September 17, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice-Chair and Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Hagerty
Chair, Senate Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
251 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Collins, Vice-Chair Murray, Chair Hagerty, and Ranking Member Reed:

We, the undersigned, urge you and your fellow members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations and Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government to fully support the District of Columbia Courts' Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 budget request. Full funding at the requested FY 2027 levels for operations and capital improvements is necessary for our community's Courts to serve their crucial role in protecting public safety in the Nation's Capital and providing for the fair and timely administration of justice.

For the last four fiscal years, the D.C. Courts have managed to maintain their core operations with roughly level funding, despite the impacts of inflation and compounding infrastructure needs. **But now, in 2026, as the number of criminal prosecutions and civil matters rise even more sharply, the D.C. Courts are under severe strain to meet the needs of the District's residents and visitors. Specifically, from FY 2023 to FY 2025, new civil and domestic relations case filings have increased 33%; criminal case filings have increased 160%.** These increases must be accompanied by budget increases or litigants and the public will suffer.

We are grateful that the Senate successfully filled numerous judicial vacancies on the D.C. Court of Appeals and Superior Court this year, including the eight confirmations on August 7. We are pleased that the Courts will soon be able to operate with a more complete roster of judges. **Judges cannot deliver justice on their own, however. They must be supported by professional court staff, reliable technology, robust security, and up-to-date capital infrastructure to adjudicate cases.** Thus, while the prospect of new judicial officers in D.C. is exciting, each added judge will heighten the need for fully funded D.C. Courts.

The D.C. Courts' Critical Role in Public Safety and the Delivery of Justice

Comprised of the D.C. Court of Appeals (D.C.'s equivalent of a state-level supreme court), the Superior Court (our trial court of general jurisdiction), and the Court System, the District's judicial branch is not simply another government agency, nor does it follow the same structure or funding as Article III federal courts. Rather, these courts are an integral component of the District's public safety foundation.

Federal and local officials, as well as D.C. residents, share Congress's goal to ensure that criminal and civil cases are promptly, fairly, and efficiently resolved. Recent changes in relevant laws and prosecution practices have resulted in a substantial increase in criminal case filings and in greater pre-trial detention of those who have been arrested. A corresponding increase in the Court's capacity to process these cases is essential to ensure fairness and confidence in the judicial system: every arrest, grand jury proceeding, prosecution, juvenile proceeding, pretrial detention hearing, trial, and appellate review depends upon sufficient operational capacity of the Courts.

We all can agree that the agencies comprising the justice system, such as those responsible for supervising defendants before trial or after sentencing, assisting victims, housing and caring for incarcerated persons, or integrating returning citizens back into the community, depend on efficient courts. Victims deserve to feel safe, have timely resolution of cases, and accountability for those who harmed them. Individuals charged with crimes deserve to have their Constitutional rights protected as they face life-changing consequences and the potential loss of liberty for their alleged actions.

Additionally, the Courts must also have adequate resources for the timely adjudication of civil matters, including a range of commercial disputes as well as child custody cases, domestic relations matters, the probating of estates, employment and housing cases, and a panoply of other non-criminal proceedings. **Businesses and everyday people in the District rely on our courts to address their legal disputes in a reasonable amount of time. As noted, these filings have increased 30% in the last three fiscal years.** Without sufficient tools and staff to advance cases through the many stages of civil litigation, cases can drag on for years. This can – and does – lead to unintended ripple effects on families, business owners, employees, and the economy of the District of Columbia.

The D.C. Courts Serve a National Interest

The D.C. Courts serve not just the needs of District residents but also ensure safety and fairness for the 27 million tourists who come to the city each year. Members of Congress and their staffs, private employers, non-profits, and foreign government personnel also depend upon the D.C. Courts to assure proper administration of justice. Given D.C.'s unique role in our federal structure, Congress has a unique and vital responsibility to appropriately fund the Courts.

The Courts' Budget Must Be Fully Funded to Fulfill Core Needs

Congress has been presented with a budget designed to meet today's needs, but the current recommendation for FY 2027 by the House Committee on Appropriations proposes a reduction

of nearly 13% from the FY 2026 budget, even though criminal and civil case filings have increased significantly. As noted above, the budget proposed by the D.C. Courts for FY 2027 follows years of fiscal austerity. **Currently, D.C. Courts operate with staff levels well below levels of ten years ago, jeopardizing their ability to meet security and case management needs, which are central for the people served by the courts.**

Specifically, the D.C. Courts face distinct and mounting challenges that require more resources than the House's proposal would provide. Security threats to court buildings and judicial officers are an escalating concern not just at the U.S. Supreme Court, but among our local judiciary as well. Our Courts manage a trove of non-public personal information and proprietary business data. Hackers, ransomware, and other cyber threats are a persistent danger, so dynamic information technology protections are a constant requirement. The adoption of artificial intelligence tools promises to introduce new efficiencies, but AI implementation requires technically savvy staff and sophisticated technology infrastructure.

While the Courts have worked hard to stay ahead of these challenges through improved productivity, targeted reductions, prudent fiscal management, and systematic strategic planning, the options for struggling through with inadequate resources have now been exhausted. In FY 2027, even continued static funding will diminish the Courts' ability to administer justice effectively and safely, especially with the eight newly confirmed judges set to join our courts.

Conclusion

Congress and the President have made clear their shared goals to improve public safety, reduce crime, increase operational efficiencies, and strengthen cybersecurity. Those are aspirations shared across the District of Columbia by the organizations and individuals who have signed this letter – all of whom care deeply about our community, the importance of an independent and effective judicial branch, and the principles of our Constitution.

Fully funding the D.C. Courts' operational and capital improvement budget requests for FY 2027 is an investment in our shared goals and will promote the fair and timely administration of justice for D.C.'s residents, those working in the District, and all who visit our Nation's Capital.

Sincerely,

Businesses and Organizations (95):

Council for Court Excellence
A Present Help Movement, Inc.
ACLU-D.C.
Advisory Neighborhood Commission Single Member District 6B09
Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.
Akin
ArentFox Schiff LLP
Ashurst Perkins Coie U.S. LLP
Bar Association of the District of Columbia
Bernstein Management Corporation

Bread for the City
Burr Law Firm
Calloway & Co.
Capitol Concierge, Inc.
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington
Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law
Central American Resource Center
Child Welfare Monitor
Children's Law Center (DC)
Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children of the District of Columbia
Crowell & Moring LLP
Curator Counsel, PLLC
cylindr
D.C. Affairs Community of the D.C. Bar
D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center
D.C. Chapter - American Board of Trial Advocates
DC Affordable Law Firm
DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
DC Bar Foundation
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
DC Consortium of Legal Services Providers
DC Consumer Rights Coalition
DC Defense Lawyers' Association
DC Fiscal Policy Institute
DC Justice Lab
DC Statehood PAC
DC Vote
District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission
District of Columbia Behavioral Health Association
Eversheds Sutherland US LLP
Federal City Council
Flikshop
Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop
Georgetown Prisons and Justice Initiative
Grassroots DC
Green and Foushee
Helping Ourselves to Transform
Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia
House of Ruth
InterAmerican Bar Association, DC Chapter
Johnson Legal PLLC
Koonz, McKenney, Johnson & DePaolis LLC

Law Office of Alexander Powell, PLLC
Law Offices of Cooper & Crickman, PLLC
Lee/Shoemaker PLLC
Legal Aid DC
Legal Counsel for the Elderly
Lillian's Southern Box Catering
Lynn & Palumbo
McGuireWoods, LLP
Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project
More Than Our Crimes
Morgan Lewis LLP
Mothers Outreach Network
National Association of Consumer Advocates
National Bar Association
National Crime Prevention Council
Neighbors for Justice
Network for Developing Conscious Communities
Non-Profit Solution
Open City Advocates
Open Horizon
Opportunity DC
Pathways to Housing DC
Perspectives Partnership
Rising for Justice, Inc.
Scale Justice
School Justice Project
Scrofano Law PC
Solid Ground Law
Steptoe LLP
The Bail Project
The Festival Center
The Lapidus Law Firm, PLLC
The Second Look Project
The Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
Trial Lawyers Association of Metropolitan Washington, D.C.
Tzedek DC
Ullico Inc.
Volare
Volunteer Legal Advocates
Washington Council of Lawyers
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia

Individuals (214):

Aayushma Bastola	Chuck Elkins, ANC Commissioner 3D01
Aisha Adegbuyi	Claude E. Bailey
Alexandra Smith	Cortney Robinson Henderson
Alfred F. Belcuore	Cristina Sacco
Alyssa Lovegrove	Crystal Jones Nieves
Ameerah Adetoro	Cynthia Arnold
Andrew H. Marks	Cynthia D. Hill
Ann C. Keep, Board Member Council for Court Excellence and ANC6b - Public Safety Committee	D.C. Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6
Ann K. Ford, Former Member if D.C. Board of Governors	Daraja Carroll, CJA Panel member
Ann Marie Foley	Darrell G. Mottley, D.C. Bar Past President, 2011-2012
Anna Roblin, ANC Commissioner 5D03	David Cynamon
Annika Monkarsh	David H. Cox, Esq.
Anthony Petty	David Sobelsohn
Anupama Iyer	Dawn Boutelle
Ashok Kumar Batra	Denise Diallo
Ata Akiner	Dillon Lawrence McDowell
Autumn Clarke	Diona Howard-Nicolas
Avneet Chhabra	D'Lynn Jacobs
Benjamin F. Wilson	Dr. Carmen Johnson
Benton Coblentz	Dwight D. Murray
Betty E. Sinowitz, Esq.	Dylan Melton
Brian Ferguson	Eden Romeo
Brian Spiegel	Elinor Hart
Brian Terrill	Elisa Ortiz
Brian Zaleski	Elizabeth S. Medaglia
Bruce Levine	Elizabeth Sarah Gere
Carol Melamed	Elizabeth Twardock
Carol Sienche	Ellen M. Jakovic
Cary Feldman	Elliott Milstein, Professor of Law Emeritus, American University Washington College of Law
Caryl S. Bernstein	Elyse Smith
Cassandre Gaspard	Emily Cassometus
Chales K. Hopkins	Emily Han
Charquinta McCray	Emma Layton
Chen Pu Philippe Lin, Esq.	Emma Trugman
Chloe Madison Lawrence	Erik English
Christen Boas Hayes	Fatimah Sultan
Christian Teresi	Geoffrey M. Klineberg
Christopher G. Hoge, Past President, Bar Association of the District of Columbia (1997-98)	Georgia Beth Tuckerman
Christopher T. Nace	Gwendolyn Green
	Hannah Rose Olson

Harold Cunningham, ANC Commissioner 7F08
Howard Bauleke, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner 1C01
Ian A. Herbert
I-Ra Abubaker
Irene Rhodes
Isa Mirza, Senior Human Rights Advisor, Foley Hoag LLP
Isadora Evers
Jacquelyn Weaver
Jalontae Smith
James J. Fleming, Jr.
James J. Sandman
James P. Tuite
Jason A. Grant
Jay Brozost
Jean Gray
Jeffrey Elijah Banks
Jeffrey S. Gutman
Jelahn Stewart
Jennifer Ricketts
Jessica E. Adler, Esq.
Jessica Magyari
Jhon Pacheco
Joanne Zimolzak
Joel P. Bennett
John L. Machado, Esq.
Jonathan Bender
Jonathan Jeffress
Joseph Prefontaine
Joseph Scrofano
Joseph Washington
Joshua A. Levy
Joshua L. Mogil
Joy Levin Welan
Judge Heidi M. Pasichow (Ret.)
Judge John M. Mott (Ret.)
Judith Neibrief
June Kress
Kailin Hamilton
Karen E. Evans
Katherine A. Mazzaferri
Kathleen E. Voelker
Katie McConville, Esq. MPP
Kayla Davies
Kayla Weiner
Keith Watters
Ken Coleman
Kenisha Murray
Kerry Kemp
Keyana Pusey
Khaya Laidley
Kimberly Brown
Kimberly Himes
L. Palmer Foret, President, Trial Lawyers Association of Metropolitan Washington, DC (2003-2004); DC Chapter President, American Board of Trial Advocates (2011-2013)
Lara Demir
Lawrence S. Lapidus
Lee Ann Anderson
Leigh El-Hindi
Lindsay Ayers
Lisa Cohen
Logan Faircloth
Lois Fingerhut
Lois Schiffer
Louis Antoine Gilbert
Lovey F. Evans
Lucy Shichman
Marc Schindler
Maria Valderrama
Marianela Peralta
Mark Gerard Griffin
Mark R. Stone
Marlene Williams
Marna S. Tucker
Marta Beresin
MaryEva Candon, Secretary, Bar Association of the District of Columbia
Mason Grow
Mateya Kelley
Maureen Thornton Syracuse
Melissa Rhea
Melody Webb, Esq.
Melvin White

Michael Pates	Richard B. Hoffman
Michelle Parfitt	Robert Dinerstein
Mikayah Alston	Robert Tignor
Minisa Yarullina	Rodney F. Page
Misty Thomas Zaleski	Ronald E. Hampton
Mitchell Lindstrom	Sandra H. Robinson
Nancy Aliquo Long, Esq.	Sarah Baczewski
Natalie S. Walker	Sarah Campanella
Nechama Masliansky	Sarah Helmes
Necole Larue	Sharon Terrill
Nubia Anaguano	Shavon J. Smith
Patricia Greenwell	Shelina Farmer
Patrick A. Malone	Shelley Broderick
Patrick M. Regan	Sherelle Bradley
Patrick McGlone, D.C. Bar President, 2017-2018	Stephanie Chaplin
Paulette E. Chapman, CCE President and Partner, Koonz, McKenney, Johnson & DePaolis LLP	Tarek Maassarani
Penelope Spain	Thomas R. Healy, Esq.
Peter R. Kolker	Timiko Collins
Philip Allen Lacovara, former Counsel to Watergate Special Prosecutor	Toni Michelle Jackson
Priscilla Skillman	Treazure Johnson
Professor Myles V. Lynk	Tynesha M. North
Rachel Hirsch	Victor E. Long
Rachel Kirschner	Victoria E. Samuels, Attorney at Law
Rachel Mina	William Edward Lawler III
Randall McNeil, Criminal Justice Policy Analyst	William P. Lightfoot
Rev. Thomas Brackeen Jr.	Zerline Hughes Spruill
Richard A. Levie	Zoe Feuer
	Zoe Smith

Note that no member of the judiciary participated in the formulation or approval of this letter. This letter does not reflect the specific views of or endorsement by any judicial member of any organization.

CC: All Members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations and Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government; The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, U.S. House of Representatives; The Honorable Tom Cole, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations; The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations; The Honorable Dave Joyce, Chair, House Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government; The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government; The Honorable James Comer, Chair, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform; The Honorable Robert Garcia, Ranking Member, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform