



D.C. Criminal Code Reform Commission
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Criminal Code Reform Commission Applauds Council Hearings

(Washington, DC – November 4, 2021) The [District of Columbia Criminal Code Reform Commission \(CCRC\)](#) is pleased that the District of Columbia City Council today is holding its first hearing on the agency’s recently introduced legislation, the “[Revised Criminal Code Act of 2021 \(RCCA\)](#)” (B24-0416).

The RCCA is the product of over four years of agency deliberations with stakeholders, informed by research into other jurisdictions and expert-recommended best practices. The bill comprehensively revises the elements that establish District crimes, establishes defenses and exceptions to liability for crimes, creates a uniform and proportionate classification system for penalties, and codifies general definitions and other legal requirements applicable to all criminal offenses.

[Richard Schmechel, Executive Director](#) of the CCRC, said, “The RCCA provides for greater predictability, transparency, proportionality, and fairness in District criminal laws. It modernizes the District’s criminal code and aligns it with national best practices. If adopted, this would be the first comprehensive revision of the District’s criminal code since created by Congress in 1901.”

The structure and drafting of the District’s current criminal offenses stand in sharp contrast to most other U.S. jurisdictions. Most states comprehensively restructured and redrafted their criminal statutes in the mid- or late 20th century following the issuance of the [Model Penal Code \(MPC\) by the American Law Institute](#) in 1962. The District is among the minority of jurisdictions that did not update their code at that time. Despite ongoing efforts by the Council, piecemeal legislative amendments have been unable to fix pervasive, structural problems with the D.C. Code. An academic review of state criminal codes using objective factors like clarity, consistency, and completeness ranked the District near the bottom—45th of 52 jurisdictions.

The CCRC was established in 2016 as an independent agency with [the mission of providing recommendations](#) to the Council and Mayor for revising District criminal statutes. The recommendations are based on current District statutory and case law, a thorough review of model legislation and other jurisdictions’ best practices, research into relevant social science literature, and pertinent District criminal justice data analyses.
