There is wonderful work being done by an ever-growing coalition of professionals who refuse to accept a status quo that is anything less than the best we can do for our communities. For many criminal justice professionals and advocates looking to reform their bail systems, the District of Columbia continues to be the model of fair and effective pretrial decision-making and programming.

Timothy J. Murray, Former Executive Director
Pretrial Justice Institute
Effective Risk Assessment, Supervision and Treatment

**PSA has used some form of risk assessment since its inception in 1967— the longest continuous use of a risk instrument in the pretrial field.** PSA’s current risk assessment is the result of independent research to identify factors that are predictive of failure to appear for a scheduled court appearance and rearrest on a new offense during pretrial supervision. *This helps ensure that defendants are matched to appropriate and effective levels of supervision when release is appropriate, or detained when that is consistent with public safety.*

**PSA provides a continuum of supervision for defendants released into the community pending trial, based on each individual’s assessed level of risk.** PSA promotes defendant accountability to court-ordered conditions, court appearance and public safety by employing supervision levels consistent with a defendant’s identified risk level, and promotes swift and effective consequences for pretrial misconduct.

Illicit drug use and mental health issues contribute significantly to public safety concerns and flight risk. When appropriate, PSA integrates substance dependence treatment and mental health services into supervision. This includes referrals to community-based treatment providers and PSA’s own specialized treatment and supervision programs. *The District of Columbia Superior Court’s nationally-recognized Drug Court and Mental Health Community Court are two examples of how PSA and the court have committed to providing help and support (in lieu of punishment) for defendants with substance use disorders and/or mental health issues, and thus breaking the cycle of drug use and crime.*

**Results**

Effective practices lead to positive results. *PSA is proud to have helped its local courts secure non-financial release for over 85% of pretrial defendants, a much higher percentage of such releases than in any other court system nationwide.* About 88% of all released defendants return to court as required; also, about 89% of released defendants are not again arrested prior to trial, and of those who are, less than 1% are alleged to have committed a violent crime.