

THE LOCAL ROLE OF THE U.S. PAROLE COMMISSION: INCREASING PUBLIC SAFETY, REDUCING RECIDIVISM, AND USING ALTERNATIVES TO RE-INCARCERATION IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE,
POSTAL SERVICE, AND THE DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

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THE LOCAL ROLE OF THE U.S. PAROLE COMMISSION: INCREASING PUBLIC SAFETY, REDUCING RECIDIVISM, AND USING ALTERNATIVES TO RE-INCARCERATION IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2010

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL
SERVICE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Stephen F. Lynch (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Lynch, Norton, Cummings, Kucinich, Connolly, Chaffetz, Bilbray, and Cao.

Staff present: William Miles, staff director; Aisha Elkheshin, clerk/legislative assistant; Jill Crissman, professional staff; Dan Ziedman, deputy clerk/legislative assistant; Howie Denis and Mitch Kominsky, minority counsels; and Alex Cooper, minority professional staff.

Mr. LYNCH. Good morning. The Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia will now come to order.

I want to welcome Ranking Member Chaffetz, members of the subcommittee, hearing witnesses and all those in attendance.

The purpose of today's hearing is to examine the effectiveness of residential reentry centers, or halfway houses, on public safety prisoner reentry and recidivism in the Nation's Capital. The chairman, ranking member and subcommittee members will each have 5 minutes to make opening statements, and all Members will have 5 days to submit statements for the record.

Ladies and gentlemen, again, let me welcome you to today's subcommittee oversight hearing on the utilization and effectiveness of Bureau of Prison-sponsored halfway houses in the District of Columbia, also commonly referred to as community correction centers. Halfway houses play a critical role in Federal corrections policy; yet this important phase of an ex-offender's road to recovery and reentry often goes unregulated. And in the case of the District, at times, under-used.

According to the Bureau of Prisons program and policy statement on community correction centers, whenever possible, eligible inmates are to be released to the community through a community

correction center [CCC], unless of course there exists a reasonable impediment. It is estimated that every year, nearly 2,500 ex-offenders return to the District after completing their sentences. There is an average of five ex-offenders per day and with many inmates regularly returning to the District, it is imperative that the Bureau of Prisons and its halfway house providers are equipped and adequately prepared to help these individuals successfully transition from confinement to community.

To that end, today's hearing is intended to ascertain how well the Bureau and its partners are doing in meeting that objective. Currently, the District is home to three BOP, Bureau of Prisons—I will try to reduce the number of acronyms that we use during the hearing. But it is unavoidable, apparently. Currently, the District is home to three Bureau of Prison-affiliated halfway houses: Hope Village in ward 8, Efforts From Ex-Convicts in ward 2, and Fairview, the District's only halfway house for women, in ward 7. And I am glad to have both the BOP officials and representatives from each of these particular centers here with us this morning to help us get an update on the role that halfway house are playing in reducing crime and recidivism in the Nation's Capital.

Since adoption of the Revitalization Act in 1997 and the massive restructuring of D.C.'s criminal justice system, both the city and the Federal Government have worked diligently and collaboratively to increase public safety by implementing sound felon reentry systems and practices. Halfway houses serve as an instrumental element of this overall approach and therefore warrant serious and ongoing oversight.

I would like to thank the gentlelady from the District of Columbia, Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton, for continuing to place an emphasis on prisoner re-integration issues, and for recommending today's hearing. I look forward to the testimonies of our invited witnesses, and now yield to the ranking member, Mr. Chaffetz of Utah, for any opening remarks he may have.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Stephen F. Lynch follows:]

**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN STEPHEN F. LYNCH
AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE
AND POSTAL SERVICE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

OVERSIGHT HEARING

**“Half Way Home to the District: The Role of Halfway Houses in Reducing Crime and
Recidivism in the Nation’s Capital.”**

**Room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building
10:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 3, 2010**

Ladies and gentlemen, again, let me welcome you to today’s Subcommittee oversight hearing on the utilization and effectiveness of Bureau of Prison sponsored halfway houses in the District of Columbia. Also commonly referred to as Community Correction Centers, halfway houses play a critical role in federal corrections policy, yet this important phase of an ex-offender’s road to recovery and re-entry often goes unrecognized, unregulated and in the case of the District, at times, under-used.

According to the Bureau of Prisons’ Program and Policy Statement on Community Correction Centers, whenever possible eligible inmates are to be released to the community through a CCC unless, of course, there exists a reasonable impediment. It is estimated that every year nearly 2,500 ex-offenders return to the District after completing their sentences. This is an average of five ex-offenders per day and with many inmates regularly returning to the District, it is imperative that the Bureau of Prisons and its halfway house providers are equipped and adequately prepared to help these individuals successfully transition from confinement to community. To that end, today’s hearing is intended to ascertain how well the Bureau and its partners are doing in meeting this objective.

Currently, the District is home to three BOP affiliated halfway houses, Hope Village, in Ward 8, Efforts From Ex-Convicts, in Ward 2, and Fairview, the District’s only halfway house for women, in Ward 7 and I’m glad to have both BOP officials and representatives from each of these particular centers here with us this morning to help update the Subcommittee on the role halfway houses are playing in reducing crime and recidivism in the Nation’s Capital. Since adoption of the Revitalization Act in 1997 and the massive restructuring of D.C.’s criminal justice system, both the City and the Federal government have worked diligently and collaboratively to increase public safety by implementing sound felon reentry systems and practices. Halfway houses serve as instrumental element of this overall approach, and, therefore, warrant serious and ongoing oversight. I’d like to thank the gentle-lady from the District of Columbia – The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton - for continuing to place an emphasis on prisoner reintegration issues and for recommending today’s hearing topic to the Subcommittee. I look forward to the testimonies of our invited witnesses and now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Chaffetz of Utah for any opening remarks he may have.

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Mr. CHAFFETZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to Eleanor Holmes Norton for her work on this and for encouraging this hearing to happen. I do support the idea and the notion that it is supposed to be the Department of Corrections, and that pathway back is an important one and I am glad we are diving into that today.

This particular hearing provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the Federal Bureau of Prisons and its relationship to halfway houses in the District of Columbia. The Bureau of Prisons is vested with the authority to house D.C. code felons under the National Capital Revitalization Act. And upon release, most convicts are automatically housed in a BOP-based halfway house in D.C. under the jurisdiction of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency [CSOSA]. The National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1977 fundamentally restructured the relationship and the responsibilities between the Federal Government and the District Government, including its courts, prisons and parole supervision. The District's Lorton correction facility in Virginia, which had housed D.C. code felons, was closed in 2001. This resulted in such convicts being placed in various Bureaus of Prisons throughout the country.

CSOSA, which supervises D.C. ex-convicts, is also a Federal entity. I would specifically like to learn about how the Bureau of Prisons and CSOSA work together to curb recidivism rates. We all want ex-offenders to return safely to their communities. Halfway houses are critical to the success in this effort. A good halfway house can help save lives. They can provide a safe place where someone can learn the skills and get the tools they need to live in a healthy lifestyle.

A halfway house is a transitional facility. It is needed to ease the difficult task of going back from prison or drug recovery straight back into the community. Ex-offenders can best succeed if they are sober, employed and have a good place to live. Otherwise, they are highly likely to go through the revolving door of the criminal justice system, something nobody wants to have happen.

Again, Mr. Chairman, and Eleanor Holmes Norton, I thank you both for holding this hearing and insisting that it happen. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

I yield back the balance of my time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
[The prepared statement of Hon. Jason Chaffetz follows:]

EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
CHAIRMAN

DARRELL E. ISSA, CALIFORNIA
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

Majority (202) 225-5061
Minority (202) 225-6074

Statement of Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia
Half Way Home to the District: The Role of Halfway Houses in Reducing Crime and
Improving Prisoner Reentry.

February 3, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.

This particular hearing provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and its relationship to halfway houses in the District of Columbia. The BOP is vested with authority to house D.C. Code felons under the National Capital Revitalization Act. Upon release, most ex-convicts are automatically housed in BOP-based halfway houses in D.C. under the jurisdiction of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA).

The National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997 fundamentally restructured the relationship and responsibilities between the federal government and the District government, including its courts, prisons, and parole supervision. The District's Lorton Correctional Facility in Virginia, which had housed D.C. Code felons, was closed in 2001. This resulted in such convicts being placed in various BOP prisons. CSOSA, which supervises D.C. ex-convicts, is also a federal entity.

I would specifically like to learn about how the BOP and CSOSA work together to curb recidivism rates. We all want ex-offenders to return safely to their communities. Halfway houses are critical to the success of this effort.

A good halfway house can save lives. They can provide a safe place where someone can learn the skills and get the tools to live a healthy life.

A halfway house is a transition facility. It is needed to ease the difficult task in going from prison or drug recovery straight back into the community.

Ex-offenders can best succeed if they are sober, employed, and have a place to live. Otherwise, they are highly likely to go through the revolving door of the criminal justice system.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Mr. LYNCH. The Chair now recognizes Ms. Eleanor Holmes Norton for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, I am going to simply summarize my testimony and ask that it be put into the record, only to emphasize, Mr. Chairman, first, my sincere appreciation for this hearing. There has not been a hearing involving halfway houses now for almost 10 years. And yet, these houses are or should be critical to reentry.

I also want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, because we are dealing with a fairly complicated agency here. These are local D.C. code offenders, yet they are in a Federal prison. And CSOSA, the Court Services Offender and Supervision Agency, is of course a Federal agency. So it requires some coordination and understanding of what is a unique situation in our Federal system, where essentially BOP is a State prison for the District of Columbia, yet is a Federal agency with Federal rules. We are very concerned that the 6,500 D.C. code felons are now spread to 75 BOP facilities in 33 States. You can't run a State prison system that way.

And I will be looking, Mr. Chairman, for a solution to that problem. We don't understand precisely what the effect of these halfway houses is on the most important part of their mission, which is reducing recidivism and public safety. I will be particularly interested, Mr. Chairman, to learn this morning as much as I can about those two issues, and I thank you very much again for this hearing.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton follows:]

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE AND
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**HALF WAY HOME TO THE DISTRICT: THE ROLE OF HALFWAY HOUSES IN
REDUCING CRIME AND RECIDIVISM IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL**

February 3, 2010

My sincere appreciation to Chairman Stephen Lynch for scheduling this hearing on community corrections centers, also known as halfway houses, in the District of Columbia. This is the first time the subcommittee has examined this important public safety issue in almost 10 years. The federal government assumed a number of the District's criminal justice functions and costs when Congress passed the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997 (the Act). As a result, the federal government, and this subcommittee in particular, now play an important role in reducing both recidivism and crime in the District of Columbia. I have visited several of the prison facilities that house men and women from the District, as well as the three halfway houses contracted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)

in the District of Columbia to speak with their directors and with District residents about their programs and needs.

The Act enabled the District to close its Lorton Correctional Complex and, in return, the BOP assumed responsibility for incarcerating D.C. code felons. Today, 6,500 D.C. code felons are housed in 75 BOP facilities, located in 33 states. Ironically, halfway houses are premised on the idea that prisoners near the end of their sentences should be placed in their local communities to help them make the transition back into civil society. Such facilities are particularly important for returning D.C. code felons, who are housed in prisons that are often hundreds of miles from home. Until D.C. prisoners are housed closer to the District, where relatives and friends can help ease their transition and re-entry, halfway houses must help play this vital role in the District. Yet, perhaps inevitably, it is always difficult to find locations for halfway houses here or elsewhere. A D.C. mayoral commission, which was established in 2001, heard many complaints from residents about accommodating halfway houses in city neighborhoods.

The Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), the federal agency created by the Act, has jurisdiction over D.C. Code felons released by BOP onto parole or

supervised release, and CSOSA employees often work in halfway houses. CSOSA monitors D.C. Code felon compliance and provides a range of support services. Best practices indicate that all elements of the criminal justice system -- from prison to post-release supervision -- should work together from the day an offender enters prison until release. Today, we are particularly interested in how the BOP, private contractors and CSOSA plan for the release of D.C. Code felons and the results of their supervision.

Joint federal and local responsibility for public safety in the District has created a unique relationship between the District and federal authorities. Federal responsibility for this local mission creates a special need for the BOP to understand the local needs of our city, just as our subcommittee has the responsibility of ensuring that D.C. Code felons are properly transitioned back into our communities. At bottom, what cannot be avoided is the question of the effect halfway houses have on public safety in the District of Columbia.

This hearing is particularly important because it gives this subcommittee the opportunity to hear first-hand from BOP, the agency in charge, from the operators of District halfway houses,

and from a witness who has matriculated through a halfway house. I welcome Adrienne Poteat, Acting Director of CSOSA; Louis Eichenlaub, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director for the BOP; Nancy LaVigne, Director of the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute; Charles Reynolds, CEO of Fairview halfway house; Jeffrey Varone, CEO of Hope Village halfway house; and Michael White, former resident of Hope Village. I thank you for appearing today, and I look forward to your testimonies.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Maryland, Mr. Cummings, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I take great interest in this hearing.

As a resident of the inner city of Baltimore, and as one who used to voluntarily run an after-care program for young men who were being released from our juvenile facilities, I take tremendous interest in this subject. So therefore, I want to thank you for holding this hearing, and I want to thank Ms. Norton for all that she has done in regards to these kinds of issues and so many others. I have said to many people many times that she is one of the finest public servants I know, working tirelessly to address so many, many issues of the District.

Ex-offenders need help to make a smooth transition into day to day civilian life. Once they make that transition, they have the potential to serve as critical resources to our communities, acting as mentors to our young people, and working to unravel the same criminal network to which they once belonged. While the Nation's crime rates have fallen over the last decade, there has been an unprecedented explosion in prison and jail populations. Upwards of 650,000 men and women are released from State and Federal prisons each year, and an even larger number of people are being released from our local jails.

In my home town of Baltimore, approximately 700 to 800 former prisoners are re-entering our neighborhoods from prison every month. Unfortunately, we are failing to integrate far too many of these returning neighbors into the economic and social life of our communities. Nearly two-thirds of released prisoners are expected to be re-arrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within 3 years of release. Such high recidivism rates translates into thousands of new crimes each year, at least half of which can be averted through an improved prisoner reentry efforts.

I might add that it is not, when I return to my district, it is not unusual, Mr. Chairman, for me to be approached by anywhere from five to six people a day who tell me something like this: "Mr. Cummings, I have just gotten out of prison or I have been out for a few months, I simply cannot find a job, cannot find opportunity. And if you can't help me, then I am going to have to do something." And what they mean by that is that they are going to have to commit a crime. This is the real deal, to survive, that is. And I am certainly not sitting here excusing them for that. I just want us to be aware of that.

These programs have to address the issues of education, housing, treatment, training and employment. In these economic times, this is very difficult, when you look at it from the employment standpoint. When we had our jobs fair just recently, Mr. Chairman, we had a number of people who came through. And one of their major complaints was that nobody wanted to, the people with records, that is, said that nobody wanted to give them an interview. And I tried to make them realize that for every person who had a record, there were probably 100 who didn't have a record who were trying to get the same job. And a lot of employers just don't want to hear from anybody who has a record.

So they face a very difficult situation. Reentry programs, such as halfway houses or community correction centers produce successful outcomes for our communities and our citizens. I am proud to have been one of the original co-sponsors of the Second Chance Act of 2007, which is now law, that extended the amount of time that prisoners can stay in a halfway house from 6 months to 1 year.

Today, we examine the unique prisoner reentry program here in the District of Columbia. The D.C. code felons are being housed in 75 different facilities, located in 33 States, meaning that they are not able to visit with social workers, clergy, friends, and family, which are crucial in preparing the prisoner for reentry into their own community.

And so Mr. Chairman, as my time runs out, I ask that my entire statement be placed in the record, and I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the gentleman. And without objection, his remarks and his statement will be submitted to the record.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Kucinich, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. When we think about crime and punishment, our society still doesn't have it right. Because there is no way that we can appreciably affect recidivism if we don't make sure that when people try to come back and participate in society that there is a place for them. We are asking people to do something impossible.

When you look at it in a larger context, Mr. Chairman, I am going to have to leave here to go over to a meeting with Secretary Salize, who is talking about jobs right now. We have 15 million Americans without any jobs. And in that market, you get released from prison, you try to find a job, it's harder than ever. So halfway houses sometimes just leave people halfway. And if you want to get the full distance, then a society has to be there with an opportunity. We can't keep condemning people for going back to prison if we don't have a place for them in our society.

And it is famous, we have one of the largest prison populations in the world, per capita, we are one of the highest in the world. It is really a commentary on our society.

