GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Metropolitan Police Department

Public Roundtable on the

Extended Juvenile Curfew & Designated Juvenile Curfew Zones in the District of Columbia

Testimony of
Pamela A. Smith
Chief of Police

Before the
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairperson

October 30, 2024
John A. Wilson Building, Room 120

Good morning, Chairperson Pinto, members of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, everyone gathered here today in person, and those watching us remotely. My name is Pamela A. Smith, and I am the Chief of Police for the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). I am joined here today by Lindsey Appiah, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Committee on the positive impact that the *Juvenile Curfew Emergency Amendment Act of 2025* had on public safety this summer. In June, Mayor Muriel Bowser proposed this narrowly tailored legislation to provide tools to address a growing trend of large groups of youth engaging in disruptive, intimidating, and sometimes criminal behavior. The legislation was passed, with some amendments, at the July 1st Council session, and was in effect July 7th through October 5th.

As a reminder, this legislation was prompted by incidents in some of our neighborhoods this spring and early summer, with groups of dozens, to more than 100, youths engaged in disruptive behavior, such as massive brawls, running through stores, private lobbies, and restaurants, jumping on tables, brawling, and damaging property. Incidents like these happened in Navy Yard, the Wharf, and the U Street Corridor. These incidents were not just "kids being kids." This trend was not isolated to DC. Prince George's County authorized curfew zones with extended hours, first in National Harbor, and then more generally throughout the county, in 2024. Residents, employees, and visitors were understandably fearful, and asked what the District government was going to do to either prevent this behavior or hold the youth accountable.

The *Juvenile Curfew Emergency Amendment Act* authorized several tools to help police curb this behavior. I will focus on the three elements that MPD used this summer. Whereas the non-emergency curfew law usually applies to youth 16 years of age or younger, the emergency legislation expanded the curfew to include 17-year-olds. Second, it changed the beginning of the citywide curfew hours in July and August from midnight to 11 p.m., seven days a week. Most importantly, the legislation authorized the Chief of Police to designate a juvenile curfew zone with extended curfew hours beginning no earlier than 8 p.m. The zones could be established for a period up to four days, based on an analysis of relevant data, intelligence indicating ten or more youth would be gathering in the proposed zone in a manner that would result in substantial harm to public safety, or other verifiable information of a threat to public safety by unaccompanied youth.

Under the citywide curfew, youth cannot remain in any public place or on the premises of any establishment, unless involved in certain exempted activities. In other words, youth must be at home or in someone's private residence. In contrast, in the juvenile curfew zones, youth do not need to return home until the citywide curfew hours begin; they simply cannot stay in a zone in groups of nine or more. To come into compliance, youth can choose to either leave the zone, or break up into smaller groups.

I authorized seven curfew zones in July and August: three in Navy Yard, two in the U Street corridor, one in southwest DC, and another in northeast DC. Maps of these locations are attached to my testimony. The locations were announced to the media and posted on MPD's website. Officers hung bright yellow, 11 by 17-inch posters around and within the zones, informing the public of when and where the juvenile curfew zone would be in effect and how to come into compliance. As 8 p.m. approached, officers would circulate and speak with youth in the area,

making sure they were aware of the law and its requirements. As a result of this proactive effort, MPD did not have to cite any youth for curfew violations in the zones during the active hours (8 p.m. to 11 p.m.), nor were there any large gatherings.

In short, this legislation produced the desired outcome: with narrowly tailored periods of enforcement, it increased community safety without increasing juvenile arrests. This is what we want to see. Of course, some people would like to do away with the curfew entirely. But that is not where we are right now, and I have to deal with reality, not aspirations. The reality is that our youth are generally safer at home, where they are not influenced by group think, engaging in conduct that alarms and intimidates community members. Not only does the curfew safeguard the community, it protects the youth from the consequences of poor decisions. I urge the Council to reauthorize the juvenile curfew zones to ensure police have a tool that can be strategically used to safeguard both the community and youth.

