to achieve their individualized goals and have access to community resources.

a. What are the budget line items used to provide this support?

The Chaffee Foster Care Grant (Federal funding) is used to support the aforementioned services.

b. What recommendations do you have for more we can do to support youth aging out of the system?

CFSA recommends continued investment in affordable housing, enhanced education and employment opportunities, and prioritization of funding to support overall mental and behavioral health initiatives for children and families. Above all else, continued prioritization of youth voice.

34. **How would a new permanency option like SOUL reduce the cost of other potential placements for older system involved youth?**

An independent fiscal analysis of the SOUL permanency option was conducted in May 2024 by Mainspring Consulting. The analysis found that the estimated annual cost of a SOUL Family would be about half the current cost of a family foster care placement: approximately $24,250 for a SOUL Family compared to approximately $44,892 for a family-based placement option. The difference can be attributed to the more costly specialized care that is part of the current placement array, which will not be utilized within the context of a SOUL Family.

35. **Please provide a programmatic breakdown of the well-being services offered to children in the care of CFSA.**

See Attachment Q35_ OWB Service Supports Array

36. **How many Nurse Care Professionals are currently employed by CFSA?**

There are 19 nurse care professionals employed with CFSA. They are comprised of one program administrator, one program manager, three supervisory nurses, and 14 front-line nurses.

37. **Please provide a walk-through of the medical and behavioral health screening process prior to placement.**

The Healthy Horizons Assessment Center (HHAC) serves as an onsite clinic that provides medical screenings for infants, children, and adolescents (0-21) entering, re-entering, exiting, and changing placements while in foster care. The goal is to provide medical screenings in one location by experienced child welfare clinicians promoting quality health care and wellness. Services provided by the clinic are Medicaid reimbursable.

Screening protocol:
Child/youth accompanied by staff to the HHAC for placement screen and registered.

- Medical assistant reviews and confirms registration information and triages (takes vital signs, height, weight) child/youth and escorts them to examination room.
- Nurse Practitioner (NP) performs a complete head-to-toe physical and mental/behavioral health examination based on EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, Treatment tool) Medicaid guidelines.
- Laboratory tests and treatment are performed by NP/MA (Medical Assistant) if needed.
- NP shares screening results with the accompanying staff and youth (if age appropriate).
- If indicated, referral for medical case management follow-up with a nurse care manager initiated by the NP, and prescription(s) provided if needed.
- NP completes the "Cleared for Placement" form and provides two copies to staff - one for the resource parent and the other for the social worker.
- If medical concerns noted during the examination require immediate attention, the NP refers the child/youth to Children's Hospital ER for further evaluation and treatment.
- Children's Hospital discharge report serves as the child/youth "Cleared For Placement", which is shared with the HHAC.
- For a child/youth experiencing a mental health crisis, the NP contacts the Children and Adolescent Mobile Psychiatric Service (Champs) through DBH for immediate onsite assistance.