I don't know about any of you, but I come from a family in Cleveland, OH, that some members of our family had some tough times, and some of them did time. And maybe if they had had better lawyers, they wouldn't have done time. But they did time. And when they came back, it was very tough for them to find a way to get back into the system, very tough.

So I want to thank the people who are involved in this effort to try to really give individuals an opportunity to be able to rescue their lives. But we have to have solid economic components. You just can't be expected to do this on your own. It is called a halfway house. You can meet people halfway, but our society has to do something about helping people get the entire distance.

I really am grateful for those who have dedicated their time and effort to the endeavors in the District. I hope that we will be able to address some of the issues of people being able to see their loved ones who are incarcerated, sometimes at a great distance from the District. Hopefully we will be able to do something about some of

the issues of oversight of houses that are essentially operated by private contractors.

So I thank you, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the gentleman.

The committee will now hear from today's witnesses, after a brief introduction. It is committee policy that all witnesses are to be sworn before testifying. So may I ask you to please rise and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. LYNCH. Let the record reveal that all the witnesses have answered in the affirmative.

Your entire statements will be included in the record. A little bit about the ground rules here. You will see a small box in front of you. You might want to turn that one around so the witness can actually see it. Thank you very much.

The green light will indicate that you have 5 minutes to summarize your statement; the yellow light means you have 1 minute remaining to sort of wrap up your statement; and the red light indicates that your time has expired and you should immediately summarize and end your statement.

I would like to introduce today's panel. Mr. Louis Eichenlaub serves as the Mid-Atlantic regional director for the Bureau of Prisons. Regional Director Eichenlaub joined the Bureau of Prisons in 1986 as a research analyst in the Office of Research and Evaluation and Information Policy and Public Affairs Division in the Central Office here in Washington, DC.

Ms. Adrienne Poteat was named as the acting director for Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency in July 2008. In this position, Ms. Poteat oversees a Federal agency of nearly 1,300 employees, which was created by the D.C. Revitalization Act of 1997 to improve public safety through active community supervision for ex-offenders.

Ms. Nancy LaVigne is the current director of the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Ms. LaVigne is an expert on crime prevention and prisoner reentry and is the founding director of the U.S. Department of Justice Mapping and Analysis for Public Safety program.

Mr. Charles Reynolds is currently CEO of the Fairview Adult Rehabilitative Center, the only all-female community correction center in Washington, DC. In addition to the Fairview Center, Mr. Reynolds also operates a reentry facility in the Hampton Roads area on behalf of Rehabilitation Services, Inc. Both sites incorporate state-of-the-art rehabilitation and correctional residential services.

Mr. Jeffrey Varone is CEO of Hope Village, a nationally accredited community correction center which has been providing offender reentry services since 1977. Mr. Varone has over 25 years of experience in the field of community corrections and in residential reentry programs.

Mr. Michael White is a third-generation Washingtonian and former D.C. code offender. Mr. White was incarcerated at Petersburg prison from June 2007 until October 2008. And thereafter, he was a resident of Hope Village halfway house from October 2008 until January 2009.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for their willingness to come before this subcommittee and help us with our work. Mr. Eichenlaub, you are now recognized for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

STATEMENTS OF LOUIS EICHENLAUB, MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF PRISONS; ADRIENNE POTEAT, ACTING DIRECTOR, COURT SERVICES AND OFFENDER SUPERVISION AGENCY; NANCY LaVIGNE, DIRECTOR, JUSTICE POLICY CENTER, THE URBAN INSTITUTE; CHARLES M. REYNOLDS, JR., CEO, THE FAIRVIEW ADULT REHABILITATIVE CENTER; JEFFREY VARONE, CEO, HOPE VILLAGE; AND MICHAEL WHITE, FORMER HOPE VILLAGE RESIDENT

STATEMENT OF LOUIS EICHENLAUB

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Good morning, Chairman Lynch and members of the subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of Bureau of Prisons Director Lappin to discuss the role of residential reentry centers, or halfway houses, in the District of Columbia.

As regional director for the Bureau of Prisons Mid-Atlantic Region, I am well aware of the unique role that we play in the District of Columbia. While the number of inmates sentenced in D.C. Superior Court is relatively small compared to our entire inmate population, which is less than 3 percent, we devote substantial resources to ensuring they receive appropriate care and treatment. And, mindful of the unique relationship between the Federal Government and the District of Columbia, as an organization we work hard to maintain a variety of collaborative relationships with the local criminal justice community.

The mission of our community is to house offenders in institutions that are safe, secure, humane, cost-efficient and provide opportunities for offenders to prepare for a successful return to the community. There are two corollaries to this mission. First, offenders come to prison as punishment, not for punishment. And reentry begins on the first day of an inmate's incarceration.

In coming into the Federal prison system, District of Columbia offenders have available to them a broad variety of opportunities for self-improvement. Every Federal prison offers inmate programs that stress the development of work skills and life skills needed to enhance employment upon release and to help inmates maintain a crime-free lifestyle. These programs include work, education, vocational training, substance abuse treatment, observance of faith and religion, psychological services and counseling, release preparation and other programs that impart essential life skills.

Rigorous research has found that inmates who participate in programs are less likely to commit future crimes. For example, inmates who participate in Federal prison industries are 24 percent less likely to recidivate and substantially less likely to engage in misconduct. Inmates who participate in vocational or occupational training are 33 percent less likely to recidivate. Inmates who participate in education programs are 16 percent less likely to recidivate. Inmates who complete the BOP's residential substance

abuse program, which includes a community transition component and is available at the rigorous correctional institution, are 16 percent less likely to recidivate and 15 percent less likely to relapse to drug use within 3 years after release.

We recognize that as inmates approach release, there are a variety of immediate needs to address. Through the release preparation program, we provide assistance in resume writing and job seeking and retention skills. We have employment resource centers at all of our institutions. We offer mock job fairs, where inmates learn job interview techniques and community recruiters learn of the skills available among inmates. During these events, qualified inmates are afforded the opportunity to apply for jobs with companies that have job openings.

Finally, our staff helps inmates secure identification, apply for benefits, compile education and training certificates, diplomas, transcripts and other significant documents needed in the community. Community-based programs, or halfway houses, complement the Bureau's reentry efforts described above. Research has shown that inmates who are released through halfway houses are more likely to be employed and less likely to recidivate. For this reason, the BOP places most inmates in community-based programs for the final portion of their term of imprisonment to help offenders gradually re-adapt to their community environment. Many of the programs and treatments that offenders receive in the correctional institutions are reinforced during their stay in the community-based programs.

Additionally, offenders receive assistance in finding a job and a place to live and access to services they may need following release. The BOP does not operate any halfway houses. Rather, all of them are operated by private providers under contract with the BOP. We are committed to ensuring that our programs, including halfway houses, build upon the body of knowledge about what is effective in reducing recidivism. For halfway houses, these evidence-based practices are articulated in our statement of work. Halfway houses must, one, conduct an assessment to identify the crime-producing behaviors to target; two, develop an individualized case plan based on the assessment; three, offer effective interventions; and four, implement the program consistently.

We regularly monitor our contracts for RRC services, frequently visiting both Hope Village and Fairview in the District. We work closely with the providers, as well as the staff from the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, to refine our operations and those of the providers.

I look forward to hearing from our partners in the D.C. criminal justice community today and to continue to collaborate on how best to address the needs of the District and its incarcerated population.

Chairman Lynch, this concludes my formal statement. Again, I thank you, Mr. Chaffetz and the subcommittee for your support of our agency. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or any other members of the subcommittee may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Eichenlaub follows:]



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

LOUIS EICHENLAUB
MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL DIRECTOR
FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE, AND
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ENTITLED

"HALF WAY HOME TO THE DISTRICT: THE ROLE OF HALFWAY HOUSES
IN REDUCING CRIME AND RECIDIVISM IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL"

PRESENTED

FEBRUARY 3, 2010

**Statement of Louis Eichenlaub
Mid-Atlantic Regional Director
Federal Bureau of Prisons
Before the U.S. House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal
Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia Subcommittee
February 3, 2010**

Good morning Chairman Lynch and Members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of Director Lappin to discuss the role of Residential Reentry Centers (RRCs) or "Halfway Houses" in meeting the reentry needs of offenders from the District of Columbia.

The mission of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is to protect society by confining offenders in the controlled environments of prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, humane, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure, and provide inmates with a range of work and other self-improvement programs that will help them adopt a crime-free lifestyle upon their return to the community. As our mission indicates, the post-release success of offenders is as important to public safety as inmates' secure incarceration.

The BOP is responsible for the incarceration of more than 208,500 inmates. This figure represents primarily offenders who have been charged with or sentenced for committing Federal crimes and, based on the National Capital Area Revitalization Act of 1997, also includes felons convicted of violating District of Columbia statutes. (This latter group represents 2.7% of the total inmate population). Specifically, we have 5,782 inmates who were sentenced in D.C. Superior Court (we also have 1,000 inmates who were sentenced in U.S. District Court). Approximately 82 percent of the total inmate population is confined in Bureau-operated institutions, while 18 percent are under contract care, primarily in private sector prisons.

We have experienced significant increases in the inmate population in the last 2 decades. While we are no longer experiencing the dramatic population increases of between 10,000 and 11,400 inmates per year that occurred from 1998 to 2001, the increases are still significant and include average annual net increases of 5,000-7,000 inmates per year for the last 5 fiscal years (from 2003 to 2008). We expect these increases to continue the next several years, reaching a total of 220,000 by the end of fiscal year 2011.

Our agency has no control over the number of inmates who come into our custody or the skill deficits they bring with them. We do have control, however, over the programs in which inmates participate while they are incarcerated that increase their opportunities to succeed when they return to the community. Virtually all of our inmates will be released back to the community at some point. Most need job skills, vocational training, education, counseling, and other assistance (such as drug abuse treatment, anger management, and parenting skills) if they are to successfully reenter society. Each year, approximately 50,000 inmates release from federal prison and return to our communities, a number that will continue to increase as the inmate population grows.

Inmate Reentry

Preparation for reentry begins in the first days of an inmate's incarceration. Every Federal prison offers inmate programs that stress the development of work skills and life skills needed to enhance employment upon release and to help inmates maintain a crime-free lifestyle. These programs include work, education, vocational training, substance abuse treatment, observance of faith and religion, psychological services and counseling, release preparation, and other programs that impart essential life skills. We also provide other structured activities designed to teach inmates productive ways to use their time.

Rigorous research has found that inmates who participate in programs are less likely to commit future crimes; inmates who participate in Federal Prison Industries (FPI) are 24 percent less likely to recidivate; inmates who participate in vocational or occupational training are 33 percent less likely to recidivate; inmates who participate in education programs are 16 percent less likely to recidivate; and inmates who complete the residential drug abuse treatment program are 16 percent less likely to recidivate and 15 percent less likely to relapse to drug use within 3 years after release.

Inmate Work Programs. Prison work programs teach inmates occupational skills and instill in offenders sound and lasting work habits and a work ethic. All sentenced inmates in Federal correctional institutions are required to work (with the exception of those who for security, educational programming, or medical reasons are unable to do so).

FPI is the BOP's most important correctional program because it has been proven to substantially reduce recidivism and is self-sustaining. FPI provides inmates the opportunity to gain marketable work skills and a general work ethic -- both of which can lead to viable, sustained employment upon release. It also keeps them productively occupied; inmates who participate in FPI are substantially less likely to engage in misconduct.

Education, Vocational Training, and Occupational Training. The BOP offers a variety of programs for inmates to enhance their education and to acquire skills to help them obtain employment after release. All institutions offer literacy classes, English as a Second Language (ESL), adult continuing education, parenting classes, recreation activities, wellness education, and library services.

With a few exceptions, inmates who do not have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate must participate in the literacy program for a minimum of 240 hours or until they obtain the GED. The ESL program enables inmates with limited proficiency in English to improve their English language skills. We also facilitate vocational training and occupationally-oriented higher education programs. Many institutions offer inmates the opportunity to enroll in and pay for more traditional college courses that could lead to a bachelor's degree.

Occupational and vocational training programs are based on the needs of the specific institution's inmate population, general labor market conditions, and institution labor force

needs. On-the-job training is afforded to inmates through formal apprenticeship programs, institution job assignments, and work in the FPI program.

Substance Abuse Treatment. The BOP's substance abuse treatment program includes drug education, non-residential drug abuse treatment, residential drug abuse treatment, and community transition treatment.

Drug abuse education is available in all BOP facilities. It is designed to motivate appropriate offenders to participate in non-residential or residential drug abuse treatment, as needed.

Non-residential drug abuse treatment is also available in every BOP institution. It primarily targets inmates with relatively minor or low-level substance abuse impairment and inmates whose sentence does not allow sufficient time to complete the residential drug abuse treatment program. Non-residential drug abuse treatment is based on the cognitive behavioral therapy model and focuses on criminal and drug-using risk factors such as antisocial and pro-criminal attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors and replacing them with pro-social alternatives.

The BOP is required by statute to provide residential drug abuse treatment to all inmates who volunteer and are eligible for the program. The foundation for residential drug abuse treatment is the cognitive behavior therapy treatment model, which targets offenders' major criminal and drug-using risk factors. Residential drug abuse treatment is provided toward the end of the sentence in order to maximize its positive impact on soon-to-be-released inmates. The residential drug abuse treatment program is available in 62 BOP institutions, including the Rivers Correctional Institution that houses 542 D.C. Superior Court offenders, 179 D.C. District Court offenders, and 17 offenders serving both Superior and District Court sentences.

Drug abuse treatment in the BOP includes a community transition treatment component to help ensure a seamless transition from the institution to the community. The BOP provides a treatment summary to the RRC where the inmate will reside, to the community-based treatment provider who will treat the inmate, and to the U.S. Probation Office before the inmate's arrival at the residential reentry center. Participants in community transition drug abuse treatment typically continue treatment during their period of supervised release after they leave BOP custody.

Specific Pro-Social Values Programs. Based on the proven success of the residential substance abuse treatment program, we have implemented a number of other programs to address the needs of other segments of the inmate population (including younger offenders and high-security inmates). These programs focus on inmates' emotional and behavioral responses to difficult situations and emphasize life skills and the development of pro-social values, respect for self and others, responsibility for personal actions, and tolerance. Many of these programs have already been found to significantly reduce inmates' involvement in institution misconduct. The positive relationship between institution conduct and post-release success makes us hopeful about the ability of these programs to reduce recidivism.

Life Connections. The Life Connections Program is a residential multi-faith-based program that provides the opportunity for inmates to deepen their spiritual life and assist in their ability to

successfully reintegrate following release from prison. These programs are currently underway at FCI Petersburg, USP Leavenworth, FCI Milan, USP Terre Haute, and FMC Carswell. We have found a reduction in serious institution misconduct among program participants. We will assess the effect of the program on recidivism, once a sufficient number of graduates have been released for at least 3 years.

Inmate Skills Development Initiative. The Inmate Skills Development initiative unifies our inmate programs and services into a comprehensive reentry strategy. The three principles of the Inmate Skills Development initiative are: (1) inmate participation in programs must be linked to the development of relevant inmate reentry skills; (2) inmates should acquire or improve a skill identified through a comprehensive assessment, rather than simply completing a program; and (3) resources are allocated to target inmates with a high risk for reentry failure. The initiative includes a comprehensive assessment of inmates' strengths and deficiencies in nine core areas, and allows us to meet the important reentry goals required by the Second Chance Act. This critical information is updated throughout an inmate's incarceration and is provided to probation officers as inmates get close to their release from prison so as to assist in the community reentry plan. As part of this initiative, program managers have been collaborating and developing partnerships with a number of governmental and private sector agencies to assist with inmate reentry.

Specific Release Preparation Efforts. In addition to the wide array of inmate programs described above, the BOP provides a Release Preparation Program in which inmates become involved toward the end of their sentence. The program includes classes in resume writing, job seeking, and job retention skills. The program also includes presentations by officials from community-based organizations that help former offenders find employment and training opportunities after release from prison.

Release preparation includes a number of inmate transition services provided at our institutions, such as mock job fairs where inmates learn job interview techniques and community recruiters learn of the skills available among inmates. At mock job fairs, qualified inmates are afforded the opportunity to apply for jobs with companies that have job openings. Our facilities also help inmates prepare release portfolios, including a resume, education and training certificates, diplomas, education transcripts, and other significant documents needed for a successful job interview.

We have established employment resource centers at all Federal prisons to assist inmates with creating release folders to use in job searches; soliciting job leads from companies that have participated in mock job fairs; identifying other potential job openings; and identifying points of contact for information on employment references, job training, and educational programs.

