



**Community Advocacy Guide:**  
**B25-0112: FRESH STARTS Act of 2023**

**Public Hearing: Thursday, July 13, 2023**

*The bill can be accessed here: <https://ims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B25-0112>*

**Background**

Community leaders and formerly incarcerated residents have long been voicing concerns about the quality of meals served at the DC Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities. In 2021, Don't Mute My Health, Impact Justice, and DC Greens co-hosted [a series of community conversation on DC Jail Food](#), where formerly incarcerated residents shared their experiences such as inadequate food, lack of fresh and nutritious meals, and unsanitary conditions they faced in DC jails. Numerous studies suggest that lack of adequate nutrition can lead to poor behavioral and mental health<sup>1</sup>. Research also has shown that people who are incarcerated are more likely to be in worse mental and physical health<sup>23</sup>.

community and government led efforts, DC Council held listening sessions with community members, advocates, and experts to develop the Food Regulation Ensures Safety and Hospitality Specialty Training Aids Reentry Transition and Success (FRESH STARTS) Act of 2023. The Bill (B25-0112) was introduced by Councilmember Brooke Pinto on February 2, 2023, with the support of Councilmembers Lewis George, Henderson, Nadeau, Allen, Frumin, R. White, and Gray.

**What does this bill do?**

The bill proposes to:

- Mandate DOC to provide all incarcerated individuals with daily nutritious meals based on the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans and offer a plant-based food as a main course option;
- Direct DOC to adopt the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP), a set of values to promote purchasing of food that supports local economies, health, valued workforce, animal welfare and environmental sustainability;
- Increase transparency by mandating DOC to publish monthly reports on food safety and sanitation and an annual report on DC Health's quarterly food safety inspections;
- Require DOC to pay all incarcerated individuals engaged in food preparation or related services no less than a living wage as established by DC law; and
- Create a task force to develop long-term recommendations, including steps to:
  - Increase the quality of meals within correctional facilities in the District;
  - Transition to a self-operated food service model;
  - Provide currently incarcerated individuals with expanded access to hospitality career training as well as employment support upon release; and
  - Include an urban farm within the designs of new and remodeled jail facilities



## Public Hearing Details

- **Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety**, chaired by Councilmember Brooke Pinto
- When: **Thursday, July 13, 2023, at 1:00 pm**
- Where: virtual via Zoom
- How to watch: DC Council Channel 13, [www.dccouncil.us](http://www.dccouncil.us), [youtube.com/@cmbrookepinto](https://youtube.com/@cmbrookepinto), and [entertainment.dc.gov](http://entertainment.dc.gov).

## How can I provide inputs on the bill?

Anyone can testify on this bill, even if you are not a DC resident. To submit your testimony:

- Contact Ms. Aukima Benjamin, Committee Manager to the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, **no later than Wednesday, July 12, 12:59pm** by:
  - E-mailing at [judiciary@dccouncil.gov](mailto:judiciary@dccouncil.gov), or
  - Calling (202) 724-8058
- You will then receive information on how to join the hearing.
- If you anticipate needing language interpretation, or requiring sign language interpretation, inform the Committee of the need as soon as possible, but no later than July 6, 2023.

## Tips on providing testimony:

1. Thank Committee Chair for convening this hearing and considering this bill;
2. Greet any other Councilmembers who are present;
3. Briefly introduce yourself and/or your organization/business;
4. Explain why you care about food served in the District's correction facilities;
5. Explain how one or more pieces of this bill will make a difference to you, your organization, or your community;
6. Express any concerns or suggestions you have to improve this bill;
7. Close by thanking the Councilmember(s) for listening and re-stating clearly whether you think the Council should make this legislation a law in DC.

As an individual, you will have 3 minutes to speak. If you represent an organization, you will have 5 minutes to speak. Your written testimony can be as long as you like and include more information than you read aloud in your allotted time. Remember that one page of double-spaced text (about 250 words) takes about 2 minutes to read aloud.

Be sure to practice reading your testimony aloud before the hearing and time how long it takes you. Practicing will help stay within the time limits and make your points clearly and succinctly.

After you testify, councilmembers may ask follow-up questions about your testimony. It's ok if you're not an expert or don't know the answer to a question. You can always say, "I'll get back to you."



### **Tips on testifying virtually:**

You will not be assigned a specific time to testify but rather you will be expected to be present when your name is called. You may estimate when this will be based on the witness list that is shared the day before the hearing. When it is your turn to testify, you will be called on. You will need to have access to/be able to be on Zoom. The virtual hearing will be publicly visible.

### **What can I do if I can't testify that day?**

You can submit a written testimony via email at [judiciary@dccouncil.gov](mailto:judiciary@dccouncil.gov) or leave voicemail testimony by calling (202) 630-7585. If you are leaving voicemail testimony, speak slowly and clearly, state your full name and the organization you represent, if any, and note the bill, hearing, or agency you are submitting testimony on. Do not provide an e-mail, phone number, or other personal contact information in voicemail testimony. **All information must be received by September 15, 2023.**

### **About the DC Food Policy Council**

The DC Food Policy Council (FPC) is a coalition of local food leaders and government representatives appointed by Mayor Muriel Bowser to promote a more equitable, healthy, and sustainable food system in the District. The FPC creates Community Advocacy Guides on District food-related legislation to educate and inform residents about the legislation and how to testify.

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<sup>1</sup> Rao, T. S., Asha, M. R., Ramesh, B. N., & Rao, K. S. (2008). Understanding nutrition, depression and mental illnesses. *Indian journal of psychiatry*, 50(2), 77–82. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.42391>

<sup>2</sup> Maruschak, L. M, Brnson, J., & Alper, M. (2021). Indicators of Mental Health Problems Reported by Prisoners and Jail Inmates. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. [https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/imhprpii1112\\_sum.pdf](https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/imhprpii1112_sum.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Binswanger, I. A., Krueger, P. M., & Steiner, J. F. (2009). Prevalence of chronic medical conditions among jail and prison inmates in the United States compared with the general population. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 63(11), 912–919.