

**Testimony of Kate Coventry, Senior Policy Analyst
At the Joint Performance Oversight Hearing on the Interagency Council on Homelessness
DC Council Committees on Human Services and
on Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization
January 29, 2020**

Chairperson Nadeau, Chairperson Bonds, and other members of the Committees, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kate Coventry, and I am a Senior Policy Analyst at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. DCFPI is a non-profit organization that promotes budget choices to address DC's economic and racial inequities and to build widespread prosperity in the District of Columbia, through independent research and policy recommendations.

I would like to focus my testimony on capacity needs related to Homeward 2.0, the new Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.

Homeward 2.0 retains the mission of the original Homeward DC—to make homelessness in DC rare, brief, and non-recurring. At this point, the Plan contains more than 100 strategies to meet its 10 goals. DCFPI is very pleased that one of the goals is to coordinate with upstream systems to stem inflow into the homeless services system. DC is experiencing a lot of inflow into the homeless services system, and stemming inflow has to be a major policy effort in the coming years. The number of individuals touching the homeless services system each year increased 20 percent between 2015 and 2018, and the number of individuals experiencing first time homelessness increased by 24 percent during that period.¹

People exiting systems or institutions—such as the behavioral health system, hospitals, the criminal justice system, foster care, and nursing homes—are particularly at risk of becoming homeless. The Plan recommends working that the ICH work with all of these systems to increase our understanding of residents involved in these systems, improve discharge planning, and explore targeted housing interventions.

These efforts will require increased staff capacity at the Interagency Council on Homelessness and at the relevant partners, including Department of Behavioral Health, Child and Family Services Agency, Department of Corrections, and Age Friendly DC Council. DCFPI recommends that policymakers allocate the funding that is needed in the fiscal year 2021 budget so these efforts can be launched as soon as possible.

Thank you for the chance to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions.

¹ DC Interagency Council on Homelessness. Looking Back to Move Forward: Progress and Lessons Learned During the First Four Years of Homeward DC September 2019
https://ich.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ich/page_content/attachments/Homeward%20DC%20Progress%20Report_Final.pdf