RRC Placement Process

The RRC placement process begins at the institution where an inmate is housed. Seventeen to nineteen months prior to an inmate's release (or at initial classification if the inmate has less time to serve), the inmate's unit team (consisting of the unit manager, case manager, and other staff), conduct an individualized assessment to determine if an inmate should be released through an RRC. Consideration is given to many factors, including the inmate's willingness to participate in programs, his/her conduct, and the likelihood that he/she will avail him/herself of the opportunities that RRCs provide. The RRC Director is afforded the opportunity to review the referral material to determine if the inmate is appropriate for his/her facility, and if so, if a bed is available on the requested placement date.

Residential Reentry Centers

The BOP places 80% of all inmates in community-based programs for the final portion of their term of imprisonment to help offenders gradually re-adapt to their community environment. These programs are a critical component of a comprehensive reentry strategy. Many of the programs and treatment that offenders receive in the correctional institutions are reinforced during their stay in the community-based programs. These programs provide an important opportunity for offenders to find a job and a place to live, save some money, complete drug treatment (in some cases) and strengthen ties to family and friends. In other words, these programs contribute to public safety.

The BOP does not operate any RRCs, rather all of them are operated by private providers under contract with the BOP. Prior to awarding a contract, the BOP inspects the proposed site and conducts background checks on all proposed contract staff. The BOP carefully monitors performance under such contracts, conducting regular (scheduled and unscheduled) site visits. Repeated findings of deficiencies lead to withholding funds, contract modifications and even contract termination on occasion.

The BOP is committed to ensuring that its programs, including RRCs, build upon the body of knowledge about what is effective in reducing recidivism. For RRCs, these evidence-based practices are articulated in our statement of work (SOW). RRCs must:

1. conduct an assessment to identify the crime-producing behaviors to target;
2. develop an individualized case plan based on the assessment;
3. offer effective interventions; and
4. implement the program consistently.

BOP staff conduct regular oversight of our DC RRCs. We contract with three RRCs in DC to provide reentry services: Fairview (for female offenders), and Efforts for Ex-Convicts (EFEC) and Hope Village for male offenders. Our contracts at Hope Village, BOP's largest RRC, are performance-based. Performance-based contracting allows contractors to reach reentry program

goals and outcomes through interventions tailored to the specific population they house. A further requirement of performance-based contracts is that the contractor must conduct quarterly self assessments. In this process, Hope Village must assess its own program integrity, quality assurance, evaluation efforts, and fidelity to program interventions. These quarterly reports form the basis of BOP's monitoring efforts at Hope Village, as we check to see that the contractor has identified and corrected weaknesses and is effectively self-monitoring.

The BOP complements its use of RRCs with home detention. Some inmates are placed in home detention for a brief period at the end of their prison terms. They serve this portion of their sentences at home under strict schedules, curfew requirements, telephonic monitoring, and sometimes electronic monitoring. The supervision is provided by staff at the RRCs. After release from the RRC or from the institution (for inmates not released through a RRC), most inmates have a period of supervised release under the supervision of the U.S. Probation Office, or in the case of DC offenders, by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency.

Closing

Chairman Lynch, this concludes my formal statement. Again, I thank you, Mr. Chaffetz, and the Subcommittee for your support of our agency. As I have indicated in my testimony, we are being challenged significantly in our ability to meet our mission based on very tight budgets over the past several years. We desire to expand inmate programs that have been demonstrated to reduce recidivism as expressed through our mission. We can provide more inmates with the opportunity to avail themselves of beneficial correctional programs by reducing our crowding and adequately staffing our facilities as funding permits. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, sir.

Ms. Poteat, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF ADRIENNE POTEAT

Ms. POTEAT. Thank you, Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Chaffetz and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today before you and testify on behalf of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency to discuss the role of halfway houses in reducing crime and recidivism in the District of Columbia.

CSOSA was certified as a Federal agency in 2000 and charged with the unique responsibility of supervising men and women on probation, parole or supervised release in the District of Columbia. On any given day, we supervise 16,000 offenders, 6,000 of whom are on probation, parole or supervised release, and have served a period of incarceration in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Each year, approximately 2,400 offenders return to the District of Columbia from BOP facilities.

The demographic profile of the returning offender suggests enormous challenges for us. In fiscal year 2009, 44 percent of them had a history of violent crime, 70 percent had a history of substance abuse, 30 percent had a diagnosed mental health illness, and nearly 40 percent did not have a GED or high school diploma. These offenders arrived in the District of Columbia with an immediate need to find housing and employment services, to develop positive social networks and reconnect with their families. They also have needs in mental health and medical services.

The challenge is compounded for offenders released after long periods of incarceration in the Bureau of Prisons facilities. Sometimes, once they are released, their support networks have been dissolved.

CSOSA created a specialized unit to deal with the offenders coming from the Bureau, and that is a Transitional Intervention Team [TIPS]. We work solely with the offenders returning from prison. The TIPS CSOs begin this transition period 6 months prior to the offender returning to the community. They investigate home and employment plans prepared by the BOP case managers. They ensure that the proposed plans for home and employment are successful for reentry into the community and do not pose a risk to a prior victim, or in the case of sex offenders, children living in the home.

Offenders who transition through a halfway house undergo a comprehensive risk and needs assessment by the TIPS CSOs. This includes a substance abuse history, criminal behavior patterns, history of violence, educational or vocational deficits, physical or mental health challenges. Armed with this information, the TIPS CSO develops an individualized plan for each offender. During the course of a halfway house stay, an offender may be enrolled in Unity Health Care, be referred to Goodwill Industries for job placement, receive skills from opportunities industrialization centers, and be connected to a mentor from an area faith-based program. The offender will also be oriented to his supervision requirements.

Unfortunately, of the 2,400 offenders who will return to the District, last year, only 40 percent of them transitioned through half-

way houses. This average stay for our CSOSA offenders was 45 to 60 days. Our experience suggests that a longer period of stay may be effective in stabilizing offenders during this critical period.

In general, offenders who experience halfway house placements are 20 to 40 percent more likely to find themselves in stable employment and housing during their 180 day stay period, and some of them are considered to be our riskiest population. Employment and housing stability have long been associated with greater supervision compliance.

Research conducted by the Bureau of Justice statistics in 2002 supports the need for a comprehensive strategy for addressing offender needs during the first 180 days after release from prison. That study found that the offenders are at a greater risk of committing new crimes or serious supervision violations prior to being sent back to prison during the first 6 months in the community. Of the nearly 68 percent of the offenders who will be re-arrested within 3 years of their release, less than half of them will be arrested during the first 180 days. Clearly, this is the most critical intervention period to slow down the likelihood of the offender re-offending.

Now I would like to just turn your attention to an immediate challenge facing CSOSA. We will have approximately 500 offenders who will be returning to the District based on the U.S. Parole Commission in correctly applying parole guidelines to these men and women that were D.C. offenders that were sentenced during the 1985 time for drug offenses. And it was the epidemic of the crack. So therefore, some of them have spent more than 10 years in the prison system and will probably come home with a lot of challenges that they will be facing at that time. Therefore, we will be working very closely with our partners to address those needs for those men and women returning to the District of Columbia.

In closing, CSOSA has been collaborating with our criminal justice partners, researchers and academics to develop strategies to reverse the pattern of recidivism. That consistent theme emerging from our shared work is that the offender reentry must begin before inmates leave prison, and intervention services must be front-loaded. Halfway houses accomplish this goal. We look forward to continuing our close collaboration with the Bureau of Prisons, our halfway house providers, and other local and Federal partners to enhance public safety while also reducing recidivism.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and will be open to any questions that you have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Poteat follows:]

**Testimony of Adrienne Poteat, Acting Director
Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency
for the District of Columbia**

**Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight
And Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal Workforce,
Postal Service and the District of Columbia**

**Entitled, "Halfway Home to the District: The Role of Halfway Houses
in Reducing Crime and Recidivism"**

February 3, 2010

Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Chaffetz, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am pleased to appear before you today on behalf of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) to discuss the role of halfway houses in reducing crime and recidivism in the District of Columbia.

CSOSA was certified as a federal law enforcement agency in 2000 and charged with the unique responsibility of supervising men and women on probation, parole or supervised release in the District of Columbia. On any given day, CSOSA supervises 16,000 offenders, approximately 6,000 of whom are on parole or supervised release and have served a period of incarceration in the Federal Prison System. Each year, approximately 2,400 offenders return to the District from a Bureau of Prisons facility.

The demographic profile of the returning offender population suggests that many begin the reentry process with enormous challenges. Among those released to parole or supervised release in FY 2009, 44% had a history of violent crime, 70% had a history of substance abuse and 30% had a formally diagnosed mental illness. Nearly 40% did not

possess a high school diploma or GED. Grappling with those issues, these offenders arrive in the District with an immediate need to negotiate housing, find suitable employment, reestablish family connections, develop positive social networks, learn to manage their time and resources, and address any substance abuse, medical or mental health issues. This challenge is even more daunting for offenders released after long periods of incarceration during which their support networks may have dwindled or dissolved.

Recognizing this need, CSOSA created specialized Transitional Intervention for Parole Supervision (TIPS) teams to work solely with offenders returning to the community from prison. Through a series of progressively comprehensive Memoranda of Understanding, CSOSA, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the US Parole Commission established each agency's responsibilities related to pre-release planning for DC Code offenders convicted of felonies in DC Superior Court. Now approaching its 12th year, the TIPS program provides reentry services to offenders who transition from prison through a Residential Reentry Center (which I will refer to as halfway houses throughout my testimony) to community supervision, or offenders released directly from a BOP facility to community supervision.

TIPS Community Supervision Officers begin the release planning process with offenders long before they are released from prison to a halfway house or the community. BOP case managers submit a release plan to CSOSA that includes the offender's proposed living arrangement and potential employment. The TIPS CSO investigates the

release plan to ensure that the proposed home and employment is conducive to the offender's successful reentry and does not pose a risk to the community, including returning the offender to a home where the victim resides or, in the case of sex offenders, in a residence where children are present. This effort establishes a community 'safety net' where the offender's most prevalent risk factors are identified and addressed through community support and criminal justice accountability.

Offenders who transition through a halfway house undergo a comprehensive risk and needs assessment by the TIPS CSO to identify the offender's substance abuse history, criminal behavior patterns, history of violence or aggression, educational or vocational deficits, and physical or mental health challenges. Armed with this information, the TIPS CSO, working directly from the halfway house, develops an individualized supervision plan that addresses the needs identified in the assessment and includes specific goals for the offender. During the course of their halfway house stay, a typical offender may be enrolled in the Unity Health Care program, be referred to Goodwill Industries for job placement or enroll in a skills training program with the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), be connected to a mentor from an area faith institution, and secure placement in transitional housing upon their release. The offender will also be oriented to his supervision requirements and the consequences for non-compliance.

Unfortunately, of the 2,400 offenders who returned to the District and CSOSA supervision last year, only 4 in 10, or approximately 960 offenders, transitioned through the three halfway houses with which BOP has contracts for DC offenders, namely, Hope Village and Efforts from Ex-Convicts (EFEC) for male offenders and Fairview for women offenders. The average halfway house stay for CSOSA offenders is 45 to 60 days. Although our committed core of TIPS officers do a tremendous job in helping offenders acquire the skills and resources to meet their day-to-day challenges in this short period of time, our experience leads us to believe that a longer halfway house stay may be effective in further stabilizing offenders during this critical period.

To underscore the importance of a halfway house transition on offender compliance and an increased opportunity to successfully complete supervision, I want to provide a general comparison of offenders released to CSOSA following a halfway house placement and those released without a halfway house placement.

Parole and supervised release offenders transitioning from the BOP to CSOSA with a halfway house placement are more likely to have a criminal history involving violent crimes and/or drug-related crimes. They are less likely to have a criminal history involving a sex offense and are identical with respect to firearm charges. They look the same on demographic, behavioral health and other factors associated with supervision compliance. However, when we look at compliance during the first 180-day period following release from BOP, we see clear advantages for offenders who begin supervision following a halfway house placement. More specifically, we observe

noticeable differences with respect to an offender's compliance on supervision. Employment stability and housing stability have long been associated with greater supervision compliance among our offender population. Offenders who have experienced a halfway house placement are 20% to 40% more likely find themselves in stable employment and stable housing during the 180-day period we consider to be the riskiest period with respect to supervision failure.

Research sponsored by the National Institute of Justice supports the need for a comprehensive strategy for addressing offender's needs during the first 180 days after release from prison. A 2002 national study conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics¹ indicates that offenders are at greatest risk for having their supervision term revoked and being sent back to prison due to a new crime or a serious supervision violation during the first six months following release from prison. Nearly 68% of offenders will be rearrested within three years of their release from prison. The most common rearrests are for property, drug or public order offenses. Of these offenders, a little less than half will be arrested within the first 180 days of their release date. Thus, the first 180 days following release from prison are clearly the most critical intervention period to slow or divert an offender's likelihood of rearrest, revocation and return to prison.² CSOSA employs an intensified close supervision strategy for offenders who do not transition

¹ Langan, Patrick A. & Levin, David J. (2002). *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

² The study included inmates from the department of corrections of 15 states: Arizona, Maryland, North Carolina, California, Michigan, Ohio, Delaware, Minnesota, Oregon, Florida, New Jersey, Texas, Illinois, New York and Virginia. Although the study did not include inmates from the District of Columbia or inmates serving sentences at BOP, CSOSA relied on the study primarily for its strong methodology regarding outcomes of interest with full knowledge that the results may differ somewhat from the results of the national study. Additionally, the sample was the most comprehensive research available for making comparison with CSOSA's three-year follow-up for tracking arrests, convictions and revocations.

through a halfway house. These offenders are considered 'high risk' and are supervised at the Maximum level until their CSOSA assessments are completed. They have frequent contact with their supervision officers, may be placed on GPS monitoring, have a more stringent drug testing schedule, and are subject to accountability tours and possibly day reporting.

Now, I'd like to turn your attention to an immediate challenge currently facing my agency. Approximately 500 additional offenders are being considered for release as a result of a recent court ruling that determined that the USPC incorrectly applied parole guidelines to DC Code offenders eligible for hearing under the 1987 guidelines of the former DC Board of Parole. The USPC began hearings in January and will conclude them at the end of March 2010. It is anticipated that 75 to 80% of these 500 offenders will be released to the District of Columbia between April and June 2010. Most of these offenders were convicted of violent crimes during the height of the city's crack epidemic (1985-1989) and pose significant supervision challenges.

Given the USPC's expedited processes, CSOSA may not have sufficient time to conduct adequate pre-release planning for all of these offenders most of whom have been incarcerated for ten years or more and may no longer have ties to the community. As such, the potential for homelessness among this population is significant. We anticipate that many of these offenders will lack employable skills or a legitimate means of financial support.

We believe that these offenders' chances of success would be greatly improved were they allowed to transition to the community following a halfway house stay. This would allow CSOSA an opportunity to help them find suitable housing, enroll in training or secure a legitimate source of income, connect with a faith-based mentor to develop life skills and an outside support mechanism, link to substance and mental health services, and adjust to CSOSA's stringent supervision requirements. All of the city's criminal justice and social service stakeholders will need to come together to collectively address the challenges these offenders could potentially pose.

In closing, CSOSA has been collaborating with criminal justice executives, practitioners, researchers, and academics at the national and local level to develop strategies to reverse the alarming pattern of recidivism. There is at least one consistent theme that has emerged from our shared work – offender reentry has to begin before inmates leave prison and intervention service delivery must be 'front-loaded.' CSOSA, through its TIPS program, is doing the best it can with respect to working with inmates six months prior to release from the Bureau of Prisons.

We look forward to continuing our close collaboration with the Bureau of Prisons, our halfway house providers and our other local and federal partners, to enhance public safety while also reducing the rate of recidivism. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and welcome any questions. Thank you.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Ms. Poteat.
Ms. LaVigne, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF NANCY G. LAVIGNE

Ms. LAVIGNE. Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the role of halfway houses in transitioning people from prison to the community.

I am director of the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute. The bulk of our research is on prisoner reentry, and for good reason. The successful transition of people returning home from prison is critical, not only for them, but for the safety and well-being of their families and the communities to which they return.

Yet the path to successful reentry is rarely a smooth one. People exiting prison face tremendous challenges to leading sober and law-abiding lives on the outside. Few have housing or jobs lined up. And many struggle with substance abuse, health problems and mental illness. While they may receive treatment, training or assistance behind bars, far too often prisoners are released without the support and services critical to their successful reintegration. Prisoners returning home to the District face an additional challenge of having been incarcerated sometimes hundreds of miles away from their families and potential employers. They return home in need of health care, drug treatment, jobs, and importantly, safe and affordable shelter.

