

STATEMENT

BY

**Jasper Ormond,
Interim Director,
Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency
for the District of Columbia,**

**BEFORE THE
United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia**

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Madam Chairperson and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of the Fiscal Year 2003 budget request of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia, or CSOSA. As you know, CSOSA provides supervision for pretrial defendants and convicted offenders released into the community on probation, parole, or supervised release. The Pretrial Services Agency (PSA) supervises defendants, while the Community Supervision Program (CSP) supervises offenders.

For FY 2003, CSOSA requests direct budget authority of \$161,925,000 and 1,266 FTE. Of this amount, \$100,612,000 is for the Community Supervision Program; \$37,357,000 is for the Pretrial Services Agency, and \$23,956,000 is for the Public Defender Service. The District of Columbia Public Defender Service transmits its budget request with CSOSA's. The Director of PDS, Cynthia Jones, will present it in a separate statement.

CSOSA requests an increase of 4.4 percent over FY 2002, taking into account the President's initiative of making each agency directly responsible for funding federal retiree benefits and health insurance. This increase, which excludes PDS, is spread over ten new initiatives totaling \$13,653,000 and 92 FTE.

In the two years since CSOSA was certified as an independent Executive Branch agency, we have made great progress toward our goals of establishing strict accountability for the population we supervise and supporting the fair administration of justice in the District of Columbia. These goals support our mission, which is to increase public safety through effective supervision of defendants and offenders.

CSOSA supervises approximately 15,900 offenders and 8,000 defendants at any given time. Our supervision model is based on the premise that four types of activities must occur in order for us to perform effectively. Therefore, our budget request is based on these Critical Success Factors: Risk and Needs Assessment, Close Supervision, Treatment and Support Services, and Partnerships. In addition to our request for enhancements in these areas, we also request information technology funding to support the Critical Success Factors and enhance our ability to measure performance. I will discuss our FY 2003 budget initiatives within the context of the Critical Success Factors and briefly summarize our information technology initiatives.

Risk and Needs Assessment

The first Critical Success Factor is **Risk and Needs Assessment**. We believe that effective supervision is based on comprehensive knowledge of the offender's risk to the community and need for support services. Defendants are assessed for risk as part of the release recommendation process. For offenders, risk assessment includes diagnostic activities, such as pre-sentence investigations; initial risk screening; comprehensive pre-parole assessment, and reassessment every 180 days throughout the supervision period. Needs assessment begins at intake and continues throughout supervision. It is the basis of case planning and referral to treatment, education, job training, and other support services.

CSOSA will dedicate 25 percent of its FY 2003 budget to activities in this area, and we request funding for three new initiatives. First, we request \$2,310,000 for additional diagnostic staff within the Community Supervision Program. Diagnostic staff

prepare pre-sentence and post-sentence investigations, which are used by the court in determining sentences, by the Federal Bureau of Prisons in making institutional placements, and by the US Parole Commission in making release decisions. These reports must be thorough, accurate, and timely; they are an important product our Agency provides to the criminal justice system.

Our existing staff completed over 5,000 investigations last year. The additional staff will reduce each diagnostic officer's caseload from 14 investigations per month to a more appropriate level of nine. The caseload reduction is supported by a workload study we commissioned from the National Institute of Corrections last year.

Second, we request \$1,127,000 to establish two additional teams of officers in the Transitional Interventions for Parole Supervision, or TIPS, program. TIPS officers work with inmates transitioning to the community through Community Corrections Centers, or halfway houses. These officers investigate and verify the inmate's release plan, work with the inmate to secure employment, and initiate referrals to treatment, education, training, or other support services. The TIPS program ensures that supervision is not interrupted as the inmate transitions from the institution to the community.

The volume of TIPS investigations has remained consistent throughout the three years since the program began. However, during this period, the average length of stay for inmates in halfway houses decreased. This means our officers have less time to complete each investigation. Moreover, an increasing number of inmates are transitioning directly from prison to the community with no halfway house stay. For these inmates, the release plan must be verified within a very short time. The additional staff would ensure that release plan verification and case planning are completed in a timely manner despite the shorter timeframes.

Finally, we request \$1,300,000 to relocate approximately 70 diagnostic and interstate supervision staff from Building B of the D.C. Superior Court to other office

space in close proximity to the court. Building B must be vacated to allow renovation for the new Family Court.

Close Supervision

CSOSA's second Critical Success Factor is **Close Supervision**. We believe that a system of close supervision, based on clearly defined expectations and graduated sanctions for offenders and defendants who violate those expectations, will result in increased accountability and decreased recidivism among our population. The primary means of enforcing accountability are regular contact between the defendant or offender and the supervision officer, as well as regular drug testing.

For sufficient meaningful contact to occur, the officer's caseload must be manageable. We have set a target of 50 offenders per officer for general supervision cases and have made consistent progress toward that target. Last year, the average general supervision caseload was 64 offenders per officer. With the addition of Pretrial Supervision Officers funded in FY 2002, PSA's caseload will be reduced from 95 defendants per officer to 83.

CSOSA will dedicate 48 percent of its FY 2003 budget to activities in this area, and we request funding for three new initiatives. Our first new Close Supervision initiative totals \$3,633,000 to establish five offender general supervision teams and a new field office. With the addition of these staff, CSP's general supervision caseload will reach the target level of 50.

The second new initiative would provide \$569,000 for the Pretrial Services Agency to develop and establish a community-based Day Reporting Center. The Center will expand the available supervision options for higher-risk defendants by offering non-residential intensive supervision with a variety of substance abuse, education, and life skills programs.

