

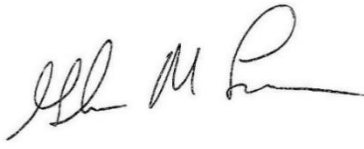
Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Glen Lee
Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

FROM: Glen Lee
Chief Financial Officer 

DATE: April 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement – Leading Education Access for Reentry and Necessary Success (“LEARNS”) Amendment Act of 2025

REFERENCE: Bill 26-526, Draft Committee Print as provided to the Office of Revenue Analysis on April 2, 2026

Conclusion

Funds are not sufficient in the fiscal year 2026 budget and the proposed fiscal year 2027 through fiscal year 2030 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. Assuming the bill is first funded in fiscal year 2027, the bill will cost \$7.7 million in fiscal year 2027 and \$26.7 million through fiscal year 2030.

Background

The bill makes permanent a requirement that the Department of Corrections (DOC) provide education services to individuals with a disability in DOC custody who are eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)¹. The requirement is currently in place, through temporary legislation², for school years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026.

The bill requires DOC to ensure access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all eligible incarcerated students with disabilities, ages 18 and older, through the end of their special education eligibility under IDEA and District law. Special education eligibility under District law currently goes to age 22 and ends with a secondary school graduation or GED. Prior to school year 2021-22, DC

¹ Placement of Students with Disabilities in Nonpublic Schools Amendment Act of 2006, effective March 14, 2007 (D.C. Law 16-269; D.C. Official Code § 38-2561.01(4)).

² Special Education for Young Adults in the Custody of the Department of Corrections Second Temporary Amendment Act of 2025, effective January 29, 2026 (D.C. Law 26-82; 73 DCR 2672).

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Public Schools (DCPS) provided special education services for students in District custody who were eligible for those services under IDEA and District law. From 2021 to 2023, special education services at DOC were administered by the See Forever Foundation (SFF), the nonprofit that manages Maya Angelou Public Charter Schools³. In 2024, DOC was designated as the agency responsible for providing FAPE to eligible individuals in DOC's custody, with the understanding that SFF would continue to provide the services under contract with DOC.

The bill expands DOC's responsibility to include evaluating individuals, upon request⁴, who were not previously assessed for special education services to determine if the individual is with a disability. This responsibility will require DOC to conduct evaluations for youth through age 22 who were not previously identified as having a disability⁵ or did not have an IEP before incarceration, if the youth does not have a high school diploma or GED. If a disability is identified, DOC must create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and provide education services in accordance with the IEP. The bill specifies that DOC must provide education services through contract with an education provider experienced in District education services. DOC must ensure the provider operates a high school diploma program offering credit-bearing courses and post-secondary planning; provides in-person instruction to all eligible students, including those in restricted housing or medical units; addresses the unique social, emotional, and learning needs of incarcerated students; and implements each student's IEP.

The bill also repeals two municipal regulations. The first regulation exempted DOC from providing a FAPE to a youth who, in the last educational placement prior to incarceration, was not identified as having a disability and did not have an IEP. The second regulation exempted DOC from providing a FAPE if the youth had been identified as having a disability and had received services under an IEP, but left school prior to incarceration, or did not have an IEP in the last educational setting, but had been identified having a disability.

The bill requires DOC to make available, by July 1, 2027, a tracking system for individuals in DOC's custody to submit service requests, grievances and complaints. The system must assign a unique ticket number to each submission and provide detailed status information⁶. It must also provide information on how individuals in custody and their family members may contact DOC to receive additional information on the status or resolution of the service request or complaint. Within 30 days of launch, the grievance tracking system must include all open service requests and complaints from the previous six months. DOC must accept tracking system submissions in writing and orally. DOC must establish a public portal that allows all grievances and service requests to be viewed and searchable by the public, excluding personally identifiable information.

Access to the grievance tracking system must be available from an online portal that must be made available by January 1, 2027. The portal must provide contact information for specific DOC leadership

³ See Forever Foundation, Maya Angelou Schools. (2026, February 26). *About Us*. Retrieved from See Forever Foundation Maya Angelou Public Schools: <https://www.seeforever.org/about-us/>

⁴ By the individual, the individual's legal counsel or the State Education Agency.

⁵ In accordance with Chapter 30 of Subtitle A of Title 5 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (5-A DCMR § 3001 et seq.).

⁶ Allowing real-time status updates and searchable by ticket number, date, status, and nature of request.

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and oversight bodies⁷ and a list of inmate rights. The portal must provide an individual in custody with information on the number of complaints and service requests he or she has made.

The bill makes technical changes to the code regarding mandatory reporting requirements of crimes by counselors⁸ to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) or Child and Family Services Agency to clarify that the victim is under 18 years of age.