That is where halfway houses come in. When designed and operated well, halfway houses can serve as a nurturing way station, easing what would otherwise be a stark transition from the prison environment to the free world. Now, I wish I could tell you that halfway houses are a definitive success in reducing recidivism. But it is just not that clear-cut. For every study that finds that halfway houses are effective, another one finds that they have no effect at all.

Why is that? I think it is because not all halfway houses are created equal. Some house only low-risk inmates, while others welcome inmates of all risk levels. Some offer a full complement of programs and services, while others function strictly as work release centers. These variations in populations and services are I think what explains the mixed findings in the research on their effectiveness.

In fact, the most definitive evaluation of halfway houses suggest that medium and high risk residents are most likely to benefit from living in these homes, demonstrating a significantly lower likelihood of re-offending than matched comparison groups that do not transition through halfway houses. What is really interesting is that the same study found that low risk residents using halfway houses actually have higher rates of recidivism than comparison groups. What this means is that housing low risk prisoners in transitional facilities takes them out of the environment that makes them low risk to begin with.

Research has also found that the type and quality of programs in halfway houses makes a big difference in preventing re-offending. Effective halfway house programs have qualified who use such evidence-based practices as needs assessments and tailored wrap-around services.

So what does this mean for the District? Well, as we know, less than half of the prisoners, close, but less than half of the prisoners returning to D.C. transition through residential reentry centers, D.C.'s term for halfway houses. This raises some questions that the committee may seek answers to, and I am pleased to observe that some of these questions have already been answered in the affirmative by the previous witnesses. They include, are the right people housed in the halfway houses? Are risk assessment tools used to ensure that medium and high risk prisoners, those most likely to benefit, end up filling those beds? Do the centers assess the needs of their residents? Do they target services to those needs? Do they hire and retain well-trained, experienced staff? Do they engage in self-evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of their programs? These measures will enable the District to yield the best possible public safety impact from its halfway houses.

D.C.'s halfway houses are a scarce but potentially valuable resource in improving prisoner reentry, reducing recidivism and increasing public safety in the Nation's Capital. I urge this committee to ensure that these facilities are used as effectively as possible to make the most of their potential for successful prisoner reentry and improved public safety.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions you may have.
[The prepared statement of Ms. LaVigne follows:]

Statement by

Nancy G. La Vigne, Ph.D.
Director, Justice Policy Center, The Urban Institute

At a hearing on

Halfway Home to the District: The Role of Halfway Houses in Reducing Crime and
Recidivism in the Nation's Capital

by the

House of Representatives Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on
Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia

February 3, 2010

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the role of halfway houses in transitioning people from prison to the community. I am director of the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute. The bulk of our research is on prisoner reentry, and for good reason. The successful transition of people returning home from prison is critical not only for them, but also for the safety and well-being of their families and communities (La Vigne, Brooks, and Shollenberger 2007; Shollenberger 2009).

Yet, the path to successful reentry is rarely smooth. People exiting prison face tremendous challenges to leading sober and law-abiding lives on the outside. Few have housing or a job lined up, and many struggle with substance abuse, health problems, and mental illness (La Vigne, Shollenberger, and Debus 2009; La Vigne, Visher, and Castro 2004; Mallik-Kane and Visher 2008; Visher and Courtney 2007; Visher et al. 2005). While they may have received treatment, training, or assistance behind bars, far too often

prisoners are released without the support and services critical to their successful reintegration (La Vigne et al. 2009; La Vigne, et al. 2004; Mallik-Kane and Visser 2008; Visser et al. 2005).

Prisoners returning home to the District face the additional challenge of having been incarcerated hundreds of miles away from their families and potential employers (Roman and Kane 2006). They return home in need of health care, drug treatment, jobs, and importantly, safe and affordable shelter (Hall et al. 2009; Roman and Kane 2006). That's where halfway houses come in. When designed and operated well, halfway houses can serve as a nurturing way station, easing what would otherwise be a stark transition from the prison environment to the free world.

I wish I could tell you that halfway houses are a definitive success in reducing recidivism, but it's not that clear cut. For every study that finds halfway houses effective, another finds they have no effect. Why? Because not all halfway houses are created equal. Some house only low-risk inmates, while others welcome inmates of all risk levels. Some offer a full complement of programs and services, while others function strictly as work-release centers. These variations in populations and services may explain the mixed findings on their effectiveness.

The most definitive evaluation of halfway houses suggests that medium- and high-risk residents are most likely to benefit from living in these homes, demonstrating a significantly lower likelihood of reoffending than matched comparison groups that do not transition through halfway houses (Lowenkamp and Latessa 2002). The same study found that low-risk residents using halfway houses have *higher* rates of recidivism than

comparison groups. What that means is that housing low-risk prisoners in transitional facilities takes them out of the environment that makes them low risk to begin with.

Research has also found that the type and quality of programs halfway houses offer make a big difference in preventing reoffending. Effective halfway house programs have qualified staff who use such evidence-based practices as needs assessments and tailored, wraparound services (Lowenkamp, Latessa, and Smith 2006).

About half the prisoners returning to D.C. transition through residential reentry centers. Some questions for this committee: Are the right prisoners housed there? Are the centers using risk assessment tools to ensure that medium- and high-risk prisoners—the ones most likely to benefit—end up filling those beds? Do they assess the needs of their residents? Target services to those needs? Hire and retain well-trained, experienced staff? Engage in self-evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of their programs? These measures will enable the District to yield the best possible public safety impact from its halfway houses.

D.C.'s halfway houses are a scarce but potentially valuable resource in improving prisoner reentry, reducing recidivism, and increasing public safety in the nation's capital. I urge the committee to ensure that these facilities are used effectively to make the most of their potential for successful prisoner reentry and improved public safety.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions you may have.

Note

The views expressed are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

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Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Ms. LaVigne.
Mr. Reynolds, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF CHARLES M. REYNOLDS, JR.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before this August body to discuss the role halfway houses play in reducing crime and recidivism in the Nation's Capital, collaborate on alleviating the problems that face returning female citizens and providing what we believe are some viable solutions.

I am especially grateful to Congresswoman Norton for her support of community reentry programs in the District of Columbia. Thank you, Ms. Norton, for your continued work on behalf of those clients whom much of society tends to forget or ignore. Your visit to the Fairview on March 30, 2009 was truly an inspiration to the residents that we serve and the staff that supports your reentry efforts.

Reynolds and Associates operates a 60-bed residential center known as Fairview, located in the District of Columbia, the only female facility of its kind, serving returning female citizens under the authority of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. We serve more than 1,000 returning females annually. This testimony focuses specifically upon those clients who are under the authority of BOP and housed in the residential, dormitory type facility with 24 hour supervision.

Upon arrival at the Fairview, the residents are assessed and then placed into appropriate counseling, educational, vocational and job placement programs. As a result of these assessments, several issues have been identified. Approximately 70 percent of the clients have mental health issues. Half of that number relies on prescribed medications and roughly 30 percent suffer from physical ailments, with the most common being asthma, allergies, diabetes and hypertension. Approximately 30 percent of the clients are either HIV positive or have full-blown AIDS, and a significant number of them are recovering from some form of substance abuse.

Approximately 20 percent of the residents are housed with family members upon release, who are not always fully prepared for the issues that might occur when their loved one comes to live with them, after having been gone for so long. Unfortunately, too many of our clients are homeless, and many of the programs that offer transitional housing have long waiting lists, and far too many are released to shelters, rather than stable environments that would contribute significantly to their successful reentry.

In the current economy, many highly qualified individuals are entering the job market and taking jobs that were previously filled by our clients. Therefore, despite the fact that Reynolds and Associates, as a full employment placement specialist who provides job skills, job readiness training, GED and computer skills courses, only about 5 percent of our clients are currently employed. When a client is released from Fairview, there is no process of tracking their progress and provide additional case management services for them.

A significant number of the BOP residents indicate that they would benefit from post-release case management, which could as-

sist them in not returning to prison. Some of the proposed solutions are, placing a psychologist or psychiatrist and a nurse practitioner at the facility and providing comprehensive dental care. Providing for enhanced onsite substance abuse counseling, in addition to community after-care component, to aggressively address their addictive behavior. Include family members in more activities to enhance communications, especially where their children are involved, and custodial concerns are present. Enhance partnerships with transitional housing providers to increase housing availability for the returning citizens. And a need for more incentives for partnerships with local employers, to encourage and reward employers that provide job-specific training, so that a resident is able to move into a position immediately before and after release. Providing some post-release tracking for at least 18 months, so that post-release issues could be regularly addressed. And establishing a mentoring program that collaborates with the case managers to assure that the after-care needs of the clients are addressed and monitored after release.

In conclusion, I ask that you thoroughly read this testimony in order to assess the full impact of the issues on returning females to the District. In addition, if additional services are mandated and funded to meet the unique needs of the female citizens returning to the District, it is our sincere belief that recidivism can be significantly reduced and that our overwhelming majority of our clients, your constituents, can become good, productive citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Reynolds follows:]

**Testimony before: The Subcommittee on Federal
Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia**

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman

**ISSUES FACING
FEMALE RETURNING
CITIZENS**

**VIABLE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS REENTRY
PROBLEMS FACING FEMALE OFFENDERS AND
TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

February 3, 2010

REYNOLDS & ASSOCIATES, INC.
CHARLES M. REYNOLDS, JR., PRESIDENT & C.E.O.
1430 G STREET, N.E.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002-5424
202.396.8982 (Voice)/ 202.388.9342 (Facsimile)

INTRODUCTION

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS FEMALE REENTRY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BACKGROUND

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony. It is an honor to appear before the Subcommittee to expound upon the role that halfway houses play, in reducing crime and recidivism in the Nation's Capitol, the problems facing female returning citizens, and what we believe are some viable solutions. I am especially grateful to Congresswomen Eleanor Holmes Norton for her support of community reentry programs in the District of Columbia; thank you Ms. Norton for your tireless work on behalf of those whom much of society tends to forget or ignore. Your visit to Reynolds & Associates, Inc., on March 30, 2009, was truly an inspiration to the residents that we serve and the staff that supports our reentry efforts.

Reynolds & Associates, Inc. (R&A) operates a sixty (60) bed "Residential Re-entry Center" known as Fairview, located in the District of Columbia. The only female facility of its kind in Washington, D.C., Fairview serves "Returning Citizens" who are under the authority of the District of Columbia Department of Corrections (DCDC), the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), or the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). All three contractual agreements are awarded through a competitive bidding process.

Fairview serves more than one thousand (1,000) returning females annually. Returning citizens, also referred to as "clients", coming from the District of Columbia Department of Corrections, are of two types. They are either (1) pre-trial clients that have been court-ordered to Fairview pending their court proceedings or (2) individuals who have committed a misdemeanor offense and are serving the remainder of their sentence with R&A, until release. CSOSA refers clients as a condition of probation who have been sanctioned to R&A for a specific period of time, usually from thirty (30) to one hundred and twenty (120) days; to provide increased supervision and stabilization as a result of their non-compliant behavior. This presentation focuses upon the clients who are under the authority of the United States Department of Justice Bureau of Prisons.

The United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) clients are typically, either federal institutional transfers or community confinement cases (CCC). Clients who have been transferred from a federal institution are serving out the remainder of their sentences and are considered to be pre-release. BOP clients who fall under the CCC category have conditional release supervision requirements that need to be fulfilled pursuant to the provisions of our contract with BOP, commonly referred to as the "Statement of Work (SOW)," R&A houses

returning citizens (clients) in a residential dormitory-type facility, providing three (3) meals per day, accounting for their whereabouts, the behavior of the clients inside and outside of the facility, and providing counseling services and life skills, i.e. substance abuse, non-violent conflict resolution, nutrition, parenting, coping skills and employment skills training. Additionally, the clients are provided counseling for health needs and HIV/AIDS, as well as employment and vocational services, adult basic education and GED preparation, basic computer training, transitional housing services, and financial literacy training.

The Subcommittee should be aware that while funding from this body would enhance reentry program expansion, R&A is proactive in identifying and obtaining additional resources independently. To that end, R&A has created a not-for-profit entity known as the Foundation for Residential and Rehabilitative Services, Inc. (FRRS), in an effort to further enhance and expand programs and services for Fairview clients.

PROBLEMS FACING FEMALE RETURNING CITIZENS

When a client arrives at Fairview, she is assigned to a room, provided with bed linen and given an orientation that includes an accounting for her personal property and familiarization with the Resident Handbook, which documents the house rules. She is assigned a Case Manager, who performs an assessment of the residents' mental health, physical health, employment skills level, release plan, and special needs. After the assessment, a program plan is developed based on the client's identified needs. The resident is then placed into the appropriate counseling, educational/vocational and job placement programs. The Case Managers and Employment Placement Specialist work to monitor the progress of each resident both individually and in team meetings at least once every fourteen days. As the result of the aforementioned assessments, several systemic issues have been identified below:

- ✦ **Mental Health** — Approximately seventy percent (70%) of the clients have mental health issues and half of that number relies on prescribed medication. The DC Department of Mental Health (DCDMH) has reorganized, and after an initial assessment by DCDMH, DCDC and CSOSA clients are linked with Community Connections, Pathways, or Green Door. BOP clients that require mental health services are referred through Transitional Drug Abuse Treatment (TDAT), either to CHIPS or Renaissance.
- ✦ **Physical Health** - Approximately thirty percent (30%) of Fairview clients suffer from physical ailments, the most common being asthma, allergies, diabetes, and hypertension. Unless there is a medical emergency, in such cases we call 911, the residents with physical health needs are sent to Unity for treatment.
- ✦ **HIV and AIDS** — Approximately thirty percent (30%) of the clients served by R&A are either HIV positive or have full-blown AIDS. These residents come with a host of medical issues that need to be addressed and treated, during

their stay;

- ✦ **Substance Abuse** — A significant number of the clients are recovering from some form of substance abuse. There is counseling available at the facility on a regular basis from a Certified Addictions Counselor (CAC), both in a group setting and on an individual basis, as they approach their release date. Additionally, residents are sent to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) for further treatment. Unfortunately, the issue with AA and NA is that the meeting sites are in the some of the very same neighborhoods where the clients became addicted. Consequently, they are apprehensive about returning and thus the treatment tends to be less effective, as a result. In addition, R&A conducts regular urine monitoring for drug use and breathalyzer tests are conducted both at random and each time a client returns from outside the facility to detect alcohol use;
- ✦ **Family Counseling** — Approximately twenty percent (20%) of the residents are housed with family members upon release. Many of our clients have not interacted in a family setting while incarcerated and are not used to being productive members of a household. In many cases, a client's criminal history has caused friction between her and the rest of her family. Despite the fact that R&A provides "Life Skills" training to the individual client, family members are not always fully prepared for the issues that might occur when their loved one comes to live with them;
- ✦ **Transitional Housing** — Unfortunately, a significant number of our clients are homeless. Many of the programs that offer transitional housing have long waiting lists. The client must have documentation, which includes government issued identification, birth certificate, social security card, psycho/social interviews, medical clearances, police clearances, etc. In light of the fact that so many of these persons are indigent, the process for obtaining the required documentation can be quite a lengthy process, resulting in further delays in placement. Sadly, the result of this housing situation is that too many of these individuals are released to shelters, rather than to stable environments that would contribute significantly to their successful re-entry;
- ✦ **Employment and Training** — Currently only about five percent (5%) of our clients are employed despite the fact that R&A has a full-time Employment Placement Specialist who provides job skills and job readiness training, and offers GED and computer skills courses. Our clients' low employment rate can be partially attributed to the current unemployment crisis in America. Unfortunately, even with incentives, such as bonding and tax credits, that are provided to employers for hiring qualified individuals with criminal histories, it is still difficult to get them to hire these individuals with little to no marketable skills and a criminal record versus individuals who are over qualified with no criminal histories. Many higher qualified individuals are continuing to enter the job market and take jobs that were previously filled by our clients.

