

July 12, 2023

Judiciary and Public Safety Committee Hearing

Council of the District of Columbia

John A. Wilson Building

1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20004

Subject: Testimony Advocating for Nutritional Reform in Correctional Facilities via the FRESH STARTS Act of 2023

Good Afternoon Councilwoman Pintos members, and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. My name is Leonard Eugene Bishop I'm currently the ANC Commissioner for Single Member District 7F08. I am testifying today in support of the FRESH START Act of 2023.

Today I testify with an urgent plea regarding a pressing issue that requires this council to bring forth this needed legislation. The severe inadequacy of nutrition afforded to the resident population at the DC Department of Corrections is saddening, to say the least. As a recipient of the substandard and unhealthy food served here. I implore you, our representatives, to exercise decisive action for the sake of the health, well-being, and fundamental dignity of the men and women confined within the DOC.

To describe the meals being provided as simply 'offensive' would be to do a disservice to the gravity of the situation. These meals primarily comprised of processed, soy and canned goods, which are not only severely lacking in essential nutrients but are also frequently outdated or in varying stages of spoilage. Fruits and vegetables, vital elements of any balanced diet, are either not served at all, overripe or overcooked, rendering them barely edible. This state of affairs is a flagrant disregard for the basic beliefs of human dignity and stands in stark contradiction to the established norms of correctional institutions.

This grim reality highlights the urgent need for the enactment of the FRESH STARTS Act of 2023. This meticulously crafted legislation represents a glimmer of hope for incarcerated individuals, such as myself, who have been forced to rely on commissary purchases as a lifeline due to the inedible nature of the meals being provided. The infrequent provision of uncooked vegetables by the Department of Corrections serves as a rare oasis in an otherwise nutritionally deficient landscape.

This legislation transcends the immediate issue of meal provision, reaching further into the comprehensive influence of diet on health, and well-being. Devotion to sourcing nutritionally rich foods, embodies a tangible dedication to augmenting the quality of meals within correctional facilities. This aligns squarely with the core values of the Good Food Purchasing Program,

encapsulating local economies, optimal nutrition, a respected workforce, environmental sustainability, and human welfare. This pivotal facet of the Act not only promotes health but also fortifies our commitment to local producers and a sustainable future.

The FRESH STARTS Act of 2023 represents a pivotal juncture in our collective journey towards building a more compassionate, healthy, and hopeful environment within DC Department of Correction. It is not merely an act of legislation, but an expression of our society's responsibility and an embodiment of our shared commitment to human dignity, health, and equality. Your action on this Act echoes your values, showing that you honor the essential worth of each individual, regardless of their circumstances.

In conclusion, I appeal to your sense of equality, urging you to vote in favor of the FRESH STARTS Act of 2023. This isn't just legislation, but a pledge to human dignity, recognizing the invaluable role nutrition plays in physical health, and mental well-being. Therefore, I ask you to seize this critical opportunity and ensure that not another day passes where residents are subjected to subpar, nutritionally deficient meals within our correctional facilities.

I thank you for your invaluable time, your undivided attention, and the significant actions you are poised to take in the future. Your commitment to address this pressing issue is deeply appreciated by the men and women confined within the DC Department of Corrections.

Respectfully,

Leonard E. Bishop
ANC Commissioner 7F08
7F08@ANC.DC.GOV
202-790-6714