

FULL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING  
MARK-UP OF SEVERAL BILLS

for the

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
GOVERNMENT REFORM

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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## **FULL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING MARK-UP OF SEVERAL BILLS**

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**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2025**

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
*Washington, D.C.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:11 a.m., in room HVC-210, U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. James Comer [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Comer, Jordan, Turner, Gosar, Foxx, Grothman, Cloud, Palmer, Higgins, Sessions, Biggs, Mace, Fallon, Donalds, Perry, Timmons, Burchett, Greene, Boebert, Langworthy, Burlison, Crane, Jack, McGuire, Gill, Garcia, Norton, Lynch, Krishnamoorthi, Khanna, Mfume, Brown, Stansbury, Frost, Lee, Casar, Crockett, Randall, Subramanyam, Ansari, Bell, Simon, Min, Pressley, and Tlaib.

Chairman COMER. The Committee will please come to order. A quorum is present.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 5(b) and House Rule XI, Clause 2, the Chair may postpone further proceedings today on the question of approving any measure or matter or adopting an amendment on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered.

The Committee will continue to use the electronic system for recorded votes on amendments and passage of the bills before the Committee. Of course, should any technical issues arise, which I do not anticipate, we will immediately transition to traditional roll call votes. Any procedural-or motion-related votes during today's markup will be dispensed with by a traditional roll call vote.

I will begin with my opening statement.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JAMES COMER REPRESENTATIVE FROM KENTUCKY**

Crime in the District of Columbia has recently reached levels unseen since the violent era of the early 1990s. Juvenile crime has reportedly more than doubled the national average as of February 2024. The D.C. Attorney General and D.C. Council's soft-on-crime policies have created an environment of school absences and offenders to be released, allowing juvenile crime and violent crime to flourish. Further, recent anti-law enforcement rhetoric and highly restrictive policing laws from the D.C. Council have created reten-

tion and recruitment challenges for the Metropolitan Police Department. President Trump, in response, has made sweeping moves to bring Federal law enforcement resources into the District and exercise existing authorities under the Home Rule Act to direct local law enforcement to combat the crime crisis. Like President Trump, House Republicans are committed to restoring law and order in our Nation's Capital City.

The Home Rule Act, which was signed into law in 1973, provides a charter for the local government of the District of Columbia, granting a degree of self-governance to D.C. officials, including the authority to legislate, conduct elections, and otherwise govern local municipal affairs. Under the Home Rule Act, Congress retains the right to enact legislation for D.C. on any subject, including legislation to amend or repeal any law enforced in the District prior to or after an enactment and any act passed by the D.C. Council. Today, this Committee will exercise this authority to consider several pieces of legislation to reinforce President Trump's efforts to make D.C. safe again. Every resident and visitor deserves to feel safe in our Nation's Capital, and today, this Committee will fulfill its constitutional duty to oversee District affairs and make D.C. safe again. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting today's agenda of legislation needed to address D.C.'s crime crisis.

I now yield to the Ranking Member for his opening statement.

Mr. GARCIA. We can move on to the first item.

Chairman COMER. Okay. Our first item for consideration is H.R. 5183, the District of Columbia Home Rule Improvement Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 5183, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOME RULE IMPROVEMENT ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5183, the District of Columbia Home Rule Improvement Act, a bill to amend the District of Columbia Home Rule Act to establish a uniform 60-day congressional review period for the District of Columbia laws, to clarify the expedited procedures applicable to consideration of resolutions of disapproval of District of Columbia laws, to authority the use of resolutions of disapproval to disapprove provisions of District of Columbia laws, and District of Columbia Executive Orders and regulations, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5183, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill and the amendment.

The Constitution explicitly grants Congress authority over the District of Columbia. When Congress passed the D.C. Home Rule



in 1973, it retained certain powers for itself to ensure accountability and oversight of Washington, D.C. One of these powers is the ability to formally disapprove of D.C. Council legislation through resolutions of disapproval. However, the D.C. Council has attempted to bypass congressional oversight by abusing loopholes and bundling ultra progressive policies in too-big-to-fail legislative packages in order to pass irresponsible legislation. As a result, D.C. has become less safe for its residents and visitors.

The District of Columbia Home Rule Improvement Act allows Congress to exercise additional oversight by allowing for a line-item disapproval of D.C. legislation, providing a uniform 60-day window for all D.C. Council actions to receive congressional review, and expanding the types of policy actions that Congress can disapprove of, to include executive actions of the D.C. Mayor, D.C. agency regulations, and D.C. Council emergency legislation. Further, this legislation, like the congressional Review Act process for Federal Agency regulatory review, prevents the D.C. Council from passing any substantially similar laws that Congress has disapproved in the future, and from attempting to withdraw its own legislation from the congressional disapproval window, which we saw happen in 2023 with the Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022.

Overall, this legislation will ensure Congress has the procedural tools to exercise its constitutional oversight role over the District and ensure responsible local governance of the Nation's Capital. I want to thank the sponsor of the bill, Representative Gosar from Arizona, for championing this important reform legislation. I urge my colleagues to support Representative Gosar's bill.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for his opening statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman Comer. I want to say some remarks and then talk about, of course, this first bill.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER  
ROBERT GARCIA, REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA**

It is pretty clear that Donald Trump and House Republicans, especially here on the Oversight Committee, are pushing a blatant power grab by hijacking authority from local Washington, D.C. leaders and residents. Now, as a former Mayor myself, I know that city governments must serve the residents, and governments are there on behalf of the people. It is also a way to ensure when you elect someone to government that they are being held accountable by the people that elect them. Now, Congress should not use our Nation's Capital, an American city with over 700,000 residents, as a political prop. The people of Washington, D.C. should be empowered to make their own decisions, and, quite frankly, if the President is so obsessed with governing D.C., he should step down as President and run for Mayor.

Now, Mr. Comer, we will talk about this first bill. I and Democrats strongly opposed a so-called District of Columbia Home Rule Improvement Act, which should just be known, quite frankly, as a Home Rule Reduction Act. We know that D.C.'s autonomy is already limited, as the world has learned over the last month. I understand how difficult the Federal Government can make running a city on a day-to-day basis, and we should be empowering D.C. to fix its own problems. We know that this bill further limits D.C.'s

autonomy. The bill limits D.C.'s ability to respond to an emergency and could cause chaos in the D.C. Code. The purpose of the D.C. Home Rule Act, the foundation of the D.C. Government, is to "grant to the inhabitants of the District of Columbia powers of local self-government, and to relieve Congress of the burden of legislating upon, essentially, local District matters." The Home Rule Reduction Act does just the opposite. It restricts powers of local self-government and increases the burden on Congress to legislate on local D.C. matters.

Now, the bill endangers residents and visitors by limiting the authority of both the Mayor and Council to respond to an emergency, and that is dangerous. The bill strips the Mayor of authority to issue Executive Orders and regulations that take effect immediately, even in the event of an emergency, such as a need to protect the peace, health, or safety of residents. Now, this bill requires Executive Orders and regulations to be transmitted to Congress for a 60-day congressional review before they take effect. The bill does not contain an exception for an emergency, and that is highly problematic. The bill also allows Congress to use a disapproval resolution for individual provisions of a D.C. bill rather than only for the entire bill. Giving Congress a line-item veto for D.C. bills will cause chaos in the D.C. Code. Members of Congress will introduce disapproval resolutions on individual provisions without understanding how those provisions affect other provisions of the bill undergoing the congressional review process or the D.C. Code. That means more congressional micromanagement and more meddling in the democratic process, and that is less local authority and control for the people that have been elected to serve D.C. residents.

I urge Members to vote no on the Home Rule Reduction Act, and with that, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Ranking Member yields back. I now recognize the sponsor of the bill, the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Gosar.

Mr. GOSAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is once again Liberation Day in Washington, D.C. Today, we will take steps to end the lawlessness in our Nation's Capital. Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 of the U.S. Constitution, also known as the Enclave Clause, established the District of Columbia as a seat of the Federal Government. Furthermore, under the Constitution's District Clause, Congress retains ultimate responsibility for the government of the District of Columbia, very important. Yet, in recent years, the D.C. Council has advanced a series of dangerous, soft-on-crime measures to weaken law enforcement and ignore public safety.

My bill, H.R. 5183, the District of Columbia Home Rule Improvement Act, will restore Congress' power over D.C. given to us by President Nixon in the Home Rule Act of 1973. This 1973 law created a review period, giving Congress the ability to block bills in the Federal District through a resolution in the House and the Senate signed by the President. My bill improves this process and mimics the congressional Review Act that we all know and love. Now, H.R. 5183 makes simple fixes to improve Congress' oversight of D.C. It gives Congress a uniform 60 days to review D.C. laws. It provides expedited procedures for resolutions to pass both Houses and avoid stalemates we have seen in the past; establish

the safeguards on D.C. emergency procedures by preventing the Council from extending—extending—emergency waivers of congressional review to pass non-emergency laws. It expands congressional review to line-item provisions of D.C. laws, Mayoral Executive Orders, and regulations. It empowers every Member of Congress with the same ability to move a resolution of disapproval out of the Committee. It promotes efficient governance by preventing the D.C. Councils from passing legislation similar to those that have already been repealed by Congress. And finally, it requires accountability from both the D.C. Government and this Committee through an annual report to Congress and a hearing.

Unfortunately, the D.C. Council has shown time and time again it cannot be trusted to put public safety first. In fact, Congress' oversight of D.C. Home Rule is not new. In 2023, Congress exercised this constitutional authority over D.C. laws to block an anti-police bill. Not surprisingly, bleeding heart, Joe Biden, vetoed the resolution. Back in 2015, the House passed another resolution to overturn a District of Columbia pro-abortion bill, but it died in the Senate after running out of time. My bill reflects longstanding conservative principles: upholding the Constitution, defending law and order, and ensuring the Federal Government fulfills its duty to safeguard the Nation's Capital.

We are not here today at this hearing because D.C.'s reckless policies make our jobs inconvenient. We are here as friends, parents, and grandparents, in my case, to address violence in the city. Hardworking Americans should be able to visit our Nation's Capital without fear of harm. Interns and staff should be able to walk the streets of Washington, D.C. and feel safe from career violent criminals repeatedly set free. Clearly, the D.C. Government recognizes it needed the President's help because it established a juvenile curfew and issued a Mayoral Executive Order to facilitate a local Federal police partnership. We need to do better and do a better job, and my bill is a solution.

I look forward to working with the President, Chairman Comer, and my colleagues to fight back against this D.C. disorder. My bill, H.R. 5183, the District of Columbia Home Rule Improvement Act, acts on Congress' authority to update the Home Rule Act with common sense oversight abilities. I ask my colleagues' support for my bill, H.R. 5183, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair now recognizes Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose this bill. It is a profoundly harmful bill masquerading as a congressional procedure bill. In fact, it is one of the biggest reductions in the District of Columbia's authority since Congress passed the Home Rule Act in 1973. Unlike many of the bills we are considering today, this bill does not amend or repeal a law enacted by D.C. Instead, it imposes a significant new limits on the authority of both the D.C. Mayor and Council to govern.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, and the entire D.C. Council and the D.C. Attorney General, Brian Schwalb.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. This bill limits the Mayor's authority to respond to emergencies. Under the bill, an Executive Order or regulation issued by the Mayor takes effect after a 60-legislative-day congressional period unless a disapproval resolution is enacted during that period. This means the Mayor no longer can implement an Executive Order or regulation immediately, no matter how urgent it might be, such as it is in response to civil unrest or a public health emergency.

This bill limits the Council's authority to legislate in an emergency. Under the Home Rule Act, an emergency bill takes effect immediately and remains in effect up to 90 days. Under this bill, however, a successive emergency bill enacted by D.C. takes effect after a 60-day legislative day congressional review period unless a disapproval resolution is enacted during that period. The new rules this bill establishes for a successive emergency bill can prevent the Council from responding to an emergency that lasts more than 90 days, depending on the congressional calendar. In addition, the Council often uses successive emergency bills to fill gaps in law caused by the congressional review period for the temporary and permanent versions of an emergency bill. While the Home Rule Act is silent on this matter, the courts have long said that the Council has this authority. This bill takes away this authority. In practice, this means D.C. laws will change constantly. Laws will expire only to be revived when the congressional review period for a bill ends.

Adding to the chaos, this bill gives Congress a line-item veto during the congressional review period for bills enacted by D.C. Currently, disapproval resolutions can only disapprove an entire bill. This bill permits a disapproval resolution on individual provisions of a bill. Under the Home Rule Act, it is easier procedurally for Congress to disapprove a criminal bill enacted by D.C. than a civil bill enacted by D.C. This bill makes the duration of the congressional review bill for a civil bill and the procedure for a disapproval resolution on a civil bill the same as those that currently apply to a criminal bill. Under this bill, the congressional review period for a civil bill, which is currently 30 legislative days, is 60 legislative days, and a disapproval resolution for a civil bill is eligible for a motion to discharge from Committee, which it currently is not.

I urge my colleagues to see this bill for what it really is and vote no, and I yield back the balance.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. I know Mr. Bell seeks recognition. The Chair recognizes Mr. Biggs, then we will go to Mr. Bell.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I support the bill, and I would just point out what makes D.C. different than any other municipality in the country. So, you can stand up and say, "I was Mayor of San Bernardino," whatever it is, but there is no other municipality in the country that is addressed in Article I, Section 8. In Article I, Section 8, describing the District of Columbia says that "Congress shall have power to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever over such District," reference, the District of Columbia. That is different than any other municipality in the country, and I will just continue on: "over such District as made by session of particular States and the acceptance of Congress become the seat of the government of the United States," which is exactly

what the District of Columbia is, “and to exercise like authority over all places purchased by the consent of the legislature of the State in which the same shall be.”

That is what makes it unique, and that is what makes Congress have the authority. That is what grants Congress the authority to actually legislate in the District of Columbia. That is what is unique about it. You have chosen to live in the most unique city perhaps in the world where the Federal Government has authority to legislate within your municipality. There is no other jurisdiction in the country that we can say that about, and no other municipal jurisdiction, and thus, when things seem to be out of control or not going well, Congress has exclusive legislation. That is what the Constitution says, and you can disregard that. You may not like that. I am sorry, everybody on this dais took an oath to adhere to the Constitution of the United States of America, and that is right in the Constitution. You want to change, you got to change the Constitution. With that, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Gosar.

Mr. GOSAR. I thank the gentleman from Arizona. Now, we just heard that this new bill, 5183, restricts D.C.’s ability, and the Mayor’s, to respond to emergencies. This is blatantly false. The District of Columbia Home Rule Improvement Act does not prohibit the D.C. Council or the Mayor from passing emergency legislation with waivers from the current congressional review. It prohibits the extension until reviewed. It prohibits the extension until review is done. So, once again, we are hearing the sky is falling, the sky is falling, but as my colleague from Arizona talked about, this is a unique city, a very unique city, and you chose to live in it, and now what we have to do is we have to make sure that everybody profits from this. Everybody has a right to be safe, to expect to be able to walk and enjoy this city, so there needs to be accountability.

The other thing is, is everything was put for 60 days, just a uniform aspect because Congress was not doing its due diligence on the 30-day aspect. So, from that standpoint, that is why we went to a consolidated 60-day review. So, with that being said, I hope that the misnomers are being laid out and that everybody can vote for this, and so I will yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Bell from Missouri.

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I associate myself with my colleague, Representative Norton, who I think made an eloquent argument on why this bill is not in the interest of D.C. or in democracy, which is what I want to talk about. And my colleague on the other side referred to it as Liberation Day, and I am really scratching my head here. Like, it is literally the opposite of liberation. Remember that whole thing about no taxation without representation? We literally fought a war over it to ensure that folks, one man, one woman, one vote. And so, we can look at Article I, Section 8, but let us not forget that the default in our Constitution is democracy. It just seems like a very inauthentic argument to say that Washington, D.C. is unique, but Washington, D.C. is unique because you made it that way and you continue to vote in a manner to keep it in this way, to keep folks in D.C. from having

statehood or enjoying the rights that the other states in the country enjoy.

And what we have seen is, historically, when governments want to take power, when governments want to usurp the government that is in place, they always will come up with these justifications or put these spins on it to make it sound like they are for the people when, in fact, they are against the people because the people in D.C. have voted for what they want in their government, in their law enforcement, and things of that nature. And so, you know, my god, I understand that you have been given talking points, but for god's sakes, at least make it make sense. This is not liberation. This is literally the opposite by definition of liberation. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Higgins from Louisiana, then Mr. Subramanyam will be next.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To address the gentleman's points regarding the means by which our Nation's Capital is governed and populated and the unique interaction with the seat of government, as it was envisioned by our Founders and enshrined in our Constitution, as the gentleman from Arizona clarified, our Founders discussed, you know, for my young colleague's benefit, I am sure he knows. He is a very educated man, and I am certain you have read the Federalist Papers and the private discussions of our Founders, and they talked about this. They talked about we were to create the seat of government of a new republic born, where the Capital city of the United States would be built and centered. What would be the rules there? What would be the dimensions? What would be the construct of what was envisioned as a Capital city of our republic?

And the Founders discussed, you know, representation as compared to apportionment for the states, and what would happen when the Capital of our Nation, which no doubt would become a density of population, which it has. They were right. What would happen regarding the representative rights of those citizens if they did not have the standard apportionment of, say, a sovereign state? And the Founders talked about not only the unique relationship of the U.S. Congress with our Nation's Capital, and our responsibility and our rights to be involved in the governance of the Nation's Capital City, but the unique rights and access to government for the residents of D.C., only in Washington, D.C.

This is the only city in the United States where the resident of that city can interact with the entire seat of your national government with a sign in your yard, while walking your dog in the evening, or enjoying a meal, maybe sitting next to Congressmen and senators, Members of the executive branch, senior judges in Article III, senior bureaucrats from the seat of our government. The citizens of Phoenix or New Orleans or New York do not enjoy that access. The Founders discussed this, and if you have not read it, I suggest that you do because it was clearly recognized that D.C. was going to have a unique role to play for the entire republic, and the citizens of the envisioned Capital City would enjoy a special access to government. You will be uniquely represented, and there had to be a balance, which is why our Founding Document was constructed as it was, and the writ of our Constitution addressed

the Capital City in the manner that it did, and these laws were enshrined.

And here we are today. We have a responsibility as the People's House to be sometimes involved at a greater level in the operations of our Nation's Capital. This is the way the Nation's Capital's governance was envisioned. It has been an interesting ride for 200 years, and here we are today, you know, we are doing our best. Respectfully to my colleagues across the aisle, I would hope that you could step back and support these series of legislative efforts to help D.C. today. Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields. The Chair recognizes Mr. Subramanyam from Virginia.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I feel like we are talking past each other a little bit. I understand that this is in the Constitution, that the Congress has oversight over D.C. What I do not understand is why we are asking for line-item vetoes of D.C. legislation. Not even the Mayor has that power right now. We are making individual Members of Congress more powerful than the Mayor of D.C. over D.C. matters. No D.C. resident elected any of us, and they had the ability to elect their Mayor instead, though, and their D.C. Council.

And the second thing that we are doing here is we are extending the congressional review period. I do not understand why we have to do that. Why isn't 30 days enough? Why isn't the current process enough? If there is a D.C. law you do not like, well, we have several other bills here to address all the laws that a Majority on this Committee do not like today. Why isn't that enough? I think if you sat in the coffee shops and restaurants of D.C. and had residents have special access to you, you will see that they are not happy with what this is because they had no say in what is happening today. And so, I understand Congress' power over D.C. What I do not understand is why we have to take extreme measures. I think I do understand it is political, it seems, right? It is in reaction to political desires, but I do not think this is good for the City. I certainly do not think this is good for safety. It is not going to help anything in my opinion.

I am going to yield over to the gentleman, Mr. Bell, from Missouri.

Mr. BELL. Thank you, and if we are going to talk about history, we cannot just cherry pick which history we are going to talk about. Many of our states were initially territories, and many of those territories became states from negotiations, from compromises, many over the slavery issue. And so, when we are talking about D.C. and leaving it in this box as if it cannot evolve to where the people have actual representation, as my colleague pointed out, the argument goes against democratic principles that policies are being implemented by people that were not, in fact, voted by them, which is unique, but not in a good way. So, we cannot really talk about the history without understanding how that history evolved and how different states evolved from territories.

And you brought up the *Federalist Papers*, and so let us talk about that. In "Federalist 43," James Madison said, "A municipal legislature for local purposes derived from their own suffrages will, of course, be allowed them." So, when we look at our Constitution,

which intended that we be a democratic Nation, which I think we all agree on, when we look at the *Federalist Papers*, and when we just look at what is aligned with our values, I think the answer is clear in that folks in D.C. should be afforded the same rights that every other American is afforded across this great Nation. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Does any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5183, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GARICIA. Mr. Chair, a recorded vote, please.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 2693, the District of Columbia Electronic Transmittal of Legislation Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 2693, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMITTAL OF LEGISLATION ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 2693, the District of Columbia Electronic Transmittal of Legislation Act, a bill to amend the District of Columbia Home Rule Act to permit the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia to transmit acts of the District of Columbia to Congress in electronic form.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to order an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 2693, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill and amendment.

I am pleased to support H.R. 2693, which authorizes the electronic transfer of D.C. Council legislative action to Congress for re-



view. The current requirement for the hand delivery of physical copies of D.C. Council legislation has created delays in receiving documents and inconsistent timelines between the House and Senate for commencing the congressional review period under the Home Rule Act. This legislation will also save taxpayer dollars and free up staff time in both the District and Congress. I thank Representative Norton for introducing this commonsense legislation and urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for his statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Chairman Comer. I also want to first just say and thank Congresswoman Norton for this legislation. Of course, Democrats strongly support any opportunities to modernize government in a way that makes it more efficient and centers the residents.

This bill would amend the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, as well as the House and Senate rules, to permit the Chair of the Council of D.C. to transmit local laws or acts of D.C. to Congress in electronic form. Now, currently, House and Senate practice requires any acts to be passed by the Council and delivered in actual physical hard format copy. Now, this of course, is outdated and can be costly. Allowing the Council to transmit acts of Congress electronically is a commonsense efficiency for the modern era. It will reduce the time and effort required by both Council and congressional staff to deliver, receive, and process those acts. I want to thank my colleague, Ms. Norton, for this legislation, and I thank the Chairman for being a co-sponsor. It is good to have a bipartisan bill in front of us today. This is a reasonable, good government effort by our Committee and should be engaged in. I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. I now recognize the sponsor of this legislation, Ms. Norton, for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank Chairman Comer for co-sponsoring and marking up this bill. This bill brings the congressional review process for the legislation enacted by D.C. into the electronic age by allowing the Chair of the D.C. Council to transmit legislation to Congress electronically. The D.C. Government supports this bill.

The Home Rule Act requires the Chair of the Council to transmit a bill to Congress for a review period before it can take effect. A bill takes effect after the review period unless a resolution of disapproval is enacted during that period. The Home Rule Act is silent on the form of transmittal, but Congress has always required bills to be transmitted physically. Electronic records are recognized as valid under Federal and state law, and the Federal Government and state and local governments conduct official business electronically. Federal agencies transmit regulations and other documents to the *Federal Register* electronically.

Congress already conducts some official business electronically. For example, the House permits Members, including acting through their staff, to introduce legislation and submit statements to the *Congressional Record* electronically. The requirement that the Council transmit bills physically imposes unnecessary costs on D.C. The Council engages in a 12-step process to transmit bills, including printing two copies of each bill and Committee report, ar-

-ranging a time for delivery of these documents to the offices of the Speaker and President of the Senate, and having two staffers drive to the Capitol to deliver the documents. Two are required because of parking requirements and restrictions.

The requirement that the Council transmit these bills physically also imposes unnecessary costs on Congress. The following congressional officers and Committees are involved in the transmittal progress: the offices of the Speaker and the President of the Senate, the House and Senate Parliamentarians, the House Clerk, the Senate Secretary, this Committee, and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs. The difficulty the Council had transmitting physical bills during the pandemic and on January 6 highlights the need for electronic transmittal. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Do any other Members seek recognition on the bill?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 2693, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chairman, can I ask for a recorded vote?

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered by Mr. Gosar. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 5103, the Make the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 5103, THE MAKE THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SAFE AND BEAUTIFUL ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5103, a bill to establish a program to beautify the District of Columbia and establish the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful Commission.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5103, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I recognize myself for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill and the amendment.

I support this legislation which codifies core components of President Trump's Executive Order 14252, to require the formation of the D.C. Safe and Beautiful Commission. The D.C. Safe and Beautiful Commission, made up of key Federal law enforcement, will be focused on ensuring full enforcement of Federal and local laws in the District. The commission will develop recommendations on how to prioritize the safety of the District's residents and visitors. The bill also requires the development and implementation of D.C. Beautification Plan. Key Federal and local leaders will be tasked with coordinating the cleanliness of the District's facilities, infrastructure, and parks. These leaders will also work to restore Federal public monuments, statues, markers, and similar properties that have been defaced. I thank Representative McGuire for leading this bill that will further congressional backing to the President's executive actions, and I urge all my colleagues to support the McGuire legislation.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for his statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Chairman. We, Democrats, strongly oppose the Make the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful Act as another attempt to limit D.C.'s home rule and its own governance over its own laws and community. Now, this bill establishes a Federal commission with sweeping authority over local matters that should be decided by D.C. residents and their elected representatives. The people of D.C. need more ability to make their own future and control their own community, not less.

Now, as my colleagues know from their home districts, public safety priorities belong in local hands, not dictated by an Administration that will not put D.C. or its communities first. Now, we know that Federal resources and cooperation certainly can be valuable to a city, but this commission is really not about supporting D.C. residents. This legislation explicitly directs the commission to push D.C. to adopt the Administration's mass deportation agenda, which has caused chaos throughout our country and here in the District as well. We do not need to be supporting efforts where masked men are kidnapping people and residents off the streets, not just here in the District, but across the country.

And this bill, which talks about beautifying D.C., is explicitly linked to a mass deportation agenda, trying to enshrine that here in the District of Columbia. These policies we know actually undermine public safety. When hardworking immigrants fear deportation, they are less likely to report crimes, that is also a fact, and everyone becomes less safe as a result. The hardworking men and women that are working in the restaurants in D.C., cooking, working hard at car washes, gardening, doing the hard work oftentimes that others may not want to do, deserve respect and not to be living in this community in fear. Now, Republicans used to be the Party of respecting state and local authority, but now you are advocating for a long-term plan to give Donald Trump power over the wishes of its residents.

According to a recent poll, 80 percent of D.C. residents oppose President Trump's control of D.C. Police and the surge of Federal troops patrolling the streets—80 percent. None of our Republican colleagues would accept that level of Federal micromanagement in their districts. If we were serious about making D.C. more safe and beautiful, we would not stop D.C. from spending its own tax revenue, which Republicans did earlier this year, blocking \$1 billion in D.C. funds from being spent, money that could actually be spent making the District more beautiful and safe as this bill says it is attempting to do.

Now, I urge my colleagues to vote no on this legislation and, instead, support real partnership and respecting the local needs and democratic principles of the local elected officials who are actually working to make this community more safe and secure. And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. I now recognize the sponsor of the bill, Representative McGuire.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a father of five, as a Navy Seal veteran, my number one priority in Congress is to keep the American people safe at home and abroad. Now, I have heard someone say that this was extreme measures, but I think people were dying, and the bottom line, Mr. Chairman, is people were dying way too much in the District of Columbia.

The American Dream is to live, work, and raise your family in peace. Regardless of race, party, religion, or creed, you should be able to walk down any street in America with your little girl or little boy and be safe. You should be able to get on the subway. You should be able to ride a bicycle or drive your car. And I have seen in the news where a woman said it is the first time in D.C. in ten years where she feels safe driving with her windows down. I think many of us remember the newly engaged couple that was killed outside the Israeli embassy. We all know about the 21-year-old staffer who was shot in a drive-by. Bottom line is people are dying, so this is not extreme. This is required. We must keep the American people safe.

My bill, the Make the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful Act, codifies President Trump's Executive Order 14252, and ensures our Nation's Capital is clean, safe, and beautiful. Our Nation's Capital is a direct reflection of our great country and should be a symbol of pride for the American people, and a safe and beautiful location for all to reside and visit. Unfortunately, years of soft-on-crime policies have turned Washington, D.C. into a city of high crime rates, rampant homelessness, and graffiti on historic buildings and monuments. In 2024, D.C. had the 4th highest homicide rate in the country, and since the beginning of 2025, there have already been over 1,600 violent crimes reported in our Nation's Capital.

Since President Trump cracked down on crime in D.C., violent crime is down 45 percent. I wish I would see folks on the other side talk about all the lives have been saved. Carjackings have decreased 87 percent. We have heard of minors coming in from Maryland with a gun hijacking cars. It is down 87 percent. Why couldn't they do that before Trump got here, and overall crime has dropped 15 percent. There have been 2,120 arrests, 20 of which were gang

members. Why do you want to protect gang members? These statistics prove that law and order works. We should keep the American people safe.

My bill codifies many elements of President Trump's successful Executive Order until 2029, ensuring there is not a backslide into lawlessness in the city. This bill is not partisan, it is common sense, and this should not be based on Democrat, Republican, or Independent. It should be based on common sense and keeping you alive. Wanting our Nation's Capital to be safe is not political. It is the best interest of all who travel to and call Washington, D.C. their home. I urge all my colleagues on this Committee to vote in favor of my bill and take a stand to make D.C. safe and beautiful, and with that, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose the Make the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful Act.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General, Brian Schwalb.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. First, this bill disparages D.C. and perpetuates the misinformation and disinformation the Trump Administration and Republicans in Congress have spread about the safety and beauty of D.C. I encourage tourists to continue to visit D.C. and businesses and people to continue to move this wonderful city. D.C. is a world-class city, full stop.

Second, the bill establishes a commission and tax it with several functions I oppose. For example, the commission is directed to develop and encourage the implementation of policies that "will direct the maximum of enforcement in Federal immigration law within the District of Columbia, including policies to encourage the reduction of available Federal safe or local law enforcement resources to apprehend and deport illegal aliens." The last thing D.C. needs is more masked ICE agents terrorizing communities, separating families, and shuttering the community trust needed for effective local policing. If the Federal Government wants to improve D.C., it should start by investing in the assets it owns here. For example, 90 percent of parkland in D.C. is owned by the Federal Government. While I strongly support the mission of the National Park Service and its employees, the Agency is grossly underfunded, and its deferred maintenance backlog in D.C. alone is more than \$1.5 billion, with a "B", dollars. The National Park Service has lost a quarter of its employees either through firings or resignations during the Trump Administration. The Administration's Fiscal Year 2026 required the largest funding cut in the history of the National Park Service.

I urge a no vote on this bill, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Does any other Member seek recognition on the bill?

Mr. BELL. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

Chairman COMER. Okay. Do you all want to speak now before Mr. Bell files an amendment?

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman COMER. All right. I am going to recognize Mr. Higgins, then we will go to Ms. Randall.

Mr. HIGGINS. I just want to note that I support my colleague's bill here, and I just want to clarify, this is like a law-enforcement-positive and enforcement-of-law-centric bill. It establishes a commission that covers a broad spectrum of Federal Government involvement: the Department of Transportation, the Department of the Interior, Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation; United States Marshals Service; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia; the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland; the United States Attorney's Office for Eastern District of Virginia. And the number one function, "the function of the Committee, to recommend actions and review the effectiveness of such actions with respect to the following," and it goes on to cite several things. But a key function of the commission that this legislation would create is to work in collaboration with its leadership and union, ensuring the Metropolitan Police Department and the District of Columbia is provided with assistance to facilitate the recruitment, retention, and capabilities of its officers.