- ✦ **Post-Release Tracking and Follow-up** - Once a resident is released from Fairview, there is no process for the progress of that resident to be tracked and provide additional case management services. R&A conducted an in-house survey of all residents between January 20, 2010 and January 27, 2010. A significant number of the BOP residents indicated that they would definitely benefit from post-release case management that might assist them in being less likely to recidivate when they became frustrated with the rigors of community reintegration.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

After observing and discussing the problems with the BOP residents, R&A has concluded that some of the problems that the clients face in the District of Columbia can be better addressed if we can provide the some of the following on-site wraparound services to our residents:

- Place either a psychologist or psychiatrist at the facility at varying time intervals, i.e., office hours, three (3) to five (5) times per week so that a client with mental health issues can be assessed within hours of her arrival and provided with the necessary treatment immediately and ongoing;
- Provide for an on-site Nurse Practitioner at least three (3) days a week to assess the physical health needs of residents, consult with a physician when necessary, and prescribe medication. In conjunction with the Nurse Practitioner, develop a treatment modality specifically for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). This program component delivered on a individual basis would generate more candor from the residents resulting in a reduction of the spread of STDs, including education and methods of prevention;
- In addition to the medical program component, dental care should also be provided. Many of the women have not received dental care in recent years, if ever, and have dental needs that have been exacerbated by substance abuse. It is extremely important to an individual's overall health and one's self esteem to have proper dental care and this is especially true for job interviewing;
- Provide for enhanced substance abuse counseling on-site, in addition to the aftercare community component, to aggressively address addictive behaviors. By providing these enhanced in-house and aftercare services, R&A would have more control over the residents' participation and be better able to track a resident's progress;

- As a component of life skills training, there should be additional provisions to further include family members to enhance communication, especially where children are involved and custodial concerns are present. This may include additional family counseling and mediation services to ensure that any major issues are worked out before a client is released into the community;
- Enhance partnerships with the housing providers to increase the housing stock available to returning citizens. Coordinate and streamline the process of obtaining the documents required to qualify for transitional housing and increase the housing available for this population;
- In addition to the job readiness skills that are currently provided, there need to be expanded, on-site computer training, additional incentives for partnerships with local employers to encourage and reward employers that provide job-specific training so that a resident would be able to move into a position upon release, any training programs should be geared toward specific jobs;
- Provide post-release tracking that would require a released resident to contact her case manager, at least once, in a thirty (30) day period for a term of eighteen (18) months so that post-release issues could be regularly addressed, a comprehensive plan developed with the client to assure that the continuation of the proper treatment and care of the clients' physical and mental needs, (medical, mental health, substance abuse, etc.) are maintained through the provider, continued participation in programming for the educational, and/or vocational development and/or job readiness and/or placement, and follow-up to assure that the housing placement is complete. Case management should be effectively developed and an established mentoring program to collaborate with the case manager to assure that aftercare needs of the client are monitored. This method of aftercare would give R&A and BOP a true statistical database to track recidivism, data that is currently unavailable.

Conclusion

If additional appropriations are mandated and funded to meet the unique needs of female citizens returning to the District of Columbia, it is our belief that recidivism can be significantly reduced and that the overwhelming majority of the program participants can become good productive citizens.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Reynolds.
Mr. Varone, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JEFFREY VARONE

Mr. VARONE. Good morning, Chairman Lynch and members of the subcommittee.

I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the effectiveness of residential reentry centers, or halfway houses, on public safety, prisoner reentry, and recidivism in the Nation's Capital. Of course, I will be speaking from experience we have garnered over the past 30 years at Hope Village, Inc., helping offenders reintegrate into the Washington, DC, community.

Hope Village is a private, adult community correction center, also known as a community-based Residential Reentry Center, located in southeast Washington, DC. Since 1977, Hope Village has provided transitional services to offenders to assist their transition and positive reintegration back into the Washington, DC, society.

The Bureau of Prisons awarded Hope Village the first private pilot community correctional center program in 1982 to house offenders returning to the Washington, DC, area. This program became so successful that other similar programs are operating in many other areas within the United States. Currently, Hope Village has two contracts with the BOP, serving offenders reentering the community in the Washington, DC, area who are generally referred for placement within 6 months of the remainder of their sentence. Both contracts are performance-based, and for a period of 10 years, which includes a 3-year base period and 7 additional award term/option years. We also have a contract with the District of Columbia Department of Corrections to serve offenders who are pre-trial inmates, court-ordered misdemeanor, and sentence misdemeanor inmates.

Hope Village is the second largest employer in ward 8 of the District of Columbia. Hope Village employs 104 dedicated, full-time staff to facilitate our program and provide comprehensive transition services to offenders. Our staff includes a senior operations director, 2 program directors, 35 Charge of Quarters, 8 case managers, 5 vocational counselors, 2 certified substance abuse counselors, and 4 social workers. Within our facility, we operate separate departments for correctional services, training, programs, computer services, personnel, facility maintenance and food service.

Our very low offender recidivism rate is tangible testament to the effectiveness of our programs for offender reintegration. In 2009, we reported 1,157 positive offender releases into the community. Of all the offenders who participated in our programs in 2009, only nine persons were re-arrested, which is statistically insignificant given the total offender population.

Historically, Hope Village has been a work release program, where participating offenders were required to secure employment as part of their placement at Hope Village and transition into the community. Hope Village has adapted to changes in the community and the employment market, and has tailored its program to meet the evolving needs and goals of program participants. Each week, Hope Village accepts approximately 25 to 30 new offenders from various Federal prisons to participate in the Hope Village program.

Every offender is required to complete a 7-day orientation to the facility, including an orientation class, assessments for medical and mental health issues, a 12-hour mandatory life skills program, covering topics relating to substance abuse, job readiness, health awareness, life safety, financial management, parenting and computer skills.

Offenders must complete the orientation program before they are allowed any movement outside of the Hope Village premises. Offenders are required to attend the orientation class within 24 hours of their arrival at Hope Village. During this orientation, the offender meets with representatives from Hope Village, the Bureau of Prisons, and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency to review the regulations and rules of Hope Village that we previously sent to the offender while he was at a Federal institution. The representatives are available to discuss the rules and procedures and answer any questions the offender may have about the program or his time at Hope Village. This meeting is critical to ensure offenders understand their obligations during their participation in program, and the serious consequences of rule violations, which includes a recommendation for the return to the Federal institution or extended services.

During the first week of arrival, each offender meets with a program review team, consisting of his program director, case manager, vocational counselor, social worker, drug treatment provider and a CSOSA representative. Our program staff closely monitor this individualized plan and review it every 2 weeks to assess the offender's progress or lack thereof, and where necessary, address implementation of additional strategies to meet the offender program goals.

At Hope Village, we know that employment plays a large part of evaluating an offender's self-esteem and a key factor to reducing recidivism. As such, we make it our priority and place a premium on assisting Federal offenders with their employment needs, whether this involves improving their skills by sending offenders to specific job training programs, like Project Empowerment, or referring them to offsite career centers. Given that many of the offenders come to Hope Village after lengthy periods of incarceration, they are long disconnected from the work force, and some never had a record of employment before incarceration.

Moreover, many offenders do not have basic forms of identification, such as a Social Security card, birth certificate, driver's license, or even a picture identification card.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Varone, you have grossly exceeded the allotted time. I notice you have a lot more to go there. Could you please wrap up and we will move on to the next witness?

Mr. VARONE. Absolutely. I want to talk a little about the public safety and accountability. Offenders who are referred to Hope Village remain under the supervision of the Attorney General. Therefore, we take our direction and enforce our guidelines set by the Government. On the facility grounds, we account for the residents or inmates every hour, approximately every hour. CSOSA is a valuable partner with us. We have, at least weekly, the Hope Village staff and CSOSA conduct intake and orientation.

We have found an active engagement with the community plays a pivotal role in deterring crime and maintaining public safety. For the past 20 years, we have formed a significant partnership with the local community to improve the overall quality of our life and offenders through support from citizens, local elected officials and religious leaders. We collaborate with four faith-based organizations, Faith Tabernacle, Alan AME Church, Samaritan Ministries and Congress Heights United Methodist Church.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Varone, I am going to accept your full statement into the record. You do not need to read it, sir. Will you please sum up?

Mr. VARONE. Sure. In addition, Mr. Chairman, Hope Village pledges to continue to work closely and cooperatively with our contractors, BOP, D.C. Department of Corrections, CSOSA, and the community to deliver quality and meaningful programs and services to offenders at the point of reentry, thereby fulfilling our mission statement, changes lives.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, to provide this statement, and we welcome the opportunity to respond to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Varone follows:]

Hope Village

2840 Langston Place, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20020
(202) 678-1077 / 678-1551
Fax (202) 678-0161

STATEMENT OF
JEFFREY VARONE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
HOPE VILLAGE, INC.
BEFORE THE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE, AND
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
FEBRUARY 3, 2010

Chairman Lynch and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the effectiveness of residential re-entry centers or “half-way houses” on public safety, prisoner re-entry, and recidivism in the Nation’s capital. Of course, I will be speaking from the experience we have garnered over the past thirty years at Hope Village, Inc. helping offenders re-integrate into the Washington, D.C. community.

I. BACKGROUND

Hope Village is a private, adult Community Corrections Center also known as a community-based Residential Reentry Center (RRC), located in Southeast, Washington, D.C. Since 1977, Hope Village has provided transitional services to offenders to assist their transition and positive re-integration back to Washington, D.C. society.

“HOPE VILLAGE CHANGES LIVES”

The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) awarded Hope Village the first private pilot Community Correctional Center program in 1982 to house offenders returning to the Washington, D.C. area. This program became so successful that other similar programs are operating in many other areas within the United States. Currently, Hope Village has two contracts with the BOP serving offenders re-entering the community in the Washington, D.C. area, who are generally referred for placement within 6 months of the remainder of their sentences. Both contracts are performance-based and for a period of ten years, which includes a 3-year base period and seven additional award terms/option years. We also have a contract with the District of Columbia Department of Corrections (DCDOC) to serve offenders who are pre-trial inmates, court-ordered misdemeanor, and sentenced misdemeanor inmates.

Hope Village is the second largest employer in Ward 8 of the District of Columbia. Hope Village employs 104 full-time staff to facilitate our program and provide comprehensive transition services to offenders. Our staff includes a senior operations director, 2 program directors, 35 Charge of Quarters, 8 case managers, 5 vocational counselors, 2 certified substance abuse counselors, and 4 social workers. Within our facility, we operate separate departments for correctional services, training, programs, computer services, personnel, facility maintenance, and food service.

Our very low offender recidivism rate is tangible testament to the effectiveness of our programs for offender re-integration. In 2009, we reported 1,157 positive offender releases into the community. Of all the offenders who participated in our programs in 2009, only nine persons were re-arrested, which is statistically insignificant given the total offender population.

II. SERVICES & PROGRAMS

Historically, Hope Village has been a work-release program, where participating offenders were required to secure employment as part of their placement at Hope Village and transition into the community. Hope Village has adapted to changes in the community and employment market, and has tailored its program to meet the evolving needs and goals of program participants.

A. Orientation

Each week Hope Village accepts approximately 25-30 new offenders from various federal prisons to participate in the Hope Village program. Every offender is required to complete a 7-day orientation to the facility, including an orientation class, assessments for medical and mental health issues, and a 12-hour mandatory life skills program, covering topics relating to substance abuse, job readiness, health awareness, life safety, financial management, parenting, and computer skills. Hope Village then develops an individualized program plan for each offender to determine his particular program goals to facilitate his re-entry to the community. Offenders must complete the orientation program before they are allowed any movement outside the Hope Village premises.

Offenders are required to attend the orientation class within 24 hours after their arrival to Hope Village. During this orientation, the offender meets with representatives from Hope Village, BOP, and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), to review the rules and regulations of Hope Village previously sent to the offender while he was at the federal institution. The representatives are available to discuss the rules and procedures and answer any questions the offender may have about

the program or his time at Hope Village. This meeting is critical to ensure offenders understand their obligations during their participation in the program, and the serious consequences of rule violations, which can include a recommendation for their return to the federal institution and extended sentences.

During the first week of arrival, each offender also meets with a Program Review Team, consisting of his program director, case manager, vocational counselor, social worker, drug treatment provider, and a CSOSA representative. Our program staff closely monitors this individualized plan and review it every two weeks to assess the offender's progress or lack thereof, and where necessary, address implementation of additional strategies to meet the offenders program goals.

B. Vocational & Employment Services

At Hope Village, we know that employment plays a large part of elevating an offender's self-esteem and a key factor to reducing recidivism. As such, we make it our priority and place a premium on assisting federal offenders with their employment needs, whether this involves improving their skills by sending offenders to specific job training programs like Project Empowerment, or referring them to off-site career centers. Given that many of the offenders come to Hope Village after lengthy periods of incarceration, they are long disconnected from the work force, and some never had a record of employment before incarceration.

Moreover, many offenders do not have basic forms of identification such as a social security card, birth certificate, driver's license, or even a picture identification card. For these reasons, a large number of offenders are not immediately employable. Hope

Village assists those offenders secure these forms of identification as a priority in their quest for vocational opportunities.

Our vocational counselors (VCs) conduct weekly job readiness sessions utilizing power point presentations to share employment opportunities with unemployed offenders. They discuss job search strategies, computer and internet usage, dress codes, interview techniques, and the importance of follow-up after interviews with participants. The VCs also help offenders prepare resumes and complete job applications.

The VCs meet with unemployed offenders on their caseload every two weeks to ensure employment-related activities are being accomplished. Also, the VCs have developed and are sharing an "employee newsletter" to assist offenders with their job search efforts. Accountability goals are met by monitoring the offenders while they are outside the Hope Village facility engaged in job search efforts or actual employment. We maintain contacts with local employers to monitor each offender's work performance.

To augment our vocational service offerings, we contract with Congress Heights Training Center to conduct GED classes and improve work place literacy, using PC based software (PLATO and Work Place Essentials). Classes are held Monday through Thursday from 2:00 – 9:00 p.m. Hope Village's computer lab is equipped with 14 computers for offenders to utilize for training and to hone their skills.

All employed offenders are required to pay 25% of their gross wages as a subsistence fee to BOP to help defray the costs of their placement at Hope Village. The BOP may grant some offenders waivers or reductions in the subsistence amount based on financial circumstances. We believe that the subsistence fee helps train offenders in

meeting their financial obligations, which is a critical component of societal re-integration. In 2009, offenders paid \$96,470.00 towards subsistence.

Despite our best efforts, offender employment remains an issue because of offender turnover rate, short placements, and the unique offender population. The high unemployment rate in the District of Columbia, which exceeds the national average, further exacerbates these challenges. Nonetheless, we take pride in our accomplishments in providing employment services, such as our recent success cooperating with the CCM and the D.C. Government Office of Education, to place five of the seven participating offenders in the Hospitality Training and Internship Program (HTIP). We are committed to intensifying our efforts to help offenders gain employment skills and/or employment before their release into the community, because an employed individual contributes financially and in other ways to his family and his community.

C. Medical & Mental Health Needs

During the first week of the offender's arrival at Hope Village, our trained staff meets with the offender to identify their medical and mental health needs. Hope Village is not a medical facility. All offenders are referred to Unity Health Care for enrollment in the DC Health Care Program where they receive physical and mental health screening, as well as continued care, including medication administration, for their conditions. Hope Village staff monitors treatment for the duration of the offender's placement.

Substance abuse is an immense concern with the offender population. Hope Village employs two certified substance abuse counselors to provide weekly on-site drug and alcohol counseling, including relapse prevention, and coordinate the offenders' utilization of providers in the community with whom BOP contracts. These providers

include Renaissance, Next Step, Second Genesis, and the Salvation Army. We randomly test all offenders at least four times each month for drug use and for alcohol use every time they return to the facility from the community.

D. Transitional Skills & Journaling Program

Our transitional skills and journaling program is a 9-week mandatory program that was started approximately three years ago. It is instrumental in helping offenders focus on critical skills necessary for their success upon re-entry into the community. We provide each participating offender with a booklet, which is divided into nine sections covering topics such as handling social influences; authority figures; anger and time management; creating a safety net; healthy relationships; responsibility; and caring and honesty. The exercises require offenders to create journals in each section of the booklet. Offenders may take the booklets home upon release from Hope Village, and can use the booklet as an easy reminder and reference tool on how to address social problems as they arise. Our quarterly surveys reveal that all offenders like this program, and they find it very beneficial to their transition.

III. PUBLIC SAFETY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Offenders referred to Hope Village remain under the supervision of the Attorney General of the United States. Therefore, Hope Village is required to take direction and enforce guidelines set by the government and the BOP to ensure that offenders continue to comply with the conditions of their penal status, in addition to protecting the public. In this regard, we are required to maintain offender accountability while they are in the Hope Village facility, at work assignments, in other activities outside the facility, and under home detention.

On the facility grounds offenders are counted approximately every hour, and while on pass Hope Village staff maintains contact with each offender daily. They are required to contact Hope Village staff at least once every eight hours. Offenders on home detention are contacted minimum daily. Vocational counselors conduct on-site job checks within the offender's first week of employment, and maintain accountability checks while offenders are engaged in employment. Social workers conduct on-site host visits with family members of offenders to approve the location and confirm the family member's consent to have the offender reside with the family member upon his release from Hope Village.

