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6 **A BILL**
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10 **IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**
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14 To establish the Commission on Poverty to address the needs and interests of persons in poverty,
15 evaluate current and previous poverty-reduction programs to determine their
16 effectiveness, hold meetings, hearings, and listening sessions to gather data and
17 information on issues of poverty from experts and from residents in, or impacted by,
18 poverty, and to require the Commission on Poverty to develop and submit, by a specified
19 date, a comprehensive strategic plan for the reduction of poverty and annual updates of
20 the plan to the Mayor and the Council; and to amend the Confirmation Act of 1978 to
21 make a conforming amendment.
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23 **BE IT ENACTED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this**
24 **act may be cited as the “Commission on Poverty Establishment Amendment Act of 2020”.**

25 **TITLE I. COMMISSION ON POVERTY**

26 **Sec. 101. Definitions.**

27 **For the purposes of this title, the term:**

28 (1) “Commission” means the Commission on Poverty established pursuant to section
29 102.

30 (2) “Poverty” means, in reference to an individual, someone living with an annual
31 household income of less than or equal to the income levels published in the most recent poverty
32 guidelines issued by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

33 (3) “Poverty-reduction plan” means a comprehensive strategic plan for the reduction of
34 poverty in the District issued by the Commission pursuant to section 106.

35 Sec. 102. Commission on Poverty; establishment.

36 (a) There is established the Commission on Poverty. The purpose of the Commission is
37 to study issues surrounding poverty, evaluate current and previous poverty-reduction initiatives
38 in the District and throughout the country to determine their effectiveness, and based on its
39 research and evaluations, make comprehensive and continuing recommendations to the Mayor
40 and the Council for strengthening and enhancing the economic status of persons in poverty in the
41 District through initiatives that will also improve their educational, wellness, and housing
42 outcomes.

43 (b)(1) The Commission shall be composed of 19 appointed members, who shall be
44 appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Council pursuant to section 2(f) of
45 the Confirmation Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-142; D.C. Official Code
46 § 1-523.01(f)), and 7 ex-officio members. All appointed members shall be residents of the
47 District. Among the appointed members, there shall be 8 ward representatives, one from each
48 ward, and 11 at-large representatives.

49 (2) To qualify as a member appointed from a ward, a person shall:

50 (A) Be in poverty at the time of the appointment, or have been in poverty
51 at some time within the previous 3 years;

52 (B) Have been a resident of the ward the member represents for at least
53 one year before the date of appointment; and

54 (C) Remain a resident of the ward the member is appointed to represent
55 throughout the member's term.

56 (3) To qualify as a member appointed at-large, a person shall be a resident of the
57 District and have experience in areas of public policy or programs related to the particular

58 interests, needs, and concerns of persons in poverty, including experience working in the
59 following areas or with the following populations:

60 (A) Providing direct social services, whether through a government
61 program, faith-based organization, community-based organization, or other organization;

62 (B) Healthcare access and affordability;

63 (C) People with mental illness;

64 (D) Children and youth;

65 (E) Quality and equality in education;

66 (F) Low wage workers' rights and the working poor;

67 (G) Adults 60 years of age or older;

68 (H) The elimination of hunger;

69 (I) People who are homeless;

70 (J) Persons with disabilities; or

71 (K) Immigrants.

72 (4)(A) An appointed member of the Commission shall serve a term of 3 years;
73 except, that of the initial members, 7 members shall be appointed for a term of 3 years, 6 shall be
74 appointed for a term of 2 years, and 6 for a term of one year.

75 (B) Upon a vacancy occurring during a term, the Mayor shall appoint a
76 successor with the advice and consent of the Council pursuant to section 2(f) of the Confirmation
77 Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-142; D.C. Official Code § 1-523.01(f)), to fill
78 the unexpired portion of the term.

79 (C) An appointed member may be reappointed; provided, that a member
80 may not serve more than 2 terms, exclusive of partial terms served pursuant to subparagraph (B)
81 of this paragraph.

82 (5) Appointed members of the Commission shall serve without compensation;
83 except, that expenses incurred by the Commission as a whole, or by an individual member when
84 the expense was duly authorized by the Chairperson of the Commission, shall be reimbursed
85 pursuant to section 1108(d) of the District of Columbia Government Comprehensive Merit
86 Personnel Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-139; D.C. Official Code
87 § 1-611.08(d)).

