



Annual Report 2012

District of Columbia

Commission on Re-entry and Returning Citizens Affairs

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR	3
PURPOSE AND DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION	4
MISSION OF THE RE-ENTRY COMMISSION	5
FAST FACTS.....	5
COMMISSIONERS' BIOGRAPHIES.....	6
COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION	8
2012 PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARIES.....	9
2012 COMMUNITY OUTREACH	10
THE COMMISSION'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR 2013.....	12

Message from the Chair

To Mayor Vincent Gray, DC Council Members and Residents of the District of Columbia:

It is with great pleasure that we submit the first annual report for the newly appointed Commission on Re-entry and Returning Citizens Affairs ("Commission"). In the six months that the Commission has been in existence, our approach has been to attend public hearings, build relationships, reach out to the community and understand the complexity and diversity of the issues that impact returning citizens, their families and the community.

Under the leadership of Mayor Gray and the DC City Council the Commission on Reentry and Returning Citizens Affairs was re-established on May 17, 2012 by the swearing in of 14 of the 15 voting members required to fulfill the Commission's establishing legislation. D.C. Law 16-243; D.C. Official Code 24-1302. Since then, the Commission has held seven public meetings, met with local and federal officials, and attended community public meetings. In addition, the Commission has worked diligently over the last several months to establish the required by-laws and rules of procedures for the Commission and convened a retreat for strategic planning purposes.

While working very hard to strengthen the core of the Commission, the Commission realizes the importance of engaging in dialogue with the 11 ex-officio non-voting government agencies that are a part of the Commission pursuant to D.C. law. These DC agencies are charged in developing and implementing policy and programs in their respective agencies, and it is a part of the Commission's strategy to engage each individual agency and at an appointed time to bring the agencies together to employ collaborative reintegration efforts.

As we reflect on 2012 efforts, there is one number we would like to guide us in 2013. This number is one and it reflects the commitment of each Commission member. In 2012, the dedicated members of the Commission have worked on one accord to develop an efficient vehicle of change and support for returning citizens while upholding our core values of integrity, commitment and transparency. It is our hope that we can continue to work together as one city, bringing together the Mayor, DC Council, faith and community groups, correctional professionals, re-entrants and the community. A shared effort is imperative to the work of the Commission on Re-entry and Returning Citizen Affairs because every one of us is vital to the continued success of returning citizens, their families and our community.

Reverend Kelly D. Wilkins,
Chairperson

Purpose and Duties of the Commission



The Commission's establishment act can be found in the DC Code, Section 24-1303. The Commission's stated purpose is "to advise the Mayor, the Council, and the Director on the process, issues, and consequences of the reintegration of ex-offenders into the general population." (DC Code 24-1303(a)).

The Commission's duties are to (DC Code 24-1303(c)):

- (1) Serve as an advocate for ex-offenders;
- (2) Review and submit to the Mayor, the Council, and the Office an annual report that shall be submitted to the Mayor and the Council within 90 days after the end of each fiscal year, be the subject of a public hearing before the Council, and include:
 - (A) A summary of the recommendations of the Commission, including a summary of required monthly meetings pursuant to subsection (b)(7) of this section;
 - (B) A budget breakdown, with supporting budget documents, detailing the fiscal implications of the Commission's recommendations;
 - (C) Executive branch policy and legislative priorities of the Commission for the following fiscal year;
 - (D) A summary of community outreach efforts undertaken by members of the Commission;
- (3) Develop sustainable relationships and coordinate with federal, state and private agencies working with ex-offenders;
- (4) Participate in public hearings and promote community dialogue concerning the issues confronting ex-offenders;
- (5) Review and comment on proposed legislation and regulations, policies, and programs and make policy recommendations on issues affecting ex-offenders;
- (6) Develop policy and provide continuing review of the planning undertaken by the Office; and
- (7) Make reasonable requests for information necessary to effectuate the discharge of its responsibilities.

Mission of the Re-Entry Commission

The mission of the Reentry Commission is to advocate for and improve the quality of life for returning citizens and their families. The Commission analyzes policy and legislation and provides advice and guidance that seeks to influence the Executive Branch, the D.C. Council and the community.

Vision

To be a respected and effective body that influences reentry policies and legislation that affects the Executive Branch, the City Council and the community.

