

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**



B26-0328 - Vehicular Terrorism Prevention Amendment Act of 2025

Testimony of  
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Before the  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

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John A. Wilson Building  
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Good afternoon, Chairperson Pinto, Councilmembers present, and the staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. My name is Clint Osborn, and I am the Director of the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA).

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Vehicular Terrorism Prevention Amendment Act of 2025. We appreciate the Council's attention to this matter and welcome collaboration on how we can protect events across the District from vehicular attacks and accidents.

We oppose this legislation because (1) it is too narrowly focused on one aspect of event security planning and negates a more holistic and risk-based approach to barriers and pedestrian safety; (2) it would constrain the District's event planning process by codifying the use of specific technologies, standards, and best practices for the use of vehicles barriers, which are still evolving; and (3) it establishes HSEMA as a rule-making agency for traffic infrastructure, which is a significant departure from our existing mission and capabilities.

To be clear, keeping District residents and visitors safe is our core mission and something that both we and our District agency partners take very seriously. Every year, HSEMA coordinates security measures for hundreds of events, from small festivals to major National Special Security Events (NSSE) like the Presidential Inauguration. Our team is acutely aware of the hazards that vehicles can pose to pedestrians, be it intentional or unintentional.

Across the globe, there have been numerous recent instances of fatal vehicular attacks on public events, including the 2025 New Year's Eve celebration in New Orleans, 2019 New Year's celebration in Germany, and the 2018 and 2024 Christmas market attacks in France and Germany, respectively. Closer to home, Heather Heyer was murdered during a Charlottesville vehicle ramming incident at the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally.

Many in our community will also recall the horrific 2007 Unifest incident, in which 49 people were injured by a driver in Anacostia, after she plowed through a festival crowd while under the influence of drugs. I want to acknowledge that our first responders are also at risk, as they manage and maintain the secure perimeter surrounding events and pedestrian areas. Officer William "Billy"

Evans of the U.S. Capitol Police was killed four years ago in a vehicle attack on the Capitol only a few blocks from where I'm testifying today.

We believe that in recent years, our current processes have resulted in consistently safe events, but the threat is always top of mind. Informed by the incidents I referenced and many others, the District takes a holistic approach to event safety, and we are continuously working to improve that approach.

We are initiating an effort to collaborate with partner agencies, event organizers, and other stakeholders on a more formal review process of our current policies and legislation, combined with a review of emerging technologies such as portable barriers. We believe that event safety is achieved through a layered, adaptive approach – not a single prescriptive solution and that this bill does not adequately account for the range of methods we currently use or the evolving threat environment. We look forward to speaking more with the Council as we conduct this research and analysis.

Appropriately certified manufactured portable barriers can be a useful and effective part of an overall event safety plan. They have been deployed in the District and elsewhere for numerous events and they should be featured heavily in any published rules, regulations, or guides. Other physical security options should also be featured, including blocking vehicles, strategic gate/ticketing placement, hardened street furniture, landscaping, and site layout, and other traffic calming or mitigation measures.

We believe that effective vehicle attack mitigation also includes robust non-physical measures. HSEMA works closely with event organizers and other public safety agencies to identify risks, share intelligence, coordinate public education & communications plans, and make sure that the safety and security plan for every event includes robust measures to account for all kinds of natural and man-made threats.

Finally, I want to share that HSEMA's role in special events goes beyond the issue of vehicle barriers that we are here to discuss with you today. HSEMA manages the Mayor's Special Event

Task Group (MSETG). For events that require closure of a District-owned roadway, MSETG is the first stop for event organizers. While MSETG is not a permitting authority, it does bring organizers together with all the relevant agencies needed for permitting to ensure a safe and successful event. Despite the success of MSETG, I do understand that event permitting can seem like a cumbersome process for organizers and that more could be done to streamline the process while ensuring safety remains at the forefront for traffic as well as the prevention of issues with food handling & safety, venue construction, severe weather planning, heat illnesses, and other essential items at the center of our permitting process. The District's current permitting rules and processes are based on years of successes – and unfortunate failures – at events around the world.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We share the Council's commitment to ensuring the safety of events here in the District and look forward to your collaboration on this. My team and I are available to answer any questions you may have.