88 (c) The following officials, or their designees, shall serve as non-voting ex-officio
89 members, the:

- 90 (1) Director of the Department of Human Services;
- 91 (2) Director of the Department of Health;
- 92 (3) Director of the Child and Family Services Agency;
- 93 (4) Director of the Department of Employment Services;
- 94 (5) Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools;
- 95 (6) Superintendent of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education
- 96 (7) Director of the Department of Aging; and
- 97 (8) Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development.

98 (d) The Commission shall elect a chairperson from among its appointed members.

99 (e) Quorum of the Commission shall consist of a majority of the voting members.

100 (f) The Commission shall develop its own operating rules and procedures.

101 (g) The Commission may establish committees that address specific issues or
102 populations.

103 Sec. 103. Commission on Poverty; functions.

104 (a) The Commission shall:

105 (1) Serve as District leaders in advancing policies and initiatives aimed at
106 elevating the needs of persons in poverty;

107 (2) Review and make comments and recommendations on existing and proposed
108 programs, policies, administrative rules, and statutes that have an impact on poverty in the
109 District and, in particular, on District residents living in poverty;

110 (3) Represent the Commission and the interests of persons in poverty before
111 District public bodies and agencies.

112 (4) As required by section 106, develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the
113 reduction of poverty in the District (“poverty-reduction plan”);

114 (5) Following the adoption of the poverty-reduction plan, meet and issue annual
115 reports on the poverty-reduction plan, which shall include updates on the implementation of the
116 poverty-reduction plan and updates on District legislative and agency initiatives that address or
117 intersect with poverty, which the Commission shall submit to the Mayor and the Council;

118 (6) On an ongoing basis and in preparation for issuance of its annual report,
119 conduct studies and review the progress of programs and District agencies engaged in addressing
120 poverty;

121 (7) Hold public meetings, hearings, and listening sessions as required by section
122 106 and in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, effective March 31, 2011 (D.C. Law
123 18-350; D.C. Official Code § 2-571 *et seq.*);

124 (8) Periodically conduct forums of experts on matters affecting the health, safety,
125 and welfare of persons in poverty;

126 (9) Establish and maintain a publicly accessible website, on which the
127 Commission shall post the following content:

128 (A) The poverty-reduction plan;

129 (B) The Commission's annual reports;

130 (C) Notice of the Commission's meetings, hearings, and listening
131 sessions; and

132 (D) Any other notices or information the Commission determines
133 appropriate.

134 (10) Review and comment on proposed District legislation, including the Mayor's
135 annual budget submission to the Council, and regulations, policies, and programs that address or
136 may have an effect on poverty;

137 (11) Identify and track the adoption and progress of the Commission's
138 recommendations in the poverty-reduction plan; and

139 (12) Request and receive information and data from various governmental and
140 non-governmental sources necessary to aid the Commission in the discharge of its
141 responsibilities.

142 (b) To the extent not otherwise restricted by District or federal law, the Commission shall
143 have the authority to request directly from each department, agency, or instrumentality of the
144 District any non-confidential information considered necessary by the Commission to fulfill its
145 mandate; and each department, agency, or instrumentality shall provide such required non-
146 confidential information to the Commission upon its request.

147 Sec. 104. Commission on Poverty; meetings and listening sessions.

148 (a) The Commission shall meet on a regular basis, as determined by the Chairperson, but
149 at least 6 times annually, with 4 of those meetings being listening sessions.

150 (b)(1) The listening sessions shall be located in communities with a high concentration of
151 persons living in poverty. The Commission shall seek the testimony of:

- 152 (A) Individuals who have been impacted by poverty and related injustices;
- 153 (B) Policy advocates;
- 154 (C) Direct-service providers;
- 155 (D) Community leaders; and
- 156 (E) Faith and religious leaders.

157 (2) The purpose of the listening sessions shall be to:

158 (A) Document the material conditions of poverty and related issues in
159 communities with high concentrations of persons living in poverty and the impact of such
160 conditions on residents and the community at large; and

161 (B) Assess the resources that already exist in the community, including the
162 leadership, grass-roots efforts, and overall resilience to determine how the District could assist
163 the community in addressing poverty and its effects.

164 Sec. 105. Commission on Poverty; resources and staff.

165 (a)(1) The Commission shall have at least 3 paid staff persons, including an Executive
166 Director.

