

Testimony of Andrew Anderson
January 30,2020 Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety Oversight Hearing

Committee on Judiciary And Public Safety Chair Alien and members of the Committee,

My name is Andrew Anderson. I am a DC resident. I am a member of the People for Fairness Coalition. I live in Adams Shelter and I am a returned citizen

There are two reasons I am testifying today . First, I want to share my experience with you on my return to citizenship. Second, I would like to express my concern that the DC Department of Corrections, which should play a key role in facilitating reentry for returned citizens in DC and which is formally represented on the DC Interagency Council on Homeless (ICH) does not attend ICH meetings.

My experience

I was incarcerated in South Carolina for 8 years and released in September 2018. Before being placed on parole I was given a Federal Placement Review for housing and employment. I was asked several questions to see if I was suitable for housing before placement in a halfway house. It was determined that there was no plan in the immediate future for housing. I was told to report to my Parole Officer in DC after discharge from the halfway house in Baltimore Maryland that I was sent to. At the end of the 28 days at the halfway house I was released to the District of Columbia on my own recognizance and told to report to my Parole Officer within 24 hours.

I had to borrow money from another resident of the halfway house to return back to Washington DC, money which should have been provided to me by my case manager at the halfway house. Upon returning to Washington I immediately reported to my Parole Officer who made arrangements to have me placed in transitional housing in South East DC. I was there for 90 days. There was some attempt to provide suitable housing upon my release from transitional housing, but these plans fell through and I was told to go to a low barrier shelter.

On December 23, 2018 I was admitted to the 801 East low barrier shelter. Upon arriving there I went through an intake procedure which included a bunch of questions

regarding health, employment issues, psychological status. I was not provided any further assistance in the form of case management.

Today I reside at Adams Shelter. I have been told that I qualify for Rapid Rehousing as a result of taking the VI SPDAT thanks to the assistance I received at Miriam's Kitchen which is a nonprofit entity that assist people experiencing homelessness.

To my knowledge, the DC Department of Corrections was not aware of my case and took no action to help me.

Which brings me to the second reason for testifying today.

Concern about the lack of involvement of the DC Department of Corrections in the ICH and with returned citizens in DC shelters in general

Goal 5.E. of Homeward Bound, DC's Strategic Plan for ending homelessness in DC, specifies that the Department of Corrections; the Mayor's Office on Returned Citizens and Court Services; and the Offender Supervision Agency (which is part of the Department of Corrections) are responsible for assisting returned citizens residing in shelters in DC including: reviewing the discharge planning process and identifying steps to improve the process and target assistance to returned citizens residing in DC shelters.

It is clear to me that in my case this did not happen.

The DC Department of Corrections is formally represented on the ICH as a government representative. However, it is my understanding that they do not attend quarterly ICH meetings and that they do not report to the ICH or any other entity that is responsible for tracking returned citizens who experience homelessness. As a formal member of the ICH, they should be participating in relevant ICH Committees such as Strategic Planning and Housing Solutions. There is, to my knowledge, no transparency on how they support returning citizens residing in DC shelters.

Why are they not taking on the responsibility that they should as a member of the ICH?

I suspect that I am but one of many returned citizens in DC who fell through the cracks, among others because the DC Department of Corrections has not been there to assist me when I have needed assistance.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify.