

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT

Vasuki Wilson

Vasuki@RisePublic.com

202-294-2342

DC Justice Lab Supports the Law Enforcement Vehicular Pursuit Reform Amendment Act of 2021 Introduced by Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

Bill aims to reduce fatalities caused by police pursuits and strengthen accountability

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 22, 2021 - DC Justice Lab, a team of law and policy experts who advocate for community-rooted reforms to the District's criminal code, today announced its support for the Law Enforcement Vehicular Pursuit Reform Amendment Act of 2021 introduced by Councilmember Janeese Lewis George (Ward 4) to codify no chase policies into law and subject police officers who violate the law to disciplinary action and the District of Columbia to civil liability.

The introduced bill, informed by legal recommendations from DC Justice Lab, prohibits vehicle pursuits unless a police officer reasonably believes it is necessary to prevent immediate danger, notably 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. 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.

"Verdicts are not substitutes for policy change. That's why I am proud to introduce this legislation as we work to reduce the injuries and fatalities that often result from police pursuits and support the safety of police officers, suspects, and bystanders," said Councilmember Janeese Lewis George. "We see too many instances of police officers chasing suspects for misdemeanors, traffic offenses and civil infractions. This bill requires police to assess the potential risks of a pursuit and establishes a path for victims of police pursuits to seek justice."

"An increasing number of police departments across the country have recognized the unnecessary harm and risk of these tactics and have restricted vehicular pursuit policies to prevent the deaths that often result from these dangerous pursuits," said Patrice Sulton, founder and Executive Director of DC Justice Lab. "I applaud Councilmember Lewis George for her commitment to advancing common-sense public safety solutions and holding those who abuse positions of power to account."

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 three DC residents were tragically killed during vehicular pursuits. Jeffrey Price, Amir Brooks, and Karon Hylton-Brown were all young Black men who died from injuries sustained while being pursued by police.

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.

END