No regular American, looking back at our Nation's Capital, will say why would anyone in our Nation's Capital reject such a thing? Why would you reject the idea of having the Federal Government coordinate with the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department to assist them to facilitate in recruitment, retention, and capabilities of its officers to fight crime in your city? So, Mr. Chairman, I support this bill, and I just wanted to take this moment to clarify that this is a law enforcement-centric bill. It will help the District of Columbia, and I encourage my colleagues to support the bill. I yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Ms. Randall.

Ms. RANDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, this bill might sound reasonable on the surface, but when we dig into what it actually does, it is about forcing local communities to abandon policies that keep their residents safe and protected. Despite the words "safe and beautiful" being in the title, the devil is in the details, and the American people have seen the ugly, dangerous impacts of another bill that included "beautiful" in the title not so long ago. This bill would compel D.C. to coordinate and operate with Federal immigration officers. Here is what happens when local authorities are forced to do immigration enforcement instead of focusing on their actual job, keeping us safe.

On the Olympic Peninsula in my district, we are currently fighting the largest active fire in Washington State, with another fire sparking over the weekend. The Bear Gulch fire is estimated to be more than 10,000 acres and under nine percent contained. Wildland firefighting is one of the most dangerous and critical public safety duties, and I applaud the hardworking crew members who put their lives on the line to perform these lifesaving duties, staying for two weeks at a time in tents in a field, leaving their family, their day jobs to do this work to keep our communities safer. And yet, on August 27, instead of being able to conduct their critical work, 44 crew members were forced to stand in line for

hours, mostly brown-skinned crew members, to show their IDs to immigration enforcement. Customs and Border Patrol [sic] arrested two crew members, and dozens more were pulled away from performing fuel management during an active wildfire. It is absolutely unacceptable that these resources were diverted and that non-critical personnel from Customs and Border Patrol [sic] were allowed to enter a restricted fire area without carrying red cards.

Local communities know what works for their residents. This bill takes that choice away and makes all of us less safe. That is why I am voting no, and I urge my colleagues to do so as well. I yield the balance of my time to the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. I yield back to the Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Does any other Member seek recognition? Ms. Stansbury, from New Mexico.

Ms. STANSBURY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I want to say welcome to the people of Washington, D.C., who have flooded this hearing room on a day in which we are hearing a set of bills that have not so much as had a single public hearing. Let me just emphasize that. Not a single bill on this docket has had a public hearing as of yet, and I do not think that it is any mistake that this markup to vote these bills out of Committee is happening on the last day that Donald Trump has ordered our Nation's National Guard to occupy this city. There are no coincidences here, folks.

So, I have some questions for the Chairman because we do not actually have witnesses here to testify about these bills. So, my first question for you, Mr. Chairman, is where did these bills come from? Where did this package come from?

Chairman COMER. We have been talking about these bills for a year now, and you know that, Ms. Stansbury.

Ms. STANSBURY. But why is this package being brought forward today?

Chairman COMER. This is a markup. That is when you vote on bills.

Ms. STANSBURY. I understand the congressional procedure, but why is this Committee marking up a set of bills today without a hearing? Did the President ask you to do this?

Chairman COMER. We are debating the bills as we speak. That is what a markup is.

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Comer, did the President ask you to hold this?

Chairman COMER. I have not talked to the President.

Ms. STANSBURY. Was this markup called pursuant to the President's occupation of Washington, D.C.?

Chairman COMER. We have had this markup on the books for a long time.

Ms. STANSBURY. And so, there was no coordination with the—

Chairman COMER. This is what a markup is. You are participating in a markup.

Ms. STANSBURY. There was no coordination with the White House on this markup.

Chairman COMER. I have not talked to the White House, but, I mean, there is always coordination.

Ms. STANSBURY. So, you did not consult with the White House on this bill?

Chairman COMER. We support the President's Make D.C. Safe Again.

Ms. STANSBURY. You did not consult with the White House on the development of a bill that would create the actual entity that he said he wanted? There was no coordination with the White House on this bill?

Chairman COMER. We support what the President has done. We have sat back and watched, and we have seen the crime rates go down significantly in Washington, D.C., and we want to make sure that crime stays down in Washington, D.C.

Ms. STANSBURY. But this bill here—

Chairman COMER. If you do not like the bill, you can vote against it.

Ms. STANSBURY. No, I am asking you a question because we have not heard this bill. Was this bill drafted in coordination with the White House? I am asking the question.

Chairman COMER. Well, it is not my bill.

Ms. STANSBURY. Okay. Does the sponsor want to answer that question?

Mr. MCGUIRE. I would say that we support President Trump, and bottom line—

Ms. STANSBURY. It is just a simple question.

Mr. MCGUIRE. We want—

Ms. STANSBURY. Did you coordinate with the White House in the development of this bill?

Mr. MCGUIRE. People are dying in Washington, D.C.

Ms. STANSBURY. Why can't you answer the question?

Mr. MCGUIRE. Crime has been cleaned up, and we want to keep it—

Ms. GREENE. Mr. Chairman, we need order. We need order, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. STANSBURY. It is just a question. Did you coordinate with the—

Ms. GREENE. This is not a debate. Mr. Chairman, we need order.

Ms. STANSBURY. This actually is the debate.

Ms. GREENE. Ms. Stansbury is out of order.

Ms. STANSBURY. That is exactly what a markup is, my dear. This is a debate over the bill.

Mr. MCGUIRE. It should be common sense.

Ms. STANSBURY. Did you guys coordinate—

Mr. MCGUIRE. We are just trying to keep the American people safe. They are dying in D.C.

Ms. STANSBURY. I just asked you a simple question. The people—

Mr. MCGUIRE. And we are looking at President Trump's plan has worked.

Ms. STANSBURY. The people of Washington, D.C. are here to hear from you.

Mr. MCGUIRE. So, we are going to codify what President Trump did to keep the American people safe.

Ms. STANSBURY. Okay. Thank you. That answers the question.

Mr. MCGUIRE. I do not care if you are Democrat, Republican, or Independent.

Ms. STANSBURY. Okay.



Mr. MCGUIRE. We love you, but we have got to keep you safe.

Ms. STANSBURY. Okay. Let me ask you another question. I am going to ask the sponsor this question. Have you ever been inside of City Hall? Yes or no.

Mr. MCGUIRE. I have not.

Ms. STANSBURY. Have you ever attended a City Council meeting here in Washington, D.C.?

Mr. MCGUIRE. I have spoken with people all over D.C. in restaurants and everything else.

Ms. STANSBURY. Have you ever attended a City Council meeting here in Washington, D.C.?

Mr. MCGUIRE. And they thank us that they can walk down the street and walk their dog and ride on a subway without getting stabbed.

Ms. STANSBURY. Did you consult with the Mayor or the Council—

Mr. MCGUIRE. Without being part of a drive-by—

Ms. STANSBURY [continuing]. Or any members of law enforcement in the development of this bill?

Mr. MCGUIRE [continuing]. And without people coming out of Baltimore and other places because they know the laws are too lax here, and it is not safe.

Ms. STANSBURY. I am asking the sponsor of this bill, did you consult with the Mayor or the City Council in the development of this bill?

Mr. MCGUIRE. I consulted with the people of Washington, D.C.

Ms. STANSBURY. You did? Can you tell us some of who you consulted with?

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Ms. STANSBURY. Can you tell us who you consulted with, sir?

Mr. MCGUIRE. Congress has jurisdiction over Washington, D.C., but I talked to—

Ms. STANSBURY. I am asking you a very simple question. Who did you consult with? Did you consult with—

Mr. MCGUIRE. And I just told you. I just answered you, but you are not—

Ms. STANSBURY. Did you consult with the law enforcement of Washington, D.C. in the development of this bill?

Mr. MCGUIRE. I talked to police officers as well, yes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Would the gentlewoman yield her final minute?

Ms. STANSBURY. I am asking the gentleman who—

Mr. MCGUIRE. I did. I spoke with law enforcement. I spoke with restaurant owners. I spoke with people walking their dogs all around D.C.

Ms. STANSBURY. Oh, you talked to people walking their dogs.

Mr. MCGUIRE. And they said thank God—

Ms. STANSBURY. That is how you developed the bill.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank God we can walk down the street without being stabbed or mugged or be part of a drive-by.

Ms. STANSBURY. Oh, okay.

Mr. MCGUIRE. I cannot believe a Democrat, Republican, Independent, would not like this commonsense legislation—

Ms. STANSBURY. Sir, do you live in the Washington—

Mr. MCGUIRE. [continuing]. That keeps people safe.

Ms. STANSBURY. Do you live in the Washington, D.C. area?

Mr. HIGGINS. Will the gentlelady yield?

Ms. GREENE. We are all here.

Mr. MCGUIRE. We are all here.

Mr. HIGGINS. It was encouraging debate.

Ms. STANSBURY. I am asking you a question.

Mr. MCGUIRE. I have been here nine months.

Ms. STANSBURY. Are you a resident of Washington, D.C.?

Mr. HIGGINS. Recognize her colleague from Louisiana?

Ms. STANSBURY. Sir, I have my time here. I am asking the sponsor of the bill. You have debate time on your own. There is plenty of time to debate. Do you live here in the city of Washington, D.C.?

Mr. MCGUIRE. We are all here in D.C. representing our districts across the country.

Ms. STANSBURY. Exactly, sir.

Mr. MCGUIRE. And we have jurisdiction over Washington, D.C.

Ms. STANSBURY. And so that is exactly my point. If you wanted to run for Mayor of Washington, D.C., then you can move to Washington and run in a democratic free and fair election——

Ms. GREENE. Your time has expired.

Ms. STANSBURY [continuing]. And actually become a city official.

Chairman COMER. All right. The gentlelady's time has expired. Any other Member seek recognition?

[Applause.]

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Chairman?

Ms. GREENE. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman COMER. I now recognize Mr. Higgins.

Mr. HIGGINS. I would just like to say that I am glad that the gentlelady just performed in the manner that she did because America is watching. Like, this display, your display, good lady, and I am quite sure you are a wonderful person and your family loves you. You and I do not really know each other, so I do not mean this in a personal way. I am just observing that your——

Ms. STANSBURY. I will just say this, that the District is watching.

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. That your display.

Chairman COMER. It is his time.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you for enhancing the point I am about to make. Your display demonstrates exactly the sort of elitist, arrogant tone that Americans across the country are going to recognize as the hallmark of your party. So, we sit back, and I would yield my entire time to you to carry on like that, like, to demonstrate to the American people this is what the Democrat Party represents——

Ms. STANSBURY. If you would like to yield your time, I am happy to take more time.

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. Arrogant elitism. And as you stated to me, good lady, you can have your own debate time. Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Mr. FROST. Would you yield a minute to me? I have a question. I have a question.

Mr. HIGGINS. I have already yielding to Mr. Chair.

Chairman COMER. Mr. Higgins yields back, and I just want to make sure everyone knows. Mr. Higgins spent his career in law enforcement, Mr. McGuire was a Navy SEAL, and I think they are

sincere in their efforts. And what we have seen over the last three weeks and the massive reduction in crime in Washington, D.C., and I appreciate their opinion and words of advice, and just wanted to make sure everyone knew what we were dealing with here. Now, does any other Member seek recognition? Mr. Frost.

Mr. FROST. No, I just have a question for my colleague from the State of Louisiana because I am curious as to where your bill is. Louisiana is the state with the second-highest rate of deaths in this Nation.

[Applause.]

Mr. FROST. You are more likely to be shot standing on a random street in your state than you are in Washington, D.C. So my question is, where is your bill for the occupation of the State of Louisiana to keep your people safe, if you are at all sincere in this.

Mr. HIGGINS. Would the gentlemen yield for an answer?

Mr. FROST. I will yield for an answer.

Mr. HIGGINS. I support state rights. I am a constitutionalist.

[Laughter.]

Mr. FROST. But not D.C.?

Mr. HIGGINS. Stand by. As a constitutionalist, I support my sovereign state's legislature, which is doing everything it can to push back upon the crime rate of the Democrat-controlled cities of New Orleans.

Mr. FROST. Okay. So, I will take my time back. I will take my time back. That is the rules.

Mr. HIGGINS. If you remove the crime stats of New Orleans, Louisiana is one of safest—

Mr. FROST. That is the rules. I will take my time back. I will take my time back. So, you only invoke the rules—

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. In the country.

Mr. FROST [continuing]. When other people are speaking, not when you are speaking. Okay.

Mr. HIGGINS. That is your time.

Mr. FROST. I agree with you. Look, I am for state sovereignty. So, what do you think about California?

Mr. HIGGINS. California is not where I live. You are asking about my state. I am telling you—

Mr. FROST. See, you only care—

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. About crime in my state.

Mr. FROST. I will reclaim my time. I will reclaim my time.

Mr. HIGGINS. So, I am going to correct you.

Mr. FROST. I will reclaim my time.

Mr. HIGGINS. Crime in my state is driven by the city of New Orleans—

Mr. FROST. I will reclaim my time.

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. Run by Democrats.

Mr. FROST. The gentleman will stop speaking. I will reclaim my time.

Mr. LYNCH. Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FROST. You are more likely to be shot standing in a random street in your state—

Mr. HIGGINS. In New Orleans.

Mr. FROST [continuing]. In your state, in Louisiana, than anywhere in Washington, D.C.

Mr. GARCIA. Is this is Mr. Frost's time? Mr. Chairman, it is Mr. Frost's time.

Mr. FROST. And you are here because you [words taken down.]

Mr. LYNCH. Point of order Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FROST [continuing]. Who, during the election last year, we said time and time again——

Mr. HIGGINS. Words taken down, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FROST. I reclaim my time.

Mr. HIGGINS. Words taken down, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. All right. Hold on.

Mr. HIGGINS. My colleague just called me [words taken down]. I move for his words to be taken down.

Ms. BOEBERT. I second.

Mr. LYNCH. Point of order.

Chairman COMER. We will stand in recess for a second here.

[Laughter.]

Chairman COMER. We will suspend to see about taking the words down.

[Pause.]

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my remark.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman has asked unanimous consent to withdraw his remark.

Without objection, so ordered.

We will proceed with debate. The words were taken down, and——

Mr. FROST. I will continue—with the remainder of my——

Mr. LYNCH. Point of order.

Chairman COMER. Mr. Frost has 3 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Point of order?

Mr. LYNCH. My point was that Mr. Frost has a right to his time.

Chairman COMER. Yes.

Mr. LYNCH. Unobstructed time, an opportunity to speak, and I think if we afforded him that right under the rules——

Chairman COMER. Okay.

Mr. LYNCH [continuing]. Then we would not have this back and forth.

Chairman COMER. That is fine. He started by asking if people would yield to a question. I think that is how it all started.

Mr. LYNCH. He reclaimed his time at least a half a dozen times.

Chairman COMER. I am giving him 3 minutes, even though I do not have to. Because of the rules——

Mr. LYNCH. Well, you are the chairman. You are running——

Chairman COMER [continuing]. I have given him 3 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. You are running this hearing, sir.

Chairman COMER. Okay. I am giving it. Okay. All right.

Mr. LYNCH. You are not a spectator.

Chairman COMER. Okay. You got 3 minutes, Mr. Frost. Go ahead.

Mr. FROST. This body is full of lapdogs doing exactly what the President wants, when he wants it, not pushing back, and what we just heard, this exchange with me and my colleague, is indicative of the problem here. None of you know anything about Washington,

D.C. You are talking about a so-called, you know, walking down the street and talking with people that are walking their dogs, people in the restaurants you go to, which might not be full of people from D.C. anyway, and it is just sad. It is sad. We need D.C. statehood.

Yes, we need D.C. statehood. We need to put this behind us. You know, it is wild to me that we are here debating with people from the Republican Party, a party that is supposed to be about states' rights and local rule, and the consent of the governed, which is fundamental to our Constitution and this country. But before you, we have activists, organizers, people who are here to say that they want a voice. They want to be represented by the government that they pay taxes to.

[Applause.]

Mr. FROST. Free D.C.—Free D.C., and it is just grand to sit here with other Members who have higher murder rates than Washington, D.C., but not invite the President to occupy their own state with the military. So, I think it is important that we are here today to have this debate, because this is a debate, about what is going on in Washington, D.C., and why every American should be concerned, and why, of course, every American should be concerned about what the President's doing, but in many cases, even more concerned about the fact that Congress and that Republicans in Congress want to do nothing about it. And in fact, they want to enable it and do anything the President says.

The gentleman could not even answer the question about if the bill was drafted with the White House. We know it was drafted with the White House. And so, we say Free D.C., and we will continue to fight for the people of Washington, D.C., who deserve for their home to be a state, who deserve for their local officials that they voted for, their City Council, their members to make decisions about how to make sure that this is a safer place. And I got to say, when we talk about crime, when we talk about violence, gun violence has been going down in this country the last three years. We still have a lot of work to do, but you guys talk about it and nothing happens. We put forth solutions and passed bills like the Safer Communities Act, and violence goes down in this country. That is the difference between us. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Anybody seek recognition?

Ms. GREENE. Mr. Chair?

Chairman COMER. Ms. Greene.

Ms. GREENE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, I want to talk about a story that I think is very relevant. Brendan Ofori died after being shot on a Green Line Metro train in 2023. "Only on 4," his mother tells what prosecutors told her about dropping charges against the 17-year-old's accused killer. This was a 17-year-old black teenager here in Washington that was murdered, and prosecutors dropped the charges against the man. They have photos of him, eyewitness accounts, and his murderer was never prosecuted, never went to jail. And I think that is the kind of judicial wrong that has not only happened here in Washington, D.C. to many innocent people and their family, but it is happening all over the country. And this is a very relevant conversation because when in-

nocent people are being murdered, especially teenagers, and their murderers are having charges dropped or they have judges that let them off on lenient crimes, or, say, they are a repeat offender that has been arrested and arrested and arrested over and over and over again, and they keep getting released, and they keep getting released, and there is another victim and another victim and another victim, this should go beyond political boundaries.

And I cannot understand how this becomes a fight about my Democrat colleagues' Trump derangement syndrome and politicizing Washington, D.C. This should be about victims of crime, and this should be the fact that we should have a justice system that holds people accountable for the crimes they commit against innocent people. And right now, we are seeing on the news an innocent woman that came from Ukraine. This woman felt safer coming from a war in Ukraine. She thought she was coming to America to be safe, and she was murdered on a train. In cold blood, murdered, and we are seeing crimes like this day after day, night after night, and it goes on and on and on. And anybody wants to argue about the National Guard? You people want the National Guard coming in and handing out water bottles when there is some sort of natural disaster? Is that just what the National Guard is supposed to be for? Well, I am going to tell you what is up. The National Guard is also here to protect and keep our streets and our country safe. They are not meant to be sent over to foreign wars to go die in some foreign country. The National Guard should be used for Americans to be safe, businesses to be able to prosper, people to be able to walk with their families down the street.

I am going to tell you something, people of Washington, D.C. in this room. Congress has jurisdiction over the District of Columbia. That is the reality. Democrats, you may not like that, but that is the reality. The bills that are being passed here and being, in a public setting, being discussed and debated and being voted on are for your safety. Because what has happened, and you know it because you live here, you are living in a city filled with crime—filled with crime—and we have witnessed it as Members of Congress. We have lived in it. A Democrat Congressman just a few years ago got carjacked. We have had interns murdered on Washington, D.C. streets, and you know it because in your communities, you know people and you witness it. There are drive-by shootings, there are drug deals, and the youths of this community are being done wrong, absolutely being done wrong.

And so, I am telling you right now, I can tell you, I am from Georgia. Yes, that is where I am from. However, I come to work in Washington, D.C., and I live here when I am here for work, and I happily go back home when I am not here for work. But I will tell you there is a commitment by Republicans on this Committee to stand up against crime and do what is right for the American people. And I 100 percent, and so do my colleagues, 100 percent support the use of the National Guard to clean up the crime and stop the criminals from murdering and raping and stealing and making cities unsafe, and that is the reality of where we are today. And so, this debate can continue back and forth, but it is ridiculous. Fighting for criminals is a losing argument. Fighting against

crime will win every single time on anybody that has common sense. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields. The Chair recognizes Ms. Simon.

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Ranking Member. I just want to speak briefly, and thank you for the citizens of D.C. for being here today. Your presence, we honor it. It is extremely important to have you all here today to bear witness to what we are talking about.

You know, I am sure a lot of folks in the audience and also folks here behind the dais, we have been victimized and experienced violence. I do not even know how many obituaries over the years that I have had to help mothers write, how many funerals we have had to fundraise so that folks at the hands of gun violence and the permanency of poverty, we have seen it, but I want to say one thing. And so, I know the hurt when we are talking about the joys of potentially seeing and experiencing a beloved community where people do not die, where young men actually grow old.

So, I do not understand then why on April 22 of 2025, the DOJ unexpectedly canceled 365 grants, totaling \$800 million across programs across the country, including victim services and prosecutors' offices, juvenile justice crime prevention, including—supporting critical messengers in communities that we know are taking guns out of children's hands, can go into spaces where our brothers and sisters in law enforcement cannot. Those grants were canceled. In that same portfolio, we saw the breakdown, such as \$535 million taken away from one particular grant, the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program, \$136 million of that from the juvenile justice block grants. I can go on. In May 2025, a group of senators came to push back, but, again, this Administration has shown us that while we virtue signal that we want safer streets, we continue to defund violence prevention programs. In fact, the White House closed down its Office on Gun Violence Prevention. I can go on and on.

If we want safe communities, we will fully fund teachers. In the city of Washington, D.C., there are a limited amount of fully funded services for young people with mental health issues. So, let us fully fund that. Let us fully fund job programs for every young person going door to door, filling out an application, trying to get a job. Let us fully fund that. Let us fully fund teachers who actually can live in Washington, D.C., and not have to commute two hours to and fro. Let us fully fund that. Let us make sure that Howard University has a hospital that can deeply treat folks who are suffering from chronic illnesses. Let us fully fund that. Let us ensure that when these brothers and sisters who have sworn to serve this country, when they leave, that there is a sustained violence prevention effort that is overly funded, where you all do not have to come to the Capitol to beg every single year to ensure that babies have lunch programs. Let us fund that because no mother in this audience wants to stand at that grave site. No district attorney or no public defender wants to sit in a courtroom and grieve another life.

What I think we are all saying here, regardless of how we vote, is that the people of Washington, D.C. deserve, one, self-determination, and that the children deserve to grow old. So, we do not need

quick fixes. What we need is a Congress that fully funds the District, fully funds education, fully funds reentry programs, fully funds accountability programs, fully funds rape kits, fully funds violence prevention as it relates to domestic violence. We know, we have heard from you, Free D.C., what you need.

And it is our obligation to do just that. Thank you all for being here today.

[Applause.]

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Ms. Boebert from Colorado.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, it is interesting all the funds that are needed for all these crime rehabilitations. I thought they were saying D.C. was such a safe and wonderful place. But really, I mean, Washington, D.C.'s crime rates remain significantly higher than the national average, particularly for violent and property crimes, despite recent declines, thanks to President Trump and this Administration for taking action. Based on the most recent data from 2024, the latest full-year figures available for 2025, the breakdown is key crime rates in D.C. versus the national average per 100,000 people in 2024. Violent crime in D.C. recorded 1,006 violent crimes per 100,000 residents compared to the U.S. average of 369. This makes D.C. violent crime rates 180 percent higher than the national average. There is a crime problem in Washington, D.C., and I may have time to go back to more of this. Just like the property crime rates had 3,693 property crimes per 100,000 versus the national average of 1,758. That is 109.8 percent higher property crimes here in Washington, D.C.

I have a Ring doorbell cam at my residence where I live when I am in Washington, D.C., where I am here more than I am home, and unlike Democrats, I have one registered residence, and that is in Colorado. I do not go all over the country saying this is my prime residence. I lease here. But on that Ring door cam, I am set up for a 5-mile radius of my home to get notifications of what is going on around me. And all day, every day, gunshots, car stolen, porch pirates. Folks are getting their homes broken into on a regular basis, a daily basis. I get notifications on a Ring door cam, just neighbors talking to one another, what is going on. "Five, six, eight gunshots just went off. Does anybody know anything?" "High-speed car chase." "Oh, no, another package stolen." "My car was broken into." "My car was stolen." "My house was broken into." All day, every day in Washington, D.C. Do you know I have the same program for my home in a radius in Colorado and I get "my cat is missing," "my dog is missing." "Hey, I have a bike for sale. Does anybody want it? Do you want to purchase it?" We do not hear gunshots going off every single day. There is a crime problem here.

And as far as having an issue, taking issue with the National Guard, having a temporary presence to get your city, this city, our Nation's beautiful capital, under control and safe? I did not hear any problems from Washington, D.C. residents or my colleagues on the other side of the aisle when 20,000 National Guards came in and surrounded the Capitol Building and prohibited your First Amendment rights to petition your government with your grievances. I did not see an uprising there. We were not happy about the fences and the hundreds of miles of barbed wire surrounding



our Nation's Capital and armed National Guard, tens of thousands of them, keeping you out of the People's House, but now they are here to help and keep you safe, and that is somehow an issue?

I am glad that we are having this hearing today. I am glad that we are having this markup. I am glad that we are having this debate. You know, whistleblowers have even told this very Committee that they have faced pressure from Metropolitan Police Department leadership to manipulate crime statistics in Washington, D.C. We all live here. We are here a lot during the year. We see it. We do not need the data. We know it is manipulated because we see everything. You cannot even go into a CVS store and get a bottle of shampoo because it is locked up.

We want this to be a beautiful place for people to visit. The history here in this city is incredible. Our Nation's Capital should be celebrated. People should want to come here and certainly feel safe, and thanks to President Trump and the legislation that we are marking up today, it can be. Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman COMER. The lady yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Subramanyam.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, this bill has one provision I want to talk about for a second, which is, I think, it is Subsection E. It says, "To increase the speed and lower the cost of processing concealed carry license requests." This has been shown to actually increase gun violence, and especially if you do not include live fire training, that is a 32-percent increase in gun deaths, and I could go on and on with statistics about why this is a terrible idea. If you actually care about the safety of people in D.C., you are going to end up with people doing more concealed carry, more people with guns, more gun deaths, and this is precisely the reason why folks oppose this bill and D.C. residents oppose this bill is because they did not sign up for this. They do not want this, right? They do not want to be subjected to more gun violence than they already are right now.

And so, I think that this provision is something that, if you put it on the ballot in D.C., it would be voted down very swiftly, what has been imposed on them.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. And so, yes, I will yield.

Mr. MCGUIRE. D.C. has some of the most complicated and strict gun laws in the country. Law-abiding residents who wish—

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I am not going to yield my time. Do you have a question?

Mr. MCGUIRE. Well, I was just going to say that you said that—basically, criminals do not care about the law, and we do not change any of the procedures to get a concealed weapons permit. We just speed it up. That is all we do. We do not change any procedures. We just speed it up. You make law-abiding citizens helpless victims. It is their God-given right.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I do not understand what—

Mr. MCGUIRE. The Second Amendment, you are talking about the—

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I do not understand what the provision is trying to do then, with all due respect. Could you tell us?

Mr. MCGUIRE. It is just speeding up the ability for you to get a concealed weapons permit.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. But why do—

Mr. MCGUIRE. If you want a concealed weapons permit in D.C., you have got to wait months just to get an appointment. Criminals just go get a gun. They do not care. And so, that is why you see 12-year-olds with a gun doing carjackings. The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun, and it is our God-given right to protect ourself and our family, and so it speeds up the process.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you for your comments because I think the people in D.C. do not agree with that, and I also think that the evidence does not agree with that either. We are not going to agree on that today, but I think the point I am trying to make is that the people of D.C. do not want this and do not agree with you. And by making the concealed carry permitting process more lax, you are not going to solve any sort of gun violence in the city. In fact, you are going to make it worse. That is what the evidence shows. It is not like no state has ever done this before. Twenty-nine states have done it, right? But the evidence is pretty clear that gun violence has gone up in many of those states because of that law. And so, you know, that is one of the reasons why I am very much opposed to this bill is because of that specific provision because, one, the people at D.C. do not want it. They do not think it works. It does not work. Two, it has been shown not to work either. And so, if we are actually going to address gun violence, let us not make it worse. That is what this bill does. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Mr. FROST. Will the gentleman yield? Will the gentlemen yield to me?

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Yes, I will yield back to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. FROST. Thank you. No, I mean, you know, it is good to hear from our Republican colleague here. He is concerned about the D.C. gun laws. He is concerned about gun violence in D.C. I am not sure if the gentleman is aware that most guns used in crime in Washington, D.C. come from outside Washington, D.C., from states that do not have good gun laws. So, my hope is, from hearing your concern today, maybe we can work together. Maybe we can pass universal background checks. Maybe we can pass Federal legislation to make sure that every state plays by the same rules to make sure that we lower gun violence in this country and protect our people. I yield back.

[Applause.]

Chairman COMER. Do any other Members seek recognition? Any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none. Oh, Mr. Mfume.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just want to offer some perspective and perhaps something for the sponsor of this bill to think about. We really are debating something that is very, very basic to all of us, and that is whether or not we believe in the imposition of policy without participation of those who are being imposed upon. I mean, this is what the Boston Tea Party was about. This is why you hear in D.C. "Taxation Without Representa-

tion.” This is why we do not even have a voting member in the House of Delegates outside of a delegate, because of this situation where we believe that we can impose policy without participation from the people who are being governed.

Now, I want to just ask the sponsor of the bill a question. You said, sir, and with all due respect, that there was so much here you did not understand, and one of the things you did not understand was why we—I assume, that meant those of us on this side of the aisle—wanted to protect drug dealers. I am making the assumption you really did not mean that the way you said it. I hope it was rhetorical because it is clear that Members on this side of the aisle are just as opposed to crime, drug dealers, lunatics, rapists, and anybody else as you are—

Ms. BOEBERT. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MFUME [continuing]. On your side of the aisle.

Ms. BOEBERT. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MFUME. No, I will not yield just yet. So, I am assuming it was rhetorical, that you did not have an underlying assumption that we are somehow protecting and supporting those sorts of criminals.

Now, this whole thing about imposition of policy, none of us, if we are honest, would have any kind of situation in our District like this unless we raised holy hell. We would lay down and tie up the government before we would let policy be imposed on us and the people we represent. Right or wrong, there is a practice here, and we ought to at least recognize and say there is a practice. For those Members on this side of the aisle, and I am speaking now just for myself, but I assume that the others will agree, there is no safe haven for rapists and for murderers and for child molesters and criminals. There ought never be. In fact, they ought to be put underneath the jail, sir, and there is no real safe haven that anybody is advocating.

Now, let me just dial back for a minute to a time when dinosaurs ruled this earth. Way back in 1987, I met at the White House with President Reagan, with Congressman Fauntroy, who represented the District at that time, to talk about this whole notion of home rule and the people of D.C. having an opportunity to govern themselves. If you will check the record, the President at that time supported that. He believed in it, and he advocated that we find a way. whenever we want to do something, to have a conversation with the people that are being governed. I do not know that that conversation has occurred. I have not seen a meeting anywhere where we have gone out into the community as a Committee to try to have that conversation.

