



June 25, 2019

Acting Director Hugh Hurwitz
Federal Bureau of Prisons
320 1st St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20534

Dear Acting Director Hurwitz,

The D.C. Reentry Action Network (RAN) is a coalition of nonprofit organizations that provide direct reentry-specific services to justice-involved District of Columbia residents. RAN strives to ensure that all justice-involved people in D.C. have access to high-quality reentry services to support their successful reintegration and promotes community-based alternatives to end DC's over-reliance on the criminal justice system. RAN member organizations are quite familiar with Hope Village, for many years having clients who have been residents there. RAN's Co-Chairs met with Hope Village and toured the facility on 4/22 and Hope Village's leadership team spoke directly with RAN members on 5/14. RAN members also met with CORE DC's CEO on 1/15, while RAN's Leadership Council met with CORE DC Leadership on 1/16 and toured the halfway house in Brooklyn, New York managed by CORE NY on 2/14.

RAN members' own experience aligns with well-established research about the benefits of halfway houses in ensuring successful reentry for people returning to the community from prison. It has been shown halfway houses contribute to decreasing the likelihood of recidivism. [Studies](#) in Ohio, Colorado, and California all found that halfway house residents committed fewer crimes and less serious offenses than returning citizens released directly into the community. Additionally, returning citizens who complete a halfway house program are [more likely](#) to successfully complete parole than their counterparts who were released directly into the community.

A new halfway house must be in the District.

RAN recognizes the importance of serving D.C. residents at a halfway house in D.C., not in the surrounding suburbs. This unique group of returning citizens has often been housed hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away from their loved ones in Federal Bureau of Prison (BOP) facilities, disconnected from their personal support systems and D.C.'s resources. By opening a new halfway house in D.C., as opposed to Maryland or Virginia, the BOP ensures a more effective [continuum of care](#) for D.C.'s returning citizens and facilitates family reunification. Residents will be able to access community-based and government programs in the city while at the halfway house and post-release. For example, if a person is residing at a halfway house in Virginia, they will have to begin mental health treatment in Virginia, only to have to start over with a new provider on their new insurance once they're released back to D.C. The halfway house's proximity to the District's network of community-based reentry service providers and

government agencies will also allow for increased programming and much needed services within the facility. Few, if any, RAN members have the funds and the mandate to provide services outside the District. Disruption of benefits is another reason why the halfway house should be in DC. It takes far longer, for example, to transfer Medicaid from one jurisdiction to another than it does to apply directly for Medicaid in DC, jeopardizing linkages for physical and behavioral healthcare. Public transportation is also more available in the city, allowing halfway house residents to navigate to their many appointments, commute to jobs, and re-learn their way around a city that may have changed drastically in their absence.

RAN supports CORE DC as the new halfway house provider in the District.

RAN member organizations do not usually take a position on behalf of specific halfway house providers. However, RAN member clients who have resided in Hope Village report many problems over the years with both the physical facility and lack of programming to support their reentry. RAN member clients also complain about how they are treated, from a lack of sufficient and nutritious food, to a lack of consideration and accommodation regarding resident's work schedules, and to a lack of support for them as individuals trying to turn their lives around. In addition, Hope Village has routinely rejected a majority of RAN member organizations' attempts to provide services to residents, refusing to allow CBOs to see their clients or to provide workshops and other services in the facility. Given the longstanding issues expressed in varying reports as well as Hope Village's inability to express a vision for the future when asked by RAN members, we support CORE DC.

RAN has met with both Hope Village and CORE DC's leadership. Both leadership teams presented at RAN Member meetings. CORE DC leadership allowed RAN to tour the halfway house CORE operates in New York. The facilities were clean and offered several improvements to Hope Village's model. Computers and a job coach were provided to assist residents with finding jobs. The process of administering passes and medications are computerized. Residents reported that they were treated with dignity, with staff referring to them as "residents" and showing other signs of respect. CORE DC has represented that any halfway house they operate will meet the same standard of cleanliness RAN observed in New York and will have ample space for CBOs to hold educational workshops, meet with clients, and provide services. CORE DC has promised to actively collaborate with CBOs in the District, identify and work with community partners to help returning citizens find employment, medical and mental health treatment, and other necessary support services. RAN is committed to ensuring CORE DC follows through on this promise. RAN Leadership Council saw firsthand how CORE NY embraces community participation through Community Advisory Boards in New York, a practice we hope will be replicated in the District. Further, CORE DC has committed to act with transparency and treat their residents with dignity and respect. CORE DC also demonstrated good relationships with their neighbors in New York that we would expect to see in the District.

Regardless of who receives the contract, returning citizens residing in the halfway house must be treated with respect and valued, there must be transparency between the halfway house provider and the community, and there must be more meaningful collaboration between the halfway house and community-



based organizations. Faced with the choice between Hope Village and CORE DC, and based on the representations made by CORE DC and the values listed above, RAN member organizations support the intent of CORE DC to run a halfway house in the District. However, RAN firmly believes a new halfway house must be in the District. RAN will revisit its decision to support CORE DC if the halfway house is not in the District. RAN is in support of a change that reflects the city's intent to provide meaningful and robust support for justice-involved individuals and we are hopeful that CORE DC will ultimately be awarded the halfway house contract and provide the change the District's returning citizens need.

Sincerely,

The D.C. Reentry Action Network

- Amazing Gospel Souls, INC
- Building Futures Program
- Community Services Agency
- Changing Perceptions
- Collaborative Solutions for Communities
- Community Connections, Inc.
- Community Family Life Services
- Community Mediation DC
- DC Project Connect
- DC Reentry Task Force
- Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop
- Hillcrest Children and Family Center
- House of Ruth
- Jubilee Housing
- Legal Aid DC
- Lorton Art Program
- National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens
- Open City Advocates
- Project New Opportunity
- Southeast Ministries
- The Rock Christian Church Ministries
- Thrive DC
- ULS – Disability Rights DC
- United Methodist Women
- Voices for a Second Chance

CC: DC Mayor Muriel Bowser
DC Council Member Phil Mendelson
DC Council Member Kenyan McDuffie
DC Council Member Charles Allen
DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson
DC Council Member Anita Bonds
DC Council Member David Grosso
DC Council Member Elissa Silverman
DC Council Member Robert White

DC Council Member Brianne Nadeau
DC Council Member Jack Evans
DC Council Member Mary Cheh
DC Council Member Brandon Todd
DC Council Member Vincent Gray
DC Council Member Trayon White
ANC 5C Chair Jacqueline Manning
ANC 8B02 Commissioner Paul Trantham
CSOSA Director Richard Tischner

Please contact RAN Co-Chair, Paula Thompson at paula@vscdc.org for further inquiries.