

To : Montgomery County Council

Subject: Bill 3-24, Late Night Establishments – Hours of Operation

I am writing to support the effort to restrict the late-night operation of Hookah bars in Montgomery County. However, it does not go far enough. The current governance is not working. We live six blocks from downtown Silver Spring, and we get to enjoy an ongoing symphony of police and ambulance sirens seven nights a week as our first responders try to respond to the chaos that has become the norm.

The County has had some success in getting new housing built in downtown Silver Spring. However, the tenants in several of the buildings adjacent to and along Georgia avenue cannot feel safe right now living there. The crowds, loud music blaring from the roof of the Society Lounge, the wide-open block party and “food trucks” set up on the street. The Council seems more concerned with reducing impact on the club owners than in enhancing the safety and quality of life of the residents.

The County Council needs to go further. The clubs should be restricted to much earlier hours in line with what other jurisdictions like Prince George’s County have done. Midnight at the latest. In addition, the number of such establishments should be limited. If members of the Council are concerned about the economic impact on the Hookah Bar owners and employees, the county could provide them with financial support to move to underserved communities like Bethesda or Potomac.

The Council needs to focus on the needs and safety of the community that lives in the area, pays taxes, and votes in elections. Not the roving street party in downtown Silver Spring.

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