Through outreach and communication the Commission seeks to change the perception of returning citizens and assist in removing barriers to their active participation in all walks of life.

Core Values

1. Integrity
2. Commitment
3. Transparency

Office on Returning Citizen Affairs (ORCA)

The commission works collaboratively with ORCA. ORCA provides information for the empowerment of previously incarcerated persons in order to create a productive and supportive environment where persons may thrive, prosper and contribute to the social, political and economic development of self, family, and community.

Charles Thornton, Director

Fast Facts

In America, 2.2 million people are in prison. Each year, more than 700,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons. This is an average of 2,000 people returning to communities every day and Washington, D.C. is no different. According to a Research and Development Corporation (RAND) study there are an estimated 60,000 persons with a criminal record living in the District of Columbia, about 10% of the current population. In 2011 there were 3,300 men and women on community supervision, including parole and probation under Court Services and Offender Supervision Agencies (CSOSA) jurisdiction. Most encounter significant barriers in going home to their communities and to successful reentry into life after incarceration.

Commissioners' Biographies

Public Voting Members:

Rev. Kelly Wilkins, Chair of the Reentry Commission, has a dual role serving as Minister of Social Justice and Reentry at Covenant Baptist United Church of Christ and the Cluster Coordinator for the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency Faith-Based Initiative. She is responsible for addressing justice issues as well as assisting returning citizens reintegrate successfully back into the community.

Dr. Roosevelt Cohens, Co-Chair of the Reentry Commission, is currently the CEO/President of Serenity Workforce Development Institute of Washington DC, and Serenity Family Social Services Inc. of Chicago, IL. Dr. Cohens provides organizational leadership for Serenity and Serenity Family Social Services staff. Dr. Cohens provides anger management, restorative justice, substance abuse counseling, trauma cognitive behavior therapy re-entry trainings for administrators of community based organizations.

Tracye Payne Wilson, Secretary of the Reentry Commission, is the Employment Coordinator for Our Place DC, a non-profit program that supports women who are or have been in the criminal justice system by providing the resources they need to maintain connections with the community, resettle after incarceration and reconcile with their families.

James D. Berry, Jr., is the Chief of the DC Public Defender Service's Community Defender Division, where he directs three programs: (1) Juvenile Services Program, (2) Institutional Services Program, and (3) Community Reentry Program. He has over thirty years of experience in the D.C. criminal justice community.

April Frazier-Camara, Esquire, directs the Community Reentry Program at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, which provides legal services to people arrested or sentenced for DC Code offenses with the goal of assisting them with successful transition back into the community.

Terence Ingram is President and CEO of Maximum Security and Protection, LLC.

James R. Lindsay is President of The Lindsay Group LLC, a management consulting firm in the District of Columbia. The firm provides services to clients in four principle areas: Organizational Development, Proposal Preparation and Fund Development, Management, Training & Facilitation.

Saymendi Lloyd is the Chair of the Citizen Advisory Council of the DC Department of Corrections and the founder of The Women's Wing Organization Inc.

Amin H. Muslim is the Director of Constituent Services for Ward 7 Councilmember Yvette M. Alexander. In this role he is responsible for responding to constituents who contact the Councilmember's Office.

Marco Price-Bey is the CEO and founder of Fresh Start Barbering Academy, an Adjunct Professor at the University of the District of Columbia, and owner of Fresh Stylz Barber Salon.

Courtney Stewart is Chairman of The Reentry Network for Returning Citizens, a volunteer organization that assists men and women with successful reintegration to the community.

Charlie Whitaker is the Chief Executive Officer for Career Path. The program works with ex-offenders and individuals with low to moderate skill sets.

Louise G. White is Co-Chair of The Reentry Task Force, a group of people from the faith community, activists and professionals focused on advocating for returning citizens.

Peter M. Willner is a Senior Policy Analyst with the Council for Court Excellence, a non-profit that works to improve the administration of justice in DC and examines policy solutions related to reentry and employment.

Ex-officio, non-voting members from the following DC Government agencies (24-1303(b)(1):

- (A) Attorney General;
- (B) Director of the Department of Human Services;
- (C) Director of the Department of Health;
- (D) Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development;
- (E) Director of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs;
- (F) Superintendent of Education of the District of Columbia;
- (G) President of the University of the District of Columbia;
- (H) Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department;
- (I) Director of the Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services;
- (J) Director of the Department of Employment Services;
- (K) Director of the Office of Human Rights;
- (L) Director of the Department of Mental Health; and
- (M) Director of the Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration, or the administrative head of the agency or the successor agency within the Department of Health responsible for administering substance abuse prevention and treatment services.

Commission Recommendation

The Commission recommends the extension the “Returning Citizen Public Employment Inclusion Amendment Act” to cover private employers.

Highlights of the Act

“TITLE XX-D “CRIMINAL HISTORY INQUIRIES

“When considering whether to disqualify an applicant for a position that is not a covered position because of the applicant’s criminal history, a public employer should consider the following factors:

- “(1) The specific duties and responsibilities of the position sought;
- “(2) The bearing, if any, that an applicant’s criminal background will have on the applicant’s fitness or ability to perform one or more of such duties or responsibilities;
- “(3) The time that has elapsed since the occurrence of the criminal offense;
- “(4) The age of the person at the time of the occurrence of the criminal offense;
- “(5) The frequency and seriousness of the criminal offense;
- “(6) Any information produced regarding the applicant’s rehabilitation and good conduct since the occurrence of the criminal offense; and
- “(7) The public policy that it is generally beneficial for ex-offenders to obtain employment.

2012 Public Meeting Summaries

The Commission convened on May 17, 2012 to be sworn in by Mayor of the District of Columbia. A short introductory meeting was held where the members and officers were introduced to the public.

The Commission held seven public meetings at the DC Office of Returning Citizen Affairs located 2100 Martin Luther King Ave Jr., SE.

The Commission met on June 21, 2012 and discussed the following:

- Understanding D.C. ACT 16-599
- Adopting Rules of Procedure
- Meetings with Ex-officio Non-Voting Members
- Humans Rights Bill

The Commission met on July 19, 2012 and discussed the following:

- Adopting Rules of Procedure-
- Current DC Council Climate and Strategy
- Public Inclusion Act
 - Implementation
 - Decoding
- Meeting with Director & Non-Voting members
- Human Rights Bill

The Commission met on August 16, 2012, and discussed the following:

- Report from Office of Returning Citizen Affairs
- Getting to Know the Commission
- Final Adoption of Rules of Procedure
- Human Rights Bill-Legislative Committee
- Public Inclusion Act

The Commission met on September 20, 2012, and discussed the following:

- Report from Office of Returning Citizens Affairs
- Budget-What are the steps to getting budget approved? How can COR assist?
- Meeting with Director Stokes
- Public Inclusion Act
- Criminal Background Checks
- Advisory Group
- Legislative Committee- Human Rights Bill-Hearing October 5, 2012,
- Commission Annual Report (What are the components needed?)
- DC Reentry Facilitation Amendment Act, Hearing September 25, 2012

The Commission met on October 18, 2012, and discussed the following:

- Report from Office of Returning Citizens Affairs
- DC Human Resources
- Report on Human Rights - Hearing/Facilitators Meeting
- Mini-Retreat (Developing Mission & Vision)
 - Fiscal Report – Commissioners

The Commission met on November 15, 2012, and discussed the following:

- Report from Office of Returning Citizens Affairs
 - Resource Center and Strategic Plan Overview
- Annual Report- Outline
- Report on Human Rights /Facilitators Mark-up
- Mini-Retreat (Developing Mission & Vision Statements)

The Commission met via conference call on December 9, 2012, and discussed the following:

- Annual Report
- Retreat Report
- Report on Reentry Facilitation Act & Anti-Discrimination Act
- Report from Office of Returning Citizens Affairs