I have voted for every pro-D.C. act here in the Congress since 1987, so I have got a long telescope of what has been happening and what has not been happening. I sponsored and voted for the first bill to provide D.C. statehood in 1993. I have worked with Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton on all since then, including the one that we barely lost two years ago. So, when people here get upset, it is not because they just do not have anything to do. You would not want somebody imposing policy on you unless you had a chance, no matter what the law was, to give your side of the story, to hear what you have to say and to understand your position.

So, let me just say that this whole imposition of policy, I know what the Constitution says. I know about the District being governed by the Congress and the President. I understand that, but let me remind you, Donald Trump was President for four years. Crime in D.C. was higher when he was President. Crime now has gone down significantly to 30-year lows, so I do not understand what happened between the first term in office and the second term to suggest that there is something out of control here. That is not really the case, and if he does believe that, I would say to the President and his people, why not have a conversation with the people who are being governed here? Whether you agree with them or not, they have a say. They are Americans. They pay taxes. They serve in the military. They do all the things everybody else can do, except they, in this instance, have to live with your imposition of policy. So, while the gentleman who introduced this may have great intentions, I would just say, in the rhetoric around the bill, let us not make the assumption that people in D.C. like being led. Let us not make the assumption that Democrats support crime. Let us not make the assumption that God Almighty has bestowed upon you something that is lacking upon others because you have a difference of opinion.

I will vote no on this bill, no on the others that come up that seek to do the same thing, and hell no on final passage. I yield back.

[Applause.]

Chairman COMER. All right. The gentleman yields back. For what purpose does Mr. Bell seek recognition?

Mr. BELL. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

Chairman COMER. Will the clerk please report the amendment?

The Clerk. Amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5103, as offered by Mr. Bell of Missouri.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

The gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Bell, is recognized 5 minutes to explain his amendment.

Mr. BELL. So, as a former prosecutor, I understand the harmful impacts that bills like this one that we are considering can have on our communities. We have heard a lot of conversations, and so I want to kind of put this all together, and let us talk about actual solutions because we have heard a lot of cliches. A good guy with a gun and a bad guy with a gun, that is just called a shootout. That is not safe at all. We have heard the National Guard, yes, if you put an occupational force, that will tamp down on crime temporarily, but what happens the day after? It is like putting on deodorant and not taking a shower. That is only going to hold up for so long, right? And so, if we are serious about addressing crime, then we got to be serious about the solutions.

And I will push back on what many of my colleagues said. This is not a commonsense issue. This is driven by data. When we look at gun violence, we see that as the gun laws have been loosened, the gun violence has gone up. We have more people dying in this country than any other country in the world by gun violence, and the less gun restrictions, the more gun violence, so what we are

talking about is just simply commonsense gun safety laws. We think that there should be violent history checks to make sure we know who has guns. Republicans oppose that. We talk about community policing. We want a police department that is representative of the people that it police. Police, when I was prosecutor and when I was City Councilman in Ferguson, what we were looking at was reforming our police department so that they did not get promoted based on how many people they arrested. We wanted them to get promoted and accolades for how many people they knew in the community because that is how you build trust in a community, addressing root causes. You cannot incarcerate your way out of mental health. You cannot incarcerate your way out of substance abuse disorder. You got to treat it. If you send somebody with mental health to jail, they are just going to come out with a worse problem, and they are likely to graduate to violent crimes. Same thing with substance abuse.

And so, this amendment is about delivering real, tangible investments in the District of Columbia, investments that prioritize public safety, community well-being, and long term progress. Let us invest in the resources that the folks need in D.C. Let us invest in food assistance, youth programs, housing, mental health services, perfect segue from my colleague, Representative Simon. Let us fund those. That is what this amendment is about. I heard him talk about being elitist. I think it is elitist when you are telling people how they should want to be governed.

[Applause.]

Mr. BELL. And just because you have a smooth southern accent does not change the fact that it is still elitist. And so, here, by funding these types of things, now we are giving the folks in D.C. the tools that they need to address those problems that we have been talking about all morning. We can equip D.C. with the resources it needs to address those root crimes, not just the symptoms.

And so, this is a comprehensive approach to public safety that recognizes that prevention is just as essential as enforcement. And so, when we talk about making D.C. beautiful, we should be talking about investing in the people of D.C., not just cleaning graffiti off the walls. The true beauty of this city lies in its residents, its native communities, and the culture they have already built, and so let us equip them with the resources and funding to support one another. I yield my time to the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Yes, I am actually going to speak next, Mr. Bell, so Mr. Comer?

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. I will recognize myself. While I am very supportive of proper allocations of financial resources to Washington, D.C. within its local budget, we are not the Appropriations Committee. We are the Oversight Committee. We should be working these conversations through the regular budget and appropriations process. And I want to say this today, and I have said this publicly many times, I strongly support, if we have a continuing resolution and the President recommends anomalies and things like that, that we restore the funding for Washington, D.C. that was supposedly inadvertently removed from the last budget we passed, so that is something that I support, and

I think most of the Members on my side of the aisle support. We recognize that that money was money that Washington, D.C. had budgeted, and that money should be in Washington, D.C.'s budget. So, that is something—

Mr. BELL. Mr. Chair, I think we have to reverse the amendments, and I think you are replying to the amendment that Ms. Ansari is about to introduce as opposed to the one that I just introduced because, initially, her amendment was going to lead. I just want to make sure people are following this.

Chairman COMER. It is okay. The two parliamentarians are working this out. We are good? All right. We are fine. So, and I just want everyone to know, I communicate with the Mayor. I have met at least two times with the Chairman of the D.C. Council. So, when we work on this legislation, because this Committee has legislative jurisdiction of Washington, D.C., there is a lot of communication that takes place, not just with myself and the Mayor and the Chairman of the D.C. Council, but also between the Oversight staff and the Mayor's Office and the Council staff. So, this is not, as Ms. Stansbury suggested, just something that popped out of mid-air. There have been a lot of conversations and communications. Now, we do not always agree, but we are working together, and I am, as Chairman of this Committee, working with the local elected officials in D.C. to try to do things, like the D.C. stadium bill, to try to restore funding that was, for whatever reason, removed from the last pending bill.

So, today, we are focused on specific Criminal Code reforms and Federal executive authorities that are needed, so this amendment also dispenses with the underlying bill. I, therefore, oppose this amendment. Does any other Member seek recognition? Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to just add my support to this amendment. I think that Mr. Bell is exactly right, and just as a reminder, and this was said by some of the Members earlier, but crime has been decreasing in the District. It is at historic lows. You look at the last couple of years before Donald Trump made the decisions to bring in the Guard, this Council and this Mayor, and, most importantly, the community, has been working on issues of violence prevention, on investing in services, which we know lead to crime reduction. That is a fact. That is been well researched across this country. And just as a reminder, here in August 2025, the President actually announced, of course, that he plans to work with Congress to somehow raise this \$2 billion to make the District safer. There has been no plan and no specifics, just empty promises that the President continues to make.

And so, this amendment does fulfill some of that promise. It actually puts together a plan that actually would invest in the District. It is \$2 billion I know that has been discussed. We are talking about reducing homelessness, expanding access to healthcare, providing food assistance to residents in need, supporting victims of crime, which is so important, and investing in mental health services. We know these types of investments actually can be used to reduce crime, not just here, but across the country. Congress should be a partner to the District. We should not be using it as

a political prop. We should be a constructive partner that helps D.C. to hire their own, make local investments, and bring the community in. So, let us please address public safety in the way that we best know how, and that is to put D.C. residents and the community first, and invest in programs we know that will actually work. And so, with that, I urge the adoption of Mr. Bell's amendment.

Chairman COMER. Does any other Member seek recognition on the Bell Amendment.

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is on the amendment, offered by Mr. Bell from Missouri.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the noes have it, and the amendment is not agreed to.

Mr. GARCIA. A recorded vote, sir.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

For what purpose does Ms. Ansari seek recognition?

Ms. ANSARI. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment on the desk.

Chairman COMER. Will the clerk please report the amendment and distribute?

The Clerk. An amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5103, as offered by Ms. Ansari of Arizona.

Chairman COMER. Okay. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

Ms. Ansari is recognized for 5 minutes to explain her amendment.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Earlier this year, the Trump Administration and congressional Republicans unilaterally withheld \$1 billion—that is “billion” with a “B”—dollars from D.C., that is part of the city's local government budget. I will repeat: these funds are all D.C. raised revenue. A Senate-passed fix has been sitting on Speaker Johnson's desk since March 18. It is outrageous that this city is micromanaged to such a degree by the Federal Government unlike any other American city, and on top of that, the Administration can apparently decide to cut or withhold an enormous portion of the city's budget just because it feels like it. This is an issue of fairness, justice, and keeping the government's word to over 700,000 Americans who are denied full and equal rights. How can the Trump Administration literally steal \$1 billion from D.C. without any justification or resource?

Imagine if this were Phoenix or Los Angeles or Las Vegas or Dallas. I am the former Vice Mayor of Phoenix, Arizona, the fifth largest city in the country, and I can tell you that a \$1 billion withholding of budget from a city government has massive implications. It should be no different for Washington, D.C. While this is the city's capital, it is also home to hundreds of thousands of hard-working people. What might actually have an impact on keeping people safe and healthy in our Nation's Capital? That would be the

\$1 billion of withheld funding for critical programs that keep this city running, funds that are D.C.'s, not the Federal Government's money.

But Donald Trump obviously believes that this city is his personal playground. He has deployed the U.S. military to its streets because he wants to feel powerful, because he is a dictator, and he wants to deflect from the fact that the biggest criminal in this city is himself, sitting and occupying the White House at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

[Applause.]

Ms. ANSARI. My colleagues have mentioned D.C.'s crime rate is at a 30-year low. So, what does Trump have our Nation's servicemembers, many of whom who have been taken from their jobs, from their families, as reservists, what are they doing here in Washington, D.C.? He has them picking up trash, sitting around bored, directing traffic. I have seen this firsthand with my own eyes. It has been mentioned. The way it sounds for my colleagues, they are more worried about their own personal safety here. I can tell you, I feel very safe here walking around my Navy Yard neighborhood. But our President is more interested in photo ops and seeming like a tough, strong man than he is about spending government resources on the programs and policies that keep us safe, whether that is investing in counternarcotics programs or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. He has literally redirected counterterrorism and human-trafficking resources away from their intended purpose and toward nonviolent immigration offenses.

So, that is why I hope this Committee can come together in a bipartisan manner to fix this grave mistake that is costing Washington, D.C. Making this right will make this city and region safer, stronger, and better for everyone. To not do so would be a violation of our responsibilities and a stain on this Committee and Congress. Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. I will recognize myself, and, again, I support restoring that funding. I do not believe it was Donald Trump that took the funding. I think it was Congress that took the funding, either inadvertently or whatever.

Ms. ANSARI. Republicans in Congress.

Chairman COMER. So, I support restoring the funding, but I cannot support this amendment because it would strike the text of the underlying bill, which enacts President Trump's Executive Order on making the District of Columbia safe and beautiful. So, I oppose your amendment, but I support the objective, and, again, I have asked that that be restored as one of the anomalies if we go the CR route, which, I would assume that is the route we are going to go. And that is something that, in the meetings I have had with both Mayor Bowser and Middleton, they both requested that, obviously, and I think that should be restored. I am speaking for myself, not everyone on the Committee, but I support, again, what you are doing, but the amendment affects the underlying bill, so that is why I oppose the amendment.

Does any other Member seek recognition? I will recognize the Ranking Member, then Mr. Biggs.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. I just want to thank Ms. Ansari for the amendment, and, I think, Mr. Chairman, I think you have ac-



knowledge that this was a mistake made by the Congress, by the Majority, by the Speaker. And so, this is an opportunity to fix a real, horrific mistake that is hurting the District. To lose that amount of money, billion dollars in funding, to provide for services, is completely irresponsible, and Congress has an opportunity right now, this Committee has an opportunity right now to actually fix the issue it has created. And so, I think this amendment does that. I want to thank Congressman Ansari for doing that. It is another example of why Congress should not be the super City Council for Washington, D.C.

[Applause.]

Mr. GARCIA. It cannot continue its efforts to try to take control over the District.

Now, Speaker Johnson and the House, by the way, have refused to enact a simple fix. They have not moved forward in fixing this enormous mistake. Instead, D.C. today and most days, just hearing any of the debates, they want to use the District as a political prop. This bill froze \$1 billion dollars from the D.C. budget, threatening city services, and I do commend the community and the D.C. Government for moving forward even with this horrific cut and mistake. Now, we do not need National Guardsmen picking up trash if we just let D.C. use their own money to fund normal city services.

[Applause.]

Mr. GARCIA. We should fix this issue, which the amendment does, and I want to thank Ms. Ansari, and I urge a yes vote.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Biggs from Arizona.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, really, what I am doing, I have got some unanimous consents. So, this one is entitled, "Murdered Congressional Intern's Mom Says Trump Should Take Over Washington, D.C." "Trump's D.C. Crime Crackdown Overwhelmingly Benefits Black Americans As Homicides Hit Zero." This one from February 12, 2024: "Yes, Prosecuting and Arresting Criminals Would Have Immediate Impact on D.C.'S Crime." This one from just the other day: "Trump's D.C. Crime Crackdown Nets Murder Suspects, Sex Criminals, Illegal Immigrants, and More in One Night." This one: "Trump's D.C. Crime Operation Puts Safety of Families First as Arrests Surge Past 1,800." This one from a couple days ago: "D.C. Wards 7 and 8 See Drop in Crime During Federal Law Enforcement Surge." This one from eight days ago: "Trump's Labor Day Crime Crackdown in D.C. Nets 70 Arrests, Including Illegal Aliens." This one, this was from last November: "Police Arrests Man Suspected in a Dozen Sex Assaults in D.C." And that is real stuff for now, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Chairman COMER. Any other Member seek recognition on the amendment?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none. The question is now on the Ansari Amendment.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the noes have it, and the amendment is not agreed to.

Mr. GARCIA. Recorded vote.

Ms. ANSARI. Request a recorded vote, please.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered by the Ranking Member. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 5214, the District of Columbia Cash Bail Reform Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 5214, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CASH BAIL REFORM ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5214, the District of Columbia Cash Bail Reform Act, a bill to require mandatory pretrial and post-conviction detention for crimes of violence and dangerous crimes, and mandatory cash bail for certain offenses that pose a threat to public safety or order in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5214, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I recognize myself for 5 minutes for statement on the bill and the amendment.

I strongly support the District of Columbia Cash Bail Reform Act. This bill requires pretrial detention for individuals charged with crimes of violence and dangerous crimes and cash bail for individuals charged with public safety and order crimes.

For far too long, dangerous criminals have been allowed to roam the streets of D.C., posing a threat to the general public. Before this bill, progressive judges could release criminals to D.C. streets with only a promise that they will not re-offend and will return to court for their trial date. This bill eliminates this judicial discretion by requiring pretrial detention for those charged with crimes of violence and cash bail or bail bonds for all defendants charged with certain public safety and law and order crimes. This is a smart and long overdue reform that rectifies the ill-conceived policies currently enacted in the District. I urge all of our colleagues to support this commonsense public safety bill.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for his statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose the D.C. Cash Bail Reform Act, and I wanted to share why. This bill, once again, interferes with D.C. law and makes major changes to D.C.'s pretrial release and detention law. Now, the bill would require pretrial detention based solely on a charge. It will also prevent pretrial release for certain crimes unless a defendant posts a

secure appearance bond. Now, no one on this Committee wants dangerous people on the streets after they have been arrested, but D.C.'s pretrial release and detention law is actually substantially similar to the Federal pretrial release and detention law in place.

Now, under both D.C. and Federal law right now, pretrial release and detention decisions are based on an assessment by a judge of a defendant's risk of flight and danger to the community, and that is how it should be. In our system, you are innocent until proven guilty. Detention decisions should be made based on risk, not on wealth or your access to pay. The Pretrial Service Agency for D.C. provides pretrial services for both the U.S. District Court for D.C. and the D.C. Superior Court. It is actually a Federal agency, and it is extremely effective by national standards. D.C.'s pretrial flight and rearrest rates are actually lower than the national rates.

Now, this problematic bill has two main components. Component one is mandatory pretrial detention for the period before trial based solely on a charge without necessary hearings, which is likely unconstitutional based on a 1987 Supreme Court ruling. And we are not aware, by the way, of any state, city, county, or territory that mandates pretrial detention for the period before trial based solely on a charge. We should stand for due process and reject this dangerous policy. Now second, the other component of the bill that is incredibly problematic is the bill prohibits pretrial release for certain offenders unless a defendant posts a secured appearance bond. Pretrial release should be based on your danger to the public and your flight risk, not on your wealth. Pretrial detention can have significant consequences for a defendant and their family, including lost jobs, income, housing, and child custody. This bill would essentially lock up more people that are of low income in this community, and, again, in pretrial, you are innocent until proven guilty.

Now finally, the data is clear that imposing financial conditions on pretrial release has no effect on crime rates. We should oppose the D.C. Cash Bail Reform Act on its merits. We should also oppose it because it violates D.C.'s self-government, and bill after bill being presented today moves back the ability for D.C. to govern itself. So, I urge Members to vote no on this bill, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Ms. Boebert from Colorado.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a fierce advocate for law and order, I support Congresswoman Stefanik's District of Columbia Cash Bail Reform Act. Our Nation's Capital is reeling from crime crisis, worsened by cashless bail policies that let violent criminals, murderers, rapists, carjackers walk free before trial, endangering residents, Federal workers, and visitors. Democrats have proven they are not soft on crime, they are pro-crime. They are pro-carjacking, pro-rape, pro-murder, pro-criminals with these policies. This bill restores accountability, ensuring safety in Washington, D.C.

The statistics are absolutely alarming. In 2023, D.C. reported 274 homicides, a 20-year high with a rate of 39.4 per 100,000 residents, surpassing New York City's 5.5 and rivaling Chicago's. Carjackings surged 547 percent from 2018 to 2023, with 140 incidents in June 2023 alone. While 2024 saw a 35-percent drop in vio-

lent crime, homicides down to 32 percent to 187, robberies down 39 percent, and armed carjackings down 53 percent, 2025 data shows that 99 homicides by August, a 12-percent increase from 2024, but still, that is troubling. Total violent crimes in 2024 hit 22,320, with 21,437 assaults. Motor vehicle thefts, up nine percent in 2025 and reached 3,136 by September. These numbers absolutely demand action. Cashless bail fuels this very chaos, creating a revolving door for repeat offenders.

To see how cashless bail is working in real time, let us look at what happened to Iryna—I am so sorry for saying her name wrong, I will get the Ukrainian language down, but the wonderful woman who was violently murdered just this week, a Ukrainian refugee seeking safety in Charlotte. She was brutally murdered on a train by a man with a violent past and was repeatedly released despite prior arrests for robbery, assault, and erratic behavior. This man has been arrested and let go 14 times due to Democrats' pro-crime policies. Cashless bail and lenient pretrial policies let dangerous individuals cycle through our streets, endangering innocent lives like Iryna's. We need to take action to ensure repeat offenders are not free to murder innocent victims and so no family endures such senseless loss.

Again, cashless bail promotes this kind of violence. There was no help for this man that was actually enforced. He was not institutionalized, he was not forced to seek help, and he was let go 14 times to repeat these kind of crimes, and this is the same thing that we see in Washington, D.C. when we have cashless bail. Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields. The Chair recognizes Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose this bill which amends D.C. law.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing the bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. This bill is paternalistic and undemocratic. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves. The D.C. Council has 13 members. If residents do not like how the members vote, residents can vote them out of office or pass a ballot measure. This is called democracy. Congress has 535 voting Members. D.C. residents do not like how the Members vote on local matters, residents cannot vote them out of office or pass a ballot measure. This is the antithesis of democracy.

While the substance of this bill is irrelevant since there is never justification for Congress to legislate on local D.C. matters, I will briefly discuss it. The D.C. law is not unique. The fact is, it is very similar to the Federal pretrial release and detention law, and the same well-regarded Federal Agency provides pretrial services in both the Federal and local trial courts in D.C. Under both Federal and D.C. law, Federal and detention decisions are based on a defendant's wealth, not on any assessment by a judge or whether a defendant will appear and is a danger to another person or the community. Nevertheless, judges have the authority to impose fi-

nancial conditions on release. Detention is a severe restriction on the liberty of an individual who is presumed innocent.

This bill mandates pretrial detention without a hearing for certain crimes that it likely violates the due process clause of the Constitution. I urge the Majority to read the Supreme Court's 1987 decision that upheld the constitutionality of Federal pretrial and detention law. The Court stressed the law's procedural protections for defendants. The Court said, "In our social liberty is the norm, and detention prior to trial or without trial is the carefully limited exception. We hold that the provisions for pretrial detention in the Home Rule Act of 1984 fall within that carefully limited exception. The Act authorizes the detention prior to the trial of arrestees charged with serious felonies, who are found, after an adversary hearing, to pose a threat to the safety of the individuals to the community, which no conditioned release can dispel. The numerous procedural safeguards detailed above must attend this adversary hearing."

This bill requires pretrial detention without any adversary hearing. Finally, the bill introduces commercial bail industry.

Mr. BIGGS. [Presiding.] The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. NORTON. I yield back.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you. Who else seeks recognition? Mr. Lynch. I am going to recognize Mr. Lynch for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to associate myself with the remarks of the Ranking Member earlier. I do want to point out that this statute, this change in the law would expand the number and type of offenses against public safety or public order that now apply in Washington, D.C. I think the Ranking Member, earlier, spoke to the impact of the residents of D.C., and I just want to add another dimension to this.

As we all know, Washington, D.C. is the place where the American people often come to exercise their right to petition their government. Throughout our history here in D.C., going back to the veterans' protests, the Bonus Army in 1932 during the Depression, going back to Dr. King's rally in support of jobs and freedom where a half a million people followed him here for the purpose of petitioning their government. You can look at the Black Lives Matter rallies that occurred more recently, the Women's March back in 2020, and so many others.

This law as written would introduce pretrial detention for anyone charged with an offense against public safety or public order. The current statute in Washington, D.C., which is amended by this, currently regards excessive noise or behavior which may disrupt the tranquility of the community as an offense against public safety or public order. So, this will impinge not only upon the daily activities of the people of Washington, D.C., but it will also, I believe, violate the constitutional right of the American people to come here and to petition their own government. They will now, after this bill is passed, be exposed to detention pretrial, detention without recourse, detention that will continue unless they make bail, which is new and different.

So, look, I have been a part-time resident of Washington, D.C. for almost 25 years, and from my own experience having been here four days a week, five days a week, for the past 25 years, things

have gotten a lot better in D.C. Things have gotten a lot better. I remember when we had significant challenges. That is not the case today. Now we have an excellent police force. We have wonderful, wonderful leadership at the City Council level, and we have had a string of Mayors here that I think have tried their level best to do what is right and to represent the people of the District, the residents of the District, even though we have curtailed those rights by statute.

This is an assault on the self-determination of the residents of Washington, D.C., and they deserve better than this. They deserve better than this. It is one thing to have the burden of living here without active representation. It is quite another to have Congress intervene on the basic functions of daily life that the people of D.C. endure and go about each and every day. This series of bills is an overreach, and we should defeat it and return the right to make those decisions back to the Mayor, the District City Council, and the people of Washington, D.C. Thank you. I yield back.

[Applause.]

Mr. BIGGS. The gentleman yields back. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Mfume.

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Chairman, the distinguished gentlewoman from the District of Columbia did not have enough time in making the points that she was trying to make, so I would respectfully yield the balance of my time to her.

Mr. BIGGS. You are recognized. He has yielded time to you, Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Finally, this bill introduces the commercial bail industry and bounty hunters into local D.C. courts. I urge my colleagues to vote no on this bill and to pass the D.C. statehood bill instead, which will give D.C. residents voting representation in Congress and full local self-government.

D.C. is not unique. In fact, it is very similar to the Federal pretrial release and detention law, and the same well-regarded Federal Agency provides pretrial services in both the Federal and local trial courts in D.C. Under both Federal and D.C. law, release and detention decisions are based not on a defendant's wealth, but on an assessment by a judge of whether a defendant will appear and is a danger to another person or the community. Nevertheless, judges have the authority to impose financial conditions on release. Detention is a severe restriction on the liberty of an individual which is presumed innocent. This bill mandates pretrial detention without a hearing for certain crimes. That likely violates the due process clause of the Constitution.

I urge the Majority to read the Supreme Court's 1987 decision that upheld the constitutionality of the Federal pretrial and detention law. The court stressed the law protections by defendants. The Court said, "In our society, liberty is the norm, and detention prior to trial or without trial is the carefully limited exception. We hold that the provisions for pretrial detention in the Bail Reform Act of 1984 fall within that carefully limited exception. The Act authorizes that detention prior to trial of arrestees charged with serious felonies are found after an adversarial hearing to pose a threat to the safety of individuals or to the community which no condition or release can dispel. The numerous procedural safeguards detailed

above must attend this adversarial hearing.” This bill requires pretrial detention without an adversarial hearing.

Finally, this bill introduces the commercial bail industry and bounty hunters into local courts. I urge my colleagues to vote no on this bill and to pass D.C.’s statehood bill instead, which will give D.C. residents voting representation in the Congress and full local government.

Mr. BIGGS. Are you yielding back?

Ms. NORTON. Yes, I yield back.

Mr. BIGGS. The gentlelady yields. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, Ms. Lee, for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I urge my colleagues to oppose the Cash Bail Reform Act that would create standards that do not exist anywhere else in this country. Let us be clear, these arguments that Republicans are now attaching themselves to when it comes to cash bail are nothing more than propaganda and fear mongering and hatred of poor people. Nearly this entire slate of bills up today shows that they hold the citizens of D.C., who are disproportionately Black and Brown, with less regard than their own constituents. Policies like these do nothing more than dehumanize and criminalize and subject D.C. residents to standards that are unconstitutional at best.

This bill would mandate pretrial detention for certain charges and attach a mandatory cash bail amount for a slew of other charges. Pretrial detention means that this person has only been accused of committing a crime. They have not been found guilty. They have not gone in front of a jury. The state has not proved their case beyond a reasonable doubt. It seems Republicans have forgotten about innocent until proven guilty in the Fifth Amendment, core tenets of our democracy. Our Constitution ensures that anybody accused of a crime cannot be denied their life, their liberty, or their property without due process of the law, but this bill would take away someone’s liberty, their freedom, and hold them in a jail cell on nothing more than an accusation. This bill conditions release not on whether a person poses a threat to public safety but on whether they can afford to pay to get out.

We are not in a country where one is presumed guilty just because they are Black or they are poor, but they are assumed innocent just because they are a white collar criminal. It is no shock that Trump and Republicans want you to believe that having more money makes you more deserving of release because they have money. But the fact remains that rich defendants accused of a crime are not inherently less dangerous than poor defendants. How does having access to cash have anything to do with the safety or the risk of a person?

Right now, how it works in D.C. is that a judge will listen to factors about the person accused of a crime, such as their ties to the community, their employment, where they live, the charges themselves, and they will determine the conditions of release without requiring money. Those judges can then allow detention of people who they think cannot be safely released or trusted to return to court. These policies in D.C. have been on the books since 1992, and the data speaks for itself. Over the last four years, 88 percent of all people released pretrial remain completely arrest free, and 98

percent remained free from violent arrest. These changes to the system took place because they are connected to data that shows no relationship between cashless bail and crime, and many other states have followed suit. The Brennan Center used data from 33 states and examined their laws in detail, so it categorized them based on how they work and when they went into effect. The result carefully studied whether crime rates changed after reforms were implemented. The research found no clear relationship one way or another.

The one industry that has suffered from D.C.'s current cashless bail system is the for-profit bail bondsman industry. They do not operate in the District anymore, but you can bet that if this bill passes, they are going to be rushing back to grow their already \$2.4 billion industry, further, of course, lining their pockets of rich folks at the expense of poor folks. When a person's freedom is at stake, they deserve to be heard as an individual rather than painted with a broad brush. That is called due process. It is also why it is so important for folks to have an attorney during these hearings, which is why I introduced the True Justice Act to provide grants to public defender offices to expand their services to include bail hearings because not every jurisdiction provides that representation.

To be clear, this bill would strip the due process rights of people who have not been proven guilty yet. It is shameful, Republicans, to put forward this bill, and I urge my colleagues to oppose it. I yield back.

Mr. BIGGS. The gentlelady yields back. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Bell, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to add a little bit of nuance here because there are two conversations we should be having. There are low-level nonviolent offenders, and then there are serious and violent offenders. Serious offenders, you are not going to find many judges that are releasing people that are charged with murder, homicide, and rape. And, by the way, I was a prosecutor before coming to Congress, and so the gentlelady's assertion that all Democrats are pro-crime, pro-rape, pro-murder is insulting. I locked up rapists and murderers and drug dealers, hundreds of them, and I am not sure how many the gentlelady has done.

But with low-level nonviolent offenders, the problem is, is that when you require bail on cases like these, and in this amendment, there is discretion because it says crimes that are a clear threat to public safety and order. So that means low-level offenders, if a judge used their discretion, could be kept in prison for low-level offenses because they impacted "public order." And what you will have is, the reason why we see cash bail not working as far as with low-level offenders is that the rich murderer can purchase his freedom, while the college student who forgot to pay a ticket or they got picked up on a small amount of drugs and they cannot make the \$1,000 bond, well, they cannot get out. And what we have seen is that if you want to make our communities safer, prisons are not the way to do it. Our recidivism rates across the country after ten years are 80 percent. That means eight out of ten people are going back. So, if you want to create criminals, put them in jail because that is what happens. They come out and they are more likely to



re-offend. When we take low-level nonviolent offenders and address those root causes—the substance abuse, the mental health, the addiction—when we address that, the data shows they are significantly less likely to re-offend.

We created a diversion advisory committee in St. Louis County for low-level nonviolent offenders. Remember that 80 percent number I talked about? Of the close to 5,000 people that we were able to get in our program, our recidivism rate was 3.9 percent. That means 96 percent of the people were not offending. We were connecting them with jobs, we were connecting them with healthcare, we were connecting them with housing, the things that they needed and that correlate with a lack of recidivism. So, when we are going backward, because we already actually solved this problem and recognized that cash bail for low-level nonviolent offenders does not work. It actually makes us less safe. And so, we got to make sure that we are understanding the nuance and the policies that actually work as opposed to the things that are just good to hear on a campaign commercial or what have you. And so, that is why I join my colleague, Representative Norton, in opposing this bill because it does not work.

I yield the remainder of my time to the Ranking Member, if he so chooses to take it.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. BIGGS. No, go ahead. I think he has yielded to you.

Mr. GARCIA. No, no, go ahead.

Mr. BIGGS. Okay. The gentleman yields. Time has expired because of that, and now I will recognize myself for my 5 minutes.

So, I support the bill, the underlying bill. There is so much to say, but I am going to just limit it and I am going to introduce these articles in just a moment. But, Mayor Bowser, who I have had the pleasure to meet with her on numerous occasions talking about these types of issues, and she is a pleasant person and I think she is sincere, and I think she wants to do her best for the District. In August 13, she said, “I can’t say that given some of the rhetoric,” regarding President Trump’s rhetoric, “of the past, that we are totally surprised about,” and she said that relating to the National Guard coming in. And then so minutes later—this is from a *CNN* article—it says, “Minutes later, she suggested the Federal intervention may work to the city’s benefit and told reporters she did not have the legal authority to stop Trump’s plans. ‘The fact that we have more law enforcement and presence in neighborhoods, that may be positive,’” she said.

And then she did not like the presence of ICE in the District, and then the following day—this is from the article, again—she responded to a question about her relationship with Trump saying, “I am the Mayor, and he is President. I mean, that has always been our relationship, and the D.C. Mayor and the President of the United States will always have probably more interaction than any city in the rest of our country, so we are going to keep doing our job.” And that is really kind of what Article I, Section 8, Clause 17, would imply, as the gentleman from Louisiana talked about earlier.

Another article, dated August 27, the Mayor said this: “We greatly appreciate the surge of officers that enhance what Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) has been able to do in this city,” Bowser

said at a press conference. "The difference between this 20-day period of this Federal surge and last year represents an 87-percent reduction in carjackings." She went on to say that she had had a courtesy meeting with the President, and she suggested the surge of hundreds of Federal law enforcement officers had filled a gap left by attrition and slow hiring in the D.C. Police Department, something that had been a concern of hers long before Trump's emergency declaration. And I know that is true because that was one of the topics when I met with Mayor Bowser previously. "We need to hire 500 new officers over the course of the next several years to have the number of officers that we need and to decrease the amount of overtime that we use," Bowser said.

And then, just from late last week: "Mayor Muriel Bowser has issued an order requiring ongoing local coordination with Donald Trump's Federal takeover of Washington, D.C." This is another quote: "Her order also establishes a safe and beautiful emergency operations center whose role will be to manage the District's response, coordinate centralized communications, and ensure coordination with Federal law enforcement to the maximum extent allowable by law within the District." Trump thanked her for her cooperation.

I raise this because I hear what my colleagues across the aisle say, and I am hearing what our side says, but the reality is you cannot deny that there has been improvement in the District since the Federal participation here. The Mayor herself has said that. You just cannot deny that. And when you take that and you couple that with the constitutional authority delegated, not just delegated, but mandated to the Congress, then it says maybe we are not doing things wrong, but maybe we need to fix things just a little bit more. And for that reason, I support this bill and submit these, without objection, into the record.

So ordered.

And I am going to yield back my time. Who else seeks recognition? Anyone? The gentleman from Louisiana is recognized.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to comment regarding cash bail, generally speaking, because my colleague across the aisle, and we thank him for his service as a prosecutor and now here in Congress, and we respect his opinion and his passion for his core principles. And yet, the observation regarding cash bail and how it actually works in the reality of the conflict between law enforcement and the criminal element in our judicial system at its entry level, his assessment was wrong and requires correcting.

The so-called low-level crimes that the gentleman would say absolutely should not have cash bail, a low-level crime becomes a high-level crime when somebody is home and the criminal did not think somebody was going to be home, like a burglary. You go into a home. They think the home is empty. That is a burglary, but if someone is home sick or whatever and they respond, that can quickly escalate into something far worse than a burglary.

So, it is the same criminal actor out there that is committing these crimes. And when you remove cash bail, you remove that period of time where that criminal, who is a child of God, a fellow citizen, they have an opportunity in jail to step back from the elements that have perhaps driven them into criminal behavior in the

first place—drugs, alcohol, a violent sort of an immersion into the some of the components that create the criminal lifestyle—and if they get arrested, now they do not get arrested for every crime. You do not get a speeding ticket every time you are speeding, do you? So, when there is an arrest of somebody, there is generally many unknown crimes similar that they have committed.

So, they get arrested. They have to go before a magistrate within 48–72 hours, depending upon the state and the municipality, and then that magistrate, according to the law, is to set bond. And if there is no cash bond, then that criminal, he does not have the means, you understand, to pay a cash bond, that is part of the matrix to determine in these municipalities that have established no cash bonds, and they give discretion to the judge to say can you pay a cash bond, and the guy says no. So, okay, there is no cash bond. He is immediately back out on the street.

So, we as a people have not given that man, that child of God, that opportunity that he has forced upon himself by his actions to sit in jail for a week or two, and it may be the first week or two in a long time that he has had no alcohol, no drugs, no immersion in violence.

Mr. BELL. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HIGGINS. And to give him an opportunity to reflect upon his life. Like, this happens in jail. But if he is in and out of the courtroom at his magistrate's hearing immediately after arrest, or quickly within a day or two after arrest, and he does not have to call someone to ask them to come post his bond, which is generally ten to fifteen percent nationwide, to pay a bail bondsman. So, if it is \$1,000 bond, he has to come up with \$100 or two, but he does not have that. So, he calls his friends, he calls his family, and they do not want to pay because they have been burned before by the same guy, so he ends up in jail for a period of time, a week or two, a month. And it is that timeframe, Mr. Chairman, that this man, this child of God, has an opportunity to get his mind right, and I think we have a responsibility as a society to consider that totality of circumstance as it relates to cash bail. I yield, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BIGGS. The gentleman yields. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Gill, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GILL. And I would like to yield my time to Congresswoman Boebert.

Mr. BIGGS. Okay.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you very much for yielding. I just wanted to highlight some points here. Under current law, the District of Columbia has a very pro-crime pretrial release system. With few exceptions, the D.C. Code requires judges to release all but the most heinous offenders on their own reconnaissance or after pledging an unsecured appearance bond. Shockingly, under current law, someone could be charged with murder and released prior to their trial date. The District of Columbia Cash Bail Reform Act addresses this problem by directly fixing D.C. laws on bail and pretrial detention. The bill establishes a tiered system of increasingly appropriate pretrial conditions based on the seriousness of the crime. There have been many arguments here just trying to diminish this to a traffic ticket or a small offense, but it is based on the seriousness of the crime.

For the most egregious crimes, those defined in statute as dangerous crimes and crimes of violence, the judge is required to impose a pretrial detention of the offender. These crimes include terrorism, assault of a police officer, carjacking, child sexual abuse, murder, as well as other heinous crimes that we see all too often here in our Nation's Capital. This bill would also require mandatory cash bail for serious crimes that pose a threat to public safety and order, including fleeing a police officer, rioting, and stalking, among others. For such serious crimes, those defined in the bill as public safety and order crimes, requires cash bail as a condition of pretrial release. For all other crimes, the bill retains the current law process for pretrial release.

Conditions for anyone eligible for pretrial release include refraining from committing other crimes and the collection of defendant's DNA. For all defendants eligible for pretrial release, the judge may apply additional escalating sanctions, including curfews, retaining to custody outside of hours of employment, and other conditions the judge deems appropriate to ensure the public safety and compel appearance at hearings. Current D.C. Code allows judges to release those convicted of crimes who are awaiting sentencing or appeal if the judge feels the convict will not flee and does not propose danger to others. The bill also eliminates this judicial discretion and requires detention upon conviction.

No longer will progressive judges be able to release criminals to the streets of the District with only a promise that they will not re-offend and will show up in court. It will remove radical progressive loopholes that allow violent offenders to roam the streets of the District, posing a threat to residents and visitors. Those charged with obstruction of justice, fleeing from law enforcement, rioting, destruction of property, or stalking will no longer receive the least restrictive conditions for release, sometimes no bail at all. This is a smart and long overdue reform that rectifies the ill-conceived D.C. Council cash bail and pretrial detention reforms represented by The Bail Reform Amendment Act of 1992 D.C. law 9-125. Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to provide some clarity.

Mr. BELL. Will the gentlelady yield?

Ms. BOEBERT. Sure, I will yield for a moment.

Mr. BIGGS. Actually, Mr. Gill controls the time.

Ms. BOEBERT. Oh, I apologize. I yield to Mr. Gill.

Mr. BELL. Will the gentleman yield?

Ms. BOEBERT. It is up to you, sir.

Mr. GILL. No.

Mr. BIGGS. The gentleman will not yield. Mr. Gill, do you yield your time back to the Chair?

Mr. GILL. Yes.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you. Who else seeks recognition?

[No response.]

Mr. BIGGS. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by voting aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Mr. BIGGS. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Mr. BIGGS. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5214, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Mr. BIGGS. Opposed, say no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Mr. BIGGS. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Chair, can we have a recorded vote?

Mr. BIGGS. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

It is now time to consider H.R. 5172, the Strong Sentences for Safer D.C. Streets Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 5172, THE STRONG SENTENCES FOR SAFER D.C. STREETS ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5172, the Strong Sentences for Safer D.C. Streets Act, a bill to increase the mandatory minimum sentences—

Mr. BIGGS. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute offered to H.R. 5172, as offered by Mr. Biggs on behalf of Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Mr. BIGGS. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement on the bill and the amendment for 5 minutes.

So, I support H.R. 5172, the District of Columbia Criminal Mandatory Minimums Reform Act [sic]. In 2023, the D.C. Council passed the revised Criminal Code Act of 2022. It implemented progressive, soft-on-crime sentencing reforms and lowered minimum sentences for many crimes. Congress successfully passed H.J. Res. 26 to disapprove of this radical legislation. H.J. Res. 26 was a bipartisan effort signed into law by then President Biden as Public Law 118–1. Even with this success, the D.C. Code still contains mandatory minimums that are much lower than the rest of the Nation. For instance, currently, second-degree murder and rape have no mandatory minimum sentence. First-degree burglary has only a 5-year mandatory minimum. First-degree child sexual abuse has no mandatory minimum.

This legislation updates mandatory minimums for a few violent crimes. This bill ensures that several offenses, including first- and second-degree murder, rape, first-degree sexual assault of a child, armed and unarmed carjacking, and first-degree burglary are taken seriously in D.C. courts by reconfiguring the mandatory sentences. These reforms are necessary to address violent crime in the

District, and what do greater sentences do? They provide both specific and general deterrence.

What is the purpose of a judicial system, a criminal justice system? It is to protect people from those who commit violent crime, in particular, but those who commit crimes. And when you sentence someone, you have both a specific deterrence. That is to say, that individual is removed from the community, upon conviction, for the crime that they have committed. Number two, you also get general deterrence because when the law is enforced, oddly enough, other people say, I do not want that to happen to me, thus I do not want to engage in this criminal conduct. And so, you see specific and general deterrence. Third thing that you see is an opportunity for the community itself to find restitution and retribution and honor the rule of law, which is necessary in a constitutional republic that honors freedom, and then also, you do allow victims to recover through these types of sentences that are necessary.

So, I also want to give you seven attacks that happened here in this particular location, meaning the District of Columbia. On August 3 of this year, DOGE staff were beaten by teens in an attempted carjacking. On June 30, end of June, we had a congressional intern shot dead. On May 21, we had two Israeli embassy staffers shot and killed. On May 17, we had a mob of about 100 teenagers wreak havoc in the Navy Yard neighborhood, just a block from Nat's Park. On May 9, we had a senior congressional staffer carjacked and robbed in the Navy Yard. In late 2023, House Democrat, Henry Cuellar, was carjacked by armed masked men outside an apartment building in the Navy Yard. He condemned the crime, calling the criminals punks with guns, and touched on soft-on-crime policies, noting that if criminals are put in jail, you have got to lock them up and keep them there. That is what mandatory minimums do. Then another House Democrat was assaulted in an apartment elevator in February 2023.

Again, this article: "Nineteen-year-old former DOGE Worker Assaulted in D.C. Carjacking Attempt." "Senator Rand Paul Staffer Attacked in Washington, D.C." "An FBI Special Agent Was Carjacked in Washington, D.C." "A Safeway Employee in D.C. Was Slashed With an Axe by a Shoplifter." By a shoplifter. Normally, you think of shoplifting as a misdemeanor. In Arizona, it is a Class I misdemeanor, but here, greater violence. How about this? Two separate armed assaults in Northwest D.C. stopped by a Good Samaritan, minutes apart. August of this year, "Armed Thug Terrorizes P Street in D.C. Stick-Up," and then this one is old, but it is 2023, it is an oldie, but a sad one: "Congressional Staffer Attacked in Nats Park Following Charity Baseball Game."

The point is, those of us who have prosecuted and defended, we understand something. When someone is facing mandatory minimums, they tend to have that general deterrence effect. They want to stay out of prison. They want to stop, and that is what this would do. And these sentences proposed in this bill are not out of whack or out of line with the vast majority of jurisdictions in this country, but to have no mandatory minimum for rape or no mandatory minimum for first-degree child abuse, that is out of whack with America. And so, I encourage people to support my bill, and

now I yield back and recognize the Ranking Member for his opening statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I want to oppose this bill. This is a new, aggressive mandatory sentencing act for the District. And I just want to remind us that we should be following the will of D.C. residents, and that the existing research on mandatory minimum sentencing is important for us as this bill is debated.

Now, decades of evidence shows that mandatory minimum sentencing laws have actually failed to reduce crime and, in many ways, have worsened the problems within our judicial system and justice system. Now, one of the clearest outcomes of mandatory minimum sentencing has been the exponential increase of the U.S. prison population. The results of this type of legislation from the 90's was mass incarceration, not meaningful or lasting reductions in crime. Now, research has shown that there is no evidence that mandatory minimums actually significantly reduce crime rates. Now, research instead points to the conclusion that it is the certainty of punishment, not the severity, that actually deters crime. Communities are asking for more detectives, more effective prosecutions, more police patrols, not longer sentences alone.

Now, over the last two decades, both the Federal Government and the states have begun to move away from mandatory minimum sentencing. This has been a bipartisan push. In fact, Republicans who have championed this issue have included Senators Ted Cruz, Mike Lee, John Cornyn, and many others. Now, beyond its limited crime control impact, increasing mandatory minimum sentencing makes our legal system less effective. Judges lose discretion to consider mitigating circumstances or to propose alternative punishments. Mandatory minimum sentencing also disproportionately affects minority groups, so this is also a racial justice issue. At the Federal level mandatory minimum sentencing is rarely applied to most violent crimes, so we must learn from our past mistakes. Mandatory minimum sentencing has fueled mass incarceration, failed to deter crime, and deepened racial disparities.

So, we have the evidence in front of us, we can do better, and I urge my colleagues to allow D.C. to control its own laws and to vote no. And I yield back.

Mr. BIGGS. Who seeks recognition? The Chair recognizes Delegate Norton from the District of Columbia.

Ms. NORTON. I oppose this undemocratic and paternalistic bill, which amends D.C. law to apply mandatory minimums to certain crimes and to increase existing mandatory minimums for certain crimes. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves.

I ask unanimous consent to enter to the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and the D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb.

Mr. BIGGS. Without objection.

Ms. NORTON. I strongly oppose mandatory minimums for several reasons, including that they do not deter crime and for their role in this country's mass incarceration crisis. However, whether to establish, eliminate, increase, or decrease mandatory minimums should be a decision for D.C. alone. I respect D.C. home rule. I want to discuss democracy or lack thereof on D.C. The D.C. Council

has 13 members. If residents do not like how the members vote, residents can vote them out of office or pass a ballot measure. That is called democracy. Congress has 535 voting Members. None are elected by D.C. residents. If D.C. residents do not like how the Members vote on local D.C. matters, residents cannot vote them out of office or pass a ballot measure. That is the antithesis of democracy.

To my Republican colleagues, I want to share with you the first two paragraphs of the signing statement your fellow Republican, President Richard Nixon, issued on the D.C. Home Rule Act: "As a longtime supporter of self-government for the District of Columbia, I am pleased to sign into law a measure which is of historic significance for the citizens of the Nation's Capital. I first voted for home rule as a Member of the House of Representatives in 1948 and I have endorsed the enactment of home rule legislation during both my terms as President. One of the major goals of this Administration is to place responsibility for local functions under local control and to provide local governments with the authority and resources they need to serve their communities effectively. The measure I sign today represents a significant step in achieving this goal in the city of Washington.

"I will give the people of the District of Columbia the right to elect their own city officials, to govern themselves in local affairs. As the Nation approaches the 200th anniversary of its founding, it is particularly appropriate to assure these persons who live in our Capital City rights and privileges which have long been enjoyed by most of their countrymen." I urge no on this bill, and I yield back.

Mr. BIGGS. The gentlelady yields back. Who else wishes to be heard on this bill?

[No response.]

Mr. BIGGS. Seeing none, the question before you now is the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by voting aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Mr. BIGGS. Opposed, no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Mr. BIGGS. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5172, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Mr. BIGGS. Opposed, no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Mr. BIGGS. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GARCIA. Recorded vote, please.

Mr. BIGGS. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

The next item for consideration is H.R. 5163, the Clean and Managed Public Spaces Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.



**H.R. 5163, THE CLEAN AND MANAGED PUBLIC SPACES ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5163, the Clean and Managed Public Spaces Act, a bill to prohibit camping on public property in the District of Columbia.

Mr. BIGGS. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5163, as offered by Mr. Biggs on behalf of Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Mr. BIGGS. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I recognize myself. I actually do not. I recognize the Chairman, Mr. Comer, for 5 minutes, and there you go.

Chairman COMER. [Presiding.] Thank you, Representative Biggs. I support H.R. 5163, which would prohibit outdoor camping on public property in the District of Columbia. On March 28, President Trump signed an Executive Order, titled, "Making the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful," which sought to restore order to our Capital City. A key aspect of this plan is directing the National Park Service to remove homeless encampments on Federal land. Under this legislation, a person shall be fined not more than \$500, imprisoned for not more than 30 days, or both, for camping on public property. This is a very important step to making our Nation's Capital safe for residents and visitors. I want to thank the sponsor of this legislation, Representative Timmons from South Carolina, for his leadership on this issue, and I urge my colleagues to support the Timmons bill.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for his statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose H.R. 5163. This bill fines and criminalizes the homeless and people that are unhoused in D.C. Now, we should be clear, homelessness is a challenge across the country, and we should be doing everything to address it, but a bill that makes it a crime to be unhoused or poor is wrong and immoral. A bill that does nothing to increase housing supply, nothing to increase services, nothing to make housing more affordable is wrong and should not be considered by this body. Now, a person who lives in a tent cannot pay a \$500 fine, so instead, we are going to put them in jail? There is nothing for them when they get out, so they end up going back on the street. Now they have charges on top of that. It will be harder to get new housing, harder to get a job, harder to assist them to get back into society. We are just trapping people in another cycle.

Now, instead of criminalizing the poor and those that are unhoused, local officials have been working to reduce D.C.'s homeless population by 20 percent, by the way, which they have done between 2015 and 2025 through evidence-based activities. The District has expanded supportive housing, mental health services, job training, and substance abuse treatments. Now, it is important to note that many veterans live on our Capital streets as well, and District officials and local community groups are working tirelessly

to house veterans and provide them with the care that they need. So now, on top of this, we are also going to be criminalizing our veterans that we are trying to assist on the streets of the District.

Now, I have also heard from my colleague, Ranking Member Takano of the Veteran Affairs Committee, who has said, and I just want to quote this, "Criminalizing homelessness, particularly for veteran homelessness, threatens to undo our critical efforts and progress in ending veteran homelessness. And from my perspective as Ranking Member of House Committee on Veterans Affairs, these penalties and displacements imposed by this bill would actively hurt every population that we are supposed to be helping," and that is his statement which I will submit in the record.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to insert the rest of his letter for this record.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. Now, America's homeless population does not just include veterans, of course, but also families with children and women who are fleeing domestic violence, but it appears that Donald Trump and the Majority do not care. Now, President Trump shut down the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which sought to explore and address the root causes of homelessness, and my Republican colleagues voted to block D.C. from spending \$1 billion of its own tax revenues, money that can be used for real solutions to homelessness, including more affordable housing and wraparound services. We should look at ways to address the affordable housing crisis. This bill does nothing to provide more housing, nothing to provide more support, yet it is, once again, criminalizing people that need our support on the streets of D.C.

I urge my colleagues to vote no on this backward legislation, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Timmons, from South Carolina.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to start with my prepared remarks, and then I am going to address the ridiculous things that were just said by the Ranking Member.

So, first, the District of Columbia is more than just a city. It is the front porch of our Nation. Millions of visitors from across the country and around the world come here every year to see their government, their monuments, and their history. They expect and they deserve to see a Capital City that is clean, safe, and welcoming. When our public spaces are overtaken by encampments, that sense of order and pride is lost, not just for visitors, but for the residents of the District who use these streets every single day.

My bill, the Clean and Managed Public Spaces Act, or the CAMPS Act, bans camping on public property in D.C., ensuring that the Capital of the greatest country in the world reflects the dignity, safety, and pride of its people. And when you get down to it, that is what this bill is about: people. Allowing individuals to sleep in tents on the streets is not compassion. It is neglect. A tent is not housing. A sidewalk is not a home. And leaving men, women, and families exposed to the elements, to crime, to addiction, and to despair, is the opposite of what a caring society should do. Public safety is also at stake. Encampments have too often become sites of violence, drug trafficking, fires, rape, sexual assaults. Residents

walking their children to school, seniors going to the grocery store, and visitors walking to the monuments should not have to navigate tense and hazardous conditions. Our public spaces must remain open, orderly, and safe for all.

By passing the Camps Act, we send a clear message. America's Capital City will be clean, managed, and worthy of the Nation it represents. At the same time, we reaffirm our commitment to helping the most vulnerable, not by abandoning them to sleep in unsafe tents, but to ensure they have a real chance at recovery, stability, and dignity. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting this legislation. Let us restore the beauty, safety, and pride of our Nation's Capital, while ensuring that every individual in need, as offered more than a tent. They are offered hope.

Now to address the comments from the Ranking Member. All that this does is give law enforcement the ability to get these people off the streets and get them help. Functionally, a conditional discharge would be given. They would be sent somewhere to get the mental health counseling, the drug addiction counseling, whatever they need to get back on their feet. This is not going to result in criminal penalties. This is going to give law enforcement the tool to get these people the help that they need. By the way, file an amendment if you have a better idea, but I am not going to have people come here and tell them that they cannot walk to dinner, they cannot walk around the Mall. That is just completely unacceptable. For the last six-and-a-half years, I have been doing that. I told my commanding officer that he could not walk from his hotel to his restaurant. You know what happened? He did. There was an active shooter right there, and he called me, he said, "yes, I probably should not have walked outside." Had another military colleague come. He had to run away from a homeless person that had a knife. My chief of staff had to move because somebody kept defecating on his damn front lawn. This is not how this world is going to be in Washington, D.C.

A Nation's Capital in decline is a nation in decline. If you want to say let us provide additional services to allow these people to get back on their feet, I am all in, but what this does is it takes them off the street, and it gives the city of D.C. the ability to force them into safe conditions where they can shower, where they can have a toilet, where they can get food and clothes, and mental health counseling, and drug addiction counseling. That is what we need to do. That is the humane thing to do and it is immoral—it is immoral—to allow these people to live under bridges, cold, hot, rain, whatever it is. It is immoral to allow them to defecate in the streets, it is immoral to allow them to harass our visitors, and we are not going to stand for it.

President Trump has put an end to it. He signed an Executive Order bringing in the National Guard, and I tell you what. It does not matter who they voted for. The District's residents are happy. They are. It is palpable. It is palpable the way that this city has changed. Everyone is safe. And by the way, to date, they have not actually had to draw a weapon because you know what happens when criminals know that there are consequences for their actions? They do not commit crimes. When you have a half dozen National Guard soldiers walking around making sure that nothing bad is

going to happen to the residents of the District of Columbia and ensuring the peace and safety, crime has gone down 78 percent.

So, we are going to continue to do the job that the city of D.C. should be doing, and we are going to get this city back in shape because there is a new day in the world, there is new leadership in the world. Not only is the Capital of our Nation going to be safe and prosperous, but the world will benefit from the new leadership in the White House. With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose this undemocratic and paternalistic bill, which establishes a new D.C. crime. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, and the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. The United States knows how to prevent and end homelessness, including by investing in housing, good-paying jobs, and healthcare. Criminal penalties are not among the solutions. I strongly oppose criminalizing homelessness. However, whether to criminalize it should be a decision for D.C. alone.

I respect home rule. This bill makes it unlawful in D.C. to camp outdoors and on public property. The penalty is a fine of up to \$500, up to 30 days in jail, or both. I note that D.C. municipal regulations already prohibit camping on public property, and the penalty is a fine of up to \$300. Separately, D.C. law already prohibits crowding, obstructing, or accommodating public property. The penalty is a fine of up to \$500, up to 90 days in jail, or both.

I want to discuss democracy or lack thereof in the District of Columbia. The D.C. Council has 13 members as residents. If its residents do not like how the members vote, residents can vote them out of office or pass a ballot measure. That is called democracy. Congress has 535 voting Members. None are elected by D.C. residents. If D.C. residents do not like how Members vote on local D.C. matters, residents cannot vote them out of office or pass a ballot measure. That is the antithesis of democracy. D.C. residents have all the obligations of American citizenship, including paying Federal taxes, serving on juries, and registering with Selective Service, yet they are denied full local self-government and voting representation in Congress.

The D.C. statehood bill, H.R. 51, the Washington, D.C. Admission Act, is the solution. The D.C. statehood bill would reduce the size of the Federal District from 68 square miles to two square miles, which would consist of the White House, the Capitol, the Supreme Court, and the National Mall and remain under the control of Congress. The residential and commercial areas of D.C. would be a new state. Congress has both the moral obligation and the constitutional authority to pass a D.C. statehood bill.

I urge a no on the Clean and Manage Public Safeties Act, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Biggs from Arizona.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will just reiterate, because I think this gets lost a lot, that Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 is very crystal clear. Congress has exclusive, and that is the word used, exclusive, authority over the legislation of the District. That is it. Congress, though, in 1973 decided that it would grant some authority and delegate some authority to the District, and it did, but Congress has every constitutional authority and right to weigh in on these decisions as it has done.

And I will just point out something on the last bill that we talked about. Just a couple of years ago, that was a bipartisan bill that went up and was signed by Democrat President Joe Biden regulating the criminal sentencing guidelines of the District, and somehow the District is saying, well, gee, this is unusual and unreal and inappropriate this time. I yield my time now to Mr. Timmons.

Mr. TIMMONS. I want to thank my friend from Arizona. I guess I am going to start by saying that if the District of Columbia was enforcing its own Criminal Code, we would not have this problem, but it is not. It refuses to, and that is because the City Council does not back the men and women of law enforcement, and 5,600 people, prior to the President signing an Executive Order, were living in the streets. It was absolute chaos. The encampments, the drug use, the crime, all of these things occurred because the District of Columbia violated its obligation to enforce the rule of law. That is why we are here, and that is why there is a Federal statute that is being proposed that would do the same thing that the D.C. City Criminal Ordinance would do, so that is number one.

Number two, and I wish that the Ranking Member were still here, hundreds of municipalities around the country have implemented bans on outdoor camping and public spaces. Many are in California, where Governor Newsom threatened to withhold funding from cities and counties that did not clear encampments from public property. In fact, Long Beach, California, where the Ranking Member was the Mayor, has had a longstanding ban on outdoor camping in public spaces, and the Long Beach Police Department has enforced this ban by making hundreds of arrests and issuing hundreds of citations this year, making Long Beach safer for its residents and visitors. If you want to check, it is Long Beach Municipal Code Section 942-110.

My bill aims to do just what the Ranking Member's criminal ordinance in Long Beach does. If the city of Washington, D.C. refuses to enforce its own Criminal Code, we are going to give Federal law enforcement the tools to do what they refuse to, and to do exactly what the Mayor's, former, city of Long Beach is doing, probably as much as any city in the country. So, I hope everyone recognizes the need for public safety in our Nation's Capital, just as Long Beach leadership has in their own city, and support this commonsense bill.

I am going to again say, all that this bill does is gives a tool for Federal law enforcement to do what the Washington, D.C. police refuse to do, and these people are not necessarily going to result in criminal convictions. It is going to give law enforcement and prosecutors the ability to force them in to getting the help that they need. If you want to file an amendment to provide additional resources, so be it, but we have to give Federal law enforcement

tools to do the job that the D.C. city officials refuse to. I urge support of this bill. Our Nation's Capital so badly needs it. I yield back to the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Biggs.

Mr. BIGGS. I thank the gentleman for his comments and associate myself with them, and I yield back to you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FROST. Would the gentleman yield for a question from Arizona?

Mr. BIGGS. Does Arizona have a question? I mean, are you asking me to yield?

Mr. FROST. Yes, yes.

Mr. BIGGS. Yes, go ahead and ask your question.

Mr. FROST. I just want to ask you a question about, as it relates to D.C. I mean, do you think it is fair that there are over 700,000 people who live here without proper representation who pay taxes?

Mr. BIGGS. Let me ask you this, did you take an oath to adhere to the Constitution of the United States?

Mr. FROST. I did. The Constitution of the United States does not prohibit us from making D.C. a state. It says that there should be a Federal District run by Congress, and the bill that Ms. Norton is pushing would amend and change the Federal District to obtain—

Mr. BIGGS. So, I will reclaim my time because I only have 9 seconds. I oppose D.C. statehood, unequivocally, but let me just say this. If you adhere to the Constitution, then you understand that we clearly have the exclusive authority over D.C. legislation. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Frost.

Mr. FROST. Just to continue off of that point, which I think is true, you keep bringing up the Constitution, but the Constitution does not prohibit Congress from making and ensuring that the 700,000 people who live in Washington, D.C. can live in a state and have a state. It says there needs to be a Federal District that Congress, yes, has authority over, and what we are trying to do is make it so we change the boundaries of that Federal District to be the places that we work, the U.S. Congress, the White House, the National Mall, so these 700,000 people can have proper representation because they are paying taxes. The Constitution does not say you cannot make Washington, D.C. and make sure these 700,000 people have a state, and I think it is really important to know that.

The other thing is the Founders, in 1790, there were fewer than 5,000 people living in the District of Columbia. Now there are over 700,000.

Mr. TIMMONS. Will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. FROST. Sure.

Mr. TIMMONS. What does that have to do with the 5,600 people that were living on the streets six weeks ago?

Mr. FROST. Good question. I will reclaim my time. I will get right to that because you brought up that there are so many cities across the entire country that are criminalizing homelessness, and it is true. It is going on. After the disastrous Supreme Court decision, *Grants Pass v. Johnson*, we see cities across the country criminalizing homelessness. Hell, my own city of Orlando has done it, too, and I think it is despicable. I think it is wrong if Blue City does it, I think it is wrong if a Red City does it, because the problem

here is you are not looking to solve homelessness. You are looking to hide it. You are not looking to provide an alternative to living on the street. You are looking to brush it away to another place, and——

Mr. TIMMONS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FROST. Not yet. And I think it is important. The other thing is that sponsor of this bill brought up, well, we are just giving them a tool. The tool is criminalization. That is the tool that you are handing Federal law enforcement, that they can be fined and jailed, further putting people who are having a tough time in life, living on the streets, into this cycle. You were talking about supporting services. Well, you have a chance. Donald Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 budget, he wants to cut HUD by 44 percent. I will yield to you if you can tell me if you are going to stand up to that. You were saying that you want to have services for people. This would make massive cuts to affordable housing, homeless services, rental assistance, all the things that help us keep people off the streets. Will you join us in opposing that? I will yield.

Mr. TIMMONS. That is a great talking point. We both know that the funding is not going to be different, so, I mean, yes——

Mr. FROST. The funding will be different. The number for the program——

Mr. TIMMONS. A budget is an aspirational document.

Mr. FROST. I will reclaim my time. The number for the programs that help homeless services will go down. Do you support that?

Mr. TIMMONS. The President's budget is always an aspirational document, and we both know, and again——

Mr. FROST. I will reclaim my time. Are you saying it does not matter? I mean, your President is saying he wants to cut HUD by 44 percent.

Mr. TIMMONS. We have \$37 trillion and \$2 trillion annual deficits——

Mr. FROST. I reclaim my time. I will reclaim my time.

Mr. TIMMONS. Okay.

Mr. FROST. Forty-four percent, he wants to cut HUD. He wants to cut homeless services for your district and my district. Do you agree with that? I will yield if you can answer yes or no, really.

Mr. TIMMONS. You and I both know that the funding will be no different than last year, and we are going to move forward.

Mr. FROST. Oh, so you will work on opposing the President's request.

Mr. TIMMONS. I know how the system works, and I know that it requires 60 votes in the Senate to change government funding, and we are not going to get 60 votes to do anything, so we are going to have a CR. But again, how are you going to help the 5,600 people? You say that this is not a tool.

Mr. FROST. I will reclaim my time. I will reclaim my time. How are we going to help them? By fighting to ensure that the President and your party does not further erode the little services that we have in this country. We need housing, not handcuffs. We have a housing crisis in this country.

Mr. TIMMONS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FROST. Every time the rent goes up 100 bucks, homelessness goes up nine percent. Let me say it one more time. Every time the

rent goes up 100 bucks, homelessness goes up nine percent. Homelessness is a housing problem, and you have no solutions for us here. You are talking about, again, trying to hide a problem rather than fix a problem. It is both cheaper and less challenging for us as a Nation to keep people housed than, yes, to help them when they are on the streets. We need to help people when they are on the streets, but we need to fund rental assistance, transitional housing, permanent supporter housing, shelters, all this suite of services that help us keep our people on top of a certain line because it does cost more and it is harder, but it does not mean we should not do it.

Mr. TIMMONS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FROST. And the President that you follow and that you, you know, are lauding wants to make a historic cut to the few services that we have so we can keep people from off the streets, and I think it is despicable. And you come here and try to act like there is a problem with us because we have a problem with you working to criminalize homelessness? People see beyond that.

Mr. TIMMONS. It is already criminal. The D.C. City Police are not enforcing it. So, I mean, what do you want us to do?

Mr. FROST. I will reclaim. The tool you want to give Federal law enforcement is allow them to go and arrest people who are sleeping on the streets because they have nowhere else to sleep. We should not be criminalizing homeless people for the failures of government. Let us step up. Let us try to work together and ensure that we eradicate homelessness and fix this housing crisis. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Ms. Lee.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, I want to say that, you know, Republican policies right now are just hellbent on beating Americans down, not lifting them up, and what you all are attempting to do in D.C. right now is just a forecast for what they actually want for the entire country.

And just, first of all, before I even go any further, I just want to state that when we talk about solutions and solution-driven policy, this is just not it, right? This is nothing more than literally criminalizing homelessness. And when we talk about whether or not allowing—allowing, right—allowing somebody to stay in a tent who has nowhere else to go, whether or not it is moral or humane. Well, the reality is, is that there is a \$150 million in HUD grants that would directly eradicate homelessness that is frozen, that is not being used, and the Trump Administration is choosing to do that. We are not solving the problem. We are not asking ourselves at all right now on this Committee, well why are people experiencing homelessness.

Well, let us think about it, and my colleague from Florida got started to get into it. We are in a housing crisis. We know that. That is not a D.C. thing. That is an American thing. It is all over the country. Wages have been stagnant for decades. Grocery prices have not come down. The student loan crisis is ballooning. Joblessness is at a high, and instead of addressing that there are more people seeking a job right now than there are jobs for them to get into, the President is firing the messenger because he does not ever want to deal with things. Just like the homeless crisis, he wants to sweep that also under the rug. And we also just saw the largest



wealth transfer from the poor to the rich in the bill passed by the Republicans, and this is all after Trump forced D.C. to clear out encampments and then shut down the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

In your Republican Congressman's world, it is a crime to not have a home, but there will not be any resources to help you if you are experiencing homelessness. You are going to just be charged and fined and imprisoned, and it is going to make your life harder. Trump and Republicans are treating people like they are sub-human, people at their lowest, and many of these folks are veterans that served this country. It is callous and it is evil. Criminalization does not end homelessness. This is lazy and dishonest policymaking. We have solutions for the homelessness crisis in this country. Republicans are just refusing to implement them because they do not believe that the cost is worth it. They do not believe it is worth pulling you out of poverty. They do not believe it is worth educating folks in the District. They do not believe it is worth feeding folks in the District. That is why they cut SNAP. They do not believe it is worth you being healthy. That is why they cut Medicaid. They would rather fine and jail you. They would rather criminalize you and make your lives even harder, perpetuating these cycles of poverty and inequality. Criminalizing homelessness actually just makes the problem worse, according to research, not just me, research.

Each move along order or encampment eviction contributes to further marginalization. It perpetuates these cycles of harm. Research shows that when people experiencing homelessness are forced to spend time in jail, they are often released with nowhere to stay. They are often poor due to loss of possessions, and they may be in worse physical health. Jail time can also disrupt access to public benefits, to shelter, and other resources. Even when detained temporarily, people experiencing homelessness have lost their jobs, their vehicles, their licenses, the very things that can bring them out of the cycle. And when you hold people on cash bail, like the other bill that is up today proposes to do, they lose all of that before they have even been convicted of a crime. This is what we want to see in D.C. Right now, the District has worked to increase their shelter capacity, but it is only a band-aid on the problem because the Trump Administration has failed to coordinate any Federal resources to help find a permanent, long-term housing solution or address the root causes. D.C. is already so inaccessible due to the insanely high rent. Thriving Black and Brown communities have been pushed aside and priced out so that wealthy developers can make a larger profit and congresspeople can feel more comfortable. Right now, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in D.C. is \$2,300 per month, and the cost of living is 40 percent higher than the national average. How are people supposed to afford houses here?

This Committee does not want to end homelessness because if they did, they would be empowering the District with a budget and the resources to tackle the problems themselves. They would be working to hold developers accountable, raising the minimum wage, expanding mental healthcare, veteran support, passing Medicare For All, but instead they are here stripping away these folks'

opportunities to govern themselves, and we still have not passed the billion-dollar budget fix in D.C. This bill, along with Trump's Executive Order, punishes people for simply existing. It is not the way that the American people should be treated or especially, the people in D.C. I urge my colleagues to oppose it, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. Ms. Lee, would you yield to a question?

Ms. LEE. I do not have any time.

Chairman COMER. Okay. I mean, I am pretty lenient. I am just wondering.

[Laughter.]

Ms. LEE. Colleagues on the Democratic side, keep that in mind. He is very lenient.

[Laughter.]

Chairman COMER. Did Washington, D.C. have a homeless problem when Joe Biden was President and the Democrats had the Majority?

Ms. LEE. The United States has had a homeless problem in and out of administrations. This whole thing, pretending that it is a Democrat or Republican bill, but let me tell you, when President Biden was the President, we had a Republican Majority in the House. We have a trifecta of Republicans right now. You all have the opportunity to do something different. You know the solutions that exist, and I am wondering, when will you propose them? It is Trump now. Will you propose them now?

Chairman COMER. No——

Ms. LEE. No, you will not. Thank you.

Chairman COMER. No, no, no, listen——

Mr. DONALDS. Chairman, since you are being lenient, Chairman, can I ask a question to the gentlelady?

Ms. LEE. No.

[Laughter.]

Chairman COMER. I will recognize——

Mr. DONALDS. Can you yield for question?

Chairman COMER. Mr. Donalds is next, then we will go to——

Mr. DONALDS. She will not answer my question? Okay. All right.

Chairman COMER. Mr. Donalds, you want to be recognized for 5 minutes?

Mr. DONALDS. Yes, sir.

Chairman COMER. You are recognized.

Mr. DONALDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple things. My colleague went through a lot of items, so I am going to try to address them. Let us start with housing. If you are going to really talk about housing, one of the big things we have to fix in our country is accessibility to building materials. The reason why accessibility to building materials in the United States continues to rise is because of the overregulation in this town by this Congress over decades in Washington, D.C. So, if you want to address housing and the affordability of housing and the attainability of housing, maybe Republicans and Democrats, we could work together on something like National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reform and other regulatory reforms to make it easier to get the materials to build housing in the first place. I wonder if my Democratic colleagues would like to go along with reforming the regulatory process in this town, which increases the financial burden on compa-

nies that have to procure the material to even build the housing to deliver it to people.

Education, I already know where they stand on this one. Republicans, we have long since stood for school choice here in the District of Columbia and all across the United States. If you examine academic attainment in areas that do not have school choice versus those that do, like my home state of Florida, it is clear that kids, even at the bottom, are learning at faster rates than they are in other jurisdictions where they do not allow school choice. D.C. has been a tug and a play with school choice. Democrats want to get rid of it. Republicans come back into power. We actually want to provide it. Go talk to the moms in D.C. They want to have a say on where their child goes to school. They want to have an opportunity for their child to succeed.

Let us talk about another issue adding to the cost because if you want to talk about homelessness, it is housing, and it is also costs: energy. My Democratic colleagues, all they want to do is have more regulation in the energy space. They want to have us buy solar panels and windmills from China as opposed to drilling for oil in the United States, building nuclear power plants in the United States, which is cheaper and readily available energy for everyone. You want to lower the cost of what it takes for somebody to live in an apartment in D.C. or anywhere else in the country? How about working with us to lower the per-kilowatt hour because everybody has got to deal with that: rich, middle income, poor.

Let us talk about public services. This is a good one. I like talking about this one. Let us talk about this one. Republicans, we have long since believed that people who are really destitute, they should be able to get the help that they need, but what we will not support are bloated programs where we know there is waste, fraud, and abuse. And when we go to our Democratic colleagues and we say, hey, let us just make sure that the people who qualify are the people that qualify, they say, no. They would rather just have more money go out the door knowing that is going to people who are not qualified for the programs. That does not make any sense. It just does not.

I heard the talk from my colleague, but, again, it was all talk. What was her solutions? Universal healthcare? That is not a solution. Universal healthcare has failed in every country that it has tried. People want to say, oh, but what about Canada? Canada, yes, they have a universal system. You know what they also have? They have a private system layered on top for people who are rich, and then some of their people come to the United States to get the procedures they cannot get in Canada. That is not a solution.

You see folks, oh, let us talk about government spending. This is a good one. There is a false notion in politics and in this town that if you just spend more money, everything is going to be okay. The truth is you cannot spend more money. When we go, as a government, to the Treasury markets—because we have to borrow the money. That does not come in taxes. We borrow that money, and when you go borrow that money, what you actually do is decrease the purchasing power of every other dollar in circulation. So, the very people that you try to lecture us about saying you want to help, you are hurting because when you devalue the purchasing

power of every American dollar, the rich guy is going to be all right. It is the poor who suffer when you devalue our currency because you continue to spend too much and borrow too much.

So, there are solutions. I say, let us work on them, but the left-wing solutions that have been brought to this town year over year over year, oh yes, they sound good. They sound great in TV ads, but they do not work. I yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Ms. Simon.

Ms. SIMON. Thank you so much and I appreciate the conversation. I do not know how many folks in this chamber have ever experienced not having a key. I have, and I was a very, very young woman, and I was a client of an Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called The Homeless Prenatal Program, and that is exactly what their mission was, is to provide support for pregnant, homeless mothers. And in my 5 minutes, and I just want to lift up the mother that I met in D.C. who lives with her children in her car. When the police tap on her window at night and demand that she get out, she was forced to tell them that she is waiting for shelter after leaving a domestic violence situation that almost killed her. I want to make clear that the D.C. Housing Authority, the waitlist has been shut down for over a decade. Families can apply, but they will be on that waitlist for almost a decade, and that is consistent all around the country. The door is locked even before homeless families knock.

I wonder if the author checked in with Catholic Charities or any of the daily shelters and looked at the daily count. For the shelters that are open in Washington, D.C., we know that folks are kicked out in the daytime. If you have done homelessness work, if you work with homeless families, you would know that. The shelters are full. Year around, shelters in this city are at capacity. Now, I agree sleeping on the concrete is beneath human dignity. I also agree that the job of law enforcement could and should be to bring folks to resource, but understanding that there is no permanent resource. With over 1,000-plus people sleeping on the street that is long term, law enforcement, under the guise of this amendment, would not be able to serve its intended mission, instead, increasing in ever so roundabout of arresting, and processing, and holding homeless folks in detention, which, by the way, is four times as expensive as housing them.

We can address poverty together, this Committee, this Congress, but when you seek to arrest and jail people with no home, when you seek to arrest and problematize folks who are trying to get treatment, when the treatment on demand does not exist. There are no beds. There are no beds. Call any service agency right now in D.C. I will wait. We have to actually create solutions instead of creating band aids where only one-half has an adhesive. I am all for creating homelessness solutions. I know what a good service agency can do for a homeless family, and pushing that family and that mother to go to school, and to live in a safe space without vermin, and without violence, I have been there. Instead, we have an Administration that chooses to kick down those small organizations and say that they are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) or they are not doing what it costs, and propping up institutions

that instead criminalize. We know it is inefficient. We know the dollars and cents do not make sense. So, let us have that conversation, and for those reasons, I cannot support this amendment [sic]. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thanks. I want to just add for the record, under unanimous consent, this letter from the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Of course, they strongly oppose this bill.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Any other Member seek recognition? Ms. Randall.

Ms. RANDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chair. My colleague from California just spoke very eloquently about the human experience of trying to find safe housing for you and for your child, for your family. I think we have to remember as we debate policy where we are just looking at tools that criminalizing human beings very rarely gets us to the goal that we think we are heading toward. You know, we saw a dramatic decrease in violent crime after the Affordable Care Act expanded Medicaid and folks had access to meaningful mental and behavioral healthcare. We have seen a dramatic decrease in homelessness when cities and other organizations focus on a housing first model to give people access to a door that closes a key that locks it, a safe roof over their heads. We do not often see a dramatic long-term decrease in problematic behavior by criminalizing it. We might like to think that that is the answer, but that alone does not solve any of our problems.

There are cities and states, like Utah, that are moving back from a housing first model, but I think it is important to, like, outline that housing first should not mean housing only. Giving folks a place to live is not a cure for all mental and behavioral healthcare needs. It is not a cure for every ill that plagues society, but it is an important first step. Permanent supportive housing programs that wrap-up around individuals and provide resources and sometimes transportation to get to a job interview, or a counseling appointment, or substance use disorder treatment, those are real, proven solutions to a homelessness crisis, and, yes, building more housing is a solution to a housing crisis. I am open to a debate, probably in another Committee, about permitting reform and ways to ensure that we are building faster, but I cannot leave unmentioned that one of the leading drivers for housing material price increase is Trump's tariff war. It is driving up the cost of building material. I am married to a carpenter. I hear about it all the time.

But when we are actually focused on meeting people's housing and healthcare needs, we see long-term solutions. The money pays off in the long run by getting upstream and meeting those needs before they become chronic, by providing Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers and increasing Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, by ensuring that Medicaid demonstration projects, like housing as healthcare, are not cut because of the devastating cuts to Medicaid that this President and this Republican Congress have supported. Criminalizing homelessness and supporting sweeps does nothing but move people out of your line of sight. It does not solve our housing crisis. It moves people to another community, another place where you cannot see

them, where you do not have to walk by a human being sleeping on the sidewalk.

I agree that is not a solution. Human beings sleeping unsheltered on the sidewalk is not aligned with any of our values, but if we want to actually solve the problem, we have to have real, proven solutions, and be willing to invest in the programs that provide the support that we need for real, lasting housing. I yield the balance of my time to the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Does any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none. The question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now in favorably reporting H.R. 5163, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Chair, a recorded vote please.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 4922, the D.C. Crimes Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

**H.R. 4922, THE D.C. CRIMINAL REFORMS TO IMMEDIATELY  
MAKE EVERYONE SAFER (D.C. CRIMES) ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 4922, the D.C. CRIMES Act, a bill to limit youth offender status in the District of Columbia to individuals 18 years of age or younger, and to direct the Attorney General of the District of Columbia to establish and operate a publicly accessible website containing updated statistics on juvenile crime in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 4922, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I am now going to recognize the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Donalds, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DONALDS. Thank you, Chairman Comer, for bringing the D.C. CRIMES Act before Committee.

Crime in the Nation's Capital has really been a stain on this great city for far too long, and it is really the responsibility of decades of really weak leadership has allowed it to spiral out of control. Rather than focusing on cleaning up the city and making it safe for residents and visitors, District officials and the D.C. Council have refused to enforce the law, they have put criminals back out on the street, and have continuously pursued progressive soft-on-crime policies. For instance, the crime data shows that juveniles make up the majority of violent arrests in D.C. from crimes like robbery and carjackings. And instead of addressing the clear epidemic of youth crime in the city, the D.C. Council increased the age of youth offenders to individuals 24 years old and younger. That means fully grown legal adults in the District of Columbia can receive sentences meant for children. This is patently insane, and Americans across the board are sick of this kind of absurdity.

Since the D.C. officials have not only known about the city's crime issues for years, but have actively aided and abetted the continuance of it, Congress has a duty—and I stress this again—as the Federal enclave, Congress has a duty to step in and restore law and order to the Capital city of our great Nation. The President's actions and immediate decline in crime show that lawlessness is a choice, and we do not have to live with that choice. This is why I have introduced a D.C. CRIMES Act. Simply put, my bill lowers D.C.'s definition of youth from under 25 years old to under 18 years old. Two, it removes the ability of judges to sentence youth offenders below the mandatory minimum, therefore, deterring juvenile crime. And third, it requires the District of Columbia's Attorney General to establish a public website containing much-needed statistics on juvenile crime in Washington, D.C.

It is our constitutional duty as Members of Congress to oversee the acts happening within the District of Columbia. This is something that has really been going on for far too long. The city has not responded to what has clearly not been in the best interest of the Nation's Capital. And I know that there are many arguments about home rule when it comes to D.C., but it should be remembered at all times that our Constitution in this matter is clear. The District is a Federal enclave. It is a Federal enclave. That has not changed since the founding of the Republic. And so, if the D.C. City Council, not its residents—not its residents—if the D.C. City Council will not do what is necessary and appropriate to make sure that the Washington, D.C., the Nation's Capital, is safe, then it is a requirement of Congress and the President of the United States to do so. Thank you, Chairman Comer. I yield.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is just, of course, another attempt by this Committee to disenfranchise over 700,000 taxpayers of the District of Columbia and their ability to write their own laws to govern their own city and community. Now this Committee, of course, has now spent more time interfering in D.C.'s local law affairs than almost any other issue. This bill of course, is trying to amend the Youth Rehabilitation Act. Now, the

D.C. Council's bill, just to be clear, was the subject of months and months of hearings, community meetings, considerable debate. Folks from the neighborhoods actually came together as they worked and crafted this actual legislation. Now, the considerable debate among D.C. residents and their elected representatives should be considered in this moment. That is the way democracy works, and if D.C. residents do not like these policies, they can vote for new policies or they can vote for new representatives at the local level.

Our Committee is not talking about violent crime in Louisiana or Mississippi or Alabama, or other places, or Federal issues that are important to us, like gun violence, or even enforcing the laws that are currently on the books to keep guns out of the wrong hands, but let us talk about what this Republican bill would actually do. The D.C. CRIMES Act amends D.C.'s Youth Rehabilitation Act, which allows judges to give alternative sentences to young adults and to seal their conviction records. Now, my Republican colleagues on this Committee from Alabama, Florida, Michigan, New York, and other places have laws in their states similar to this actual Rehabilitation Act. The sponsor of this bill of course, is from Florida, and we should actually examine Florida's Youthful Offender Act.

Florida first enacted this law in 1978. That is seven years before D.C. enacted this law. Under Florida's law, a person cannot be sentenced to more than six years in prison. Under D.C.'s law, there is no ceiling. In fact, the D.C. law is stricter. Now, under both Florida and D.C.'s laws, mandatory minimum sentences can be waived, but the D.C. CRIMES Act repeals the mandatory minimum waiver, which would be stricter than in Florida. Under D.C.'s law, the maximum eligible age for alternative sentencing is 24. That is higher than Florida's maximum age, which is 20. The D.C. CRIMES Act lowers the maximum eligible age to 18. So, to be clear, D.C.'s maximum age is not only an outlier, but the maximum eligible age is higher in Michigan than in D.C., and the list goes on and on for different states across the country.

Again, regardless of what you think of this bill, it will continue to take away the rights of the elected officials that represent this community and continue to move back the progress this community has made through numerous meetings and debate of the council. We oppose this bill, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. I recognize myself now for 5 minutes.

I support H.R. 4922, a bill providing common-sense reforms to the District of Columbia Criminal Code. It is clear to Members of the Committee and the public that D.C.'s soft-on-crime policies have failed to keep D.C. residents and visitors safe. The D.C. CRIMES Act overturns targeted portions of the D.C. Council's Youth Rehabilitation Act by amending the definition of a youth offender from a person under the age of 25 to under the age of 18. Let me emphasize D.C.'s current law. Currently, D.C. Code allows a criminal under the age of 25 to be given the same leniency that is afforded to minors. This bill requires that we treat adult criminals as adults, like the rest of the country. It also removes judicial discretion to sentence youth offenders under the minimum sen-



tencing structures in place. Our Capital cannot continue to let criminals freely roam the streets and expect this crime crisis to end. As juvenile crime soars in the District, the bill also requires the D.C. Attorney General to create a publicly available website that better tracks juvenile crime data. This data will inform Congress, the District's elected officials, the Metropolitan Police Department, the public and others, on the severity of juvenile crime in the city.

Citizens of D.C. and visitors to our Nation's Capital deserve to feel safe. I want to thank Representative Byron Donalds from Florida for leading this effort again this Congress. I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation. Do any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none. Oh, I am sorry. Ms. Norton, you are recognized for 5 minutes. Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C.

Ms. NORTON. I strongly oppose this undemocratic and paternalistic bill, which amends D.C. law. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. While the D.C. CRIMES Act is an irredeemable bill, I want to note one positive change to it. As introduced, this bill would have prohibited the D.C. Council from increasing or decreasing criminal penalties. That provision is not included in the version of the bill we are considering today. The substance of this bill should be irrelevant since there is never justification for Congress to legislate on local D.C. matters. However, I will discuss it.

Republicans repeatedly say D.C.'s Youth Rehabilitation Amendment Act leads to adults being treated as juveniles. That is false. The sentencing alternatives and set-aside options in the Youth Rehabilitation Amendment Act apply in adult court to individuals under the age of 25, not Juvenile Court. Judges may, but are not required, to apply the Youth Rehabilitation Amendment Act. The Youth Rehabilitation Amendment Act is not available for certain crimes. D.C. is the only jurisdiction with a so-called Young Adult Offender law. Alabama, Florida, Michigan, New York, South Carolina, and Vermont have such laws. The sponsor of this bill is from one of those states.

The Revolutionary War was fought to give consent to the governed and to end taxation without representation, yet D.C. residents cannot consent to any action taken by Congress. And they pay full Federal taxes. Indeed, D.C. pays more Federal taxes per capita than any state and more Federal taxes than 21 states. If Republicans care about democratic principles or D.C. residents, they would take up the D.C. statehood bill, H.R. 51, the Washington, D.C. Admission Act, which gives D.C. residents voting representation in Congress and full local self-government. Congress has the authority to admit the state of Washington, D.C. It simply lacks the will. I urge Members to vote no on the D.C. CRIMES Act. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. Do any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus on ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 4922, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GARCIA. A recorded vote, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is, H.R. 5140, The District of Columbia Juvenile Sentencing Reform Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 5140, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA JUVENILE SENTENCING REFORM ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5140, the District of Columbia Juvenile Sentencing Reform Act, a bill to lower the age at which a minor may be tried as an adult for certain criminal offenses in the District of Columbia to 14 years of age.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5140, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Gill from Texas, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GILL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your seriousness in bringing law and order back to Washington, D.C.

Mr. Chairman, the American people have a right to live in a country where we are not being butchered and robbed by career criminals that Democrat jurisdictions refuse to get off of our streets. We have a right to be able to take public transportation without being murdered. We have a right to be able to walk down the streets without being robbed or raped. We do not have to live under this left-wing anarcho-tyranny where criminals terrorize innocent people, and that includes juveniles.

In 2021, Pakistani immigrant, Mohammad Anwar, was murdered by two juveniles during a carjacking. He was an Uber Eats driver trying to provide a better life for himself here in the United States. The two girls, one of which was 15 at the time of the murder, will both be released onto our streets in a few short years when they turn 21. Mr. Chairman, the purpose of our justice system is not to rehabilitate criminals. It is to give criminals their just desserts, to lock them up and get them off of our streets so they cannot harm innocent people.

Mr. Chairman, the number of juveniles arrested in D.C. has gone up each year since 2020. More than 2,000 juveniles were arrested in 2023 and 2024. In the first six months of 2025, there have been 900 arrests of juveniles. Many of these are repeat offenders. In 2024, nearly 200 juveniles arrested for violent crimes had prior violent crime arrests. Fifty-two percent of all armed robbery arrests in 2024 were juveniles, and 53 percent of all carjackings in 2025, as of August, were from juveniles in this city. We do not have to live like this. We do not have to allow thugs of any age to terrorize us.

Mr. Chair, currently minors, 16 years old and older are eligible to have their case moved up to criminal court and to be tried as an adult in D.C. This bill lowers that age to 14 years old, making 14- and 15-year-olds who commit violent crimes eligible to be charged as adults. Violent crime refers to murder, first-degree sexual assault, burglary in the first degree, and robbery while armed, for instance. These are violent, heinous, horrific offenses that require stronger sentencing to reflect the seriousness of the crimes committed. I urge my colleagues to support this bill and to charge juveniles who commit serious violent crimes as adults, and with that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to strongly oppose this Sentencing Reform Act that is in front of us. Of course, this would lower the age of eligibility for children to be tried as adults in D.C. from 16 to 14 years for, of course, certain criminal offenses. Now I just want to be clear: a 14-year-old is not an adult. A 14-year-old is barely out of middle school, and there are good public safety reasons to avoid charging juveniles as adults, but, especially, I want to talk about what is in front of us right now.

Now, youth charged as adults are more likely to re-offend than youth processed in juvenile courts. That is a fact consistently supported by research when you look at what is happening across the country. Now, the Centers for Disease Control Task Force on Community Preventative Services reviewed decades and decades of research and also concluded that sending youth to the adult system actually increases the rates of violence, does not decrease the rates of violence. A report from the National Research Council support a policy of keeping punishment proportional with age to prevent additional offending, which this bill would make fundamentally impossible across the District. This legislation would also deepen the racial disparities that currently exist in the District's juvenile justice system, and like other bills that are in front of us, we have to come back to the community. Why do we keep trying to take away

the ability for D.C. to govern itself, and let us also look at the folks that make up this community. They should be given the ability to govern themselves.

I also want to push back on some of the characterizations that have been made about this bill. Now, we know that compared to states, the District already has the highest youth incarceration rate in the United States. We know that as a fact. It is more than three times higher than the national average. This bill, once again, interferes with D.C.'s self-government and their work in trying to reduce this. This bill would not make D.C. safer. It would deepen existing racial disparities and push more young people deeper into the adult juvenile system.

We, as a group, as a body, should urge all of our colleagues to vote no on this legislation, and with that, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose this undemocratic and paternalistic bill which amends D.C. law. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves.

I ask unanimous consent to introduce to the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. While Congress has the authority to legislate on local matters, it does not have the duty to do so. In "Federalist 43," James Madison said of D.C. residents, "A municipal legislature for local purposes, derived from their own suffrages, will, of course, be allowed them." Since 1802, Congress has created different local governments for D.C. In 1953, the Supreme Court held that, "There is no constitutional barrier to delegation by Congress to the District of Columbia for full legislative power." The substance of this bill is irrelevant since there is never justification for Congress to legislate on D.C. local matters, but I will briefly discuss it. I strongly oppose charging 14-year-olds as adults. However, whether to reduce or increase the minimum age to be charged as an adult should be a decision for D.C. alone. I respect D.C.'s home rule.

In a series of cases since 2005, the Supreme Court has recognized that children are "constitutionally different from adults for the purpose of sentencing." In these cases, the Court noted that childhood is marked by "rashness, proclivity for risk, and inability to assess consequences." The Court said that its decisions "rested not only on common sense, but on what any parent knows, but on science and social science as well." This bill is both cruel and counterproductive. Most incarcerated people eventually come home. The evidence shows that children charged as adults are more likely to reoffend and be violent than children charged as juveniles. I urge Members to vote no on this bill, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Before I recognize Ms. Simon, I ask unanimous consent to enter the following press release from the United States Attorney's Office, District of Columbia, into the record. On June 30, 21-year-old Eric Tarpinian, an intern with the House of Representatives, was murdered in D.C. We now know from U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro that the two 17-year-

old suspects recently arrested had a documented history of family court violence.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Simon.

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, Chair, and I would like to extend my remarks today in memory of James R. Bell, who is the founder of the Hayward-Burns Institute and one of the Nation's premier minds who sought justice for young people who were and have been and will continue to be systematized in the adult courts.

Mr. Chair, I strongly oppose H.R. 5140, the Juvenile Justice Sentencing Act, for many reasons. We are talking about 14-year-olds. In fact, my 14-year-old is in the chamber right now. She forgot her keys. She is a ninth grader. She is a child. She is a child. H.R. 5140 would allow children as young as my youngest daughter—my youngest daughter—would deny them the protections of the juvenile court and place them in the adult criminal justice system. To pass this bill would be to unravel one of the most important reforms in American history.

In 1899, this Nation created the first juvenile court in Cook County, Illinois. We did so because Americans recognized what science and common sense has made plain, that children are not adults. The principle became law because we knew that across the country—we knew, we knew—that transforming young people out of literally horrific behavior requires rehabilitation. The founders of the juvenile justice system believe that rehabilitation is not a weakness, but the strongest form of accountability. The data has borne that out. The Centers for Disease Control found that young people transferred into adult courts are 34 percent—34 percent—more likely to prevent violent crimes upon release than their counterparts who move through the juvenile court system. The Department of Justice has confirmed repeatedly that the transfer and transfer laws do not reduce crime. They, in fact, increase it. The claim that prosecuting children as adults and putting them in adult prisons, cages, defers and deters violence is not supported by a single—a single—credible study.

True accountability means facing the harm that has been caused, making amends, and working through treatment as children through education, through hardcore accountability, and behavior change. States like Missouri and Connecticut have pioneered therapeutic models where even young people committed of the most serious and violent crimes receive intensive supervision, counseling, and restorative justice processes that include and center the victims. The results has resulted in lower recidivism rates, greater public safety, and more lives redeemed. That is accountability that works.

This bill does not advance safety. It is bringing about more regression in a system that has continuously failed. Around the world, democracies like Germany, democracies like Sweden and Japan invest heavily in rehabilitation. Their children come home safer, and their communities are stronger because of it, because of that commitment to rehabilitation. These countries that lock 14-year-old children up in adult prisons, they are not models of justice, not models of safety. These countries that put children into cages, they are warnings. And I know what real safety looks like.

Over the last three decades, I helped design and implement initiatives that have cut youth recidivism by over 70 percent. Most recently, I led a comprehensive plan that reduced crime in our local transit system that has decreased crime by 40 percent. These results do not come from abandoning children to adult jails. They come from believing that young people, even the ones who commit the most heinous and serious crimes, can be held accountable and that these young people can change and make amends.

The choice is up to us, and the choice is stark. Either we honor the founding promise of the juvenile justice system, or we join the ranks of nations around the world that treat children as disposable. Either we follow evidence and history toward safer communities, or we legislate out of fear and condemn children to cycles of crime. This bill is not justice. In fact, it is a retreat from it. I urge my colleagues to reject H.R. 5140, and I will yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Do any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5140.

Oh, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5140, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Mr. GARCIA. A recorded vote, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Mr. GILL. [Presiding.] Our next item for consideration is H.R. 5181, the SOAR Act Improvements Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 5181, THE SOAR ACT IMPROVEMENTS ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5181, the SOAR Act Improvements Act, a bill to amend the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act to make improvements in the program for awarding school choice scholarships to students in the District of Columbia.