Hope Village has installed a security system in all housing units and around the compound to maintain accountability for participating offenders. Hope Village staff conducts security checks for contraband and rule violations in areas within the facility grounds, including random room searches in each building every day to keep offenders from bringing contraband into the facility. All offenders are required to sign in and out of the housing unit, even if it is for moving around on the Hope Village compound. In addition to the alcohol testing, offenders are subject to searches, either by "pat" technique or "wandering" each time they re-enter the Hope Village facility.

As part of the accountability procedures, Hope Village staff quickly contact institutions when offenders fail to arrive at Hope Village on their scheduled arrival dates. All accountability concerns are reported to BOP's CCM Office within two hours. Offenders who fail to return to Hope Village timely from pass into the community are placed on escape status, and BOP is immediately contacted. Staff at Hope Village is trained in the inmate disciplinary and Center Disciplinary Committee procedures, and,

where necessary, recommendations are made for an offender's return to a more secure environment.

CSOSA is a valuable partner in maintaining accountability and supervision over offenders referred to Hope Village, and we work with CSOSA to establish viable release plans for offenders. At least weekly, Hope Village staff, BOP, and CSOSA staff conduct intake/orientation for new referrals. To facilitate our cooperative working relationship with CSOSA, Hope Village has provided five CSOSA officers with rent-free offices on the Hope Village property. This way, CSOSA can have direct contact with offenders, participate in coordinated supervision of offenders while they are at Hope Village, and ensure a seamless transition in the continuity of supervision after offenders are released from Hope Village.

We have found that active engagement with the community plays a pivotal role in deterring crime and maintaining public safety. For the past 20 years, Hope Village has formed a significant partnership with the local community to improve the overall quality of life of our offenders, and maintains vital community support for our programs from citizens, local elected officials, and religious leaders. Hope Village collaborates with four faith-based organizations in the DC area (Faith Tabernacle, Alan AME Church, Samaritan Ministries, and Congress Heights United Methodist Church). These organizations provide clothing, bus passes, and assistance in obtaining identification, mentoring, and family counseling services. Offenders learn how to be good neighbors by volunteering for clean-up efforts in the surrounding community.

In addition, Hope Village has a community relations consultant, Mr. Phinis Jones, who has assisted us over the past 20 years in hosting a quarterly Community Relations

Board, comprised of representatives from BOP, DC Department of Corrections, Metropolitan Police Department, representatives of our Ward 8 Councilmember and ANC, as well as local business and religious leaders. During these quarterly meetings, we have an opportunity to discuss with the community our delivery of services to the offender population, any community concerns, and strategies for maintaining public safety and fulfilling the goals and mission of the re-entry program.

IV. PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Hope Village is contractually required to implement quality assurance standards, submit quarterly reports to BOP, and submit to random and periodic monitoring by BOP to audit the effectiveness of our service delivery to offenders. We are pleased to report that Hope Village has a long history of exceptional compliance and operating programs that receive high marks from BOP and DCDOC. On our most recent evaluation, covering the period November 1, 2008 through October 31, 2009, BOP rated our performance “very good” – the highest rating- for our overall performance and each review factor, including accountability, programs, community relations, site validity and suitability, personnel, and communications/responsiveness.

Observations in BOP’s evaluation narrative include Hope Village’s “significant efforts” to be good partners with BOP and meeting the needs for offender re-entry; doing an “exceptional job” accounting for federal offenders in the community, at work, on social pass, and on the compound; continued to show “significant improvement” in all areas turning correctional programs into one of our program strengths; and concluding that over the rated period Hope Village performed “exceptionally well” in all six of the rated categories. Just this past week BOP representatives were on-site at Hope Village

conducting a full monitoring of our programs, personnel, life safety, etc. We expect that this review will be consistent with our high performance reported on the recent evaluation.

The American Correctional Association (ACA) and the Commission of Accreditation on Corrections (CAC) nationally accredit Hope Village. ACA accreditation requires that Hope Village adopt and implement over 180 national industry standards relating to community corrections care. During our August 2009, accreditation renewal process for adult community residential services, Hope Village scored 100% on all the ACA applicable standards.

Hope Village pledges to continue to work closely and cooperatively with our contractors (BOP and DCDOC), CSOSA, and the community to deliver quality and meaningful programs and services to offenders at the point of re-entry, thereby fulfilling our mission statement to “change lives.”

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement, and we welcome the opportunity to respond to any questions you may have.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Varone. Your entire statement will be accepted into the record. We appreciate your testimony.

Welcome, Mr. White. You are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL WHITE

Mr. WHITE. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Lynch, Congresswoman Norton and other esteemed members of the subcommittee.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak at this public hearing on halfway houses in the District of Columbia. I feel that my first-hand experience may be something that a lot of times gets swept under the rug, or not get shed good light on. So I am glad to be able to offer that today.

And I also find it fortuitous to be sitting behind Mr. Varone, because he was able to shed some light on a few of the issues that I will be addressing.

I arrived at Hope Village on October 7, 2008, after having served a sentence at FCC Petersburg in Hopewell, VA. This was my first and only stay in a halfway house. And it was my expectation that it would be a way for me to transition smoothly back into society.

I was processed fairly quickly after I got there, and immediately shuffled to my quarters, a converted two-bedroom apartment, which I shared with seven other men. Later in the week, I was classified by the appropriate staff and informed of their expectations of me, including rules and regulations, the set number of in-house classes or life skills courses I would have to complete before being able to seek employment or visit my family or even receive visitation from my family, money I would have to pay from each pay check, and also the appropriate channels I would need to navigate in order to begin job hunting and what have you.

It seemed to be a very straightforward program, and I assumed that if I followed these things set before me, everything would be pretty simple and painless. I fulfilled my life skills course hours and was granted a pass of several hour to obtain a non-driver's identification card. Shortly thereafter, I began seeking employment in various hospitals and private health care offices, since that was my background. I set up interviews, and after following the appropriate avenues, had very little trouble obtaining approval to go to my interviews.

Despite my professionalism, appearance and experience, I was turned down several times due to the fact that I am a convicted felon. I was finally able to find a private internal medicine office in Fairfax, VA, that was willing to look past what was on paper and hire me. I explained to them immediately in my interview my situation and gave them a few details about the circumstances surrounding my incarceration. I explained to them that even my start date would ultimately be determined by their communication with Ms. Wilson, the job coordinator in my particular building.

I had a very rigid time that I was allowed to leave Hope Village, based on a rough calculation by the job coordinator, not really factoring in unexplained or unplanned deviations from the route, maybe trains shutting down, late buses, missed buses, what have you, and being so far away from Hope Village and traveling by bus and train and bus again, it was difficult to get there on time, and

then I had to leave right at the moment I was off, with no real room to breathe.

I was also required to take a drug class at Harbor Lights, at the Salvation Army Building on New York Avenue in Northeast, which forced me to have to leave 2½ to 3 hours early from work each week in order to make it there in time. And it was a hike. I was told by the facilitator that lateness to the program would not be tolerated and would subject me to injunctions such as loss of the privilege of even being able to leave the Hope Village premises, which would automatically cause me to lose my job, if I can't go to work. I was in a very precarious and uncomfortable position, which I felt was causing me to make unreasonable demands on an employer who hired a convicted felon.

When I received my first pay check, I was told that I would have to pay a subsistence of 25 percent of my gross pay, which would continue until my official release date, even though I would not be housed at Hope Village. This was a lot, in my opinion, considering that I was in essence starting over from ground zero, trying to find housing for myself and my children and not to mention the other expenses that are incurred simply by virtue of having a family.

I talked to my counselor, Mr. Tyson, and my case manager at Hope Village, and they explained to me that I would be able to get my subsistence reduced or even waived if I navigated another set of appropriate channels, which I did. And after making several payments and inquiries, I was shuffled around yet again. I am not going to continue to go into the issues, I see my time is winding down.

I found a lot of the procedures difficult and some contrary to one another. It was a tough impediment to me, but I was lucky to have a strong support system in my family and great community resources. Unfortunately, most people in that situation don't have those, and for them it can be very frustrating and cause them to lose sight of really what their ultimate goal is. But when the policies are enforced correctly and on a case by case basis, halfway houses like Hope Village are a great benefit and useful to those coming back into society who need help making their way. I personally was grateful for that opportunity to spend the last leg of my incarceration at Hope Village, setting myself up for the rest of my life.

I am proud to report that I have been gainfully employed at the same location since my third week at Hope Village, and am only a few short weeks away from becoming a licensed realtor. So I would like to think that I am one of the successful 1,157 people that was released from Hope Village in 2009. I look forward to continuing in this path. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. White follows:]

Testimony of Michael White

Concerning "Halfway Home to the District: The Role of Halfway Houses in Reducing Crime and Recidivism in the Nation's Capitol"

Before the

**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight
And Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal Workforce,
Postal Service and the District of Columbia**

February 3, 2010

Good Morning Chairman Lynch and Congresswoman Norton. I thank you for having this hearing on halfway houses in the District of Columbia. I believe that I can offer this subcommittee a unique perspective on halfway house operations from a firsthand perspective.

I arrived at Hope Village on October 7, 2008 after serving a sentence at FCC Petersburg in Hopewell, VA. This was my first and last stay in a halfway house, and it was my expectation that this would be a way for me to transition smoothly back into society. I was processed fairly quickly and immediately shuffled to my quarters, which was a converted two-bedroom apartment I shared with 7 other men. Later in the week I was classified by the appropriate staff and informed of their expectations of me, to include to completion of a set number of required hours of in-house classes, or 'life skills' courses, before I would be allowed to venture off the grounds to visit my family and seek employment, a weekly drug and alcohol program I would be required to attend for the duration of my obligation to Hope Village (January 7, 2009), money I would have to pay from each paycheck I received, and rules and regulations. Also explained to me at this time were all the appropriate channels I would need to navigate in order to begin job-hunting, receive visitors during the set visiting hours, begin getting weekend 'home-passes,' and ultimately go home. It seemed to be a fairly straight-forward regimen, and it was my assumption that if I followed these things set before me this would be simple and painless.

I fulfilled my 'life-skills' course hours and was granted a pass of several hours in order to obtain a non-driver's identification card. Then I began seeking employment in various hospitals and private healthcare offices, since that was my background. I set up interviews and, after following the proper avenues, had very little trouble obtaining approval to go. On multiple occasions I was refused employment due to the fact that I am a convicted felon. Despite my professionalism, appearance, and experience, I was turned down several times. I was finally

able to find a private internal medicine office in Fairfax, VA that was willing to look past what was on paper and hire me. I immediately explained to my interviewers my situation, and gave them skeletal details about the circumstances surrounding my incarceration. I explained to them that even my start date would ultimately be determined by their communication with Ms. Wilson, the job coordinator at the halfway house.

I had a very rigid time I was allowed to leave the halfway house, so I barely made it to work on time each day, and there was a set time I was expected back at Hope Village, which disallowed me from staying a moment past my scheduled end time. I was also required to take a weekly drug class, meaning each Tuesday and Thursday I was to leave work approximately two and a half to three hours early in order to make it there on time. Lateness, I was told by the program facilitator, was not tolerated and would subject me to injunctions such as loss of the privilege of leaving Hope Village for any reason until my release date of January 7, a penalty that would automatically cause me to lose my job. I was in a very precarious and uncomfortable position. I felt that this was causing me to make unreasonable demands on my employer, who was already taking a chance on hiring me.

Upon the receipt of my first paycheck, I was required to pay a subsistence of twenty five percent of my gross pay, which continued until my official release date, even though I was no longer living at Hope Village. This was a lot considering I was in essence starting over from scratch, trying to find housing for me and my children, not to mention the myriad other expenses one incurs simply by virtue of having a family. I talked to my counselor, Mr. Tyson, and my case manager at Hope Village. I was told there was a way in which I would be able to have my subsistence reduced or even waived altogether. I got the information and began making arrangements. After following those instructions exactly as they were presented to me, I was told after making several inquiries that there was yet more that had to be done. I'd made several payments between my initial inquiry and the answer I received. I felt I was making a valid argument for reduction or waiver.

Another problem I experienced with Hope Village was the issue of home visitation. After a number of weeks of living at Hope Village with good behavior, I understood that I would be allowed to make home visits to the home of an approved family member. While I was required to be only at my designated location, my children and my family and friends could visit me there. For many of them, that would be the first time I would see them in more than a year. Because this was important for transitioning back home, I followed the proper procedures and

stayed clear from any possible negative issues. However, several times my visitation was denied or cancelled at the last minute without any reason or means to appeal. This made it difficult for those in my family who had planned to see me, especially for my children. Honestly, it was emotionally difficult for me as well.

The procedures that I found difficult, and those that were contrary to each other, were a tough impediment for me, but I was lucky to have had a very strong support system in my family and great community resources. Unfortunately, most in these situations do not have the resources I had. For them, the policies could be counterproductive, especially when people are penalized even though they are working hard to follow every rule. However, when the policies are enforced correctly and on a case-by-case basis, halfway houses like Hope Village are a great benefit and are useful to those coming back into society and needing help making their way. Personally, I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to serve the last part of my incarceration at the halfway house, closer to home. I am proud to report that I have been gainfully employed in the same position since my third week at Hope Village and I am only a few short weeks away from becoming a licensed realtor, which will allow me to build a career and better provide for my family.

I thank the subcommittee again for allowing me to testify today, and I welcome any questions you have for me.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. White. Good to hear your testimony. I will begin the questioning. I yield myself 5 minutes.

I noticed from a lot of the testimony that there is a certain overlap between substance abuse and incarceration, and in getting people back on their feet, dealing with that problem. That is sort of the angle that, look, all the Members up here, all the members of this committee, work this issue. We deal with the families, with the inmates as well, trying to get them closer to home, trying to work out the job situation. It is especially difficult right now, as a number of you have recognized.

In my district, we actually confronted this from the perspective of an Oxycontin and heroin epidemic in my district. What we had to do was, well, what I did was established two homes, two transition homes. But our offender group was getting so young that we were dealing with adolescents. And you just can't co-locate kids with adult offenders.

So we ended up establishing two homes, like Mr. Reynolds, established the Cushing House for Girls, which was a rehab facility for girls. Not all ex-offenders, but all with similar problems, and one for boys. So I certainly understand what you are grappling with. Sometimes it seems overwhelming. Fortunately, we do have some employers, and I know you probably have your favorites as well. Ironically, I have a brewery, the Harpoon Brewery, which is located in my district. And it may sound like cruel and unusual punishment to have somebody come out of a facility and then go to work at a brewery. But I just want to say that they are someone who recognizes, and I tell them, this person is coming out of a rehab facility, and we are going to try them out and see if we can get that first job to build a work history. And God bless them, and I know you all have employers that you work with to get people out to work. Sometimes that is the biggest hurdle, just getting that sense of normalcy out, that first step, that transition, just making that connection back to a normal life for some of the folks we are trying to help.

Let me ask a general question of the entire panel. Maybe that will be the best use of my time. I want to talk about the nexus, and a number of you have mentioned this, about the connection between a prisoner's geographical placement and their success at reintegration. Mr. White has picked up on this in his own personal situation. Time and time again I hear about the way folks coming out of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and they are D.C. code offenders, and yet they are placed in facilities that are significant distance from their homes and that whole support system. So families can't visit them. There is a disconnect between that support system.

Can each of you, as briefly as possible, respond to this claim that there is a significant disadvantage or detriment to offenders who are coming out and are being located a significant distance from their homes and from their families, and how does that play on the halfway house situation, what you are seeing? Mr. Eichenlaub.

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Thank you. I will say, first of all, we have 40, we try and place the offenders, all offenders, including D.C. offenders, within 500 miles of their residence. We have 40 Federal facilities within 500 miles of the District of Columbia. Seventy-five per-

cent of D.C. offenders are in fact incarcerated within 500 miles. I recognize that can be a substantial drive, even within 500 miles.

Mr. LYNCH. 500 miles is a long—they could be in Boston.

Mr. EICHENLAUB. It can be up to 8 hours. So the majority are within 500 miles, perhaps even closer in West Virginia or Kentucky. Then a substantial number at the Rivers Correctional Institution down in North Carolina, which is much closer. The other 25 percent who aren't within that 500 mile radius, the standard we try to follow, may have been involved in some type of violence or misconduct that resulted in them having to a higher security level prison that may be farther away. If they need specialized medical or mental health treatment, that may take them farther away as well.

