

Testimony for Civilian Assistant Chief of Police, Bill 24-20

Greetings President Katz, Vice President Hucker and all Council Members.

My name is Bonita (Bonnie) Slade. It would be a great idea to implement the position of Civilian Assistant Chief of Police if the budget allows. It would free up police time so that officers can tend to more pressing issues that are within law enforcement duties. Police are usually the first to respond to 911 calls that are often not emergencies. I feel that this along with more training and accountability on how to police and interact with people, not Law and Order, in particular, with people of color, would be beneficial and alleviate some of their frustrations as well as some of ours and allow them to have better focus and community engagement when they are not overwhelmed with so many other issues.

As police departments all over are being looked at, ours is no different. As a Black woman, I personally have been pulled over for no reason other than being Black and driving a nice car, or pulled over only to be blocked in by 7 or 8 police cars and fearing for my life with guns drawn just to hear an officer lie and apologize with the same old excuse of we got a call for a robbery in progress with this same vehicle description. Have a nice day mam. It's awfully strange how this happens and yet they never ask to see my driver's license or registration. When this happens, I don't know if I'll be dragged out of my car, beaten for no reason and taken down with a knee to my neck (I can't breathe), possibly never to see my family again. It sickens me to my stomach sometimes to the point where I don't drive, I take Uber or Lyft because I am simply so nervous and afraid and it's safe. I was so happy to get a Lexus ES 350, I worked so hard for it and yet, it sits outside because I am so scared to drive it because I am Black. I hate that I have children in this miserable, unstable, sad world. My kids should be able to jog in the neighborhood that they live in with a hoodie on while drinking iced tea and eating Skittles if they choose to without being harassed while being Black. We didn't choose to be Black, it was given to us and I am proud to wear it. It is part of who I am and at the end of the day, I can't take it off. What's going on, has to stop and Lord knows, Montgomery County Police have their issues as well. I pay taxes just like everyone else and we all deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and not a common criminal simply because we are Black. As a Black woman, make no mistake, we go through many of the same issues that Black men go through. It is for no other reason of us simply being Black. I can't hide being Black, I can't pretend to be Black and no one who is not

Black can tell me what we/I go through or have been through and this is everywhere, stores, residential neighborhoods, jobs, schools but we're talking about the Police Department now and I feel that this would be a positive, effective move. Me putting armor on daily, starts as soon as I leave the house. When I start a new job, it's never I wonder if this place will be better or different, instead, I say when will it start and it has never failed. It's a different level of pain, hurt, disappointment and frustration that I feel when I see police officers who are supposed to protect and serve me, possibly be out to hurt, harm me or ruin my life with fake charges. It does something to your soul when you've been treated this way and people say that they're sorry you feel this way. I didn't wake up just feeling this way, it's what it's been and what it continues to be. What's even more stressful is thinking about my various family members who are DC Police Officers, Correctional Officers and Detectives and in not so nice neighborhoods. I fear for their safety daily but I do get a sense of comfort and pride knowing that they aren't part of the problem, they are not bad ones. Something has to change.

We all need to be safe and protected not stereotyped and racially profiled. We deserve the exact same human rights as every White person in this county receives. This was already a longstanding issue but when George Floyd was killed, it was different to see a man killed on camera and an officer freely not give a care in the world and all the excuses that some people used to justify the killing. It took something out of me. No matter how big or small, I have to say something. I'd be falling for everything if I didn't. The new police chief, I see lots of motivation in him, positive motivation. I believe that he is going to make change and he needs our support to do so. I need to leave this world better than when I came into it. My life, my children's lives, every Black person and every person of color in this county deserves it. We all know that All Lives Matter but all lives are not being beaten, shot, tased and or killed by police officers, Black people are. Black Lives Matter, My Life Matters, My Children's Lives Matter, my Parents Lives Matter, My Siblings Lives Matter, My Cousins Lives Matter, My Friends Lives Matter. We Matter. You Matter. Black Lives Matter.

Sincerely,

Bonita Slade