2012 Community Outreach

- **May 17, 2012-** Fourteen persons were sworn in to the Commission on Re-entry and Returning Citizens Affairs.
- **May 22, 2012-** Attended the CSOSA Call to Serve Conference to meet with Employment work group and discuss the newly formed commission.
- **May 23, 2012** - Hosted a panel discussion on Mass Incarceration at Covenant Baptist United Church of Christ. Spoke to participants regarding the newly formed commission.
- **May 24, 2012-** led with group of DC residents (east and west of the river) regarding green job campaign for returning citizens and spoke to them regarding newly formed commission and solicited their concerns regarding returning citizens. Meeting took place at Covenant Baptist United Church of Christ.
- **May 27-30-** Met with organizers, and advocacy groups regarding organizing for change. Briefed them on newly formed commission. Spoke to individuals about reentry concerns in their cities/states.
- **June 6, 2012-** Met with CSOSA female offenders brief them on newly formed commission, invited them to public meeting and solicited their concerns. Concerns focused on housing, employment and child care.
- **June 12, 2012-** Met with CSOSA clients in CSOSA Secured Residential Treatment Program advised them of the newly formed commission and invited them to public meeting and solicited their concerns. Most expressed concerns regarding recovery support, employment and housing.
- **June 14, 2012-** Met with faith leaders and congregates from various institutions at Temple United Church Inc. to advise about the newly formed commission and solicit concerns. Large portion of the conversation centered on custodian care of children.
- **July 16, 2012-** Met with DC residents, DC water rate payers, environmentalist, and congregations regarding a Green Jobs Campaign to employ returning citizens and green DC.
- **July 12, 2012-** Met with clients from CSOSA Secured Residential Treatment Program to talk about employment rights. Most of the meeting centered on concerns of discrimination.
- **July 23, 2012-** Met with the Re-entry Workgroup on Employment. Participants expressed concerns regarding pending legislations to remove employment and housing barriers for returning citizens.
- **July 16, 2012-** Met with DC residents, DC water rate payers, environmentalist, and congregations regarding a Green Jobs Campaign to employ returning citizens and green DC.
- **July 23, 2012-** Met with the Re-entry Workgroup on Employment. Participants expressed concerns regarding pending legislations to remove employment and housing barriers for returning citizens.
- **August 2, 2012-** Met with newly formed members of the CIC as an informal introduction.
- **August 3, 2012-** Met with the Steering Committee in introduce the Commission and hear the progress of their work.
- **August 7, 2012-** Video conference call with correctional centers of Allenwood, FCI Fairton, FCI Elkton and FCI Danbury. The group was advised of the Commission on Reentry and they could write the chair regarding their concerns. The chair did receive letters regarding employment, addictions, and health concerns.
- **September 2012** - Met with Christina Setlow, Legislative Chair regarding the Re-entry Facilitation Act 2012

- **September 11, 2012**- Met with DC Department of Human Resources Director Shaun Stokes to discuss the guidance and implementation of the Public Inclusion Act of 2012 and the proposed extension and impact of the criminal background check.
- **September 25, 2012**- Testified before the DC Council Judiciary Committee about the proposed Re-entry Facilitation Amendment Act of 2012. Also, met with faith leaders city-wide and council persons Michael Brown regarding housing and possible tax abatements for churches that use their property for transitional housing.
- **October 5, 2012** – Testified before the DC Council Aging and Community Affairs Committee about the proposed Human Rights for Ex-Offenders Act of 2011.
- **October 23, 2012**- Met Rep. Eleanor Holmes-Norton and informed her of the commission role and inquired about concerns around half way house participating with the community for successful reintegration.
- **October 24, 2012**- DC Reentry Commission Chair assisted with early voting at DC Jail and Correctional Detention Center.
- **October 25, 2012**- Met with Garret King, Committee Chair from the Committee on Aging and Community Fairs regarding the DC Anti-Discrimination Act of 2012.
- **November 13, 2012**- Video Conference with soon to return home inmates incarcerated at the following institutions: Allenwood, FCI Fairton, FCI Elkton and FCI Danbury.
- **December 18, 2012** – Attended the DC Council legislative session to observe debate about the Re-entry Facilitation Amendment Act of 2012.

The Commission's Goals and Priorities for 2013

- To reduce employment barriers for persons with criminal records in the District of Columbia.
- To reduce housing barriers for persons with criminal records in the District of Columbia.
- To meet with each ex-officio agency to discuss policies and programs that can promote successful re-entry.
- To convene a collaborative workgroup of voting and non-voting members to work on specific reentry concerns such as housing, employment, mental health etc.
- To foster open dialogue between the DC Business Community and the Reentry Community.
- To educate each member of the D.C. City Council about reentry challenges and increase awareness and support for reentry legislation.
- To promote dialogue and reach out to the returning citizen community regarding policy and legislation concerns.
- To support and facilitate Reentry groups concerned with issues of housing and employment in collaboration with existing organizations.
- To continue an assertive outreach to the community, advocacy groups, and government agencies to promote and solicit collaboration.



Commission on Re-Entry and Returning Citizens Affairs

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