For our third initiative, we request \$2,238,000 to maintain the increased level of offender drug testing. This will fund new positions for specimen collection at the field offices scheduled to open in FY 2002 and FY 2003. The request also includes \$1,100,000 for chemicals and supplies used to process drug tests. Drug testing is critical to both needs assessment and supervision. Offenders who are using drugs are more likely to need treatment and pose a greater risk of committing new crimes.

Late in FY 2000, CSOSA began requiring all offenders entering supervision to be tested twice weekly for eight weeks. Testing then gradually decreases as the offender demonstrates abstinence. Full implementation of this policy contributed to a 233 percent increase in the total number of drug tests between FY 2000 and FY 2001. The requested funding would meet the full cost of the new testing schedule.

Increased testing reinforces offender accountability. Each positive test is treated as a violation of release conditions and is sanctioned. Sanctions include increasing the frequency of testing, requiring the offender to check in daily with the supervision officer, or requiring the offender to attend a group meeting every day for a fixed number of days. If the offender continues to test positive, he or she will be referred to treatment or a residential sanctioning facility. The offender receives the message that drug use will not be tolerated and that violations will be punished. We believe that increased testing has begun to impact drug use among the supervised population: the average percentage of positive tests each month decreased from 28 percent in FY 1999 to 23 percent in FY 2001.

Treatment and Support Services

The third Critical Success Factor is **Treatment and Support Services**. These services provide the means through which offenders and defendants can establish stable, drug-free lives in the community. CSOSA will dedicate 23 percent of its FY 2003 spending to this area, and we plan three new initiatives.

CSOSA initiated treatment for more than 1,000 offenders in FY 2001 and continued services for 480 others. Over 800 defendants were also placed in sanction-based treatment last year. We have seen significant growth in the amount of treatment available to offenders and defendants over the past three years. In order to ensure that these resources are used effectively, CSOSA assesses all individuals referred to treatment for severity of need and commitment to treatment and recommends an appropriate placement.

As treatment availability has increased, the volume of referrals has also increased. In order to ensure timely processing of these referrals, we request \$848,000 to expand CSP's Substance Abuse Treatment Branch. The additional staff would also allow CSP to better utilize existing staff who are certified addiction counselors and expand in-house treatment programs.

The defendants and offenders under CSOSA supervision need a range of services in addition to substance abuse treatment. The average offender has a fifth grade literacy level, poor job skills, and an unstable work history. CSOSA has established a network of learning labs to provide academic and vocational assistance to address these needs. We request \$464,000 to expand the learning lab program at the new field units scheduled to open in FY 2002 and FY 2003.

The third new treatment initiative, totaling \$884,000, would provide mental health services to the defendant population. These services would include case management and referral to community-based mental health treatment services for a rotating caseload of 180 defendants. Further, this initiative includes 50 contractual, residential treatment slots for defendants with concurrent substance abuse and mental health disorders.

PSA launched a pilot mental health program in FY 2001. This program reached its capacity within 90 days, demonstrating the need to expand mental health services available to defendants. Numerous studies have established a strong association between serious mental illness and criminal activity, including violent crime. An even stronger

association exists when the mentally ill individual also has a substance abuse problem. Some studies have shown that placing the mentally ill into appropriate treatment programs reduces the likelihood of a return to jail.

Partnerships

Our fourth Critical Success Factor is the establishment of **Partnerships** with the police, the community, and other criminal justice agencies. CSOSA will dedicate 4 percent of its FY 2003 budget to activities in this area.

Although we are not requesting additional funding in this area, we have developed a new initiative of which we are very proud. Last fall, we began to work with the city's faith-based institutions on a pilot program through which returning offenders can access the resources and services available through houses of worship. During the weekend of January 11, nearly 40 faith-based institutions devoted their worship services to a discussion of offender re-entry and pledged to recruit mentors to work with offenders returning from prison. Since then, interest has remained high. We are on track to begin training mentors next month. We hope the mentoring program will be the first expression of a long, fruitful collaboration between CSOSA and the faith community that will increase opportunities for returning offenders and, as a result, decrease recidivism.

Information Technology

CSOSA achieved significant improvements in information management in FY 2001. The Agency designed, built, tested, and deployed two separate custom-designed case management applications, one for defendant management and one for offender management. The new applications replace outdated legacy systems. Both will greatly enhance the information available to the supervision officer, as well as the quality and availability of program data.

Our final program request is \$280,000 for PSA to purchase and pilot test a strategic planning software package designed to facilitate the integration of performance and budget data. If the pilot test is successful, the software will be implemented throughout CSOSA.

Conclusion

CSOSA continues to accumulate evidence that our supervision approach is contributing to a safer District of Columbia. Both the number of parolees rearrested and the rate of rearrest have dropped significantly in the three years since the TIPS program began. The number of parolees rearrested dropped 63 percent; the rate of rearrest is down more than 33 percent. We are beginning to study the effects of our supervision model on probation rearrests as well.

We are beginning to see the effects of our drug testing and treatment programs. Although we are testing more people for more drugs, the rate of positive drug tests among probationers and parolees has fallen 15 percent since FY 1999. Among a sample of offenders who *completed* treatment in FY 2001, positive drug tests dropped more than 50 percent. We are studying treatment placements and outcomes this year to determine whether the promising results of that sample hold true for the entire treatment population.

We at CSOSA are very proud of the difference we have made to offender and defendant supervision and our positive impact on public safety. We thank the Subcommittee for its past support, which has made our success possible. This concludes my prepared statement. I will be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.