Mr. GILL. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5181, as offered by Mr. Gill of Texas on behalf of Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Mr. GILL. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I will now recognize myself for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill and the amendment.

I support the SOAR Act Improvements Act, which would extend the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program authorization for seven years. The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program provides low-income children in D.C. with scholarships so they can attend a private school in the District. D.C. had the second-highest rate of chronic absenteeism in the country during the 2023 to 2024 school year at over 30 percent. These numbers have increased 110 percent over the past decade, with the problem increasing five times for middle schoolers compared to a decade ago. Unsurprisingly, when teenagers are unsupervised and not regularly attending school, they are more likely to commit crimes. To truly address juvenile crime, it is imperative that the Committee support educational opportunities wherever we can to ensure every D.C. student has access to a high-quality education. Since its inception, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship has consistently received more applications than it can fulfill and has proven successful. Extending the scholarship program will reward students who are serious about their education and are seeking better opportunities for themselves and their families. I thank Representative Foxx for her leadership on this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for his statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose the SOAR Act Improvements Act. Let us actually talk about what this bill actually does. This bill cuts Federal funding for public schools and increases funding for a failed Federal private school voucher program. So, let us say that again. This bill actually cuts funding for D.C. Public Schools. At the same time that they are trying to eliminate the Department of Education, as we have heard throughout the Majority in their debates in Congress, it is clear they also want to destroy public education nationally and here in the District. They also want to redirect Federal funding to private schools which are unaccountable to the public.

Now, the voucher law creates loopholes to exempt participating schools from Federal civil rights laws that otherwise apply to all schools that receive Federal funding. Our tax dollars could go to unaccountable discriminatory schools. More seriously, these programs just do not work for students, and if you look at legislative history, House Republicans know and have admitted, their own actions, that these programs just do not work. Republicans have conducted study after study to evaluate this policy, and they have repeatedly found that the program did not improve academic achievement as measured by math and reading tests. Instead of abandoning the policy, they have responded by trying to rig the studies, progressively lowering the research standards.

Now, the D.C. Council is the only one accountable to the residents, of course, not Congress or the House Majority. The Council

has authority to create a private school program. It has not done so, because residents do not want one. And as a reminder for us at this moment, we know that private schools also can pick and choose which students they also want to serve. When you think about students with additional needs, students with disabilities, it is the public school system that is there that steps in to provide services for these students. And removing funding away from these public schools is incredibly dangerous for the students and the families that need that support.

Now, I oppose reauthorizing the program, increasing funding for the program, or reducing funding for this being presented. Instead of considering the SOAR Act Improvements Act, we should be holding an oversight hearing on the actual program. I urge Members to vote no on this bill, and I yield back.

Mr. GILL. I ask unanimous consent to enter the letters of support from the following organizations for H.R. 5181 into the record: The American Federation for Children and the Defense of Freedom Institute Action, Dewanna Allen on behalf of D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Families, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Without objection.

I now recognize Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C., for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose this bill. The private school voucher program that Congress imposed on D.C. in 2004 was the first and remains the only federally funded private school voucher program.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb.

Mr. GILL. Without objection.

Ms. NORTON. Why this Congress has extended the program nationally? Perhaps it is because the program has failed to improve reading or math test scores as measured by randomized control trials, or perhaps it is because the students that participate in the program are denied the protection of Federal civil rights laws that protect students in public schools, or perhaps it is because private school voucher programs are unpopular with voters.

This bill not only reauthorizes a program that fails to improve test scores, denies students the protection of Federal civil rights laws, and lacks accountability or meaningful oversight, it also ends the longstanding practice of authorizing equal funding for programs, the D.C. public school system, and the D.C. public charter school system. While it keeps total funding the same, it changes the allocations by increasing funding for the program and reducing funding for the D.C. public school system. This bill also continues to weaken the evaluation standards for the program. After multiple randomized controlled trials found the program did not improve test scores, Republicans weakened the evaluation standards in 2017, and this bill further weakens them.

Congress should prohibit new students from participating in the program and redirect the funding that would otherwise go to new students to the D.C. public school system and the D.C. public charter school system. D.C. has robust public school choice. Nearly 50



percent of D.C. public school students attend charter schools, and 75 percent of public school students attend out-of-boundary schools they have chosen. I urge a no vote on this bill, and I yield back.

Mr. GILL. I now recognize the gentlewoman from North Carolina, Dr. Foxx, for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It has long been my mission in Congress, and before I came to Congress, to make sure that every child is afforded access to a high-quality education. Perhaps one of the most glaring contrasts we see in educational outcomes for school children is right here in the Nation's Capital. And I am really concerned about a comment that one of our colleagues made, that the program that we are talking about has been imposed upon the children in D.C. What has been imposed upon them is a failed education system. Mediocrity is not even a good word for it. Despite the presence of some excellent schools in the city, many children will never be afforded an opportunity to access a high-quality education, which I know from my own experience can change the trajectory of a child's life.

The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, or DCOSP, is a proven bipartisan program that opens doors for many low-income students to receive a scholarship to attend a high-performing private school in Washington, D.C. These students can receive a high-quality education while they may be otherwise left behind in underperforming schools, and, again, that is a polite way of saying it. This program provides real school choices for families and has been repeatedly studied and evaluated. The results show that participants in the program thrive and see higher rates of high school graduation and the pursuit of postsecondary education.

The SOAR Act Improvements Act reauthorizes DCOSP through 2032 and authorizes \$60 million per year to allow the program to continue admitting new students. Since its creation, the DCOSP has been oversubscribed, which has meant that many eligible school children are missing out on the opportunity to receive a great education right here in Washington, D.C. This bill also provides important flexibilities for the program administrators that will allow more children to use the program. While we have seen a staggering increase in juvenile crime in D.C. since the pandemic, it is more important now than ever to provide pathways for school children to succeed and learn instead of staying forgotten on the sidelines. I urge my colleagues to support the SOAR Act Improvements Act, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. [Presiding.] Dr. Foxx yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Bell.

Mr. BELL. You know, as a former educator, I have to question my colleagues. Are they really looking at the policy and what is good public policy? We are reducing funding for public schools and then wondering why students are not performing as well. They do not have the resources, and so the solution is not to fully fund our public schools and give them the resources they need. They suggest the solution is to reduce funding more and then give that funding to private schools, which is public funding, taxpayer money, that then private schools get to pick and choose what students they take, and then we got a whole bunch of kids that are just left behind. And

so, when my colleague says every child has to have access, I agree with that. How does this get us to that goal?

And so, I think that what this bill does is take away access, it takes away resources, and it shifts those resources, in many cases, away from the kids who need it most, and this is terrible policy. And when we talk about public safety, there is a correlation between schools that do not have resources and higher crime rates. So, there is an intersection here that if we start looking at the root causes, again, we are going to get back to that word, and we start actually coming up with real solutions to these problems, we can actually see more positive outcomes for our kids who absolutely deserve it. I yield to the Ranking Member.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much, and I just want to echo what Congressman Bell was just saying. You know, there seems to be a theme. Republicans love to talk about how they are looking out for our children and they are trying to do what is best for them, yet we still have not seen any adequate gun legislation to protect them while they are in these schools. And now that we are dealing with their education, we are talking about \$30 million being set aside, and right now, we have approximately 1,400 students that take advantage of being able to kind of go into the private school situation for OSP. So, that amounts to approximately \$21,000 per student that is going to a private school, but if we look at the 52,000 students that are in the public school, then we are talking about approximately \$192 per student, and then we start to talk about charter. Now, do you all think charter is getting less or more? Since charter is somewhere between private and public, you guessed it right. When it comes to the charter students, then they are giving charter students \$425 approximately per student. How is that equitable? I mean, I know that you all hate the idea of the word "diversity," and you do not like equity and you do not like inclusion, but gosh darn it, we are talking about kids.

And the idea that when someone goes to a public school, they cannot be turned away. They have to take that student, but when it comes to the private schools, they can absolutely cherry pick and decide who it is that they want to take and who it is they do not want to take. And somehow, if you end up being one of the prized students that they want to take, maybe because you lack diversity, then you will get access to \$21,000, but if you are a student who is just as capable, if not more than capable, somehow you will only have access to approximately \$192 for your public education, the public education that the people at least have some accountability over because they have the ability to elect who is going to sit on school boards and things like that, unlike at the private schools and unlike what we look at the charters.

And for some reason, we complain about waste, fraud, and abuse, especially in this Committee, and you are telling me that you believe that the American people are going to say, yes, send our tax dollars off to those private schools, the private schools that most likely this Administration has some cronies that actually own that they are going to profit from. There is a theme in this Congress. It is do everything that we can to line the pockets of the already rich, and make sure that those that are struggling and need resources the most are going to be the ones that are sitting there

holding the bag, being told to pull themselves up by the bootstraps, and when they do not, you blame them. I will yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields. Yes, I would just say, I went to public school, so I do not know what you are talking about on the private school stuff.

Ms. CROCKETT. I did public, too.

Chairman COMER. Okay. I thought you went to private school.

Ms. CROCKETT. I went to both.

Chairman COMER. Okay.

Ms. CROCKETT. How about that?

Chairman COMER. All right. All right. We did not have private schools where I came from.

Ms. CROCKETT. And my mama paid for it.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BELL. She was educated in St. Louis, so let us hold that down.

Chairman COMER. Any other Member seek recognition?

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

Chairman COMER. Are you seeking recognition on amendment?

Mr. FROST. No.

Chairman COMER. Oh, you just want to speak. Okay. Chair recognizes Mr. Frost.

Mr. FROST. Yes. Sorry, I am speaking on my amendment.

Chairman COMER. Oh, any other debate on the bill before we get into the five amendments?

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman COMER. Yes.

Ms. FOXX. I wonder if I could make a parliamentary inquiry of the Chairman.

Chairman COMER. State your inquiry.

Ms. FOXX. Are you aware, Mr. Chairman, that 95 percent of the children who are participating in the scholarship program are African American or Hispanic? Did you know that?

Chairman COMER. I did not.

Ms. FOXX. Yes. There is a question about diversity. The other question is, Mr. Chairman, did you know that the family income—

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chairman, is this a parliamentary inquiry?

Ms. CROCKETT. Chair, are these—

Ms. FOXX [continuing]. The family income—

Mr. FROST. I do not think this is a parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. CROCKETT. I was about to say. Hold on. Is this a parliamentary inquiry?

Ms. FOXX. Yes, it is.

Ms. CROCKETT. Is it? Well—

Ms. FOXX. Did you know that the family is only—

Ms. CROCKETT. Mr. Chair, I would ask—

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chairman, is this a—

Ms. FOXX [continuing]. \$27,000 a year?

Ms. CROCKETT [continuing]. That the gentlelady suspend until we can get a ruling as to whether or not this is a proper parliamentary inquiry?

Chairman COMER. I ruled it was not, but I did not know that. Again, I went to public schools.

Ms. CROCKETT. Okay.

Chairman COMER. We did not have private schools where I grew up, so.

Ms. CROCKETT. Then we need to——

Chairman COMER. I am still learning about private schools.

Ms. CROCKETT. Okay.

Chairman COMER. Any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. I am going to recognize Mr. Frost. For what purpose do you seek recognition?

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

Chairman COMER. Will the clerk please report the amendment and distribute the amendment to all Members?

Oh, oh, oh, I failed to recognize Ms. Greene to debate on the bill. So, you have 5 minutes.

Ms. GREENE. Mr. Comer, this is not about the bill. I would like to ask for a prayer for Charlie Kirk. It is being reported that he has been shot at an event.

Chairman COMER. Oh, my. Wow. We will have a moment of silence.

[Moment of silence.]

Chairman COMER. Thank you for pointing that out. Any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. All right. Now, the clerk, have you distributed the amendment to all the Members?

[Nonverbal response.]

Chairman COMER. All right. Will you designate the amendment?

The Clerk. An amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5181, as offered by Mr. Frost of Florida.

Chairman COMER. All right. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes to explain his first amendment.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. School voucher programs have many flaws that can and have been used by bad actors to steal money from the government, trick parents, and rob our children of the quality education needed to succeed. Outright scam schools are not the only problem that school voucher programs create. Others have under-qualified teachers and staff. Voucher schools in D.C. and my home state of Florida and across the country are allowed to operate at lower standards than our public schools while steering money away from those same public schools. This means worse education outcomes for all students.

There are a lot of things broken within D.C.'s voucher program, so this is my first of three amendments on this bill. I am also glad that several my colleagues have offered amendments so we can deal with this voucher system's many problems. My first amendment requires schools to be accredited by the list of accrediting agencies in the D.C. School Reform Act of 1995 if they want to receive vouchers. This simply requires D.C.'s voucher schools to meet

the same standards as the D.C.'s charter schools. And the 1995 act specifically names several respected accrediting bodies.

In order to qualify for the voucher program, this bill today just says a school must be accredited by "a national or regional accrediting body." What does that even mean? There is no definition in this bill, and the language seems designed to shield these schools against oversight, accountability, and any meaningful qualifications, and what is worse is that the bill allows a school five years to get this mysterious accreditation. So, they get the money. For five years, they do not have to get that accreditation, which means that an entire middle or high schooler's classes could move through the schools without having any accreditation of any kind.

We cannot allow this because D.C.'s voucher schools already underperform across all metrics when compared with the public schools. This was the conclusion of two recent Department of Education studies. Reading scores are worse, they had less instructional time, and there was also a reduction in math scores equivalent to those kids in New Orleans after Katrina. Another analysis showed that the average learning loss from attending a D.C. voucher school compared to going to public school was the same as missing 68 days of class. It is not surprising research also shows that the longer a student is in a voucher school, the farther they fall behind. The Department of Education had almost completed a third extensive study on the D.C. voucher program before the Trump Administration abruptly scrapped it last year. I wonder what the evidence was showing. These are frustrating, but they are not surprising facts, and they mimic what we see across the entire Nation.

Poorly regulated vouchers are a tax dollar wasted and a kid's future—college, trade school, or employment—endangered. For D.C.'s children, families, and future, I ask my colleagues to support this commonsense amendment to make sure that none of the District's children are left behind in subpar voucher schools. It is making the standards the same with the public schools, the charter schools, and these voucher schools. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. I recognize Dr. Foxx.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do want to go back to what my comment to you earlier was, that 95 percent of the children participating in the D.C. Scholarship Program are African American or Hispanic, but they do remarkably better with the scholarships and in the schools that they attend than students do in the "regular public schools in D.C.," and the average family income is less than \$27,000 a year. So, giving a scholarship to these families and the students is really a lifeline to a better education.

The D.C. schools have been known for years to be totally inadequate, and what this amendment does is it would limit the number of qualifying schools and weaken the program. Yes, the students would have access to schools that are not currently accredited, but they have the opportunity to work on accreditation. But, Mr. Chairman, the D.C. children are going to failing schools that are already accredited, so this makes no sense. Would you rather have a scholarship that will let you go to a school that is performing well, whether it is accredited currently or not, or go to a failing school and be limited in your educational opportunity? It re-

duces access to high-performing schools. You do not have to be accredited to be a high-performing school in any city, and especially not in D.C.

So, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment, which is simply another attempt to undermine the scholarship program that has worked so successfully in this city. And I just do not understand, and neither do most of the people in this country, why there is an attempt to force, particularly minority students, to stay in the failing schools, unless it is because these people simply support the unions, not the children. Our goal, those of us who support the opportunity scholarships, is we support high-quality education for these students. We are not victims of the unions. And so, this is a terrible amendment that needs to be voted down. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Any other Member seek recognition? Ms. Crockett.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much. I support this commonsense amendment by Congressman Frost, and I thank him for offering it. Students in the D.C. voucher program should be protected from unaccredited schools. We have seen three consistent things about the voucher program since Republicans created it 20 years ago. The program has failed to improve academic achievement as measured by reading and math scores, Republicans continue to weaken the evaluation requirements for the program, and Republicans continue to allow unaccredited schools to participate in the program. The bill would allow schools, first participating in the program after enactment of the bill, five years—let me repeat that—5 years to become accredited. That is ridiculously weak when it comes to standards.

Accreditation helps ensure that schools provide a high-quality education. The Federal Government requires colleges and universities to be accredited to receive Federal funds. It is even more important that schools participating in federally funded D.C. voucher programs, which educate students during key developmental years, also be accredited.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a *Washington Post* investigation of the program, titled, “Quality Controls Lacking for D.C. Schools Accepting Federal Vouchers.”

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. CROCKETT. Now, let me go on and deal with this because you all want to talk about my education because “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) loves to talk about my education. Let me tell you something, I got it. I got degrees, okay? I can count them off for you if you want me to, and I am proud of that, but let me tell you, it was no thanks to any Republicans that I got my education. My mom—regardless of what tropes you all might like to put out there about Black folk or government workers, let me be clear: my mom has been a Federal Government worker my entire life. She has worked hard for this Federal Government, regardless of all the nonsense and the terrible things you say about Federal Government employees, and somehow she managed to raise me, but she still was not getting paid her due like most of us that work for the Federal Government. So, what did my mom do? My mom worked multiple jobs. I know that there are tropes out there that act like Black folk are the ones that are always looking out for a handout,

but my mom worked multiple jobs to make sure that she could pay to send me to private school.

So, yes, I went to private school. I went to private school from 7th grade all the way through high school, and then I earned a scholarship to attend college at a private school, the same one that Amy Coney Barrett attended. Yes, we both attended Rhodes College, and then I earned another scholarship so that I could go to law school. Let me tell you something, my academic success, it started in public school. Public school was my foundation, so pre-K through six—yes, I believe in pre-K—I was in public school. Unfortunately, it was too dangerous for me to go and matriculate through the junior high as well as the high school, in addition to the fact that when it came to the standardized test, I typically was at the top of the standardized test in the state, and so my mom wanted to challenge me to the best of her ability, so that is what she did. She did not look to the Federal Government and say, I have decided I want to send my child to a private school, so, therefore, the Federal Government needs to give me this money instead of making it an inequitable situation for other students that are literally not in the same situation.

Yes, I got accepted to private school because my parents worked with me even when I got out of public school because they had that luxury of being able to do that, and because both of my parents happened to be college educated and they could help me to do my work. But nevertheless, regardless of my education, because I have done both, I can actually be an advocate, and I understand the difference. And I do believe in the importance of having a sound public education. And maybe my mom would not have had to work so many jobs if there had not been people siphoning money out of our public schools to the extent that she felt like they were not going to be able to challenge me, her gifted child, as I was continuing to grow.

So, all we are saying is, if you are going to give out \$20-something-thousand, \$21,000 as relates to these 1,400 students, per child, then give out the same \$21,000 for the students that are in public school. That is it. We are looking for equity, something that you all do not like. I know it is a bad word, but we are looking for equity. And I know that the gentlelady from North Carolina wants to brag about how many Black and Brown children. I will remind her one of the reasons the President has a problem with the city of D.C. right now is because it is Black and Brown. That is what it is. I mean, it would be odd if, like, the vast majority of the people that are taking advantage are not Black and Brown. That is the city. Okay. I yield.

[Laughter.]

Chairman COMER. All right. Any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the Frost Amendment Number 1.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the noes have it, and the amendment is not agreed to.

Ms. CROCKETT. Mr. Chair, I would ask for a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

For what purpose does Mr. Frost seek recognition?

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

Chairman COMER. Will the clerk please report?

The Clerk. Amendment Number 2 to the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5181, as offered by Mr. Frost of Florida.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes to explain the Frost Amendment Number 2.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chairman, this amendment addresses an issue that I am very familiar with in Florida, and it is happening here in D.C., too. See, Florida's voucher system almost has zero oversight, and as a result, my home state is riddled with scam schools that open up, take a bunch of vouchers, and then disappear or float away, and they are gone in just a few years, existing solely on voucher students' government checks. These scam schools prey especially on our immigrant communities, using language barriers or religious affiliation and a lack of understanding of our education system to rip families off and stunt the educational growth of their children.

For example, something calling itself the South Florida Academy had a large number of students crammed into rotating locations in strip malls, church foyers, and even public parks. They taught without any curriculum, but had corporal punishment. Teenagers without driver's license drove the kids between locations, one time resulting in a fatal car crash. Faith Christian Academy, located between Tampa and Orlando, simply made up extra students and pocketed the funds. The head of the school and five relatives pocketed more than \$200,000 in taxpayer state voucher money intended for disabled children who did not even attend the school. They used it to pay for property, cars, restaurant meals, plane tickets and their personal cellphone bills. This bill sponsor may be familiar with this problem because at least one voucher school in North Carolina has made up students as well.

These are not isolated examples. A single Florida Department of Education investigation resulted in dozens of scam schools being closed down. This was after ripping off my state to the tune of \$50 million. That is money that our public schools could really use. Without voucher programs, these scam schools would not exist. The vast majority of their students use vouchers because almost no one would spend their own money on them. And as soon as we see a state start a voucher program, we see an explosion of new private schools suddenly appearing. To help ensure that D.C.'s voucher schools are, in fact, real private schools, this amendment would require voucher students to make up no more than 50 percent of the school's enrollment in order for the school to qualify for vouchers.

I offer this amendment because D.C. has the same problem Florida has with scam schools that pop up in storefronts or even pri-



vate homes. Some of these schools do not even have bathrooms, some teach learning through stretching or meditation, and of the 82 schools that have been part of D.C.'s voucher program since 2003, 35 of them, almost half, have already closed down, while another seven were forced out of the program because they could not meet the program's already low standards after years of trying. That is a total failure rate of over half. Whether or not a kid's school is actually teaching them should not have the same odds as a coin flip. This amendment will guard against the greatest wasters, fraudsters, and abusers of the D.C. voucher program. It is common sense. Let us fight against these scam schools, especially when our tax dollars are at risk. I urge my colleagues to support it, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Do any Members seek recognition on the Frost Amendment Number 2? The Chair recognizes Dr. Foxx.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The first thing that I think needs to be said is we need to correct the record. There are some wildly small figure that was being bandied about earlier, but the real number of the amount of money that is being given to the public schools per student, the total number is \$1,000,664,792 being given to the D.C. public system, which comes out for the public schools \$33,365 per student. I do not know where my colleagues across the aisle came up with their numbers, but it might be interesting to point out that only a third of that money goes to actual instruction of the students. And maybe what they are doing is dividing by the number of students in the public schools because the schools give approximately one-third of the money to the support system, whatever that is, probably administrative. So, they are putting almost as much money into the administrative cost as they are into direct instructional cost.

And so, the other comments that need to be made on this amendment is it states no more than half the children at a school may be participants in the Opportunity Scholarship Program. That is going to artificially limit access to schools that may be especially popular or high performing, and it limits choices for families. It undermines also the intent of the Opportunity Scholarship Program, and I think Mr. Frost is maligning other schools to try to make his point. I have not had a chance, obviously, to investigate the schools that he is maligning in Florida, but I suspect that there are people who would be defending those institutions. I cannot do that not having known what they are doing, but that is my guess, so I oppose the amendment. We ought to vote it down.

Mr. FROST. Would you yield for a minute?

Ms. FOXX. Yes.

Mr. FROST. Well, just to say this is not, you know, hearsay or anything. The information I am saying about these scam schools in Florida comes from an investigation that the Florida Department of Education did, which, by the way, you know, our Governor is Governor Ron DeSantis, is someone I am not a fan of, but his own administration is the one that came out with these, so this is a pervasive problem across the country.

Ms. FOXX. Then you are speculating that there are schools in D.C. If there are problems with the schools in D.C., then just give

us some examples of those instead of saying this could be happening. It is not happening.

Mr. FROST. Well, I did give examples.

Ms. FOXX. I am reclaiming my time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Bell for 5 minutes.

Mr. BELL. I yield my time to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, and I did spend time talking about D.C. schools that have these issues. I am going to read this part one more time. Of the 82 schools that have been part of the D.C. voucher program since 2003, 35 of them, almost half, have already closed down, while another seven were forced out of the program because they were not meeting the already abysmally low standards after years of trying. So, that means over half of the schools failed, and I think that is an important thing for us to keep in mind. I bring up Florida because this is a pervasive issue in my state. We have continued to expand these voucher programs year after year. It is at the detriment of our public schooling and our public school system.

And there is something I have not said yet that we have to say here that is important. I think the reason why so many Republicans in Congress and the leadership support these types of programs is they want to privatize public education completely. And so, they want to continue to defund it, defund it, siphon money from public schools to private schools so they can break it, and then when they break it, they can sell it, and that is what this is all about. It is what is going on in the State of Florida, too, and our public school teachers, our officials work hard with not a lot of resources, with not a lot of money.

My mom just retired as a public school educator of 37 years, special education for all of those years. I saw her spend thousands of her own dollars to put stuff up in her classroom. I saw her stay up late at night, night after night, doing her Individualized Education Program (IEP)s, making sure her kids were okay and they had what they needed. This is the thing that happens all the time on this Committee, is you all complain about something, and then you say, well, let us take away a bunch of money from it and resources and capacity from it. Maybe then they will do better. It makes no sense, and that is what this bill does, too, ripping away money from D.C. public schools that, yes, need help, need resources, and giving them to private institutions, and it is the same thing like what just happened with the big, ugly bill. It is to make sure that billionaires and mega corporations can make more money at the detriment of working-class Americans and the working poor. I give the time back to Mr. Bell.

Mr. BELL. I yield to the Ranking Member, or the remainder of my time to the Ranking Member.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much. I want to first of all say thank you to Congressman Frost again for this important amendment which I strongly support. We should all be deeply concerned about voucher mills, which profit off students without delivering results. Voucher programs can be abused, and Democrats have historically worked to investigate.

In 2019 and 2020, Democrats sent the Department of Education and the program's administrator a request for information about the program and each participating school. Now, I want to pause right here because the gentlelady from North Carolina specifically said give me examples, I want information, I want data. I just want to be clear. The Democrats have been trying to make sure that we could be responsible about taxpayer dollars and dig into this, but I specifically mentioned the Department of Education.

Do you all know what the Republicans want to do to the Department of Education? They put the wrestling lady over it, number one, and then, she said that her job is to shut it down. So, they started gutting it from within, and I have not heard anything from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle about how devastating that would be for our children to gut the Department of Education, a Department that would do things such as collect data and conduct investigations around things such as this.

Among those requests were the number of voucher students in each grade level and at each school and the percentage of each school's revenue that came from the program. Neither the Department nor the Administrator provided the information, saying the enrollment data could identify students in the program, and they had no information on a school's source of revenue. Their responses strongly suggested schools participating in the program relied largely or solely on voucher students for their existence and could not attract other students based on quality. So, I urge you to vote yes.

In addition to that, there was an attempt to debunk what I was talking about. I just want to make sure that we clarify so we all on the same page. We are talking about Federal funding because we are on the Federal level. This is the U.S. House, and when we look at the Federal appropriations, what they are proposing as it relates to SOAR is that there be approximately \$24,000 per OSP student, so \$30 million for OSP, \$10 million for D.C. public schools, and \$20 million for D.C. public charter schools. Those are the numbers, undeniably, that is what would be in our appropriations, and with that, I will yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Higgins from Louisiana.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield my time to Ms. Foxx.

Ms. FOXX. I thank Mr. Higgins. You know, our colleagues want to continue the Department of Education, which has done an abysmal job since it came into existence, unfortunately, as a bribe, again, to the unions to put in existence. So, yesterday, a report came out. The National Assessment of Educational Progress—NAEP—offered a grim outlook Tuesday for 8th and 12th grade students. Scores dropped to the lowest in decades for reading and math score among high school seniors, along with declines in eighth grade science.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to enter this into the record if I could. It is an article, it is in *The Hill*, but it was in, I think, every major paper. We spent trillions of dollars through the Department of Education since its existence, and here is what was reported yesterday. In math, 45 percent of high school seniors scored below

basic, the lowest since 2005. In reading, 32 percent in the exam taken last year scored below basic, the lowest since the exam began in 1992. And our friends want to keep the union schools in existence and deny the opportunity for students, particularly in D.C. and other places that we have had. It is devastating what is happening in the “public schools.”

In 2023, NAEP found only 14 percent of students were reading for fun every day with experts calling it a crisis. We are not getting any return on the money that is being spent in the public schools in terms of high quality among our students, and yet, here in Washington, we are trying to help almost all minority students. Ninety-five percent are minority. They are trapped in low-performing schools, and through the Opportunity Scholarships, they have the opportunity to choose a high-performing school, and our colleagues want to deny them that. It is unfathomable that they want to do that. The best thing we could do in this country. We are in a race with China, India, and other countries who want to be first in the world, and particularly China. They want to take us over, and what are they doing? Focusing on helping students develop skills, and we are focusing on pouring money down a rat hole in terms of what we are spending for education. We are not helping our students.

This amendment needs to be defeated. All the amendments that are going to come up need to be defeated. And I yield back, and I thank my colleague from Louisiana for yielding. I yield back my time to him.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back.

Mr. HIGGINS. I yield, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. And before I yield to the next person, we never did accept *The Hill* report.

Without objection, so ordered for the record.

Does any other Member seek recognition? Ms. Crockett.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much. I just want to clarify because I do not want the American people to watch this and be confused. When it comes to education, we typically do not have this Big Government view on things such as K through 12. When we are talking about our public schools, we are talking about our K through 12 students. There typically is a school board that is locally elected. So, whether or not they are implementing certain programs or not, that is usually based upon whatever that local school board wants to do. Those local school boards are contained within states. Those states have different rules about what tests they want students to take or not, so there is state law, there is local law, and then there is Federal law.

When we look to the Department of Education, the Department of Education is around to ensure equal access to education. It is supposed to promote educational excellence and provide financial and technical support to states, local districts, students, and institutions. They also do things like making sure that there is Federal aid that is available. So yes, the Department of Education absolutely has a role to play, but their everyday role is not to be in the classroom and make sure that tests are administered a certain way, or that there is a specific curriculum. In fact, they are sup-

posed to conduct things such as our civil rights investigations, another area that the Republicans seemingly want to gut.

And when we talk about civil rights, we are talking about our uniquely abled students as well. We are talking about making sure that the resources are available no matter if you are born with a disability, no matter if you are born into poverty. No matter what the circumstance is, there has to be a level set, and that is what the Federal Government is supposed to do, is to make sure that we have a level set. The only reason that we are talking about local issues is because, obviously, we are in D.C., and D.C. needs statehood like yesterday so that they can make their own decisions. But instead, we are deciding what we are going to send into D.C., and now this is supposedly about taking care of the poor Black kids in D.C. Well, let me ask you, what else have you all done for poor Black people in this country? Give me another bill that you all got because that is not what you are known for is looking out for poor Black people. I am just saying. These are the facts.

So, in fact, nobody mentioned the numbers or wanted to play on the numbers until I brought up the fact that at a private school, they can decide who they do and do not want. And unfortunately, with this Administration, they may tell them, you are not allowed to give out scholarships to students that are of color because we know that they have done that on the Federal level. They said, listen, we are going to take your funding away at certain colleges if you are giving out money based upon the fact that someone is coming from a diverse background. We know that our Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)s right now are really concerned that they may end up struggling because they tend to cater to a certain demographic. So, please do not get it twisted. We, the American people, know that you all have not been fighting for what is best for Black folk, whether we are talking about an education or whether we are talking about the over incarceration or over policing, as we see the invasions of Black-run cities right now. I will yield.