The bill makes permanent changes to statute regarding the nature of probate proceedings⁹. Previously, when a petition for abbreviated probate was filed, the Register of Wills could admit the will to probate and was required to appoint one or more personal representatives according to the statements in the petition. Additionally, the Register of Wills had the discretion to request and require additional verified proof¹⁰ to be filed in the proceeding. The bill establishes an abbreviated probate as a process to validate a will or confirm that someone died without a will and to appoint a personal representative. The bill clarifies that probate begins when an interested person files a petition with the Court¹¹ and that unlike formal probate, this process can happen without giving prior notice¹².

The bill makes technical changes to the code to make permanent notice requirements¹³ for persons filing a petition for formal probate or acting as a personal representative to add that a newspaper is an acceptable method of publication.

The bill makes permanent the repeal of language requiring individuals in possession of a small asset of a decedent to pay or provide the asset to the designated successor when shown an affidavit signed by all known successors stating that the decedent's will has been properly admitted to probate. The bill applies changes to probate administration law¹⁴ retroactive to estates of decedents who died on or after March 21, 2025.

The bill makes permanent technical changes to the submission deadlines of specific reports to the Mayor and Council, by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), and repeals subject to funding requirements for the Safe Passage and Safe Blocks¹⁵ program.

⁷ The Director, Deputy Director, Education for Programs and Case Management, Deputy Director for Operations, and other agency leadership responsible for receipt, tracking, and resolution of grievances, as well as the Corrections Information Council and Council Committee with oversight of the Department.

⁸ Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

⁹, Strengthening Probate Administration Temporary Amendment Act of 2025, effective October 1, 2025 (D.C. Law 26-47; 72 DCR 8936).

¹⁰ The bill stipulates that if the Register of Wills requires additional proof, the matter can be referred to the Court to determine if one or more personal representatives are to be appointed and whether the will should be admitted.

¹¹ See D.C. Official Code § 20-304.

¹² D.C. Official Code § 20-323.

¹³ Notice of request for formal probate, publication and claims of creditors, and notice of appointment to interested persons, creditors and unknown heirs.

¹⁴ Strengthening Probate Administration Amendment Act of 2024, effective March 21, 2025 (D.C. Law 25-302; 72 DCR 780).

¹⁵ Safe Passage Training and School Engagement Amendment Act of 2025, effective September 10, 2025 (D.C. Law 26-40; 72 DCR 8170).

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Financial Plan Impact

Funds are not sufficient in the fiscal year 2026 budget and proposed fiscal year 2027 through fiscal year 2030 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. Assuming the bill is first funded in fiscal year 2027, the bill will cost \$7.7 million in fiscal year 2027 and \$26.7 million through fiscal year 2030.

Leading Education Access for Reentry and Necessary Success ("LEARNS") Amendment Act of 2025					
Fiscal Year 2027 – Fiscal Year 2030					
(thousands \$)					
	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	Total
Education Services Expansion	\$5,381	\$5,489	\$5,599	\$5,712	\$22,181
Grievance Management	\$2,360	\$699	\$713	\$728	\$4,500
TOTAL	\$7,740	\$6,188	\$6,313	\$6,440	\$26,681

Education Services

The bill expands DOC's responsibility for providing educational services by mandating DOC evaluate certain youth for a disability and developing an IEP for youth who did not have an IEP before entering DOC custody. DOC and SFF do not conduct initial assessments for special education services, as this is not included in the current contract¹⁶. Based on the average number of new commitments across CY 2024 and CY 2025 within the age requirements of IDEA and District law who reported not possessing a General Educational Development (GED) credential or a high school diploma, the bill will require DOC to evaluate 521 new commitments annually for presence of a disability. DOC will establish a Diagnostic Assessment Center and require three new employees to manage this process: an administrator certified in special education services, a school psychologist, and a program specialist. Additionally, DOC expects to contract for the specialists required to conduct the evaluations necessary to diagnose a disability and develop an IEP. IEP evaluations may require up to 55 hours¹⁷ of specialist work, but data on the average length of time was not available. Assuming DOC can evaluate the expected population with an average cost of \$3800 per student, DOC will require \$2 million annually in contracted specialists (speech, audiology, psychology, psychiatry and physical and occupational therapy) to evaluate individuals and prepare IEPs.

DOC requires additional operational support to handle the safety and security aspects of moving individuals to and from housing units for evaluations. DOC anticipates using correctional officer overtime to accomplish this work, as filling additional vacant positions may not be feasible. Additional overtime is expected to cost \$478,000 in the first year. DOC will require \$220,000 in the first year for additional technology and documentation systems for IEP development and education progress tracking, and \$30,000 in the first year for staff support and training. Finally, DOC requires

¹⁶ SFF screens individuals in custody (if they are under 22 and do not report possessing a GED or high school diploma) to see if they had an IEP at their last educational placement.

