

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORT
2024 Legislative Session

Reference No.: CB-29-2024
Draft No.: 2
Committee: COW
Date: April 23, 2024
Action: FAV (A)

REPORT:

Committee Vote: Favorable 10-0-1 (Council Members Ivey, Harrison, Blegay, Burroughs, Dernoga, Fisher, Franklin, Hawkins, Olson, and Watson)

Abstain: Council Member Oriadha

The County Council convened in the Committee of the Whole (COW) to consider CB-29-2024 Draft 2 on April 23, 2024. CB-29-2024 was referred to the COW on April 16, 2024.

CB-29-2024 allows commercial property owners to request the police chief to establish more restrictive juvenile or minor curfew zones within the county. It outlines the application process, including defining the covered area based on reasonable geographical boundaries, specifying that the proposed area must be primarily commercial, requiring the applicant to demonstrate the ability to notify the public about the curfew zone, and mandating a letter of support from a County Council Member representing the district involved.

Karen Zavakos, Associate Council Administrator, presented a Proposed Draft 2 of CB-29-2024, noting no substantive changes in the bill's contents. The proposed draft aims to restyle the bill from a regular to an emergency bill as outlined in the Charter, specifically in Section 317.

Ms. Zavakos further explained that these changes affect the bill's title, which is now an emergency bill. Additionally, the purpose clause has been expanded to state the nature of the emergency, focusing on protecting minors and residents from criminal activity by restricting the places where minors can be during specific hours. This clarification is noted in the bill starting on line 10.

Additionally, on Page 8, Section 4 restates the nature of the public emergency. On Page 9, two critical changes accompany the transition to emergency legislation: its effective date aligns with the date of becoming law, eliminating the usual 45-day lag after executive signature or enactment, and it mandates a two-thirds affirmative vote from the whole Council. Although procedural and

non-substantive, these adjustments are vital under the charter to expedite the bill's enactment and effectiveness.

Council Member Burroughs, the bill sponsor, indicates that a crucial necessity for emergency legislation drives the bill. His foremost concern is the public health, safety, and welfare within a specific commercial zone. He further stated that he is deeply committed to safeguarding our county's vital assets, the economic lifelines, and youth. He further noted that the parents must know their children's whereabouts and activities. Council Member Burroughs respectfully seeks his colleague's support in addressing these pressing issues.

The Office of Law finds CB-29-2024 Draft 2 to be in proper legislative form.

Sakinda Skinner, County Council Liaison, the Office of the County Executive, informed the Council Members that the County Executive fully supports CB-29-2024 and extended gratitude to Council Member Burroughs for initiating this legislation.

Council Member Oriadha raised several inquiries regarding the renewal process, suggesting annual rather than indefinite approval once granted for the created commercial zone; regarding representation, she proposed a letter of acceptance for two representatives – one at-large and one district, to ensure comprehensive voice representation. Lastly, further clarification on the definition of "reasonable geographical boundaries," stating whether it relies solely on law enforcement discretion or if there are set guidelines to follow.

Council Member Harrison spoke in support of the bill and thanked the bill sponsor. Council Member Harrison further commented about safety and community well-being, particularly regarding incidents at National Harbor. It's essential to prioritize the welfare of citizens and take action to address such issues.

Council Member Franklin supported the legislation and asked if the administration would enforce this curfew if approved for a specific commercial area.

Ms. Skinner indicated that the executive agency, namely the Police Department, will take all necessary steps to enforce this legislation.

Council Member Franklin observed that there are curfew laws in the County that aren't being enforced and questioned if these curfew laws will be enforced.

Council Member Fisher expressed support for the bill, thanked the sponsor, and focused on parental responsibility, particularly the section on page six regarding releasing juveniles when parents are unavailable. Council Member Fisher sought clarity on this issue or assurance that arrangements would be made to ensure timely assistance, considering that many incidents may occur during late night hours when county staff is unavailable.

Ms. Skinner indicated that the Police Department and the Department of Social Services will collaborate regarding parental responsibility. Ms. Skinner further indicated that the Department of Social Services will work expeditiously to ensure a resolution. Ms. Skinner further indicated that if necessary, she would get back to Council Member Fisher with pertinent information about the process.

The motion was made by Council Member Harrison and seconded by Council Member Blegay to move favorably on CB-29-2024 Draft 2.