

# Providing Testimony to Help D.C. Residents Post-incarceration



*By Isa Mirza*



*I recently testified before the D.C. City Council on policies to improve services and support for D.C. residents returning to the District after being incarcerated in the D.C. Jail or a federal facility.*

My testimony highlighted the unique complexity of serving the D.C. returning citizen population, who are under the federal jurisdiction of the Department of Justice due to the absence of local control over the District's own criminal justice system.

In particular, the testimony focused on the fact that the D.C. Mayor's Office on Returning Citizens (MORCA) needs to conduct more individually tailored case management work for an increasing returning citizen population despite limited financial and staffing resources. In addition, I testified that D.C.'s new READY Center for coordinating critically needed post-release community services only provides such support to D.C. residents returning from the D.C. Jail.

As a direct result of the testimony, D.C. Councilman Robert White wrote a letter to D.C. Mayor Muriel Bower underscoring MORCA's funding and staffing challenges, and the exclusion of D.C. residents from federal facilities at the READY Center. The letter also called on the D.C. Government to provide more resources to MORCA. In response, Mayor Bowser announced that D.C. residents returning from a federal prison will now also have full access to services at the READY Center.

I provided my testimony as a Co-Chair of the D.C. Reentry Task Force, and have advocated on behalf of the task force for nearly three years through Foley Hoag's pro bono representation. As part of this representation, I also serve as the Chairman of Board of the National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens, a grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of the District's returning citizen community.

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