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Families of the victims of deadly vehicular pursuits by Metropolitan Police Department endorse the Law Enforcement Vehicular Reform Act of 2021

Bill seeks to curb unnecessary deaths caused by dangerous police chases in the District

Washington, D.C., September 16, 2021 - The families of Antwan Gilmore, Amir Brooks, and Jeffrey Price Jr. publicly endorse their support for the Law Enforcement Vehicular Reform Act of 2021 ahead of today's protest demanding justice for the recent death of Antwan Gilmore. Gilmore, 27, was killed by Metropolitan Police Department when he was found asleep in his car near New York Ave NE in the early hours of August 25, 2021. The bill, introduced by Councilmember Janeese Lewis George developed with input from DC Justice Lab and supported by Harriet's Wildest Dreams, aims to protect the safety of residents by restricting the use of police chases in the District.

The Law Enforcement Vehicular Pursuit Reform Act of 2021 prohibits vehicle pursuits unless a police officer reasonably believes it is necessary to prevent immediate danger of death or serious bodily injury and prohibits a number of dangerous tactics that are often part of chases, including roadblocks, boxing in, ramming, and road spikes. When determining whether an officer's belief is reasonable, the court must consider specific factors, including whether any conduct by the law enforcement officer increased the risk of harm and whether the law enforcement officer made all reasonable efforts to prevent harm, including abandoning efforts to apprehend the suspect. The Metropolitan Police Department currently has a general order that restricts vehicular pursuits to cases that threaten the lives and safety of others, but as a general order, police officers violate these policies repeatedly with no accountability or disciplinary action.

"I encourage all council members to support the Law Enforcement Vehicular Pursuit Reform Act, which will minimize public safety hazards for District residents and take us in the right direction towards achieving true public safety for communities of color by holding police officers accountable," said Jasmin Boyd, relative of Antwan Gilmore. "I am deeply thankful to all of the council members who support this legislation, especially Councilmember Janeese Lewis George. Introducing this bill was an act of civic duty and compassion that acknowledges the real harm done and shows families who have been

impacted by this issue that our loved ones mattered.”

The dangers associated with police chases are well-documented. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there were approximately 1,594 deaths nationally that resulted from police chases during the years 2014 to 2017. In the last seven years, at least four DC residents were tragically killed during vehicular pursuits.

Amir Brooks was just 17 years old when he died August 6, 2014, two days after hitting a tree along Alabama Avenue SE after being illegally chased on a dirt bike by an off duty officer. “Even after dispatch had advised the officer that the bike my son Amir was riding on did not fit the description of the bike associated with [an] armed robbery, the officer proceeded to hit the bike during the chase, left the scene of the accident, rendered no medical aide to Amir and left him in the street to die,” said Pamela Brooks, Amir’s mother. The officer was placed on paid administrative duty and returned to full duty several weeks later. There was no evidence found connecting Amir Brooks to the armed robbery he was suspected of.

Jeffrey Price Jr. was killed on May 4, 2018, at the intersection of Division Avenue and Fitch St NE. As he was being pursued by two officers down Division Avenue, he was hit by a third officer who ran a stop sign on Fitch Street. “A traffic citation for riding an illegal dirt bike is not a death sentence,” said Denise Price, Jeffrey’s mother. The Metropolitan Police Department Major Crash Unit ruled the impact preventable once the body camera footage was released approximately two years after his death. The officer was given a six day suspension for failing to stop at a stop sign and served a single day.

The Law Enforcement Vehicular Pursuit Reform Act of 2021 was co-introduced by Councilmembers Trayon White, Robert White, Brianne Nadeau, Mary Cheh, and Anita Bonds. A public hearing was held on May 20, 2021 and the bill is currently awaiting markup.

ABOUT HARRIET’S WILDEST DREAMS

We, Harriet’s Wildest Dreams (Harriet’s Dreams), are a Black-led abolitionist community defense hub centering all Black lives at risk for state-sanctioned violence in the Greater Washington area. We use political organizing to dismantle oppressive systems while building a police and prison-free future using direct action, mutual aid, and legal empowerment. Our work is guided by our ancestors and centers on holistic healing and transformative justice.

ABOUT DC JUSTICE LAB

DC Justice Lab is a team of law and policy experts researching, organizing, and advocating for community-rooted reforms to the District's criminal legal system. We develop strategies and solutions that are evidence-driven, community-rooted, and racially just. We aim to fully transform the District's approach to punishment and public safety.