Chairman COMER. Any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none. The question is now on the amendment, offered by Mr. Frost, the Frost Amendment 2.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the noes have it, and the amendment is not agreed to.

Ms. CROCKETT. We would ask for a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

For what purpose does Mr. Frost seek recognition?

Mr. FROST. I have an amendment at the desk, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Will the clerk please distribute and report the amendment?

The Clerk. Amendment Number 3 to the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5181, as offered by Mr. Frost of Florida.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes to explain his amendment.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chairman, a disturbing fact that I do not think most Americans know is that voucher schools do not have to abide by all of our civil rights laws. They have a sneaky way of getting around it. They say the money is going to go to the parent, not the school, but we know who gets paid in the end. This allows government-funded discrimination. My third and final amendment simply requires something many people assume that government-funded schools must do already. It requires that schools shall not discriminate against students the basis on actual or perceived—on their sexual orientation or gender identity. This is another problem with voucher schools that I take with me from Florida.

Florida's voucher schools are sick with discrimination. A 2019 investigation showed that 156 private Florida private schools with anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and more (LGBTQ+) views that educated more than 20,000 students with state-funded vouchers. Of course, of these schools, more than half allowed the schools to deny admission or expel students because they are part of the LGBTQ+ community. Almost half of them were gay or transgender folks, and they called it a biblical sin. A separate investigation in Florida found that several private schools accepting millions in taxpayer-funded vouchers promote conversion therapy for LGBTQ+ students. Conversion therapy is a medical fraud and child abuse. Experienced teachers and administrators at schools receiving millions of dollars in state voucher funds have been fired as soon as the school finds out that they are in a same sex relationship. The State of Florida has turned public policy into a weapon against LGBTQ+ Floridians and bullies gay kids. My state's voucher program is a part of that problem, and I do not want it happening in Washington, D.C.

Almost 80 percent of D.C.'s voucher schools are religious. Almost half of D.C.'s voucher schools make no mention of LGBTQ+ plus rights on their pages. This is not to assume that all religious schools receiving the voucher programs will discriminate against LGBTQ+ folks here in D.C., but it will ensure that none can. D.C.'s educators should be able to teach without fear of being fired for whom they love and who they are. D.C. families who choose to participate in the voucher program should do so free of the fear of gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination. All children should be guaranteed a hate-free education.

Congress has pumped hundreds of millions of dollars into the D.C. voucher program with terrible results. It is glaring, a real example of waste, fraud and abuse. This anti-public education, ideologically inspired program fails D.C. students year after year. It is no wonder that the program is not even popular with D.C. residents. Since 2017, the majority of new students offered vouchers have turned them down. Less than five percent of eligible students even apply. Letters from the D.C. Council opposing the voucher program have grown stronger and stronger: five D.C. City

Councilmembers opposing it in 2011, eight members opposing in 2017, and now in 2023, 12 members opposing it.

Families and community leaders do not want it, yet we force it upon them. Failing and discriminating voucher schools that sap D.C.'s improving public schools of resources gives parents fewer choices for their child's education, not more. I ask my colleagues to look at the results and the data on D.C. voucher program and support this amendment and my other amendments. We must ensure that if a D.C. voucher program continues, our tax dollars and the academic potential of our D.C. kids are not wasted, and that people are not subjected to discrimination. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Any other Member seek recognition? The Chair recognizes Dr. Foxx.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not going to take up a lot of the Committee's time. This amendment is not needed. It is going to result in fewer choices, less access to very high-performing schools in the city. I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment. It is just not necessary to have. The bill we have before us is adequate, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. Yield back. Does any other Member seek recognition? Ms. Crockett.

Ms. CROCKETT. I again thank my colleague, Mr. Frost, for offering this amendment and I strongly support it. This amendment is about basic protections for kids' civil rights. We should all be able to agree to protect basic human decency and respect. School is for everyone and should be a place where every child feels safe. Everyone deserves the opportunity to grow, succeed, and thrive at school. We should all be able to agree that taxpayer dollars should not be used for discrimination, especially discrimination against kids in the classroom. The Opportunity Scholarship Program should be no exception. I urge a yes vote on this amendment, and I will yield.

Chairman COMER. Any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none. The question is now on the amendment, offered by Mr. Frost, the Frost Amendment Number 3.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the noes have it. The amendment is not agreed to.

Ms. CROCKETT. And we will request a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

For what purpose does Ms. Simon seek recognition?

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman COMER. You have an amendment at the desk?

Ms. SIMON. I do have an amendment at the desk, and before I speak to it, Mr. Chair, if you allow me just a couple of seconds. We heard—

Chairman COMER. Hold on one second. Will the clerk distribute—

Ms. SIMON. Yes, please.

Chairman COMER [continuing]. And report the amendment?

The Clerk. Amendment to the amendment of the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5181, as offered by Ms. Simon of California.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

Ms. Simon is recognized for 5 minutes to explain her amendment.

Ms. SIMON. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you. A few minutes ago, we learned that yet there is another victim of senseless violence in this country, and I want to extend God's grace and love and thoughts to Mr. Kirk's family. No one, regardless who you are, how you vote and what you believe in, if you are on this soil, being victimized by gun violence is horrible, and we have to shift these realities. And so, that is very much on my heart all the families in this country right now and their own situations who are reeling from gun violence. We have to continue to speak on the tragedies each and every day.

Today, I am offering a commonsense amendment to ensure that disabled students participating in private school voucher programs in D.C. have the same rights and services and protections as their peers in public school. I may be one of the few people at the dais who have a child in D.C. school. I am, I believe, the only single mom of a school-aged child in the U.S. House of Representatives, and my ninth grader actually goes to a school that is governed by the Archdiocese. And I know for a fact that if you are a disabled child and you are going to a private school, that school may not have the resources to support your child should that child have a disability—for a fact.

Simply put, my amendment would guarantee that these students, their civil rights are not dependent on what school they attend. My amendment would require that schools who accept these vouchers certify that their voucher students would be entitled to the rights afforded to them in the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, the IDEA. Without this amendment, school voucher students with disabilities would not be guaranteed the same rights that public school students with disabilities are under in terms of the IDEA. A right to a free, appropriate public education, including free special education and related services and individual education programs or IEPs, least restrictive environment requirements or the requirement for integrated learning with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible, and having special education teachers that have met special education requirements. This amendment is deeper than equity, it is fairness, and giving disabled students who take these vouchers the opportunity to have an education that they so deserve, the supports that they are so entitled to by law. It would ensure that Federal dollars are not being spent at private institutions that would deny students with disabilities the right to an IEP, or support services, or to be an integrated classroom.

Further, my amendment would also ensure that schools that accept these funds uphold the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. These laws were hard won by disability advocates to ensure that people with disabilities do not face discrimination anywhere. They took over government buildings, in-



cluding the Capitol, and crawled up the Capitol steps. I do not know if you saw the footage included an 8-year-old girl who said I will not stop crawling to the top until I get to the top because I need people to see me. She left her wheelchair behind. May you pass this amendment in her honor. They took over these government buildings hoping that students who were born with disabilities, like myself, had access to education, a fair shot.

My amendment would ensure that private schools receiving government funding cannot discriminate against students with disabilities by denying them admission or accommodations. Whether these students be blind or have intellectual disabilities or have hearing disabilities, we know that students deserve a fair shot. If you take the voucher, this amendment says, you should be able to provide that student with accommodations. It is only fair. Our children should not miss out on their education and their futures because my colleagues would deny them decades-old civil rights.

I urge my colleagues, I urge you, to vote yes on this amendment for the children in D.C., who are consistently unheard and put to the side. We cannot go back to the days of old when disabled children are in little classrooms at the end of the hall with no sign language or no Braille or no large print materials, where children with intellectual disabilities are sent off to schools without any oversight. Regardless how you vote and where you live, if we can do anything for the children, whether you agree with this bill or not, they are in these voucher programs. Children with disabilities deserve support, they deserve accommodations, and they deserve our care. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. The Chair recognizes Dr. Foxx.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly support helping any student who has any kind of disability get the education that is necessary for that child. However, this amendment is duplicative, burdensome, and undercut the programs by mirroring it in red tape and may reduce the number of children who can receive a scholarship. It is unnecessary. I urge my colleagues to vote against the amendment, and I would like to yield—

Ms. SIMON. Ma'am, can you yield for a question?

Ms. FOXX. I will yield to the gentleman from Louisiana.

Ms. SIMON. Ma'am, may you yield for question?

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank—

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Higgins.

Mr. HIGGINS. I am actually going to ask the gentlelady a question. Could you clarify, because you are passionately speaking for people that, you know, we love and respect and support. I believe Representative Foxx's legislative purposes is slightly different here, but you are in the same arena regarding education, and you have brought up our disabled citizens. You seem to indicate that you know of schools. I am asking you, ma'am, do you know of schools that are right now in violation of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and if so, if they are in D.C., why have they not been reported and investigated? They are already in violation of the law if they are not in compliance with ADA. Does the gentlelady have some?

Ms. SIMON. Yes, I do. Yes. So, because I just put my kid in school and she has dyscalculia. I know, I have made a gazillion phone calls. Private and charter schools do not have to have the same kind of accommodations that our public schools do.

Mr. HIGGINS. Okay. So, they are not in—

Ms. SIMON. No, that is across the country. That is what this amendment does.

Mr. HIGGINS. So, they are not in violation.

Ms. SIMON. I am actually not even saying trash the voucher program.

Mr. HIGGINS. But you are tying the ADA law, as it exists—

Ms. SIMON. Understand. And so, what it says is for children who have vouchers—

Mr. HIGGINS. Respectfully, reclaiming the time that was yielded to me.

Ms. SIMON. I just want to answer your question.

Mr. HIGGINS. You are tying the—

Ms. SIMON. I am saying these schools do not have to accommodate these children, and we want them to.

Mr. HIGGINS. You are tying the ADA law, which is just slightly different arena, and I would suggest that all schools should be in compliance with required ADA guidelines. I yield back to Gentlelady Foxx.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, and I yield back Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Bell.

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I yield to Ms. Simon.

Ms. SIMON. So, I want us to take a second here. This amendment—if we are thinking that disabled children provide more burden than not, then fine vote no on my amendment. This should be an easy, non-partisan vote. Whether you agree with the voucher program or not, we know that charter schools and private schools, not just disability service, but school lunch, basic rights that we have won in public schools to ensure that every single child has the same right to learn. I would encourage you and your staff to call any private school right now in Washington, D.C., and ask if a blind child, tomorrow, could enroll. Would they have access to a braille? I would ask you, tomorrow, get on the phone or stop the hearing now and call any private school in D.C. and say I have a deaf child. Will they have access immediately to someone to help them sign in class? I would ask you to call private schools throughout the city and ask them if your autistic child, who both has mobility and intellectual disabilities, can immediately integrate in a third-grade class. I would ask you—I would ask you—is there someone in that school, an aide ready and able to provide medication care for that child. I would ask you for the children with disabilities who are applying to schools, will they be able to get the testing and the services that they would get if they were at a public school?

The answer is no. There is a whole industry in Washington, D.C. and around the country where you have to pay \$1,500-plus to get your child assessed to verify their disability. It is free in the public schools. So, unless you have a disabled child in the Washington, D.C. school, I would suggest everyone close their mouths. Because I do, and I have been on the phone and I have visited schools. I

am offering an amendment because it is something that I know. And to the good doctor, I know you mean well. This amendment is about ensuring that all of our babies, regardless of their ableisms or lack thereof, have a shot. You say no, then I know where your heart is. Able students are not the only ones who should be provided the opportunity to be in the class and to learn and to be integrated.

I know folks want to take us back to a 1950s America, but there are some of us who want our young people to have the best shot. So, you tell the tens of thousands of children, not just in D.C., but in wheelchairs, those are in our deaf and our blind schools who want to integrate into public schools using your voucher program, you ask them and their parents, do they have a fair shot? All the amendment does is lift up these children and guarantee that these schools provide the accommodations that they deserve. If you want to call it red tape, you tell that to a parent of a blind child. You want to call it red tape, you tell that to a parent of an eager child who uses a wheelchair that wants to attend the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) down the street but yet does not have a rep. You call it ADA. I am saying, listen, this is an opportunity in your voucher program to ensure disabled children have the right to grow and learn and prosper in an integrated environment. Touché, you. I say yes.

Chairman COMER. Any other Member seek recognition?

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Sessions.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman, I do understand the emotion that is associated with this that the gentlewoman has expressed. I have a 31-year-old Down syndrome son, and we were lucky in Dallas, Texas, that the elementary school that he went to placed high value on Alex. I was aware for a long, long time of the school's ability to help Alex: the teacher, the principal, the students. It was an environment that was a public education, and quite honestly, just as the gentlewoman is suggesting, you have to fight for what you are going to get when you have a disabled child. You have a difference, but it was an obligation on public education. It is not an obligation on private school, and it should not be.

And I am going to stand up and support Virginia Foxx. She is more learned in this issue, but I have 27 years of dealing with this and 31 years with a young man who is an angel by all accounts, but I felt like he deserved a lot of things. But when Alex got to seventh grade, the seventh grade school could not accommodate Alex, even though it was part of the public system, and it was beyond the public school's ability and I did not argue with them. I did not like it. Alex was personally attacked and bullied, and he cried to me, and I took him out the next day. That is one of the hardest days as a dad you will ever have, and I had to move Alex to a private school that cost a lot of money, and that was the option for me. That is what I wish that we would get on board with if we want to talk about fairness.

Alex had two parents who worked, who could afford the extra \$18,000, a long time ago, to send him to a school that could not guarantee his safety, but I guarantee you the public school could not. And I think if you are going to do something really that would

be a benefit, you would allow that student who is certifiably disabled, as Alex was—you could see it, you could test it, you could put any test you want, he needed help. That is where I think this effort has been, at least in Texas, to where, hopefully, a parent who has a disabled child could live in an area where they could gather together eight, ten, twelve students who had same needs or similar needs, and move to giving that child a school, a teacher, a home school, an opportunity where they could use public money to come in and help that family, help that student.

It may be you can only find two or three teachers that find accommodation with autism or Down syndrome, including of retinal, of sight issues, and there are experts in these areas. Typically, a private school is not set up that way. It was not designed that way. Mr. Chairman, I ask for an additional 2 minutes.

Chairman COMER. Yes.

Mr. SESSIONS. Private schools are not set up for that. Private schools are not. Elementary schools are, but they have trouble. They are staggered in meeting the needs, and I would like to see some bit of conversation if we are going to talk about students that are disabled, just like my Alex, just like your child, just like thousands of other children providing, or the states that provide these, taking that public money. Parents like my wife and I, who gathered together and saw the greater good of a group of us who could satisfy this. Those schools are very expensive, but it would sure be helpful 20 years ago if, knowing I was going to pay my taxes—I was still paying \$15,000 for school taxes, did not have a child in school, he could not handle it—if I could take that money and move it with the child.

And this is what we have attempted to, these dadgum Republicans, are attempting to take and have the money, either the average or that the parent paid in, and move it to an accommodation, to a school that they could help that child. I really do——

Ms. SIMON. Sir, could you yield for a question? It is a friendly question.

Mr. SESSIONS. I really do offer a lot of heartfelt sympathy for where you are.

Ms. SIMON. Oh, I do not want sympathy. Now, if you will yield for a question?

Mr. SESSIONS. You do need it. You do need it because——

Ms. SIMON. I do not think sympathy.

Mr. SESSIONS. Okay. Well, you are now——

Ms. SIMON. I think that disabled children need justice.

Mr. SESSIONS. Okay. Well, I yield back my time. I yield back my time.

Ms. SIMON. I just have a question. I apologize.

Mr. SESSIONS. I bring back my time. But my point is, there are better answers than going to a school not even designed for this. A private school, is not designed for that, and so that is my point. So, you can come see me at my office.

Ms. SIMON. I would love to.

Mr. SESSIONS. I am available to you. I have been engaged in the Down Syndrome Caucus for 27 years. I have been working with people. I am for it. But my point is, I think you are asking something of an institution when we should be asking why doesn't the

public school give that, and the answer is, they do not. And that is why——

Ms. SIMON. They do.

Mr. SESSIONS. They do not. And that is why we need something like we are beginning to have in Texas where the parents can gather together. Mr. Chairman, I apologize for taking time. It is a very difficult issue for her. It is a very difficult issue for me, and I am very passionate about it, but I felt like I had to stand up and say, hold on here, there is a better answer. Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back, and I gave him my time, the overtime, so I will not speak on it, but I will recognize the Ranking Member.

Ms. CROCKETT. Really briefly, I just have to say that, this Committee usually devolves into something terrible, and for some reason, we cannot get to a space of bipartisanship it seems like almost on anything. But I think that what we just saw from Representative Simon as well as Representative Sessions is that something like having a uniquely abled child is not partisan. That is not partisan, and the struggles that will come along with that are not partisan. And I think that that is why it is important to support this amendment because this is amendment is not about the Democrats. It is not about the Republicans. It is about parents that are in need of making sure that they have got access to resources.

And one of the things that Mr. Sessions said that really does make good sense is that, when we are talking about private schools and public schools, yes, public schools have a higher requirement that is set upon them than private schools, and Mr. Sessions, it sounded like he agreed with that standard is that there should be this higher standard. And the reason that we have a higher standard as it relates to dealing with our uniquely abled babies is because of them having tax dollars, whether it is Federal tax dollars, county tax dollars, cities' tax dollars, versus a private school. A private school is not taking our public tax dollars, so there is a different level of oversight.

And the reason that this amendment matters is because we are talking about taking public tax dollars and putting them into the private system. So, anytime we are looking at taking public dollars and putting them into private, then private should have to adhere to the same requisites as public. If private says, hey, we are not going to take public dollars, then that is one thing.

Ms. SIMON. Yes.

Ms. CROCKETT. The final thing that I will say on this before I yield the rest of my time, in case Ms. Simon had anything else that she wanted to say, is that we continue to pretend that private or throwing money on something is always better, and it is not. It is not necessarily the case. And so, I would hope that we could look at real issues like this and decide that we are going to focus in and just do what is right by those uniquely abled students that are coming up, and I think that that is all this amendment seeks to do, if I am correct.

Ms. SIMON. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. CROCKETT. Okay. Anything else?

Ms. SIMON. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. CROCKETT. I will yield my time to Ms. Simon.

Ms. SIMON. I appreciate you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Sessions, and our Ranking Member. The crux of the amendment comes from families that I have worked with since I have been here just eight short months in the D.C. system, and I want to be clear. If you read the amendment, all it says is that if you have a voucher as a family and you are seeking to go to an accredited school, that you will not be barred from attending that school. And we know that disabilities range, they are not homogenous, that schools who are educating young people who are getting tax dollars to do so, should work extremely hard to ensure that we are not segregating students based on disability. Some might say that it is efficient and sufficient to segregate children with disabilities in schools that do not interact with able-bodied students. The disability community would say, hell no, that our students must be a part of our communities.

And no, private schools, to your point, do not oftentimes have the supports for disabled students because they are, in definition, private. I will say it again. And if we are giving tens of thousands of dollars for young people to have school choice, they should, upon choosing a school, have the basic accommodations to be a part of that community. I cannot think of anything more bipartisan but to say we want all of our children to be in community, not relegated to schools far away with no oversight, relegated only to disabled students. Who have we become that we would even be having the conversation here? I have been a disability advocate for much of my adult life, again, growing up with one. I would ask that we think about our vote here and think about the families that very few of you have met with who are wanting their children to have the education that you promote and yet cannot get some of the basic services in those institutions. Your tax dollars, our tax dollars, their tax dollars, should be paying to ensure that their children are learning, are spaced in a space that honors their difference, and they are getting what they need to be able to move through our school system here.

And with that, I will yield, and thank you so much for the time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman?

Mr. SESSIONS. I would ask unanimous consent for 1 minute.

Chairman COMER. Without objection. I have not spoken, and I yielded you 2 minutes earlier, so I have about 3 minutes left. I will yield you a couple of minutes.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir, and I am trying to limit our time and make our time valuable. I would say to the gentlewoman, I do get your point. But private schools, as we know them, are there to handle the other 95 percent of students and to give them an opportunity to excel into an environment, and that is what private schools are set up for. They are not set up for what, I would say, would be students that need special help. My son needed special guidance and special help, and I did not say every student does, but private schools are there because the vast number of parents cannot get their students into a growth mode, too, and that is why the competition is helping public schools and private schools.

So, the second thing, just because they get public money does not mean they have to operate that way. So, I politely would tell the gentlewoman, I appreciate your passion. I am going to vote no.

Chairman COMER. Any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is on the amendment, offered by Ms. Simon, the Simon Amendment Number 1.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the noes have it. The amendment is not agreed to.

Ms. CROCKETT. We ask for a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Okay. We are going to have votes in about 5 minutes, but I think we can get through this next bill, and if we cannot, we will go into recess, but our next item for consideration is H.R. 5107, the CLEAN D.C. Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 5107, COMMON-SENSE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY NOW IN D.C. (CLEAN D.C.) ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5107, the CLEAN D.C. Act, a bill to repeal the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022 enacted by the District of Columbia Council.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of substitute.

The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5107, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill and the amendment.

I support the CLEAN D.C. Act, which repeals the majority of D.C.'s Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Act of 2022. By repealing the misguided 2022 Act, Congress would restore the integrity and faith of the law enforcement of the District of Columbia. For instance, the 2022 Act stripped law enforcement officers of many tools needed to execute their duties safely and without fear of retribution, as well as limited their options in situations of life or death. The Act also created new opportunities for anti-police activists to harass law enforcement officers and added many undue burdens and requirements to officers in the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department.

In 2023, both the House and Senate sought to nullify D.C.'s Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Act of 2022 by passing a joint resolution of disapproval. Unfortunately, this resolution was vetoed by then-President Biden. This legislation would repeal the

2022 Act with the exception for Subtitle A, which is being addressed separately by Mr. Higgins' bill, and Subtitle S, which the D.C. Police does not support repealing. CLEAN D.C. Act will therefore help restore the capabilities of D.C. law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line every day for our community to do their jobs as they are trained to do. I urge my colleagues to support this important police reform legislation.

I recognize Ms. Crockett for her statement.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you, Mr. Chair, but I oppose H.R. 5107. This bill overturns laws passed democratically by the District of Columbia. It is not the place of Congress, which is not accountable to D.C. residents, to micromanage the District and act as some kind of super legislature second guessing their laws. I have said this over and over, if you want to change D.C.'s laws, run for office here.

Like many cities around the country, D.C. passed police reform packages in 2020. If you all do not know, in 2020 that is when George Floyd got killed. The D.C. police reform legislation aimed at accountability for police officers who use excessive force, kind of like what we see happening with ICE, or abuse their power, again, what we see what is happening with ICE. It is increased transparency. It provided stronger civilian oversight and empowers the Chief of Police to fire or punish officer misconduct and criminal activity. Why would we ever want to stand with criminals? Never mind. I forgot who got elected. Never mind.

The D.C. legislation banned the use of chokeholds and other neck restraints. It set reasonable standards for the use of deadly force. It prohibited D.C. from hiring police officers with prior misconduct charges. It established education and training requirements to address racism, biased policing, and white supremacy. In the wake of the killing of George Floyd, similar policies were passed in communities all over the country as communities worked to restore trust between police and residents and to address past injustices. That was the democratic process. This bill is trying to undo all of that. The first draft of this bill even tried to repeal a ban on dangerous chokeholds and neck restraints by police officers.

Thirty-nine states have passed reforms related to officer education and training requirements. Since May 2020, 26 states have enacted laws to improve data collection and increase transparency in policing. At least seven states, including Arizona, Colorado, and Wisconsin, have enacted legislation requiring the creation of public data bases on use-of-force information. States like Colorado, South Carolina, and Maryland have mandated adoption of body-worn cameras statewide. At least 20 states since 2020, have enacted laws that address state-level use of force standards. Because D.C. is not a state—again, D.C. statehood, let us go—Republicans are trying to play politics and to roll back the clock. I urge my colleagues to remember our country's history and stand with the people of D.C., stand up for self-determination, and stand up for democracy. I urge my colleagues to vote no.

I also just want to be clear. I had to Google this because, you know, this is not my platform, but it says, "The Republican platform on small government is a long-held conservative principle, advocating for limited Federal power, reduced spending, and fewer



regulations.” Now, you all do not like regulations because we all saw what happened when the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) came in. He do not want vaccinations. He do not want nothing. He just want us all to sit here and die, but nevertheless, we know that this is the opposite of small government. You all have decided that duly elected people, nope, we want to Big Government our way into D.C. We want to Big Government our way into women’s uteri. We want to just Big Government everything. We want to Big Government our way into Chicago.

I do not know what platform you all are dealing with right now because it is definitely not small government. It is definitely not limited Federal power. This is actually a Federal overpowering as I feel like we are experiencing and reduced spending, if I have to remind you all, that big, ugly bill, it increased our debt some more. The only thing that I can say you all are really standing for this in your platform is fewer regulations. I think you all either need to change the platform or need to change your party name because none of this seems to be in alignment with what you all claim to be.

So, if you all want to be good Republicans according to your platform, not the Democrats’ platform, and you want to limit Federal power, it seems like we should all vote against this bill because it does just the opposite, and it increases Federal power by deciding to supplant what we want here as D.C. lawmakers, elected from a lot of places that are not half as diverse as D.C., and telling D.C. what they are going to do with their citizens here in this city. I will yield.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. I strongly oppose this undemocratic and paternalistic bill which repeals D.C. Law. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves. D.C.’s local legislature, the Council, worked on Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act, which is 45 pages, for two years. This bill repeals almost the entire law in 19 lines. The substance of the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act is irrelevant since there is never justification for Congress to legislate on local D.C. matters. However, I will briefly discuss it.

Among other things, the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act makes it easier to fire police officers for serious misconduct and crimes, prohibits the hiring of officers with prior misconduct, and strengthens civilian oversight of the Police Department. The dictionary defines democracy as “a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation, usually involving periodically held free elections.” D.C.’s lack of voting representation in either the House or the Senate, and Congress’ plenary authority over D.C. are the antithesis of democracy.

The Council has 13 members. The members are elected by D.C. residents. If D.C. residents do not like how the members vote, they can vote them out of office. Congress has 535 Members. The Members are elected by the residents of states. None are elected by D.C. residents. If D.C. residents do not like how Members vote, they

cannot vote them out of office. The only solution to the undemocratic treatment of D.C. is to grant D.C. statehood.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter from leading constitutional scholars, including Larry Tribe, explaining why the D.C. statehood bill is constitutional.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you. The bill, H.R. 51, the Washington, D.C., Admissions Act, would grant D.C. residents, who pay the same Federal taxes as residents of the states, full control over their local affairs and voting representation in Congress. This bill would reduce the size of the Federal District from 68 square miles to two square miles, which would consist of the White House, the Capitol, the Supreme Court, the National Mall, and remain under the control of Congress. The rest of D.C. would be a new state, the State of Washington, D.C. I urge a no vote on the CLEAN D.C. Vote Act.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwab.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

And the gentlelady yields back. I ask unanimous consent to enter a letter of support from the Washington, D.C. Police Union into the record.

Without objection, so ordered.

Chairman COMER. Does any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. All right. The question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5107, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The bill is ordered favorably.

Ms. CROCKETT. We would ask for a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. The recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Now, because they have called votes or about to call votes——

Ms. CROCKETT. I do not think they have called them. Do you want to see if we can——

Chairman COMER. Have we called votes?

Ms. CROCKETT. They have not called them.

Chairman COMER. We have not, so we can keep going?

Ms. CROCKETT. You want to keep going?

Chairman COMER. All right. We will try to get through one more then.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 5143, the District of Columbia Policing Protection Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

**H.R. 5143, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA POLICING  
PROTECTION ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5143, the District of Columbia Policing Protection Act, a bill to establish standards for law enforcement officers in the District of Columbia to engage in vehicular pursuits of suspects, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read, and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5143, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Higgins from Louisiana, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In January 2023, and contrary to our recommendations, the D.C. Council enacted a Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022, D.C. Law 24 through 345. Among numerous other police-rated policy matters, one of the subtitles of Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act (CPJRA) imposed a host of restrictions on police pursuit of criminal suspects. And at the time, you know, it was one of the things that we warned against, Mr. Chairman, in this Committee regarding the disconnect between the civilians on a Council and the officers on the street who are actually engaged in law enforcement, which a large part of law enforcement is prevention. It is, like, most of it.

So, pursuit of a vehicle, that always deserves to be in the realm of discretion of the officer according to his act, and according to the totality of circumstance of that particular situation, and, of course, according to the laws of his city and the policy of his departments, and his own training and certification, his rank on shift. So, there are many factors that an officer has to navigate through in a split second to determine if pursuit is reasonable and righteous and called for, and to the benefit of the citizens and community that that officer is in service to. So, for a Council to just sort of arbitrarily say, no, you cannot do that, that was never a good idea.

So, essentially, my amendment restores the power of discretion to police officers in D.C. to pursue a vehicle if it is the right thing to do, and quite simply, that is a discretion that never should have been taken away. It was. It was a mistake. We are correcting it. There are guidelines that an officer uses, Mr. Chairman, regardless of his department. Is it an acceptable risk to make that pursuit? Is there another way to get the guy? If you know who it is and he is a, you know, maybe a regular visitor to your jail, you know where he is going. I know where he is going, he is going to his mama's house, or I know where he is going, he is going to his bud-

dy's trailer, then you can pick him up later there. And that officer needs to be able to make that decision to not pursue, whereas if he makes a determination that this guy is a danger to my community and he must be stopped, then you have got to be able to pursue.

So, bottom line is that this amendment restores that discretion and authority to the frontline officers that are called upon to enforce the law and to prevent criminal actions from happening. So, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support my amendment. I do not expect I will get that, but I would love to see support from both sides of the aisle. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. They have called votes, but I am going to yield to the Ranking Member, Ms. Crockett, for her opening statement, and then we will recess until 10 minutes after the vote, but I recognize Ms. Crockett.

Ms. CROCKETT. Mr. Chairman, I oppose this bill, which would override the will of the D.C. citizens as it relates to high-speed police vehicle chases. Let us be clear, high-speed chases are dangerous and far too often cause needless deaths, injuries, and property damage to innocent bystanders, and are often initiated over minor traffic violations. When deciding when vehicular pursuit is warranted, you need to balance public safety, the reasons behind the pursuit, pedestrian safety, and the location of the pursuit. The Metropolitan Police Department and the Police Officers Union already has a policy about when vehicular pursuit is warranted.

Under current D.C. law, the city allows pursuits where the fleeing suspect has committed a crime of violence or poses an imminent threat to public safety, where pursuit is necessary, and when it can be conducted in a way that mitigates the risk of injury to innocent people. I believe D.C. is better equipped than Congress is to make decisions about when its police should decide to initiate a car chase. This bill is unnecessary, other than to meddle in local policing policy. High-speed police pursuits of an individual are deadly actions. At least 3,336 people died in police car chases in the United States between 2017 and 2022. At least half of those were innocent bystanders. In short, as somebody who has had to deal with this dealing with criminal defense work, we absolutely need to make sure that there are parameters and standards that are put in place. And I think that it is only reasonable because the people elected the City Council, because police are hired, and they are not necessarily hired to do what the what the people have asked for.

They have asked their elected officials to make sure that they do not have these high-speed chases coming through just because maybe they do not like somebody's accent or because somebody is a little too dark. Next thing you know, we got a high-speed chase. They have laid out some parameters that are very basic and will keep everyone safe, not only those being pursued, but those that are innocent bystanders, as well as the law enforcement agents. I yield back my time.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Pursuant to the previous order, the Chair declares the Committee in recess, subject

to the call of the Chair. We plan to reconvene 10 minutes after the last vote.