Unfortunately, in the past few weeks after the Council decided against reauthorizing the emergency curfew, we have seen a return of the large gatherings of juveniles engaging in disruptive and dangerous behavior, although now happening in the daytime too.

- On Monday, October 13th, a group that grew to more than 100 youth travelled from Navy Yard to Union Station, and then to Shady Grove. At one point, when they were running in and out of traffic, a 14-year-old youth was struck by a vehicle, sustaining minor injuries. At the same time across town, 60 to 70 juveniles rampaged through the Gallery Place movie theater, destroying property, and stealing approximately $200 of candy. One juvenile threw a water bottle at an employee, striking them on the forehead. All of this happened in less than 10 minutes.

- On Sunday, October 19th, a group that grew to more than 100 youth broke out in multiple fights. Officers had to deploy OC spray to gain control and break up two of the fights. One 13-year-old was charged with simple assault.

- This past weekend, flyers were circulated on social media for two "Teen Takeovers"—in the U Street corridor and the Navy Yard / Wharf area—telling kids to bring their own alcohol and marijuana. The "takeovers" were advertised as starting in the early evening, and the kids showed up by the dozens. In the U Street area, the gathering turned violent, with the groups being disorderly in the street and eventually surrounding and banging on two vehicles, breaking the window of one car. In both incidents, the drivers got out of the cars and began to fight with the juveniles. One driver ended up in the hospital, and the suspects took their car and rammed it into a tree.

To argue that this is just "kids being kids" is to turn a blind eye to the understandable fear felt by community members impacted by these take overs, and to dismiss the property damage that impacts residents and businesses. MPD, however, cannot ignore intimidating, dangerous, and criminal conduct. To address the negative behavior over the past few weeks, we have been working with community partners and gathering intelligence. We are deploying officers, curfew vans, and light towers. MPD and our government and community partners have been hosting events that kids can attend, such as "Late Night Hype" this summer. And this week is a busy one,

with Halloween events continuing tonight and tomorrow. You can find a list of MPD's events on our website, at mpdc.dc.gov, under Community Engagement.

But there are always going to be youth who aren't interested in these events. In order to be effective in addressing these large gatherings without draining all of MPD's resources from other neighborhoods, we need the Council to reauthorize the juvenile curfew zones. It doesn't address all of the concerns and scenarios, but it is an important tool.

Of course, none of this is a replacement for parents and guardians who monitor where their kids are, who they are with, and what they are doing. I don't want any of our kids to become a statistic, either as a victim or an arrestee, and I know Councilmembers share this goal. But we cannot wait until our kids move on to the next new trend without addressing the disruptive and potentially criminal behavior at large unsupervised gatherings of youth. We need this authority now to support strategic efforts to maintain the peace.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this important issue. Deputy Mayor Appiah and I will be happy to address any questions.

