Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chief Financial Officer

**Glen Lee**
Chief Financial Officer

**MEMORANDUM**

| | |
|---|---|
| **TO:** | **The Honorable Phil Mendelson**<br>**Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia** |
| **FROM:** | **Glen Lee**<br>**Chief Financial Officer** |
| **DATE:** | **November 20, 2026** |
| **SUBJECT:** | **Fiscal Impact Statement – Ensuring Access and Supporting Engagement (EASE) Act of 2026** |
| **REFERENCE:** | **Bill 26-480, Draft Committee Print as provided to the Office of Revenue Analysis on October 28, 2026** |

## Conclusion

Funds are not sufficient in the fiscal year 2027 through fiscal year 2030 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. The bill will cost $337,000 in fiscal year 2027 and $710,000 over the four-year budget and financial plan.

## Background

The bill codifies the ability of Department of Corrections (DOC) residents[1] to testify before the District Council and engage with their Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) Commissioner; requires DOC to provide access to electronic devices and internet service for residents to register and participate via video conference at Council hearings; mandates that DOC establish processes and policies to facilitate participation, including providing educational materials; requires DOC to provide free communication methods with ANC Commissioners; and provide no-cost methods for providing testimony and correspondence to the Council. Currently, DOC residents can respond to Council on proposed legislation via written communication by mailing letters directly to Council, giving letters directly to the DOC ANC, or giving letters to their attorneys who can provide the letters to Council on their client's behalf.

[1] Residents of a DOC facility including the Central Detention Facility, Correction Treatment Facility, or any other facility operated by DOC to house incarcerated individuals. It does not include the Central Cell Block.

The bill requires DOC to ensure residents can observe Council hearings and related proceedings. DOC must also create a process for residents to submit oral testimony via video conference on issues related to them, DOC facilities, or reentry, as well as written testimony on any topic. The bill requires DOC work with the Council to establish this process and create policies that allow residents to testify, including offering alternative methods when needed. Under the bill, if a Council committee sets a sign-up deadline for a hearing, any resident who meets that requirement must be allowed to testify at the hearing.

The bill requires DOC to provide residents with electronic devices and internet access so they can register to testify, submit written testimony, and relay live video testimony at Council proceedings. DOC must also create policies and procedures to support this access, as well as a no-cost method for providing written testimony to the Council and corresponding with the Council regarding testimony.

DOC residents currently have a duly-elected ANC Commissioner who represents their interests, serves as liaison to the Council, and participates in monthly Inmate Grievance Advisory Committee meetings. DOC has a formal process for electing a resident to serve as the DOC ANC for Single Member District (SMD) 7F08, which includes the Central Detention Facility (CDF) and the Correction Treatment Facility (CTF). Candidates may run through the general election petition process, as a write-in candidate, or through a special election to fill a vacancy. Generally, candidates must obtain at least 25 signatures from registered voters in ANC SMD F708, submit required forms to the Board of Elections (BOE), and comply with DOC candidacy requirements. The elected candidate is the individual who receives the most votes and meets all eligibility requirements.

The ANC works along with designated DOC staff members in executing their duties and responsibilities and maintains a dedicated office with telephone and email access. DOC facility protocols allow the ANC to post messages, memos, letters, and flyers on both the entertainment (Viapath) and educational tablets to connect with the resident population at both facilities.

Currently, ANC town hall meetings are held on a monthly basis at DOC facilities with the ANC having the opportunity to communicate with residents and learn firsthand about issues and concerns they have. The ANC is then empowered to document findings with recommended solutions forwarded to DOC management for follow-up action. The DOC ANC Commissioner is supported by a self-selected board of residents.

The bill requires DOC to furnish education materials to residents that explain the role of the Council and ANC Commissioners, how to contact them, and how to register and submit testimony. These materials must be provided at intake, made available upon request, and posted or accessible in housing units, the law library, and case manager offices. Under the bill, residents must also be allowed to submit testimony anonymously, either by giving oral testimony without a camera or by submitting written testimony with identifying information accessible only to the relevant Council committee.

The bill requires DOC to provide residents with free access to the materials and tools needed to contact their ANC Commissioner, such as phone numbers and electronic or internet access. DOC must also develop a process that allows the ANC Commissioner to visit and walk through the facilities to meet with all residents at least once every quarter. After each quarterly ANC Commissioner walkthrough of the facilities, DOC must publish a report on its website stating the date, time, and specific facilities and units visited. Under the bill, within seven days of receiving a formal request from both a resident and their ANC Commissioner, DOC is required to provide a written response scheduling a meeting between them to occur within 15 days of the request. If the meeting cannot take

place within that 15-day window, DOC must still respond within seven days, provide the scheduled meeting date, and explain in writing why the delay is necessary.

