

District of Columbia Pedestrian Advisory Council
Testimony before the Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Public Roundtable on PR24-326 (Director of the District Department of Transportation Everett
Lott Confirmation Resolution of 2021) and B24-302 (The Removal and Disposition of
Abandoned and Other Unlawfully Parked Vehicles Reform Amendment Act of 2021)
October 26, 2021

My name is Ameen Beale and I represent Ward 8 on the DC Pedestrian Advisory Council (DCPAC). The DCPAC was established by the Pedestrian Advisory Council Establishment Act of 2009 to serve as the advisory body to the Mayor, the Council of the District of Columbia, and the District agencies on matters pertaining to the improvement of pedestrian safety and accessibility.

I am here today primarily to address bill B24-302, the Removal and Disposition of Abandoned and Other Unlawfully Parked Vehicles Reform Amendment Act of 2021. Before turning to our testimony on that bill, I will note that the DCPAC does not take a position on the confirmation of Director Lott, but we do continue to emphasize that whoever leads DDOT must continue strengthening the District's commitment to eliminating fatalities and serious injuries on our streets. We are encouraged by recent announcements of DDOT work to improve safety, but cautious in our optimism.

Turning to B24-302, the DCPAC supports the proposed changes to the law which we hope will improve DPW's ability to respond to reports of dangerous or abandoned vehicles. As I travel around Ward 8, I see -- every day -- heavily-damaged vehicles that have clearly been in a crash, often with obviously fraudulent tags like those at issue in the United States Attorney's indictment¹ of two persons accused of selling thousands of fake Texas tags. Particularly when broken glass or metal shards are apparent, and/or when vermin are present, these vehicles pose a danger to people walking in the area. They also pose a potential threat to public safety more generally. It appears that at least some of these abandoned vehicles I see have probably been taken or used in crimes.

This problem is not unique to Ward 8. Via Twitter, I have learned that people all over the city share this concern about vehicles in their own neighborhoods.

We also are very concerned about the numerous scofflaw vehicles that we see around the city -- vehicles bearing tags that show multiple violations of speed and other safety laws. Recently, I spotted a vehicle which had accumulated 31 citations, including speeding tickets, many of which were more than 60 days old, which made the vehicle eligible for impoundment. The car has more recently been ticketed by DPW on several different occasions for parking violations in the same area of Connecticut Avenue but for some reason no connection has been made to the

¹ See

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdtx/pr/three-charged-nationwide-scheme-sell-hundreds-thousands-fraudulent-texas-paper-tags>

earlier violations that make it eligible for towing. This is just one example that I and others have found of cars with repeated safety violations that have not been towed. If there is a need for additional changes to the law and infrastructure to enable DPW to impound and store these vehicles, we hope those changes also will be included in this bill. Lastly, I would like to highlight that reality that walking past abandoned vehicles everyday can be psychologically traumatizing and adversely affects the quality of life for District residents, especially those living in underserved neighborhoods where the reality of disenfranchisement and perceived systemic neglect is already overbearing and damaging.

In conclusion, we urge the Council to enact this bill and provide sufficient resources to DPW to ensure that abandoned, dangerous and scofflaw vehicles will be removed from the street. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.