Curfew Announcement

Friday, July 11, 2025 - Sunday, July 13, 2025

**Note the citywide curfew takes effect at conclusion of the zone at 11:00 p.m*

Curfew Announcement

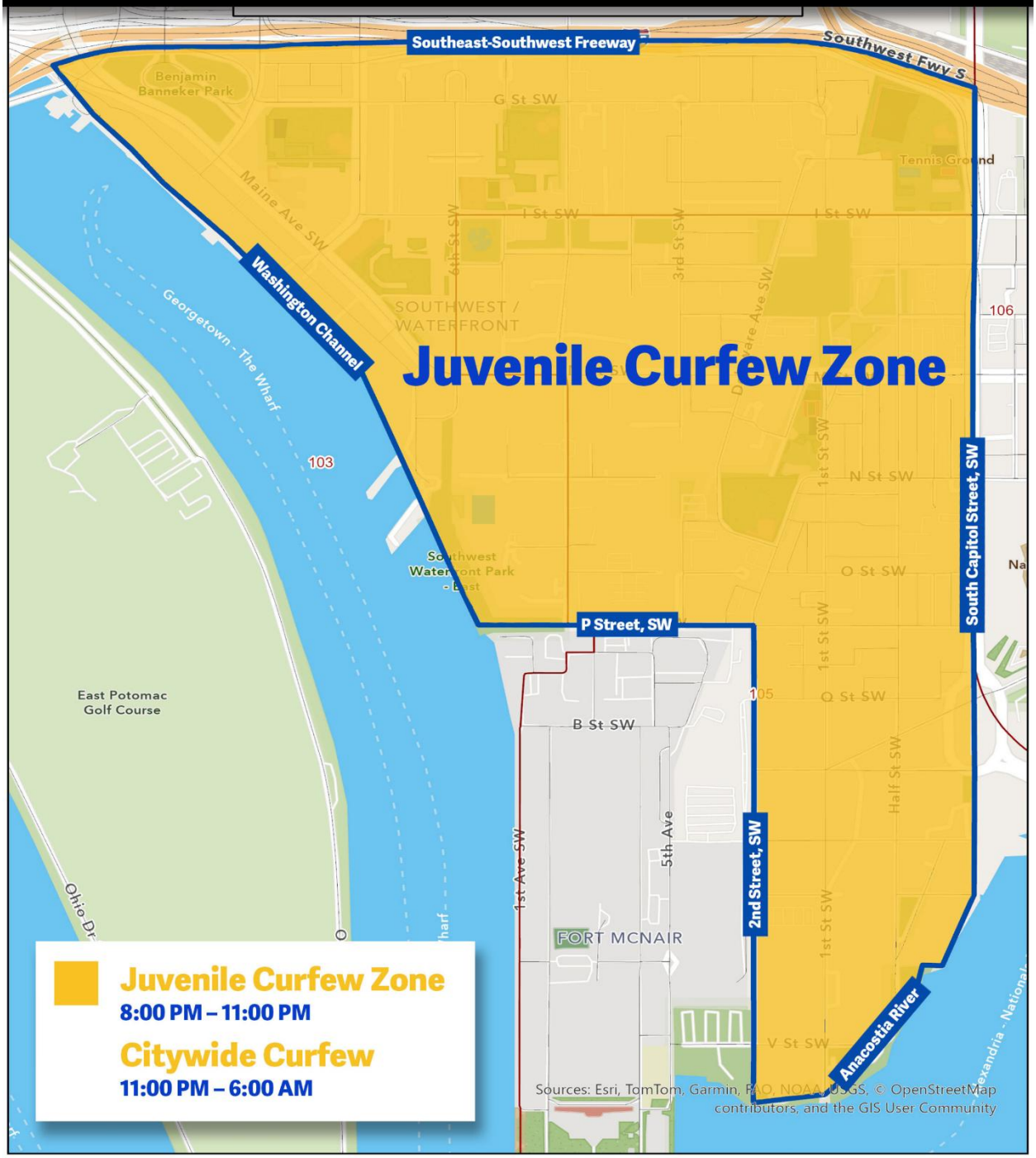
Friday, July 18 – Sunday, July 20, 2025

NOTE: The citywide curfew takes effect at conclusion of the Zone at 11 PM

Curfew Announcement

Friday, August 1 – Monday, August 4, 2025

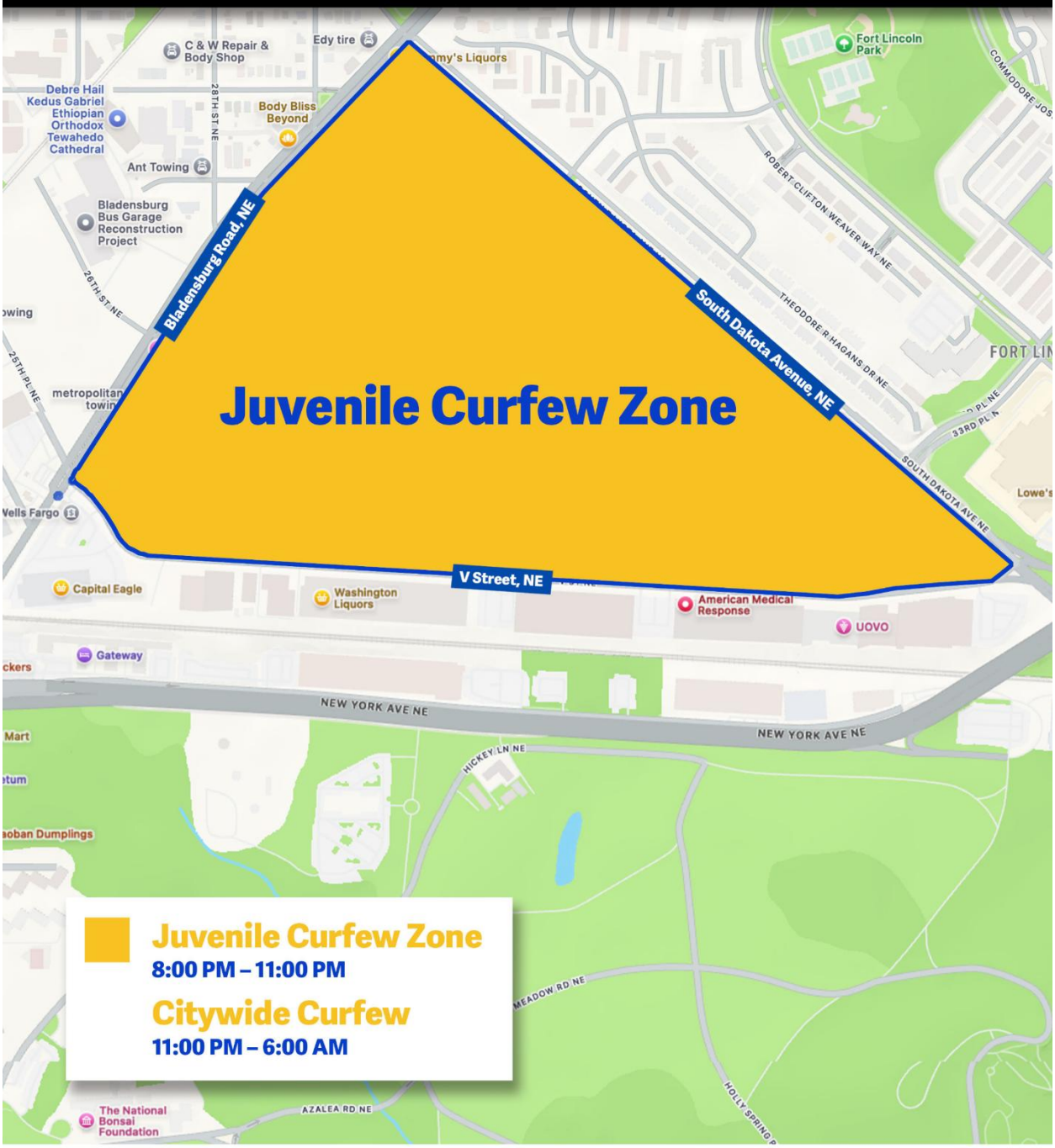
NOTE: The citywide curfew takes effect at conclusion of the Zone at 11 PM



Curfew Announcement

Friday, August 1 – Monday, August 4, 2025

NOTE: The citywide curfew takes effect at conclusion of the Zone at 11 PM



Curfew Announcement

Sunday, August 10 - Wednesday, August 13, 2025

NOTE: The citywide curfew takes effect at conclusion of the Zone at 11 PM

Curfew Announcement

Friday, August 15 - Monday, August 18, 2025

NOTE: The citywide curfew takes effect at conclusion of the Zone at 11 PM

Curfew Announcement

Thursday, August 21 - Sunday, August 24, 2025

NOTE: The citywide curfew takes effect at conclusion of the Zone at 11 PM