



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”

February 19, 2024

Chairman Phil Mendelson
Chair, Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004
pmendelson@dccouncil.gov

RE: DC Council Proposed Resolution PR25-0507 – the “District of Columbia Sentencing Commission Joel Caston Appointment Resolution of 2023”

Dear Chairman Mendelson,

At its regular meeting on January 17, 2024, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A (“ANC 2A” or “Commission”) considered the above-referenced matter. With five of eight commissioners present, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission voted (3-1-1), after a motion made by Commissioner Malec and seconded by Commissioner Patel, to adopt resolution CR-24-004, which reads as follows:

WHEREAS, at its regular meeting in January 2021, ANC 2A adopted a resolution addressed to the DC Board of Elections supporting Joel Caston to fill the vacant seat of ANC 7F07¹,

WHEREAS, Joel Caston was elected to and served as the first ANC Commissioner for the area, providing a direct line of access to and assistance for residents at the DC Jail, as well as a neighboring women’s shelter and residential building²,

WHEREAS, while at the DC Jail, he helped start a newspaper for incarcerated residents, taught financial literacy classes, and founded a mentorship program called Young Men Emerging³, which provides recently incarcerated young adults with job training and educational programming,

WHEREAS, Joel Caston has developed deep technical expertise in criminal justice issues through working with the Vera Institute of Justice and The Sentencing Project,

WHEREAS, in November 2021, after serving 26 years in prison, he was released on parole⁴,

¹ [554760_520a41d39d6147a78fa0d05b54400d77.pdf \(filesusr.com\)](#)

² [Joel Castón: DC’s first incarcerated commissioner - The Washington Post](#)

³ [Young Men Emerging Unit 2020.pdf \(justicepolicy.org\)](#)

⁴ [Ward 7 ANC Commissioner Joel Castón Free After 26 Years | DCist](#)



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”

WHEREAS, on October 27, 2023 Chairman Phil Mendelson introduced PR25-0507⁵ nominating Joel Caston to the DC Sentencing Commission (“the Commission”), an independent District government agency tasked with advising the DC Council on fair and consistent sentencing policy,

WHEREAS, the Commission has twelve voting members and five non-voting members, one of whom is appointed by the DC Council, representing the full spectrum of stakeholders in the District’s criminal legal system: judges, local and federal prosecutors, public defenders, private practitioners, law enforcement, corrections leaders, researchers, and private citizens,

WHEREAS, the Commission also:

- monitors implementation and use of the Voluntary Sentencing Guidelines,
- analyzes data on sentencing practices and trends in the District of Columbia, and
- educates the public on sentencing policies and practices.

WHEREAS, notably missing from that list of perspectives, however, is one of the groups most directly impacted by the Commission’s work: people who have been incarcerated and who have often been victims of violence themselves⁶,

WHEREAS, across the country, a growing number of institutions and legislative bodies are recognizing the importance of including formerly incarcerated individuals. For example, Minnesota⁷ now requires inclusion of an individual convicted of a felony on its Sentencing Guidelines Commission. Likewise, in Pennsylvania⁸, two formerly incarcerated individuals served as Commutations Specialists for the Board of Pardons, and

WHEREAS, Joel Caston serving as a member of the Commission would do the following⁹:

- fill that vital gap and provide the Commission deeper insight into implementation of the Voluntary Sentencing Guidelines, as experienced by those in prison,
- strengthen the Commission’s understanding of one of the most challenging issues in the District today: crime involving youth and young adults, and

⁵ [Committee of the Whole Public Roundtable • Council of the District of Columbia \(dccouncil.gov\)](#)

⁶ [The Overlap Between Those Committing Offenses Who Also Are Victims: One Class of Crime Victim Rarely Seeks or Receives Available Services | National Institute of Justice \(ojp.gov\)](#)

⁷ [Chapter 52 - MN Laws](#)

⁸ [Lt. Gov. John Fetterman Hires Two Commuted Former Life-Sentence Inmates to Improve Commutations Process in PA](#)

⁹ [Should a man convicted of murder help set D.C. sentencing guidelines? - The Washington Post](#)



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”

- his lived experience and intimate familiarity with the factors that can push disadvantaged youth and young adults toward criminal legal involvement are essential to strengthen our public safety ecosystem and to ensure both accountability and fairness.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ANC 2A supports the appointment of Joel Caston, a well-respected community leader, to the DC Sentencing Commission as he is uniquely qualified to serve as a member.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2A believes that the appointment of Joel Caston would:

- strengthen the Commission,
- advance public safety in the District, and
- better ensure a fair justice system.

Commissioners Trupti Patel (2A03@anc.dc.gov) and Jim Malec (2A02@anc.dc.gov) are the Commission’s representatives in this matter.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,

Jim Malec
Chairperson