Justice Committee

Draft Budget 2012-13 and Spending Review 2011

Written submission from the Fair Justice System for Scotland Group

Contribution to the Justice Committee Budget Scrutiny Process.

The Fair Justice System for Scotland Group (FJSSG) is an organisation that was recently established to advance for a fair justice system in Scotland.

Our main objectives are outlined below from an extract of our constitution:

1. The organization’s object is the promotion of a fair, all-inclusive and representative justice system in Scotland, this to be reflected by way of representative and reflective employment and appointment across the sector and in all other aspects of the system.

In furtherance of the above main object(s) the organization will undertake such activities as to:

- a. promote the representation of BME communities in the structures and arms of the justice system in Scotland;
- b. promote multicultural employment and appointment of members of BME communities in the justice system and agencies of the justice system in Scotland;
- c. engage the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish judiciary system as a way of promoting the inclusion of BME communities in the processes and functions and all aspects of the justice system in Scotland;
- d. work with Scottish Law Society and to ensure that enough support is availed to and provided to members of BME communities wishing to pursue the legal profession in Scotland;
- e. identify BME communities and assist them to access legal services and ensure they are well aware of their rights and obligations within the context of the Scottish justice system;
- f. to work closely with the Scottish Prison Service and the police forces to ensure equal and fair representation and treatment of BME communities in employment and during law enforcement;
- g. strive to be an organisation of great repute and useful existence by drawing together communities through workshops, training and open forums and debates;
- h. assist vulnerable individuals and groups from BME communities to enforce their rights within the justice system in Scotland and to assist them to understand the justice system;
- i. enhance BME communities welfare through the advancement of their awareness of different community cultural practices that may have a bearing on law enforcement.
Our submission

The main areas that we would like the Justice Committee to ensure there is adequate budgetary allocation are as follows:

1. To ensure budgetary allocation for the holding of workshops similar to the one addressed by the Justice Minister Kenny MacAskill that highlighted the need for more BMEs to come forward and apply to become Justices of the Peace to cover a Scotland wide programme.

2. To extend the scope of the workshops to cover other areas such as courts support staff, prison staff, probation staff and also to ensure there are adequate mechanisms for scrutinising the applications process to establish if there are any failings in the process.

3. To ensure there is adequate funding for translation in the courts so that cases are not postponed due to lack of translators thereby infringing on the judicial rights of those affected.

4. To ensure the budget provides funds allocation for organisations that may be willing to work with and on behalf of the Government in areas of statistics compilation as a way of alleviating the burden on the civil service.

Silence Chihuri
Chairman
12 October 2011