¹⁷ Based on OSSE rates for reimbursement of IEP development at private schools, development of an IEP may cost up to \$9500 at the maximum 55-hour reimbursement level.

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a new attorney to ensure compliance with the bill's educational requirements, at an initial cost of \$114,000 plus fringe.

Given the new evaluation requirements for DOC under the bill, and IDEA's requirement to provide a FAPE to students with disabilities, DOC expects to provide educational services to additional inmates. DOC's existing education services contract with SFF provides approximately 45 students with education services at a cost of approximately \$4.5 million. Although the number of commitments who will be identified as having a disability under the bill's evaluation requirements is unknown, DOC has estimated that the contract would need to be expanded to provide for at least an additional 20 students, at an estimated initial cost of \$2 million.

Leading Education Access for Reentry and Necessary Success ("LEARNS") Amendment Act of 2025					
Fiscal Year 2026 – Fiscal Year 2030					
(thousands \$)					
Education Services Expansion					
	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	Total
IEP Evaluations and Development	\$2,000	\$2,040	\$2,081	\$2,122	\$8,243
Education under SFF Contract	\$2,000	\$2,040	\$2,081	\$2,122	\$8,243
Staff Support and Training	\$30	\$31	\$31	\$32	\$124
Technology and Documentation Systems	\$220	\$224	\$229	\$233	\$907
Salary ^(a)	\$475	\$485	\$494	\$504	\$1,958
Fringe ^(b)	\$178	\$182	\$186	\$190	\$736
Correctional Officer Overtime	\$478	\$488	\$497	\$507	\$1,970
TOTAL	\$5,381	\$5,489	\$5,599	\$5,712	\$22,181

Table Notes:

(a) One Grade 12, Step 5 Attorney; 1 Special Education Teacher; 1 Psychologist; 1 Program Specialist. Assumes salary growth of 2.0 percent annually.

(b) Assumes a fringe rate of 37.4 percent and fringe growth rate of 2.35 annually.

Grievance Management

The bill requires DOC to enhance its public-facing web portal and develop a secure internal grievance management system that must be operational by July 1, 2027. While ORA estimates a cost of \$1.25 million to procure a grievance management system through a third-party vendor, additional funding could be required to find a vendor who could meet the deadline. Additional systems development costs will include \$300,000 for modifications to the current website, \$175,000 in contract funding for an IT project manager and IT data analyst, and expected ongoing maintenance costs of \$50,000 per year. DOC anticipates needing five additional employees for grievance processing and compliance, including four Correctional Program Specialists to perform data entry, process

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grievances and complaints, and track and update complaint status. DOC will also add an attorney to provide legal guidance and training on system controls, privacy, data sharing and the grievance process. Finally, DOC will require \$30,000 annually for outside training and support.

Leading Education Access for Reentry and Necessary Success ("LEARNS") Amendment Act of 2025					
Fiscal Year 2027 - Fiscal Year 2030					
(thousands \$)					
Grievance Management					
	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	Total
Website Upgrades, Tracking System Procurement, Maintenance ^(a)	\$1,725	\$51	\$52	\$53	\$1,881
Staff Support and Training	\$30	\$31	\$31	\$32	\$124
Salaries ^(b)	\$440	\$449	\$458	\$467	\$1,813
Fringe ^(c)	\$165	\$168	\$172	\$176	\$682
TOTAL	\$2,360	\$699	\$713	\$728	\$4,500

Table Notes:

(a) Does not include costs for expedited procurement/development. Includes \$1.25 million for tracking system procurement, \$175,000 in contract IT support (project manager and data analyst), and \$300,000 for website upgrades.

(b) One Grade 12, Step 5 Attorney and four Grade 10, Step 5 Correctional Program Specialists. Assumes annual salary growth of 2.0 percent. Fiscal Year 2026 cost assumes funding for the full fiscal year.

(c) Assumes a fringe rate of 37.4 percent and fringe growth rate of 2.35 percent annually.

Other Provisions

The bill repeals the subject to funding requirements for the Safe Passage Training and School Engagement Amendment Act of 2025, which requires Safe Passage Ambassadors to complete seven specific annual trainings administered by the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ) in consultation with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). The fiscal year 2026 through fiscal year 2029 budget and financial plan includes funding for program.

The bill's changes to mandatory reporting requirements, probate proceedings, and CJCC report deadlines do not have a cost.