

**Statement on behalf of the
American Civil Liberties Union of the District of Columbia
Before the D.C. Council Committee of the Whole
Budget Oversight Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2026 Local Budget Act of
2025, the Fiscal Year 2026 Local Budget Emergency Act of 2025, the Fiscal
Year 2025 Revised Local Budget Emergency Act of 2025, the Fiscal Year
2025 Revised Local Budget Temporary Act of 2025, the Fiscal Year 2026
Budget Support Act of 2025, and the Fiscal Year 2026 Federal Portion
Budget Request Act of 2025
by
Melissa Wasser, Senior Policy Counsel
June 18, 2025**

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee. My name is Melissa Wasser, and I am the Senior Policy Counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union of the District of Columbia (ACLU-D.C.). I present the following testimony on behalf of more than 14,000 members and supporters across the District.

ACLU-D.C. is committed to working to dismantle systemic racism, safeguard fundamental liberties, and advocate for sensible, evidence-based criminal justice policies. Our testimony today addresses our key recommendations regarding the District's Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget for the D.C. Criminal Code Reform Commission (CCRC).

The CCRC is an independent agency comprised of five staff that provides legal and policy analysis of proposed legislation or best practices concerning criminal offenses, procedures, or reforms, including information on existing District law, the laws of other jurisdictions, and model legislation. The CCRC serves many vital purposes including ensuring criminal laws in the District are constitutional, redrafting criminal code sections that are not working as intended, and recently, the CCRC developed the most comprehensive sentencing database that is publicly available to guide sentencing parameters in the criminal code.

ACLU-D.C. supports a stable and full funding level of \$890,125 in local funds and a permanent status for the CCRC for FY26. This is the same level of funding that was approved in both FY24 and FY25. This budget for CCRC was already small, but the agency is willing to work with the Council on minor reductions, if necessary. Full funding would ensure that CCRC can continue its vital mission of ensuring criminal laws in the District are constitutional and continue to serve the Council and the

residents of the District of Columbia with their recommendations and significant expertise.

In its oversight and legislative role, the Council has the power and responsibility to fully fund the CCRC to provide their mission-driven comprehensive services. The ACLU-D.C. is ready to work with you and alongside community partners to fund a budget that works for all of D.C.