167 (2)(A) The Mayor shall appoint the Executive Director.

168 (B) The Executive Director shall:

169 (i) Be a resident of the District;

170 (ii) Devote full time to the duties of the position;
171 (iv) Report on a regular basis, as determined by the Chairperson, to
172 the Commission; and
173 (v) Hire and supervise other Commission staff, as the approved
174 budget for the Commission permits.

175 (3) At least one member of the staff shall have been in poverty at some time
176 within the 3-year period before the individual's date of hire.

177 (b)(1) Staff shall assist in the preparation of the poverty-reduction plan and annual
178 reports, conduct the administrative activities of the Commission, and perform other duties, as
179 directed by the Commission's Chairperson.

180 (2) The staff may retain outside consultants to assist with preparing and drafting
181 the poverty-reduction plan and annual reports.

182 (c) The Mayor shall provide sufficient office space and technical and administrative
183 support to assist the Commission and its staff in meeting the goals mandated by this act.

184 Sec. 106. Poverty-reduction plan.

185 (a) Within 365 days after at least 13 of the appointed members of the Commission have
186 been appointed, and every 5 years thereafter, the Commission shall approve, by majority vote, a
187 poverty-reduction plan and submit it to the Mayor and the Council.

188 (b)(1) The first poverty-reduction plan shall set forth feasible, practical actions that the
189 District, or the District in partnership with private sector or nonprofit organizations, can take to
190 achieve at least a 50% reduction in the District's rate of people living in poverty, as defined in
191 the current United States Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines, by the

192 year 2026. Subsequent plans shall establish 5-year goals for achieving substantial reductions in
193 the rate of people living in poverty.

194 (2) The poverty-reduction plan shall include recommendations for actions that the
195 Mayor and the Council can take in the following areas:

196 (A) Bias and the relationship between poverty, race, class, and structural
197 racism;

198 (B) Public and private employment practices, including government
199 enforcement of employment and workers' rights laws and protections;

200 (C) Access to safe and affordable housing;

201 (D) Access to adequate food and nutrition;

202 (E) Access to affordable and quality healthcare;

203 (F) Equal and equitable access to quality education and job training;

204 (G) Dependable and affordable transportation;

205 (H) Access to quality and affordable childcare;

206 (I) The availability of adequate income supports;

207 (J) Opportunities to engage in permanent, sustainable work; and

208 (K) Any other area the Commission considers appropriate.

209 (3) For each action recommended, the poverty-reduction plan shall:

210 (A) Identify, in measurable terms, the potential impact of the
211 recommended action on poverty reduction;

212 (B) Identify the policy and fiscal actions necessary to achieve the
213 recommendation; and

214 (C) Provide a timeline for implementing the recommendation, including a
215 timeline for implementing each stage of a multi-stage recommendation.

216 TITLE II. CONFORMING AMENDMENT

217 Sec. 201. Section 2(f) of the Confirmation Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C.
218 Law 2-142; D.C. Official Code § 1-523.01(f)), is amended as follows:

219 (a) Paragraph (68) is amended by striking the word “and”.

220 (b) Paragraph (69) is amended by striking the period and inserting the phrase “; and” in
221 its place.

222 (c) A new paragraph (70) is added to read as follows:

223 “(70) The Commission on Poverty, established by section 2 of the Commission on
224 Poverty Establishment Amendment Act of 2020, as approved by the Committee Labor and
225 Workforce Development on November 19, 2020 (Committee Print of Bill 23-90).

226 TITLE III. GENERAL PROVISIONS

227 Sec. 301. Applicability.

228 (a) This act shall apply upon the date of inclusion of its fiscal effect in an approved
229 budget and financial plan.

230 (b) The Chief Financial Officer shall certify the date of the inclusion of the fiscal effect in
231 an approved budget and financial plan, and provide notice to the Budget Director of the Council
232 of the certification.

233 (c)(1) The Budget Director shall cause the notice of the certification to be published in
234 the District of Columbia Register.

235 (2) The date of publication of the notice of the certification shall not affect the
236 applicability of this act.

237 Sec. 302. Fiscal impact statement.

238 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
239 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
240 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

241 Sec. 303. Effective date.

242 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
243 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as
244 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
245 24, 1973, (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
246 Columbia Register.