

Testimony of

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**Hearing on B22-843,**

**the “Center for Firearm Violence Prevention Research Establishment Act of 2018”**

**Committee on the Judiciary**

**The Honorable Charles Allen, Chairman**

**Council of the District of Columbia**

Thursday, October 4, 2018

John A. Wilson Building

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairman Allen. I am Kristy Love, Deputy Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). I am pleased to appear before the Committee today on behalf of CJCC’s Executive Director, Mannone Butler, to provide testimony on the proposed Center for Firearm Violence Prevention Research, as described in Bill B22-843.

As you know, CJCC was established in 2001 as an independent District government agency that serves as a forum for identifying cross-cutting criminal and juvenile justice issues and achieving coordinated solutions. The CJCC supports the efforts of its members—the local and federal criminal justice leaders in the District—to achieve three system-wide goals: Prevent and reduce violent crime; Limit exposure to the criminal and juvenile justice systems; and Improve information sharing. The CJCC helps to achieve these goals through its four core functions: (1) automated information sharing through our JUSTIS system; (2) interagency collaboration through the work of our 22 committees; (3) training and technical assistance for justice system agencies; and (4) research and analysis to inform decision-making for justice system leaders.

CJCC’s research and analysis is conducted by the Statistical Analysis Center, or the SAC, which has been a unit of the CJCC since 2006. The District of Columbia, along with 48 states and 2 territories, each have a SAC that is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and reporting information about crime and justice in their jurisdictions. Our SAC consists of 5 highly skilled research professionals who in recent years have completed a myriad of analytical projects. The following are a few examples of system-wide research conducted by the SAC: an analysis of homicide cases and incidents in the District; exploring the applicability of Risk Terrain Modeling, which identifies the risk that crime will take place in a particular location based on spatial factors; and implementation of the Youth Rehabilitation Act. The SAC is currently conducting a study on the root causes of juvenile justice system involvement, as required by the Comprehensive Youth Justice Amendment Act (CYJAA). One of the key characteristics of the SAC is its structural independence, which is a result of its inclusion within the CJCC, making it a sought-after entity to conduct objective, fact-based criminal justice research.

With respect to B22-843, which is the focus of today’s hearing, the CJCC stands ready to support the development of the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention Research (Center). The CJCC has existing data sharing and collaborative partnerships with local and federal criminal justice and public health agencies, which would be one of a number of important factors in standing up the Center. The CJCC also convenes the Interagency Research Advisory Committee—or the IRAC, which is comprised of analysts from various criminal justice as well as public health agencies who advise the SAC on its research and analytical efforts. A Research Advisory Committee is another important ingredient for the Center.  We understand that the CJCC has been identified as a potential home for the Center. We will support the development and work of the Center wherever it is housed. However, it is important to note that if the Center were placed within the CJCC, we would need ample time for a thoughtful examination of infrastructure, as well as operational and human resource requirements. For example, based on a brief review of the firearm violence research center at the University of California, their Center is based in the School of Medicine, and most of their principal investigators are medical doctors who also have Master’s degrees in public health. This differs from the background of our SAC members who have Doctorate and Master’s degrees in the social sciences.

As I mentioned previously, nearly every state has a Statistical Analysis Center, and there is a network of SACs that is supported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Justice Research and Statistics Association. We are an active participant in that network, and in preparation for this hearing, we polled the SACs to get a sense for whether their approach to firearm violence prevention research would prove instructive. A total of five SACs indicated that they had conducted or plan to conduct firearm-related research, and several have a similar focus as outlined for the Center. For example, the Illinois SAC plans to assess firearm offending behavior over time, including a comparison of recidivism for offenders who did and did not use a firearm. The Georgia SAC is partnering with a contractor to create a risk profile for persons likely to experience repeat firearm violence based on criminal history and hospital records. And the New Mexico SAC completed research examining the factors that predict the use of firearms in violent crimes. The CJCC stands ready to support District partners in conducting a more exhaustive examination of efforts underway nationally, to help inform the research efforts of the Center.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the Council’s efforts to take a research-based approach to addressing firearm violence in the District. Standing up the Center will be no small feat. It will require the District to invest significant resources to establish the necessary infrastructure, as well as hire staff with the requisite backgrounds and experience to conduct high-quality and impactful research. The CJCC looks forward to supporting the District in this valiant effort. Chairman Allen, thank you for the opportunity to speak at today’s hearing. I am prepared to respond to any questions you may have.