

Testimony of Commissioner Isaac Fulwood Jr.

Good Morning Honorable Danny K. Davis, Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this timely discussion on the ten year anniversary of the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Act of 1997. As you are aware, the stated goals were to revitalize the economy of the District of Columbia, and to improve prospects for home rule. The major changes for the District of Columbia were:

- Closing of the Lorton Correctional Complex
- Transferring to the Federal Bureau of Prisons the responsibility for all D.C. Felons sentenced to confinement
- Creation of Court Services and Offenders Supervision Agency
- Transferred funding of D.C. Court Systems
- Re-writing laws for D.C. which eliminate parole and required a fix term of confinement.
- Abolish the D.C. Parole Board and transfer authority to the U.S.P.C.

The question is – Did the Revitalization Act help the City? In some respect it is a mixed blessing. Today the city is in better shape financially, with economical growth and a safer place. However, for the people who find themselves incarcerated in the Bureau of Prisons, their lives are compounded by being a long way from family and their inability to maintain contact with loved ones. Equally, the level of programs within the B.O.P. to prepare the offender to successfully return to society is often times inadequate.

The challenge that the Criminal Justice System faces with an urban population of offenders due to the issues of drug abuse, crimes of violence and pressure in communities to address order maintenance problems, taxes the limits of resources. In addition, this is a population that is disproportionate minority. This raises the issue of best approach to supervision. What are the best practice for rehabilitation and building social support system and strengthen family connections? The D.C. Offender is a group that is up close,

impacting our lives everyday. Reducing the recidivism rate is important in the City's focus on crime.

To address these issues, there is a need to improve programming in the institutions, G.E.D. skills training (UNICORE), drug abuse training and family management. Most studies in recent times that speak on how to lower the recidivism rate speak on the need to improve programming in the institution so that the offender population is better equipped to handle the pressures related to social control.

The responsibility of United States Parole Commission is to work with our Criminal Justice Partners in managing the Public Safety, setting conditions of release and estimate risk. We have jurisdiction over the following types of cases:

- All Federal Offenders who committed an offense before November 1, 1987
- All D.C. Code Offenders
- Uniform Code of Military Justice Offenders who are confined in a Bureau of Prisons Institution
- Transfer Treaty Cases (U.S. citizens convicted in foreign countries, who have elected to serve their sentence in this country)
- State Probationers and Parolees in the Federal Witness Protection Program

Briefly the goal of supervision is:

- Public Safety - taking steps and actions to prevent offenders from intimidating the community
- Reduce Recidivism – keeping the person in the community through coordination with our various partners.
- Socialization/Rehabilitation – assisting the offender with transition back to the community, and understanding his/her responsibility for appropriate behavior.

The issue of setting sanctions

- Identify Risk Factors
- Use of Technology
- High level of Supervision of Offender

Critical to the successful completing supervision, is building support in the community and reconnecting to family.

Reentry

- Transitional Housing – impact on changing demographics
- Drug Treatment
- Job Training
- Socialization – Rehabilitation

Connection to Family

- Mental Health Issue
- Developing Partnerships to assist in reentry.

The challenge that is faced by an urban population is the issue of managing offenders who suffer from drug abuse, unemployment and poor social skills. CSOSA and USPC have developed an approach titled Reprimand Sanction Hearings, built on the Drug Court concept. Instead of a Judge, offenders stand before a Parole Commissioner. Briefly, let me discuss this program:

Reprimand Sanction Hearings

- The mission of the Reprimand Sanction Hearings, serves as a graduated sanction, short of revocation, that permits the Commission to address non-compliant behaviors. The goal is to increase safety in the community and for the offender to advantage him or herself of the programs support, which will reduce recidivism. Additionally, it will restore a sense of respect.

-Improve accountability

-Reduce Recidivism

- Reconnect offender to supervision
- Identify support programs for offender
- Develop partnerships with CSOSA, PDS and USPC.

In summary, let me first commend P.D.S. and CSOSA for work toward improving the quality of life for offenders, which in the end makes us a safer community. Today there are still barriers to reentry; lack of community resources (limited housing, substance abuse/dual diagnoses program), financial support, coordination (communication issue) and high level of supervision.

The act has produced a greater coordination of services for the offender in the D.C. community. This would include public, private and faith based organizations. There has also been a more concerted effort to better identify the risk and need each offender poses, so that strategies can be developed to address those issues. And, finally, the act has created a more thoughtful coordination effort among the various partners who serve the Criminal Justice interest within the District of Columbia.