The bill requires DOC to submit an annual report[2] to the Mayor and Council, which must include:

- The number of residents who tried to testify before the Council, or contact or meet with their ANC Commissioner, but were denied, along with reasons for denial.
- Information regarding the number of grievances and requests to staff made by residents related to observing or testifying before the Council and communicating and meeting with the ANC Commissioner.
- An analysis on implementation and any challenges encountered.
- Policy or legislative recommendations to improve residents' ability to participate in civic engagement.

The bill does not create a private right of action.

**Financial Plan Impact**

Funds are not sufficient in the fiscal year 2027 through fiscal year 2030 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. The bill will cost $337,000 in fiscal year 2027 and $710,000 over the four-year budget and financial plan.

DOC requires funding for several different components of the bill. First, DOC will need start-up funding to ensure sufficient physical space is available to meet the requirements of the bill, including the ability of inmates to testify at hearings virtually. Second, DOC will require technology equipment (such as computers, tablets, and televisions), as well as appropriately secure networking infrastructure for the equipment to implement the requirements of the bill. Current technology used by inmates is dedicated to other functions such as entertainment and is not set up with the video conferencing technology that is required. Lastly, DOC will require funding for additional staffing to manage the scheduling and administrative process required by the bill, the information technology needs, and depending on the volume of residents testifying, overtime for security personnel.

The level of additional resources required could vary significantly, depending on two things: the level of participation by inmates, which could fluctuate based on the bills being debated, and which approach DOC decides to take to facilitate testimony. Regarding participation levels, DOC is concerned that a surge of inmates wanting to participate in hearings after the bill's passage will hinder their initial ability to meet requirements. This estimate does not assume a surge, so should one occur then DOC may not be able to meet requirements of the bill at a given time. Data from a couple of states show hearing participation rates of about one percent of the inmate population over the course of the year. For the purposes of this estimate, it is assumed five percent of the population or about 115 inmates testifying per year. Regarding the methods for meeting the requirements, DOC may have different cost-effective options depending on participation levels and further evaluation of whether existing technological capabilities to those similarly employed, with some modifications, may be an option.

For the purposes of this estimate it is assumed DOC will purchase eight communication kiosks, such as those known as "POPS"[3] booths, spread between CDF and CTF, which will provide physical space

[2] One year after the bill's effective date.
[3] POPS is the brand name for Public Safety Booth by Pillar Booth – see www.popsbooth.com.

for testimony, and facilitate more private testimony without ambient noise. Each booth will require technology (i.e. laptop or tablet) to connect to Council video conferencing, costing an estimated $2,000 each, plus an additional $2,000 each for firewall and content filtering services. Additionally, these booths will require secure wired internet services to be dropped into the booths. As of this writing a solid estimate of the cost to run internet wires to the booths and connect to a secure network are not available, so a placeholder estimate of $50,000 is included for wiring work on the eight booths. Additional start up costs include $36,000 to install televisions throughout CDF to ensure the ability for inmates to watch Council hearings without disrupting current television usage, and $10,000 to provide educational materials about the bill to inmates, and other supplies and postage.

DOC will also require two Program Analysts to facilitate scheduling testimony at hearings, coordinate technology, provide support for submitting written testimony, develop education materials, provide access to materials and tools to contact the ANC Commissioner, develop policies and procedures, and write the annual report. Lastly, depending on levels of and timing of participation, there may be correctional officer overtime or additional staffing to manage the supervision of individuals testifying, which is not included in this estimate.

The costs are outlined in the chart below:

| **Fiscal Impact Statement for Bill 26-480<br>Ensuring Access and Supporting Engagement (EASE) Act of 2026<br>FY 2027- FY 2030<br>($ in thousands)** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **FY 2027[(a)]** | **FY 2028** | **FY 2029** | **FY 2030** | **Four-Year Total** |
| 8 private kiosks / booths[(b)] | $160 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $160 |
| Installation/wiring of booths[(c)] | $50 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $50 |
| Computer equipment and content security services[(d)] | $32 | $8 | $8 | $8 | $56 |
| Televisions[(e)] | $36 | $4 | $4 | $4 | $48 |
| Educational materials, printing and postage | $10 | $10 | $10 | $10 | $40 |
| 2 Program Analysts (Grade 11, Step 4) [(f)] | $49 | $100 | $103 | $105 | $357 |
| **TOTAL COST** | **$337** | **$122** | **$124** | **$126** | **$711** |

Table Notes:

(a) Fiscal year 2027 includes full start-up costs, but only six months of Program Analyst costs for fiscal year 2027, full year costs begin fiscal year 2028.
(b) Kiosk costs estimated at $20,000 per unit.
(c) Detailed estimate is not available, this is a placeholder estimate.
(d) One computer per kiosk at $2,000 plus $2,000 for required filtering and security services on the devices.
(e) $800 per television in 45 housing units. Assumes 10 percent annual replacement.

(f) Assumes six months of Program Analyst costs in fiscal year 2027. Program Analysts at Grade 11, Step 4, DOC fringe rate of 37.4 percent. Growth rate for salary is 2 percent annually, and growth rate for fringe is 2.35 percent annually.