

March 5, 2024

To: Montgomery County Council

Re: Bill 3-24 Late Night Establishments - Hours of Operation

I am writing in support of legislative efforts to restrict the hours of the hookah lounges in Montgomery County. Unfortunately Bill 3-24 does not go far enough. If stronger measures are not put into place we will only be re-visiting this issue again as crime continues to escalate in downtown Silver Spring.

The numerous hookah lounges in downtown Silver Spring are a magnet for a range of illegal activity. At a recent Safe Silver Spring meeting, where Commander McBain, Captain Reed, and Lieutenant Gallagher spoke, we learned that in Downtown Silver Spring, between the hours of 2AM and 7AM, officers typically field twice as many calls as any other spot in the county. These clubs are taxing the resources of our police department and degrading the quality of life for local residents. It also appears downtown Silver Spring is now on the map as an attractive spot for drug dealing at all times of the day. Just walk through the Whole Foods parking lot or stroll up Ellsworth in the afternoon and you will often see open air drug dealing. Of even greater concern are the recent shootings - including late night gun battles - in downtown Silver Spring. Having lived in Petworth at the height of the crack wars in the 1990s, I am disturbed to witness a general degradation of the quality of life for Silver Spring residents in large part as a result of conditions created by these late night lounges.

I respectfully ask that legislation be written to close the lounges at midnight and request a moratorium on the opening of new lounges.

I would also like to see proposed zoning that moves lounges to industrial areas, away from residential neighborhoods and that would also limit club density. We need need sensible laws restricting these businesses, laws similar to those passed in PG County & Baltimore County .

Finally, we need increased funding to support our police department and the exceptional work they are doing.

Iris Peabody

Dale Drive

Silver Spring, Md. 20910