But having spent a number of years working in our facilities, I recognize the importance of visiting and maintaining relationships with families. It is great to see, in our visiting rooms, when those relationships are there.

Mr. LYNCH. Ms. Poteat.

Ms. POTEAT. A large portion of the offenders are at Rivers. We find it very beneficial. We have about 700 or so there, and we have the opportunity to visit Rivers Correctional Facility at least two times a year, and sometimes more, where our case managers go down and we can do our preliminary assessments there. I know that the families are able to travel there as well.

We also take some of our vendors or support systems down, so the offenders have the opportunity to meet some of them prior to being released. And we do video conferencing from there. We find it is very important to link them to the services as well as the families prior to their release to the community. In some of our video conferences, we have had the family present, as well as our mentors there, so we connect them there.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. Ms. LaVigne.

Ms. LAVIGNE. I can't underscore enough the importance of family in successful reentry. At the Urban Institute, we conducted a longitudinal study of prisoner reentry in four different States. We looked at all kinds of factors that might predict the reentry success or failure, including the degree to which they had family available to support them, both financially and emotionally. What we found was that those who indicated that they had strong family support were much more successful in staying crime-free, staying off drugs, finding jobs and so forth.

What is important to note in this is that family support can be enhanced through increased visitation, more access to the prisoners when they are behind bars. I think it also relates to some of the research I mentioned in my formal statement, where the researchers found that halfway houses were not effective for low risk offenders, they were actually more detrimental than having them back in with their families and communities. I think we heard that as much from Mr. White, that as much as there were great services available to him, it also created additional barriers to him. I understand from his statement that he does have a supportive family.

So I just want to underscore again, thinking very carefully about how you use the scarce resources of halfway houses, especially if

those house aren't close to where people live, or create barriers when they are trying to go to and from their jobs.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Chairman, when we look at distances in the District, the problem is, I think, that for the women, the females, females are a bit different from the male population. The females are housed at Danbury, CT, Philadelphia, Hazelton, PA, Alderson, WV, and Tallahassee, FL. And if you noticed in my official presentation, I talked about homeless shelters are where these people go. And when you think about it, one of the problems and one of the things that we get constantly from our females is that they are mothers. They have been away from their children for so long, they don't know them. They have to regain that confidence. Usually an aunt or grandmother or some other individual has taken care of their children.

It is a very difficult situation. And one of the things is that most of these individuals come from very menial positions. The families don't have money to travel to these locations to be able to visit them, even if they wanted to. So we have a very difficult and unique problem, as it relates to that.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. Mr. Varone.

Mr. VARONE. Mr. Chairman, I echo some of the same comments that my colleagues here at the table have mentioned to you. I want to just let you know that we at Hope Village also believe that family reunification is very important. We do it, and we promote it in a couple of different ways. We promote visitation right at the facility several times a week to allow families to come in and reunite with their loved ones. We have our social workers, there is a requirement in our program that requires our social workers to go out and do host visits. So when the family, when the offender is going to be releasing to that particular house, that they understand what is all involved, from both angles.

We also have a transitional skills and journaling program. It is a 9-week mandatory program that we started 3 years ago in our program. Those sections, we cover such topics as social influences, authority figures, anger and time management, creating a safety net. And these residents are allowed, or offenders are allowed to write in their journals, so that they would be able to then make use of that with their own private thoughts.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. Mr. White.

Mr. WHITE. Well, there is, I guess, family visitation, that is one of those things where there is a direct correlation between the prison and the coming home and possibly recidivising, I think. I know I was in a relatively close Bureau of Prison place in Hopewell, VA. Many people are much, much farther than that. But even to come and see me, whoever it might be had to, in essence, wipe out an entire day. They had to plan for the 2½ to 3 hour trip up, spend the time there, then the 2½ to 3 hour drive back, which doesn't leave much, even if you had the energy, there probably just wouldn't be the time.

And then once, when it is time to go to the halfway house, we are anticipating these visitations, which we only received individually 1 hour a week, depending on the building in which you stay at Hope Village. And for some, the frustration comes if, I know my

first home visit was denied, even though I had followed the rules, I had found employment and what have you. They said, "oh, well, it is too close to the weekend to be able to approve your home visit." And that was a very great source of frustration to me, because I had already told everyone, and everyone had planned to come over to the place where I would be staying, to spend the evening, have dinner.

So Friday afternoon when they told me, "oh, you are not going to be able to go home this weekend," I was very frustrated. And many other inmates may feel something beyond frustration, even anger. I have seen it myself, they come back into the quarters, and they are angry, they are cursing. They are just angry.

But family is very important. It is very important. It is one of those hot buttons. So for those who have a support system, people who are willing to visit them, it really could guide them in the right direction.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. White.

I want to welcome Mr. Cao to the committee.

Mr. CAO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I have another meeting to go to, so if you don't mind, I can just go ahead and ask my question. I represent the Second District of Louisiana, which is comprised of New Orleans. There is an interest in building a halfway house in an area of New Orleans East which was very much devastated by Katrina. The people are coming back to rebuild. There is a lack of a police force out there in the New Orleans East region. So people are somewhat anxious and fearful of having a halfway house in an area where there is already a lack of security.

My question to members of the panel is, what are some of the security risks of halfway houses, even though I am pretty sure that such institutions are beneficial and necessary? Would you recommend that a halfway house be built in an area recovering from Katrina and lacking an adequate security force?

Mr. LYNCH. I think those questions are probably good for Mr. Eichenlaub and Ms. Poteat.

Mr. EICHENLAUB. We have, as Congresswoman Norton knows, we have some difficulty placing halfway house around the community here, because people don't want them in their back yard in many cases. We try and find a balance between addressing the release needs of the offenders against the risk of placing them in the community. So we rely heavily on the accountability procedures that the residential reentry centers have in place, which requires them, under our contract, to have 24 hour a day accountability for the inmates. And whether that is at their job site or in the actual residential reentry center itself. I would leave it at that.

Mr. CAO. If you can address the question, because I have a very specific question, do you recommend that a halfway house be built in an area where people are recovering and lack an adequate security force to protect the people? I just want a direct answer.

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Is that a question for me, for the panel?

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Chairman, I would like to respond to that.

Mr. LYNCH. Sure, Mr. Reynolds. Take a crack at it.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Even though I am with a halfway house, and I might get hit over the head, we have facilities that are located in

upscale communities and those that are in low risk areas and high risk areas. I think the key to it is good communications with the community, and working with the political and economic structure within that area to get them comfortable with a halfway house or residential reentry center. Whoever the supplier of those services are, we have to go in and get them ready. When I say we, the halfway house owners, to get the community ready to accept it.

I just did an opening of a new halfway house in an area that was of high risk. And what I did was, I went into the area, I met with all of the community leaders, I met with all the political officials and everyone that had a stake in what is going to happen there. I was successful without having any opposition. At that time, there were no halfway house regulations that provided for a halfway house to be in that location.

So I think the answer to your question is, you need to be able to pull all factions together. Because there is adequate security within the halfway house and adequate follow-through. You would not know that it is a halfway house, of those facilities that I run.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. Mr. White.

Mr. WHITE. In my opinion, the security issue is, I guess from my experience, not too much of an issue from the inmate perspective. By and large, the people who are residents at the halfway houses are already used to a certain regimen, being on a short leash through whatever prison they have come. And for the most part, everyone is just looking to get through their time and get back home. So while there is of course a small population of people who, in any halfway house, will break the rules, will not come back, for the most part, you don't really have to worry about the inmates running amuck in this neighborhood. I assume this is the direction you are heading, the residents themselves as a security risk. Is that correct?

Mr. CAO. The residents fear that the halfway house would increase crime in an area where there is already lacking security.

Mr. WHITE. And I think that is kind of where I am heading. The residents of the halfway house, by and large, are not looking to commit crimes while housed in the halfway house. They are looking to finish their sentence and go wherever it is that they need to go from there.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. White.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Eleanor Holmes Norton for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Actually, Mr. White's testimony is, in a real sense, sets a predicate for some of what I want to ask, enforcement authorities. I have found that even when people are very troubled, they come to a community meeting and they are dead set on something they are angry about, lay out the rules, be very transparent with them, they help you enforce the rules. What they resent is not knowing how the rules are applied and then of course, feeling that they have been unfairly treated. And that is really dangerous when you are talking about people who have just gotten out of prison. Your own testimony says that is when they are most ready to be integrated.

Here is what I don't understand. Who gets to decide who goes to a halfway house and who doesn't? Could I have a straightforward answer, Mr. Eichenlaub? Who gets to decide? Is it you? And if it

is you, what specifically are the criteria for deciding who gets it and who doesn't get it?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Every inmate appears before his or her, what we call their unit team, which is comprised of their correctional counselor, a case—

Ms. NORTON. No, I am asking you, who gets to decide. Is it the BOP? I only have so much time. Does the BOP get to make that decision while people are in prison?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Yes, we make the referral.

Ms. NORTON. Does the BOP have written criteria that I could go to tomorrow to say, these are the kinds of inmates that Ms. Poteat and the halfway house leaders have to look forward to receiving, and what are those criteria? Could you spell them out and just list them for me?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. We have a policy that describes that, yes. And each case is evaluated on the merits of the individual and the needs of the individual.

Ms. NORTON. So—I hope they are. I hope it is individualized. But I am looking for at least some baseline criterion that would make me understand, high risk, low risk, been in jail a long time, like the ones Ms. Poteat talked about, just been in jail. I am looking for something other than what you just told me, Mr. Eichenlaub.

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Congresswoman Norton, there is nothing specific that says, if you have been incarcerated for 20 years, you get 180 days, or 12 months. There is nothing specific that says if you are incarcerated for this offense, you get this period of time. We have the flexibility built into our program that enables us to assess the needs of the offender and place him or her—

Ms. NORTON. OK, so there are no criteria for deciding. We have heard testimony from Ms. LaVigne that low risk offenders tend to do better in the community. I would have expected that at least that criterion would be one the BOP would use. I am troubled by no straightforward general criteria. Everything gets tailored. But if there are not general criteria, then I have to assume that sometimes there are decisions made which may appear not to be fair.

But let me say to the halfway house leaders, do you get to choose or select who gets admission to your halfway house?

Mr. REYNOLDS. We receive a dossier on each client that is proposed for the halfway house. And we have a right to accept or reject, based upon the certain criteria. But we do not have—

Ms. NORTON. Based upon what criteria? It is like getting admission or to Yale, you get to say thumbs down on some people, even though the BOP has said, this is an appropriate person to go into the halfway house.

Mr. REYNOLDS. No, what happens is in our location, we have people who review those particular things to make sure that they would fit into the halfway house environment that we run.

Ms. NORTON. What about you, Mr. Varone?

Mr. VARONE. It is the same.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, this is, it seems to me, a double whammy here. I am concerned about what appear not to be even rough criteria for placing people in halfway houses, and then wide open selection criteria by the halfway houses. Do these halfway houses all have to provide the same core services, Mr. Eichenlaub?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Yes.

Ms. NORTON. So if they all provide the same core services, does your contract mandate anything about who gets accepted or not? Or is this a wide open selection process like being admitted to any private institution?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. The contracts are negotiated based on six factors. And within that negotiation, there is some, there can be some criteria established for who can and cannot be accepted. Aggressive sex offenders, for example, there may be—

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Eichenlaub, I am very concerned about what seems to be wide open criteria on both ends. But let me give you an example. There has been testimony here that one of the threshold problems for people getting out of prison is they don't even have identification. CSOSA saw that was a problem for getting anywhere, and CSOSA apparently worked out a situation with the District to get non-drivers i.ds.

Then the BOP terminated this program. Could you give me any reason, if the District of Columbia, a few years ago, non-drivers were allowed, now we are told they are not?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. I am sorry. I am not familiar with that issue, but I would be happy to followup and provide a response in writing to the subcommittee.

Ms. NORTON. I would appreciate it if you would.

I am concerned about Ms. Poteat's testimony, because she said that there were 500 additional D.C. felons returning here. Now, what she is talking about, of course, are the infamous sentencing guidelines. And that, I am not sure that was a mistake any of, if you are talking about the felons who are going to be coming out and they are Federal felons?

Ms. POTEAT. That is correct.

Ms. NORTON. And indicated that, seemed to indicate there would be some difficulty in receiving such a large number. Mr. Eichenlaub, are those felons coming, do you know how those felons are coming to the District of Columbia? Are they coming in large numbers? Are they coming in small trickles? Have you been in touch with CSOSA about how you will indeed handle these felons? Have you been in touch with the halfway houses about how these felons will be matriculated back into civil society?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. We have dealt with circumstances such as this in the past when Federal laws have applied retroactively, and resulted in offenders being released. I am confident that with our relationship with CSOSA and the halfway house providers we can accommodate that.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Poteat's testimony—I know I am at the end of my time—she indicated, she raised the issue herself and indicated concern about so many folks. Now, you could alleviate that concern, for example, if you could tell us, yes, they are coming back but they are not coming back all at one time, or they will be coming back in small numbers. Can you tell us anything about these felons who will be coming back to the District of Columbia in larger numbers than usually come back in the form of D.C. code offenders?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. The rate at which they come out will be dependent upon the conditions and the release procedures that the parole commission establishes for them. So I couldn't say when

they are coming. Past experience suggests they are staggered when they come out, and I am confident we can accommodate that with, again, in collaboration with our partners here.

Ms. NORTON. I know my time is up, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LYNCH. OK, thank you.

Ms. POTEAT. Excuse me, Congresswoman Norton, I would like to clarify something for the record, in regard to the non-drivers identifications. There was a contract that we had with the city, but DMV is the one that terminated that, and BOP will need to go back and negotiate it.

Ms. NORTON. Why did they terminate the contract?

Ms. POTEAT. They said that because they are Federal prisoners in a halfway house, they would not allow them to get the non-District driver's license. But I have spoken with the Director of Bureau of Prisons, and he said that he would do a memorandum of understanding with the District and possibly piggyback on ours so that they can do that.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, I just want to say, memoranda of understanding have often kept the BOP from simply doing what is necessary to do. If all it took was a memorandum of understanding, I don't know why it would not have been considered a very urgent matter not to have any cessation in getting the i.d.'s to people just getting out of prison.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LYNCH. I would simply, on that matter, with the driver's licenses, I would just ask that be a three-way conversation between this committee and the Bureau of Prisons and the DMV to make sure that it is addressed in an expeditious manner. We can't leave this out there. OK? So we can sort of close that loop. And if it is a memorandum of understanding that gets it accomplished, then we will work that. It sounds like there may be a need for some regulatory refinement or legislation with respect to the standards that are employed in terms of reentry. I understand the situation as you mentioned, the circumstances with an aggressive sex offender. That matter must be treated, distinguished. However, that is one outlier. The standards for everyone else are still fairly vague, as Congresswoman Norton has noted.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Connolly for 5 minutes—I am sorry, I am out of order. The Chair recognizes Mr. Chaffetz for 5 minutes.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here. I truly do appreciate it. I particularly want to thank Mr. White for your composure and your courage for being here. I am sure a few years ago if somebody had suggested to you that you were going to be testifying before Congress, you would have said, yeah, right, and the New Orleans Saints are going to be in the Super Bowl, too. [Laughter.]

I applaud you both. I really do appreciate it. I am sure we can hear about all the positive attributes from all the other members on the panel, not to take away anything from them. But in the few minute that I do have, what I would really like to hear from your heart, and as candidly as you can, offer some suggestions and perspectives, in somewhat of a critical way, but in a constructive criticism, if you would, of things that you think should happen or things that weren't quite flowing as well as you could, all in the

spirit of trying to make it better, because I think that is what we are all here to help do.

So can you share that, your personal perspective on what yourself went through, but maybe others went through as well, and things that can be done to improve the system?

Mr. WHITE. Thank you. Well, unfortunately, there is no quick fix, no band-aid for this. It is a very difficult thing to do. In my experience, I think that everything should be taken on a case by case basis. And just based on the numbers of people coming out, and I guess the ratio of staff to resident or staff to inmate, depending on how you want to say it, it is just not that easy. But change is never easy, especially when you are really trying to shift, really make an overhaul of a situation and curb recidivism at a significant rate.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. If you could do one thing, what would be the No. 1 thing you would like to see done?

Mr. WHITE. The No. 1 thing that I would see done is just to simply have it seem that the halfway house system cares.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Tell me about the flexibility here. Because here you go and you find a job. And I recognize the need to go through the drug, I don't know if that was counseling or testing or whatever it might be, but you have to leave work early. You finally got a job, you got an employer who is gracious enough to, in a very tough economy, to hire somebody. Expand a little more about that experience and what should be done in that way to help the employer, help you, and also do the training and things that they need to do.

