

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES BYLAW REVISIONS, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE KEITH SMALLS JOINS LEADERSHIP TEAM

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. The Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, or CJCC, is proud to announce significant improvements to its organizational structure. Recently, members of the CJCC unanimously adopted important [bylaw revisions](#). The revisions were the result of a healthy modernization process to ensure the CJCC is able to better meet the needs of the community and to continue enhancing collaboration in the years to come. This is an important step for the CJCC which has been successfully engaging the community and advancing intentional, data-guided strategies for improving the local criminal justice system since its inception in 2015.

The revisions were proposed by a diverse Governance Committee formed by Chairman, Captain Jason Bruder of the Charleston Police Department and Vice Chair, Magistrate Ellen Steinberg. The Governance Committee researched key strengths and challenges, carefully reviewed the bylaws line by line, debated, and proposed thoughtful revisions. Governance Committee members include:

- Adrian Cain, Community Representative for the Business Community
- Judge Tamara Curry, Charleston County Probate Judge
- Dr. Chanda Funcell, Charleston Center Director
- Major James Hill, North Charleston Police Department
- Attorney Allie Menegakis, Community Representative (Committee Vice Chair)
- Ninth Circuit Public Defender, Ashley Pennington (Committee Chair)
- Jennifer Roberts, Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center Executive Director
- Keith Smalls, Community Representative for the Crime Survivor Community
- Ninth Circuit Solicitor, Scarlett Wilson
- Staff support provided by Kristy Danford, CJCC Director and Adina Gross, CJCC Communications & Outreach Coordinator

While the general scope of the CJCC remains in place, key revisions were instituted, such as:

- Adoption of a vision statement “To foster a criminal justice system that is fair, just and equitably applied”.
- Clarifications within the CJCC’s authority, guiding principles and responsibilities to emphasize its focus on the fair and equitable administration of justice, performance reporting and increasing public awareness and transparency of the local criminal justice system.

- Expanding the number of officers on the executive committee to three, including one Chair and one Vice-Chair from different disciplines among the CJCC's positional membership elected by the full body, and one Vice-Chair from the CJCC's Community Representative membership elected by Community Representatives.
- Updating the terms of Community Representative membership to begin in July rather than January to coincide with the selection of officers, formalizing the adoption of an inclusive community engagement process in each strategic planning cycle (as was done in the development of the [current plan](#)), and extending the term of each strategic plan from three years to five. And,
- Adding the Charleston County Deputy County Administrator for Public Safety (Eric Watson) as a non-voting member pursuant to the County's oversight of CJCC personnel.

Governance Committee Chairman, Ninth Circuit Public Defender Pennington, stated, "From my experience in over 40 years of practicing law, stakeholders have traditionally operated like they were in a courtroom, each stakeholder in their own corner. Through the CJCC we changed all that. We have taken a broader vision and we've demonstrated it works. I'm incredibly proud of the progress made by our CJCC and expect the revisions will help the CJCC to continue bringing stakeholders together in the years to come. Through the CJCC we have the data, we see the impacts of our local criminal justice system on our community, we learn from one another, and together we find ways to create better results for everyone."

Community Representative, Keith Smalls, was unanimously elected by fellow Community Representatives to serve as the first-ever Community Representative Vice-Chair of the CJCC. Alexandra Menegakis, Community Representative and Executive Director of South Carolina for Criminal Justice Reform (SC4CJR), nominated Mr. Smalls noting he exemplifies the ideal candidate for this position having been incarcerated for nearly 20 years and having suffered a tremendous loss to gun violence. Shortly after Mr. Smalls release from the South Carolina Department of Corrections Mr. Smalls' then 15-year old son was shot and killed in the Waylon-Dorchester neighborhood by other teenage boys. Since 2019, Mr. Smalls has actively served on the CJCC, initially as a Community Representative for the previously incarcerated and more recently a Community Representative for survivors of crime. Mr. Smalls currently works as a [Violence Intervention Prevention Client Advocate at MUSC](#) and is the founding executive director of [My Communitys Keeper Mentor Group](#).

Upon accepting the leadership role, Keith Smalls stated, "for my fellow community representatives, for the community itself, for the previously incarcerated and all those with lived experiences, we are making a difference. I am honored and humbled to serve in this position. I am excited to help continue the good work of the CJCC and to keep moving the mission forward."

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About the CJCC

The CJCC is a collaboration of elected and senior officials, law enforcement leaders, judicial and court leadership, behavioral health professionals, victim and legal advocates, and various community leaders working in service of the Charleston community. The mission of the CJCC is to assist in making sustainable, data-driven improvements to Charleston County's criminal justice system and thereby improve public safety and community well-being. The CJCC is currently funded by a Safety and Justice Challenge grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more information, visit www.cjcc.charlestoncounty.org.

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