



Fraternal Order of Police
Montgomery County Lodge 35

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Distinguished members of the Montgomery County Council,

On behalf of Montgomery County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 35, representing over 1500 active and retired Montgomery County law enforcement officers, we express our SUPPORT for Council Bill 3-24 Late Night Establishments – Hours of Operation.

The issue of public safety remains paramount for residents and visitors of Montgomery County. Regrettably, statistics and our firsthand observations indicate that "hookah lounges" often serve as hubs for dangerous illicit criminal activities during the early morning hours. These include drug dealing and use, alcohol consumption without proper permitting, violence, and a range of gang-related activities.

This recurring pattern places additional strain on the already stretched resources of the Montgomery County Police Department, leading to heightened tensions and unnecessary confrontations between law enforcement officers and the public. Tragically, incidents of gun violence have occurred at these establishments, including most recently this past weekend and in December 2022, resulting in officer-involved shootings.

Aligning the operating hours of "hookah lounges" and smoke shops with those established for alcohol consumption would facilitate more consistent oversight by regulatory agencies such as the alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis commission. This parity in operational hours would streamline business checks and enforcement efforts.

We extend our gratitude to the sponsors and co-sponsors of this legislation for introducing measures aimed at curbing criminal activity during late-night hours. Implementing these regulations will contribute to making Montgomery County a safer and more secure community for all residents and visitors alike.

Sincerely,

Lee Holland

President

Montgomery County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 35