Mr. WHITE. One thing that was of concern for me was that they didn't offer these programs over the weekend, when I didn't necessarily have to work. Of course, that would cut into my home visit time, but they are required programs. And at least I would have that option, it would either cut into my work, which as I said, my employer, they look the other way, but like I say, you have to leave early twice a week, this early. Or I could take this 1½ hours to 2 hours during my weekend. I would have that option. I would opt to take it over the weekend, because I need my job. At some point, I will be going home for good. So I wouldn't mind cutting into those visitations a little bit, even though they were important to me.

But that was an issue with that. And as I said, they give you a set limit of time from destination, from point of origin to destination, from halfway house to work, and from work to halfway house. Working in Fairfax, I had to take a bus and then a series of trains and then another bus each way. So it didn't allow for any missing of buses or missing of trains. My bus came about 10 minutes after I was due to be off work. So I really had to run four or five blocks to the bus to make it, because it only ran every 45 minutes in that area of Fairfax. So a little more flexibility in the time. As I said, based on a case by case, you just can't lump everyone into one box. We all have different needs. And they need to be met.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. I would just suggest, if you have any other thoughts or anecdotes or any other suggestions along the way, I appreciate your being here, but if at some point you do have other suggestions, if you would submit those to this committee, they would be invaluable. I appreciate your perspective. I wish you nothing but the best, and thank you very much for being here. I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Connolly for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing.

Thank you to the panelists for participating, and especially you, Mr. White. I thank you for your courage in sharing your story, and I am proud of the fact that my home county, Fairfax County, is a place willing to invest in you and others. I pray and hope you will stay in the righteous path.

Mr. EICHENLAUB, picking up where Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton left off, did I understand you in response to Representative Norton to say that there are no criteria by BOP in terms of who goes into a halfway house?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Let me clarify that if I may.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I am going to ask you to pull that mic closer, because I cannot hear you.

Mr. EICHENLAUB. There are some criteria. For example, if an offender has pending charges or detainers, they can't go to a halfway house.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Those are criteria for not going.

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Right.

Mr. CONNOLLY. What are the criteria for screening people and saying, here is a good candidate for rehabilitation and the avoidance of recidivism?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. That is correct, and I would respectfully—

Mr. CONNOLLY. What is correct?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. That is correct that there are no specific criteria that says, if you are this type of offender, this is what you get.

Mr. CONNOLLY. That is amazing. There are no criteria for who goes into a halfway house? So you are just rolling the dice?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. I would respectfully submit that our policy enables us to do the kind of thing that Mr. White is suggesting, which is each offender is evaluated on a case by case basis, to make an assessment as to what his or her specific needs are and then we place them based on what their needs are.

Mr. CONNOLLY. If I understood Ms. LaVigne's testimony, and correct me if I am wrong, Ms. LaVigne, you indicated that individuals who were deemed medium and high risk actually derive the greatest benefit from halfway house participation. And let me ask Mr. Eichenlaub and Ms. Poteat, that seems counter-intuitive.

What would you comment? I think for the average citizen, the person at lowest risk would be the best candidate for going, not a violent crime or whatever it may be, that is the person who is probably going to benefit the most from a halfway house and have the highest chance of success of reintegration. And yet, if I understood Ms. LaVigne, not necessarily. And by the way, that is a heartening thing to hear, but I am just wondering if you would comment a little bit. Because I think for the average citizen, including myself, that seems a little counter-intuitive.

Ms. POTEAT. Yes. I continue to say it would be your high risk offenders, for instance, someone who has spent significant period of time in prison, someone that has nowhere to live because the family ties have been broken. Someone without employable skills, did

not take the benefit of the service in the prison system, and is coming out unemployable. Someone that lacks financial support and family support. Someone that is, has a violent crime, you may want to put them in the halfway house for a gradual transition before they are going out into the community.

And then we can have a time to assess and determine and link them up with their services before they are actually sent home. Oftentimes these men may, I am speaking particularly to the men right now, may be coming out, and they have burned their bridges. And their families even have moved. So there is nowhere for them to live in the District of Columbia. Then we have to put them in a shelter or find alternative housing, whether it is transitional housing and so forth.

So it gives us adequate time to link them up and better prepare them to a positive reintegration into the community before just coming right out.

Mr. EICHENLAUB. I agree.

Mr. CONNOLLY. One of the things that bothers me, we closed the Lorton prison, an absolutely correct thing to do. However, there were understandings at the time that efforts would be made to try to make sure that inmates from that prison and future visitors to that facility would be housed relatively close to the District of Columbia, for all the right reasons, in terms of family visits and so forth. But as a matter of fact, D.C. prisoners are now scattered on, as I understand it, as many as 33 States?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. I don't know that number specifically, but that is feasible.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Is that good public policy, from your point of view, Mr. Eichenlaub?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. We try to keep them as close to home as possible. Many are in Rivers Correctional Institution in North Carolina, our correctional institutions in western Maryland and Virginia. So the majority, I think, are actually closer than that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well, what would be the reason why somebody would be many hundreds of miles away?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. If they need specialized medical or mental health treatment, they could go to one of our medical facilities where they get that treatment. If they have been in a fight with another individual from whom they need to be separated, that may result in them traveling farther away. If they have been disruptive, and we don't have a facility that is appropriate for their level of supervision that is necessary. That may result in them going farther away.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Is it also a capacity problem?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. That space is tight.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, I can't tell whether I have any time left or not.

Mr. LYNCH. You don't.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the chairman.

Mr. LYNCH. That is quite all right.

Mr. Varone, I wanted to ask you, you have a commendable record, especially over the last year, couple of years. And the re-arrest record, post-release. I was just trying to drill down on some of that data. How many of the folks that you are talking about,

there were like 1,157 people that you had come in and go through Hope Village, and only 9 of them were re-arrested in the following 6 months after release, how many of those folks are the Bureau of Prisons folks?

Mr. VARONE. I am not, at this point, Mr. Chairman, able to give you that information. I can research that.

Mr. LYNCH. OK.

Mr. VARONE. But I believe that most, if not all of them, were BOP.

Mr. LYNCH. Really? That is a commendable record. I am just trying to figure out if we can replicate some of the things that you are doing over there. You mentioned the 7-day orientation, when people come in, you spend a lot of time figuring out what the nature of their needs are. Maybe, and you can explain this, maybe you are finding out what they need in a more thorough fashion, and by addressing those specific needs, maybe that is paying off on the other end, so that the time they spend with you is more meaningful.

Do you have any thoughts about that? What is the magic of your, well, it is not magic, it is hard work, but what is the key component of your success? I deal a lot with the recovery and rehab community. And those numbers are stunning. But what do you think are the, I mean, all of you are doing wonderful work, don't get me wrong. But I just think that is a remarkable outcome that you are achieving there.

Mr. VARONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My only direct answer to you is, commitment and dedication to helping people. Because at the end of the day, we are all citizens of the United States of America. We live in the greatest country in the world. And when an individual commits a crime, they serve their sentence, they are coming back, they are coming back to our communities. So we have to figure out ways to help that individual make a good transition, so that they are and they do become productive members of society, like you and I.

I believe that we have taken our job, we take it very seriously. We look at assessing this individual, from a day to day standpoint, we put them in a position to be successful. That is not always the case with all individuals. Some individuals come to us with agendas already formulated. So I believe that for those individuals that want to do a good job, want to take the program seriously, want to become a better productive member of society, open up to our case managers and our specialized people that we have on staff, and the partnerships that we formulate in the community, I think when you encompass all that, you put out a good product.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. Mr. Reynolds, having been involved with programs and actually established a home to help women making that transition, as you mentioned in your initial testimony, a lot of these folks coming out, the females, are moms. And that creates a dynamic that is sometimes very difficult to address, especially when there is a distance here between their homes and where they are at a halfway house.

What do you think are the most important changes that we might make in order to achieve better outcomes for the women that we are trying to serve?

Mr. REYNOLDS. I think the first thing that we have to look at, Mr. Chairman, is the length of time that the females spend within the facility. Also to make sure that we have the wraparound services that are needed right at the facility. I will give you an example, and probably God made this happen and you asked the right question, this morning we were at the facility about 7:30. A young lady came stumping up the steps and passed me, and I asked her to stop for a second. I asked her about four or five times, she wouldn't stop, she continued. Then I went downstairs and I stood with her and talked with her. She wouldn't acknowledge me at all for about 5 minutes.

Finally, I got through to her. And one of her problems was anger, anger within herself. We have a lot of that. And we have a relationship with the mother to the children, they have been divorced from the children. They still have a desire to be with the male. So there is a lot of complications that we need to deal with. And we need someone like a psychiatrist or psychologist right onsite to be able to help them deal with those issues immediately. That would be some of the things that I would look at, and then the after-tracking.

Mr. LYNCH. That is great. Thank you.

Ms. Holmes Norton, for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The chairman has spoken about some of the statistics that were in the testimony. You yourself, Ms. LaVigne, testified that halfway houses appear to have quite different effects. In your view, do halfway houses make a difference? Does it matter to matriculate people through a halfway house?

Ms. LAVIGNE. I think they can make a difference. Not to beat a dead horse, but this whole issue of risk level I think is a really important one. Mr. Connolly asked about the low risk offenders, and how come they weren't getting any benefit out of the halfway houses. Well, it is by definition of the fact that they are already low risk. So you are putting people in places where they don't need to be, because they already have good odds of being successful.

Ms. NORTON. Well, you testified, and it was very important to hear this testimony, because Mr. Connolly was right, perhaps for lay people like ourselves, it is counter-intuitive. I understand that, but I am not sure BOP does. Because BOP did not testify that it is using those criteria. In fact, could I ask you, and I ask this very respectfully, Mr. Eichenlaub, I have been impressed with the use of best practices within the BOP. Do you use best practices when it comes to halfway houses? I don't hear the metrics. I don't hear the criteria. So it is hard for the committee to know how we should evaluate halfway houses.

So I must ask you, how do you evaluate halfway houses? How would you rate these halfway houses? And on what metric are you basing that evaluation? And do you tell them how you have evaluated them and what they need to do to improve or what they have done that is best?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. Thank you. We absolutely do that. At the time that we establish the contract with these organizations, as I mentioned previously, we have six factors on which they are evaluated: accountability, programs, community relations, site validity and

suitability, safety issues, life safety issues, personnel and communications. Those are the criteria on which we evaluate these organizations. We audit those regularly, three times a year. Then a comprehensive evaluation once a year.

Ms. NORTON. Could I ask the halfway house leaders here, given the testimony of Mr. White, testimony reinforced by work the committee did in trying to, in visiting the halfway houses and trying to get witnesses, could you commit to this committee that some of the rigidity that Mr. White testified to, for example, when an inmate has a job, or is willing on the weekend to in fact do what would otherwise be required to do during job time, would you be willing to commit to a second look at some of the rigidities that apparently are to be found in halfway houses in light of particularly the job situation, and how frustrated an inmate can be when, yes, surrounded by rules, but rules that keep him from contact with his family or keep him from in fact getting the kind of job record that we all believe is necessary? Are you willing to look at your own procedures to make sure those rigidities are not simply built in?

Mr. VARONE. Absolutely, Congresswoman Norton. In order to be a better program, in order to be a better organization, you have to continually look at those types of things. If I may, just to go into a little bit of detail, the privatization part of this business is such that if you don't do well, you are not going to be in business. It is just the way the Federal Government works.

Ms. NORTON. I understand that. But I also understand, look, let's be clear. We can't get halfway houses in other communities in the District, as badly as we need them. Therefore, BOP is going to have to do the best job it can in order to make sure you do the best job you can. This is not like the ordinary contract, and you know it. The fees, I was curious about fees. I understand the personal responsibility associated with the rules. And for that matter, with the fees. But Mr. White testified that he had to pay a fee for living there, even until his release date, even if he wasn't living there. Would you clarify that for me, please, how that could possibly be the case?

Mr. VARONE. I believe the fee that Mr. White is referring to is the subsistence fee that the Bureau of Prisons requires all Federal inmates to pay for a portion of their cost of care.

Ms. NORTON. Well, maybe Mr. White should clarify. Mr. White, were you saying you were no longer living or eating or receiving subsistence from the halfway house, but were required to pay, what is it, 25 percent, or whatever is the amount? And by the way, who sets that amount? Go ahead, Mr. White.

Mr. WHITE. Yes, that was correct. Even when I went to finish the rest of my halfway house time living at home, I wasn't receiving any services from the halfway house, but I was still required to pay.

Ms. NORTON. Well, you are going to have to explain that to me, to make me understand that, given how few resources these ex-offenders have. Could you explain that? You were living at, I guess, Hope Village. So let me ask you to explain it, Mr. Varone.

Mr. VARONE. Again, Congresswoman, we take our direction from the Bureau of Prisons.

Ms. NORTON. OK, now, the buck has been passed to you, Mr. Eichenlaub. So catch it here. Why would an ex-offender who had a family, good enough to feed him while he is looking for a job, to help him with his subsistence, be paying money to a private contractor who is providing nothing toward his subsistence? Wouldn't that turn you off if you were in the position of this ex-offender?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. One of the things we try and encourage among our offenders is acceptance of personal responsibility for their conduct.

Ms. NORTON. Just a moment, sir. I pay because I live, well, that is where I pay my mortgage. I pay rent because I live there. Now, how does it increase the personal responsibility of the inmate to pay for what he is not receiving?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. We believe they are demonstrating personal responsibility and accepting responsibility by paying a minimal subsistence amount for their residence.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, you indicated that we may need some, if we are not able to get the Bureau of Prisons to give us a better answer than that, then it may be that we need a statutory change here. The notion of making an inmate pay for what he does not receive runs counter to personal responsibility. That is exactly what the inmate was doing before. He was taking what he wasn't supposed to take for what he wasn't receiving. If it makes me angry, I can't imagine what people who have anger problems must feel when they say, you don't live here, you don't eat here and you are going to pay anyway.

All I can ask you to do is this, I understand that you are not the Director of the Bureau of Prisons. I will be writing the Bureau of Prisons. The chairman has already indicated that we will be doing followup. But I ask you to review this policy, so that if anything can encourage families to take over the subsistence responsibility, and if I can say so, Mr. Eichenlaub, so that we can save the taxpayers of the United States some of the funds. After all, CSOSA will continue to have jurisdiction, because this person is on supervised release.

So I find it hard to understand, given all we know about modern penology, how this requirement does anything but run counter to all we understand about modern penology. So I ask you, are you willing to review this policy?

Mr. EICHENLAUB. I respect your opinion. We will take a look at it.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

I have to confess, I do struggle with the concept that someone might serve their sentence, submit to a halfway house and complete that program, and then return home and yet still pay into a system that they have already completed. I am not sure with just this exchange that I understand the whole situation.

So I would ask you, Mr. Eichenlaub, Ms. Poteat, Mr. Varone and Mr. White, if I could get a sense of your own personal view of this and what is required. It does seem counter-intuitive at this level. But again, we haven't really drilled down much on the issue. I would like to find out what the policy is that we are following there, and whether or not this is an anomaly in Mr. White's case,

or if this is something that happens across the board with all of our inmates and those who are trying to gain reentry. I just don't understand enough about it.

And we have a call for votes.

The other piece I want to say in conclusion is that I understand the statement that there are no hard and fast standards that we apply to each individual. But you also say that we take each case, each person on a case by case basis. But there needs to be standards applied on a case by case basis, I would imagine. It can't be simply random and thinking up new standards every time a new person is assessed. So I think it would be helpful in tracking and identifying best practices if you said, OK, this is a group that we look at and we think they are most suitable for halfway houses. Then here are some groups that we identify that would be poor choices for that system.

And then we would be able to get data from that and figure out, what are the best practices. I think it would help our friends who are operating these halfway houses to know what type of analysis has been made prior to the person showing up on their doorstep. It might help us in the future. I just think that it introduces a little bit of accountability. It is not perfect, it is not rocket science, either. But it may help us in serving the people that we are trying to serve, and it may use the taxpayer money in a more efficient manner, which is always desirable.

We have had a very good exchange here. I think this panel has suffered enough from the questions of the committee. I would assure you that all of your testimony has been entered into the record, with the exception of what I have asked you to supply in the coming, let's say, 2 weeks I would like to have some of that information regarding the payments that Mr. White has asserted that he is making for no services after departure.

I want to thank you for your willingness to come before this committee. I want to thank you all for your good work. This is a tough, tough area. You are doing God's work out there, trying to help folks. And we appreciate that. With that, this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:57 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