The Committee stands in recess.

[Recess.]

AFTER 6 P.M.

Chairman COMER. The Committee will reconvene.

Before the recess for votes, we were debating the Higgins bill and it was the turn for the Minority to speak, so the Chair recognizes Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose this undemocratic and paternalistic bill, which amends D.C. law. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and the D.C. Attorney General, Brian Schwalb.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. The D.C. Council has 13 members. If residents do not like how the members vote, residents can vote them out of office or pass a ballot measure. That is called democracy. Congress has 535 Members. None are elected by D.C. residents. If D.C. residents do not like how Members vote on local D.C. matters, residents cannot vote them out of office or pass a ballot measure. That is the antithesis of democracy. It is long past time to grant D.C. statehood. The substance of the bill is irrelevant since there is never justification for Congress to legislate on local D.C. matters. However, I will briefly discuss it.

Vehicular pursuits are inherently dangerous, not just for officers or suspects, but bystanders, too, and there are often other options to detain a suspect. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, a police department's vehicle pursuit policies must "balance the risks, take all of the factors into consideration, and reach a decision that is best suited to their jurisdictions." Two percent of local police departments have decided to prohibit vehicular pursuits altogether. D.C. does not prohibit vehicular pursuits. Instead, it limits when officers can engage in vehicular pursuits.

The sponsor of this bill, who is from Louisiana, thinks he knows better than D.C. how to strike the balance in D.C. between the need to capture suspects and the risks of vehicular pursuits. I note two things about this bill. First, the sponsor titles this bill, "The District of Columbia Policing Protection Act," not the District of Columbia Police Officer Protection Act. Second, this bill requires the Department of Justice to publish a study not later than three years after enactment on technology capable of alerting members of the public to the presence of police pursuit in their immediate vicinity. Perhaps the sponsor should have introduced a bill to study the effectiveness of that technology before amending D.C.'s vehicular pursuit law. I urge no on this bill. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. Any other Members?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Before I recognize anyone else, I ask unanimous consent to enter a letter of support for the Higgins bill from the National Fraternal Order of Police on six bills into the record.

Without objection, so ordered.

Any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5143, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GARCIA. A recorded vote, please, sir.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 5179, the District of Columbia Attorney General Appointment Reform Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 5179, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ATTORNEY GENERAL APPOINTMENT REFORM ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5179, the District of Columbia Attorney General Appointment Reform Act, a bill to amend the District of Columbia Home Rule Act to provide for the appointment of the Attorney General of the District of Columbia by the President, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5179, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Fallon from Texas, for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence. I am proud to sponsor the District of Columbia Attorney General's Appointment Reform Act. It is a commonsense measure to strengthen accountability and ensure proper oversight of our Nation's Capital, and it is our Nation's Capital.

For the past few years, a conscious choice has been made to allow crime to run amok in our Nation's Capital. In fact, nearly two-thirds of arrests have gone unprosecuted. That is alarming. This disconnect undermines Congress' ability to preserve public safety in Washington, D.C., which is a Federal District, plain and

simple. It is not a state. My bill would amend the D.C. Home Rule Act so that the Attorney General of the District of Columbia would be appointed by the President of the United States. The Attorney General would serve at the pleasure of the President with a term aligned with the President's. Importantly, this appointment process does not require Senate confirmation, thereby streamlining the selection, while ensuring clear Federal accountability.

By passing this bill, we restore the proper constitutional balance and ensure the laws of our Nation's Capital are enforced by the Attorney General who has the best interest of the District's law-abiding citizens and visitors. This reform enhances accountability, reduces conflict, and strengthens the Federal Government's ability to govern effectively in the District of Columbia. And above all, it will improve public safety, and we need that. And when you consider some other capital cities and cities around the world, the murder rate in Bogota, Colombia, is 15 per 100,000, which is really high. And when you compare that to Paris or London, it is one in 100,000, but Mexico City, it is ten in 100,000, and in Islamabad, Pakistan, it is nine. And in Washington, D.C., America's capital, it is 27.

And, you know, this District not only belongs to the residents of the District, it belongs to all Americans. And this is a straightforward, commonsense solution that ensures proper governance in our Capital City, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I want to strongly oppose this bill, which is an unprecedented attack on D.C.'s voters' rights to self-governance and self-determination. Now, of all of the bills in front of us today, this might be the most extreme and certainly one of the most dangerous as an affront to D.C., its ability to self-govern, and the ability of the 700,000 residents of D.C. to have their own ability to elect their own Attorney General. This would hand that power of being able to select an Attorney General to the President of the United States without even requiring the consent of the Senate. This is a major Presidential overreach. It is anti-democratic, it is dangerous, and it is designed as legislation in front of us today.

With a hand-picked D.C. Attorney General, the President would now be in charge of what crimes the office prosecutes in the District of Columbia. No other state or U.S. territory's Attorney General operates in this way. An overwhelming majority of states elect their Attorneys General because the jurisdiction's voters choose who best represents their interests in a court of law. Even in the seven states where the Attorney General is appointed, they are still chosen by that state's Governor or legislature, officials that answer directly to their constituents and not to Federal politicians, and certainly not the President.

This bill would treat D.C. residents and local officials as second-class citizens of the United States. This bill would immediately terminate the duly elected Attorney General, who was chosen by D.C.'s voters just three years ago. The AG would be replaced with the President's favorite and perhaps biggest supporters, politicizing

this role. This bill also eliminates Senate confirmation from this appointment, removing even Congress's check on the executive branch. By designing the bill in this way, Congress' oversight role of the executive branch and their decisionmaking would be eliminated for this position.

Donald Trump's first acting U.S. Attorney for D.C., of course we know, was Ed Martin, who spent his time trying to intimidate opposition to the President with legal threats. Ed Martin, as we know, was too extreme and unqualified even for Senate Republicans and, of course, was removed from office. Now, it would limit the ability of D.C. to fight back against illegal actions by Donald Trump in our courts. Now, with backing from congressional Republicans, President Trump has tried to exert control over D.C.'s local police department and immigration policy. Now they are trying to take control of D.C.'s Chief Legal Officer. This would set a dangerous precedent for America, our country. It is incredibly concerning and should be, not just to the people of D.C., but to the people across this country. I urge us to vote no on this legislation, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. I recognize myself.

I support the D.C. Attorney General Appointment Reform Act. The D.C. Attorney General is charged with prosecuting juvenile crime in the District of Columbia which continues to rise. The D.C. Attorney General must take into account the city's unique place as our Nation's Capital and operate free from local politics. This legislation provides for the Presidential appointment of the D.C. Attorney General. A Presidentially appointed D.C. Attorney General will ensure appropriate executive accountability over crime in the District. I thank Representative Pat Fallon from Texas for his leadership on this legislation and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

Does any other Member seek recognition? Mr. Min.

Mr. MIN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, rise in strong opposition to this essentially lawless bill that is unprecedented and a serious attack on the self-determination rights of Washington, D.C. At its core, this legislation gives President Trump sweeping powers here locally, and, as noted by the Ranking Member, it would immediately terminate the term of the current District of Columbia Attorney General, Brian Schwalb. And this bill is wrong for several reasons. First, is plainly undemocratic. It denies D.C. residents the authority to choose their own AG. As was noted earlier, 42 states directly elect their Attorney General while seven other states allow their Governor, State Supreme Court, or the state legislature to appoint the AG. But here, you would have the President United States, without even Senate confirmation, to be able to select their AG. This denies D.C. residents representation.

Second, this hands Donald Trump complete and total control, not only of D.C.'s criminal system, but also its civil system. That is a massive shift we are talking about because the Attorney General here in Washington, D.C. oversees not just criminal cases, but all civil litigation deciding whom to sue, whom to settle with, and whom to defend against. It also prosecutes juveniles for local crimes. As things stand, the U.S. Attorney, who President Trump appointed, prosecutes adults for D.C. crimes. The President also



appoints local D.C. judges. And if you add the D.C. AG to that list, President Trump would effectively control all of D.C.'s litigation, prosecution, and courts. That is an overwhelming and alarming concentration of power that we are seeing, and Donald Trump, of course, in the last nine months has shown nothing to us to persuade me, probably anyone reasonable in this room, that he has the best interest of D.C. residents at heart.

On top of that, at this point, it is fair to say that there is a stark politicization of our Federal Agencies, and it is deeply concerning to imagine that the Attorney General here in D.C. would be appointed by D.C. As was pointed out earlier by the Ranking Member, Trump earlier appointed as the acting U.S. Attorney for D.C., Ed Martin, who was so extreme, who so politicized his office, that the Senate Republicans would not confirm him. And this is important because this person would have the right to decide who to prosecute for civil or criminal actions, and Trump would be in the perfect position to continue politicizing justice here in Washington, D.C.

Imagine, for example, if one of President Trump's allies or someone here in Congress committed a crime, and I think that actually happened not too long ago with one of our Republican colleagues, President Trump could direct his Attorney General to not prosecute, could, in fact, direct his Attorney General to prosecute his perceived political enemies or critics. And if you think this is imagination, just watch what is happening right now with Bill Pulte with the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), who is illegally, I believe, going through the mortgage records of political opponents of the President and creating baseless mortgage fraud allegations. Imagine an Attorney General here in D.C. with essentially unlimited powers to decide who to prosecute, who to go after civilly, based on the political directions of the President.

Third, and importantly, this bill presents a massive conflict of interest that President Trump would certainly exploit. If he controls the appointment of the D.C. AG, he also controls which consumer protection cases get pursued or ignored. And so, take a recent example: D.C. AG sued a crypto ATM operator for taking advantage of the elderly through illegal hidden fees. Given President Trump's ties to the crypto world, this raises serious doubts about whether he would support similar enforcement mechanisms.

In summary, I would say that this bill is textbook Federal overreach, it is lawless at its core. It is undemocratic at its core, it is un-American at its core, and it depends entirely on the largesse and generosity and good morality of the President of the United States. I want you to imagine if this is a Democratic President, to my Republican colleagues, who has limitless power to appoint our D.C. Attorney General, limitless power to decide who that person might decide to prosecute or not. This is a lawless, un-American bill. I urge my Republican colleagues to vote no on this, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

Chairman COMER. Does any other Member seek recognition? Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C. Yes, Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker [sic], I strongly oppose this undemocratic and paternalistic bill. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the

majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. This bill is the biggest reduction in D.C.'s authority since the Home Rule Act was passed in 1973. Republicans do not like that D.C. residents elect Democrats, so they deny them statehood. Republicans do not like whom D.C. residents elect for Attorney General, so this bill removes the current Attorney General and makes the Attorney General a Presidential appointee. Further, limiting D.C. residents' already limited ability to elect representatives is not enough for Republicans, though. This bill could have been made slightly less terrible by at least allowing D.C. to appoint its Attorney General, as was the case before 2015. Instead, this bill makes the D.C. Attorney General a Presidential appointee who serves at the pleasure of the President. Senate confirmation is not required.

I want to make the implications of this bill clear. This bill effectively makes President Trump Chief Legal Officer, giving him full control of D.C.'s litigation, and D.C. effectively loses the ability to sue the Federal Government. That is not all, though. This bill effectively makes President Trump D.C.'s chief law enforcement officer, giving him control of all prosecutions for violations of D.C. law, and, of course, the President already appoints the local D.C. judges.

This bill is why D.C. needs statehood. Congress has the authority to grant D.C. residents full local government and voting representation in Congress. It simply needs to pass H.R. 51, the D.C. statehood bill, which would make the residential and commercial areas of D.C. a state. The admissions clause of the Constitution gives Congress the authority to admit new states. All 37 new states were admitted by an act of Congress. The District Clause of the Constitution gives Congress the authority to reduce the size of the Federal District, which it has previously done. The new state would have a larger population than two other states, pay more Federal taxes per capita than any other state, and pay more total taxes than 21 other states.

I urge my colleagues to oppose the D.C. Attorney General Appointment Reform Act, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Does any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5179, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Chair, can I get a recorded vote on that?

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 5125, the District of Columbia Judicial Nominations Reform Act. The clerk will please designate the bill.

### **H.R. 5125, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS REFORM ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 5125, the District of Columbia Judicial Nominations Reform Act, a bill to amend the District of Columbia Home Rule Act to terminate the District of Columbia Judicial Nomination Commission, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5125, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Sessions from Texas.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I will be brief. I know the Committee has worked hard today.

Mr. Chairman, I speak in support of H.R. 5125, the District of Columbia Judicial Nominations Reform Act. It is important as I speak today to let each of us know that we are not, in this Act, removing any sitting judge or anyone that currently serves on that court. However, we are going to take and change the way in which judges are selected, and we are doing away with that process right now. It is important that we change this because I believe that Washington, D.C. needs to have a new system that would be good for Republicans or Democrats. Whoever serve as President of the United States would now be able to nominate those people without waiting for the Commission to make a determination about who the President could then choose or not choose.

Washington, D.C. does not have enough sitting judges. They need more sitting judges. They would be people who would be from the community and who would serve here. But more importantly, I think it is important for us to understand that the President of the United States, whoever that President is, would give notice and consideration just like it might be done in any other state. Because this is the Federal City, the President could more quickly make decisions about who would be serving. I think prioritizing actions that will allow the court to do its job is exactly what this is about. Will they probably be conservatives? Yes, I would not doubt that,

but at the time when the people of the United States make a decision to elect someone else, they would also have that equal right. And so, I think it is a good process that would happen thus. I would say that I support H.R. 5125 because this Federal City is allowed to have a full court to move forward with. I yield back my time.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also want to strongly oppose this bill. The District of Columbia Judicial Nominations Act would give the President the sole power to make nominations for D.C. courts. A fundamental principle of American Government is the right to self-determination. This includes the ability to have a say in how the judicial system is structured and run. This bill would take away the already limited power that D.C. has in the process of selecting local judges, undermining the basic right to self-government.

We know that right now, the Federal control over D.C. continues to grow and grow as more proposals and bills are put in front of us. This is an absurd level of Federal control over the D.C. local judge system. Now, some Republicans have claimed that the Commission that is currently in place violates the Constitution. We know the Supreme Court has actually disagreed on that, and for every U.S. state and territory that appoints its own judges, there is no role for the Federal Government. This bill is simply another Republican attempt to gut the nonpartisan judiciary and put partisan right-wing judges in its place.

Now, D.C. currently has numerous judicial vacancies, but this is not because of the Judicial Nominations Commission. The Commission has made recommendations for nearly every single open position. It is the President and the Senate which has failed to act on the nominations, and so the openings that some of my colleagues discuss are because the Senate has actually not acted. If the House Majority wants to improve the process, they certainly should speak with their colleagues in the Senate.

This bill would do nothing to improve the District's judicial system and is a clear attempt to further erode America's nonpartisan judiciary. I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill, and with that, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. I recognize myself to speak in support of the bill.

I support the D.C. Judicial Nominations Reform Act. This legislation aligns the appointment of D.C. judges with the constitutional process for appointing members of the Federal judiciary. This bill preserves the President's authority to nominate, with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate, anyone deemed appropriate to sit on the D.C. court. The current system where the President is restricted to nominating only those candidates put forward by the D.C. Judicial Nomination Commission inappropriately limits the President's authority. I want to thank Representative Pete Sessions from Texas for his leadership on this legislation. I urge support.

Does any other Member seek recognition? Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, I strongly oppose this bill, which eliminates the already small role the District of Columbia has in

the nomination and appointment of judges to the local D.C. courts. There are two bills on filling vacancies on the D.C. courts the Committee should consider instead. One would give D.C. the authority to select judges locally, whether by election or appointment. Since Republicans will not move such a bill, they should at least move a bill to address the longstanding judicial vacancy crisis in the local D.C. courts, which harms public safety and access to judges.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing the D.C. Judicial Nominations Reform Act from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, and the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwab.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. I also ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter on this bill from the D.C. Judicial Nominations Commission.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. Under the D.C. Home Rule Act, the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, a chamber in which D.C. has no representation, appoints judges to the local courts. The President must make a nomination from a list of three candidates recommended by the Judicial Nominations Commission. The Commission, whose members must be D.C. residents, hold a public comment period on applicants for a vacancy on the court before submitting a list to the President, which gives D.C. residents an opportunity to participate in the nomination process.

The Commission consists of one appointee of the President, two appointees of the District Bar, two appointees of the District Mayor, one appointee of the D.C. Council, and one appointee of the Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for D.C. Republicans say the Judicial Nominations Commission is unconstitutional because it limits the President's authority to make nominations. That is wrong. The Commission has long been in existence for 50 years. Congress has plenary authority over D.C., not the President. Congress also has plenary authority over the territories and has given them the authority to select their own judges. Do Republicans believe that is unconstitutional?

I would refer my Republican colleagues to the Supreme Court's 2019 decision regarding appointments to the Puerto Rico Control Board. The Court held the Appointments Clause of the Constitution does not "restrict the appointments of local officers that Congress vests with primarily local duties" under the territorial or district clauses of the Constitution. The longstanding judicial vacancy crisis in the local D.C. courts exists not because of the Commission, but primarily because the Senate does not prioritize confirming judges. For example, there has been a vacancy on D.C.'s highest local court since 2013. Congress should pass a bill to allow appointments to the court to take effect 30 days after the President makes a nomination unless a disapproval resolution is enacted during that period.

I urge my colleagues to vote no on this bill.

Chairman COMER. Does any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5125, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered and favorably reported, as amended.

Mr. GARCIA. A recorded vote, please.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

**H.R. 5242, TO REPEAL D.C.'S INCARCERATION REDUCTION AMENDMENT ACT OF 2016 AND THE SECOND CHANCE AMENDMENT ACT OF 2022**

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 5242, a bill to repeal D.C.'s Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act of 2016 and the Second Chance Amendment Act of 2022. The clerk will please designate the bill.

The Clerk. H.R. 5242, a bill to repeal D.C.'s Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act of 2016 and the Second Chance Amendment Act of 2022.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

I recognize myself for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill.

I support this legislation which repeals the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act of 2016 and the Second Chance Amendment Act (SCAA) of 2022. The Incarceration Reduction Act allowed criminals convicted of serious crimes committed before their 18th birthday to petition the court for a sentence reduction after serving at least 15 years, regardless of mandatory minimum sentences. Furthermore, the Second Chance Amendment Act expanded expungement and record sealing for more individuals, as well as expanded automatic expungement for certain crimes. Collectively, these D.C. laws have created an environment where convicted criminals in the District are not held fully accountable for their crimes.

Notably, United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, Jeanine Pirro, has expressed strong concern about these current laws, calling the D.C. Council to immediately reconsider the legislation, while her two predecessors have also echoed many of her concerns with the SCAA specifically. The DOJ attorneys stress the problems with using limited criminal justice resources on the process, "sealing past convictions rather than addressing present threats and prosecuting crime."

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I now recognize Ms. Norton for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker [sic]. I strongly oppose this amendment and paternalistic bill, which repeals D.C. law. The over 700,000 D.C. residents, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are capable and worthy of governing themselves.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record letters opposing this bill from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the entire D.C. Council, and D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb.

While Congress has the authority to legislate on local D.C. matters, it does not have a duty to do so. In "Federalist 43," James Madison said of D.C. residents, "D.C. is not unique in enacting sentence review or record sealing laws. The Federal Government has both." Half the states have sentence review policies. Every state has a record sealing law. Why did D.C. enact its sentence review law? If the Committee had examined the legal history of the law in a hearing this Congress, which it did not do before this markup, it would have learned that D.C. looked at the evidence on deterrence, crime, and age, and brain development.

D.C.'s sentence review law does not guarantee a sentence reduction. Instead, it gives an individual the ability to petition for one. The court must conduct a rigorous examination of the petition and conclude that the individual is not a danger, and that the interest of justice warrants the reduction. As of March, only 11 people, or 3 percent, have received a sentence reduction under D.C. law which have been convicted of a new crime. In contrast, of those released from Federal prison, 45 percent are rearrested or returned to prison within three years. The purpose of record-sealing laws is to reduce collateral consequences, including arrests that do not lead to charges. Under D.C.'s record sealing law, convictions for several types of felonies are ineligible for sealing. For those felony convictions that are eligible, the individual must petition the court and the court must find it in the interest of justice to seal the record. The court must consider several factors in its examination, and the record cannot be sealed before eight years after the end of the sentence. I urge my colleagues to vote no. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Any other Member seek recognition? Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to also just be clear that I strongly oppose this bill. It repeals two laws enacted by the District of Columbia, of course. This bill overrules legislation passed by D.C.'s elected officials who are accountable to the people of D.C. Now, the purpose of the D.C. Home Rule Act is to "grant to the inhabitants of the District of Columbia powers of local self-government." I have said it earlier, and I will say it one more time. I was a Mayor of a big city for eight years before I came to Congress. And folks, if they want to get involved in local government, should run for City Council and run for Mayor. Congress is not the place to be dictating to the people of D.C. how to run their city and their communities.

It is concerning for all of us, particularly here on our side, that much of this effort tonight through all these bills have happened without an additional hearing with the community, no conversations with folks on the ground, no community organizations being brought in. Local City Councilmembers were not consulted. The Mayor's team was not involved in the creation of these bills. So, at

every single level, there has been no actual interaction or outreach to the community. I will tell you that as Mayor, as a local elected official, you spend a lot of time when you craft laws doing community meetings, doing hearings, having public testimony in front of our body, which we do not do, of course, here in this body. And that input from the actual community on the ground is so important in crafting legislation. So, to just write up these types of laws with no community input is wrong and is of no benefit to the people of D.C.

I want to just add that the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act is a sentence review law. Twenty-five states and even the Federal Government have similar policies. I just want to make that very clear. D.C.'s law permits an individual who is convicted of a crime committed before the age of 25 and has served at least 15 years in prison, to petition the court to reduce their sentence. To reduce the term, the court, after considering specific factors, must find that the individual is not a danger and that the interests of justice warrant a reduction. Twelve states and D.C. have criminal records filling laws as well that meet the bipartisan Clean Slate Initiative's minimum criteria. So, the laws that we have been reviewing and the work of the Council and the community are important. They have passed those community tests.

I urge my colleagues to respect the will of the 700,000 D.C. residents whose elected representatives enacted the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act and the Second Chance Amendment Act, and please vote no. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Anybody else have any comments?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, I have an amendment at the desk. The clerk will distribute the amendment to all Members, and the clerk will designate the amendment.

The Clerk. Amendment to H.R. 5242, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I recognize myself for 5 minutes to explain the amendment.

I am offering this technical amendment that fixes a legal reference in the bill and adds clarity that the effects of the bill's repeal will apply prospectively. I yield back.

Does any other Member seek recognition on the Comer Amendment?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The question is on the amendment, offered by the Chairman.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

Do any other Members seek recognition? Does the Member from Pennsylvania seek recognition?

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.



Chairman COMER. The clerk will distribute the amendment to all Members, and the clerk will designate the amendment.

The Clerk. Amendment to H.R. 5242, as offered by Mr. Perry of Pennsylvania.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Perry, is recognized for 5 minutes to explain his amendment.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am assuming this is Amendment Number 111, just to clarify.

As we all know, motorists are one of the largest special interest groups in the world, not just in America. With thousands of drivers commuting across the District each day, it is no wonder that the city relies on nearly 500 speed and traffic violation cameras spread across 5-and-a-half square miles to generate millions and millions of dollars of petty revenue, often from its own constituents and often from people that can least afford to pay it. In fact, these automated cameras were expected to yield over \$1 billion between 2024 and 2028, with revenue declining over time as people figure out where they are, tell their friends, and just keep a lookout for them. It does not really make anybody safer. It just generates revenue. In 2020, insurance provider, AAA, deemed the city's enforcement of moving violations and parking tickets as predatory. Not Members of Congress, this is AAA, and to this day, city data shows how these cameras have made drivers safer is, frankly, nonexistent.

This amendment simply strikes all D.C. Code language permitting the city to install and use traffic cameras, bringing driving autonomy back not only to the residents of the District of Columbia, but to the people that want to come to their Nation's Capital, and stay in hotels and go to restaurants and see the sights, and not be fooled when they get home when they get this ticket in the mail, and then they do not want to come back halfway across the country and fight it, and the city knows that they are just going to pay it whether they are innocent or not. These cameras are a shameless money grab that continuously deter tourists, aggravate commuters and residents, and literally attacking local residents with hundreds of dollars in fines. It is unconscionable. It is not about safety. We all know it. It is about revenue generation, and it needs to be ended immediately. I urge support of the amendment, and I yield the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, I just have to say this is pretty ridiculous. We are now arguing about local traffic enforcement and local traffic laws of the District in the U.S. Congress. And I have to say once again, if we are now going to micro-manage traffic, and public works, and the way our traffic lights work, this is not the place to do it. This is what City Councils and what Mayors do. And I encourage our Republican colleagues that want to work on issues of traffic in local jurisdictions, that they run for their local City Councils or run for Mayor of D.C. I did the job for eight years, it is wonderful, we worked on a lot of traffic, but, again, this is not the role of the U.S. Congress. And certainly, right

now what we are doing is we are continuing to chip away all the autonomy and the work that the community and the Council and the Members of the District are doing every single day to make their communities better. These are the types of local matters that the Home Rule Act commits to D.C., and it was actually with James Madison who indicated, as we all know, in the *Federalist Papers* what this would all actually look like.

We must end the exclusion of D.C. residents from our democracy. The 700,000 residents of D.C., which is a larger population than two states, deserve not only control over their local affairs, over congressional voting rights, they deserve statehood, and they certainly do not deserve the U.S. Congress telling them how to manage their traffic laws. And with that, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Does any other Member seek recognition on the Perry Amendment?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The question is now on the amendment, offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Perry.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

Mr. GARCIA. A recorded vote, please.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Pennsylvania seek recognition?

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

Chairman COMER. Will the clerk please report?

The Clerk. Amendment Number 2 to H.R. 5242, as offered by Mr. Perry of Pennsylvania.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes to explain the amendment.

Mr. PERRY. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It has been consistently proving that turning right after stopping at a red light has very little effect on driver safety, maybe no effect. Certainly, none statistically. Drivers have long interpreted the right turn on red law to mean they must yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians before executing a right turn when they confront a red signal at an intersection. You have got to stop, take a look around, then you can turn right. It is done all over the country, but not in Washington, D.C. Sure enough, this interpretation has worked out extremely well from a safety and traffic movement perspective, and if any place needs traffic movement, it is certainly Washington, D.C.

Meanwhile, the District of Columbia has been actively enforcing a no turn on red law since January 1 of this year, with no exceptions, in the name of public safety. I know it is in the name of public safety, but what it really is in the name of fleecing the residents of Washington, D.C. and the visitors that come to this town to visit

their Capital. It is hard to believe this to be true when the city consistently earns millions of dollars in revenue from traffic cameras with suspiciously sensitive motion trackers, and vehicle accidents continue to happen daily.

Drivers in the District want to be able to drive freely without dealing with nuanced turning laws and, quite honestly, archaic ones that are almost not existent anywhere else in the country. This amendment simply repeals the D.C. right turn on red ban so that city traffic improves, and our Capital's roads are once again operating in the 21st century. And I know that the good gentleman is going to claim time in opposition, but instead of yammering on about how we should not be doing our constitutional duty, and I know that he has read the Constitution where it discusses the District of Columbia. And let me say for the record that I am for—I am in favor of giving the excess land back to the State of Maryland that should have it. I am for that, and I hope we would move on that. But why don't we talk about the issue at hand, which is fleecing and robbing the people of the District of Columbia and the visitors that come here? That is what this amendment is about, and that is what we should be discussing. So, I urge adoption, and I yield the balance, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields. The Chair recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, we are back to debating traffic policy in the Oversight Committee for the District, which does not seem, one, a good use of our time. And to be clear, if we really wanted to focus on giving D.C. the ability to write its own future, we would be focusing and having a hearing on actual statehood and giving the District the ability to elect its representatives and support the work the community is doing on the ground. This amendment demonstrates why D.C. needs statehood and why the Home Rule Act is in place, so that residents have local self-government control and to relieve Congress of the burden of legislating on local matters. We are talking about a variety of matters tonight, about judicial system, about public safety, and now we are discussing the details of right turns and stop signs and traffic in the Committee.

And so, again, this amendment is just another cut to D.C.'s budget. It will unbalance D.C.'s local budget. Congress requires D.C. to have a balanced budget. The Mayor and the Council are trying to do their jobs working with the community and getting public testimony. We should be focused on supporting D.C., not on rewriting their traffic laws, and with that, we should oppose this, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment, offered by Mr. Perry, the Perry Amendment Number 2.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

Mr. GARCIA. A recorded vote, please.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Mr. GARCIA. And I do have two letters I just want to insert into the record, please.

Chairman COMER. Okay. Proceed.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. One is a letter from Brady United Against Gun Violence just opposing any bill that restricts the autonomy of the District or overrides the District's criminal justice laws; and second, a letter from the Americans United for Separation of Church and State opposing H.R. 5181, the SOAR Act Improvements Act. Thank you.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Does any other Member seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, pursuant to the previous order, the Chair declares the Committee in recess, subject to the call of the Chair at 8 p.m. sharp—8 p.m.—in 50 minutes.

The Committee stands in recess.

[Recess.]

Chairman COMER. The Committee will come back to order. Appreciate everyone coming back. It is 8:05, and we will begin.

I think everyone sees we have 25 votes, so we are going to go down the list. Hopefully everybody has the list in front of them. We will begin.

The question is on favorably reporting H.R. 5183, the Gosar bill. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5183.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. All right. I see we have few more coming in. We will wait a little longer on this one, then we will get rolling.

[Brief pause.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote? Voice. Hold on.

Chairman COMER. Okay. One more. One more.

[Brief pause.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 22. The nays are 18.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it. The bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 2693, the Norton bill. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5183 [sic].

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 40. The nays are zero.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5103, the Bell Amendment.

Okay. Let me back up.

The Committee will now resume consideration of H.R. 5103, Make the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful Act.

The question is now on the previously postponed amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute, offered by Mr. Bell from Missouri.

Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on the amendment to the amendment of H.R. 5103 by Mr. Bell from Missouri.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote.

Mr. MFUME. I am not recorded.

Chairman COMER. What is that? Oh, okay. Okay. Wait a minute. We have got a technical difficulty here.

[Brief pause.]

Chairman COMER. Yes, it worked now. It worked now. All right. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 19. The nays are 24.

Chairman COMER. The nays have it, and the bill [sic] is not recorded favorably.

The question is now on the previously postponed amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute, offered by Ms. Ansari.

Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on the amendment to the amendment of H.R. 5103 by Ms. Ansari.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 19. The nays are 25.

Chairman COMER. The nays have it, and the amendment is not agreed to.

The question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5103.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5103 is agreed to.

The question is on favorably reporting H.R. 5103. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5103.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is on favorably reporting H.R. 5214, the District of Columbia Cash Bail Reform Act, by Representative Stefanik. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5214 by Stefanik.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 26. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5172, the Strong Sentences for Safer D.C. Streets Act, by Representative Biggs. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5172 by Representative Biggs.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 26. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5163, the Clean and Managed Public Spaces Act, by Representative Timmons. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5163.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 4922, the D.C. Criminal Reforms to Immediately Make Everyone Safer [sic], the D.C. CRIMES Act, by Representative Donalds.

Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 4922.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 26. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5140, the District of Columbia Juvenile Sentencing Reform Act, by Representative Gill. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5140.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 26. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The Committee will now resume consideration of H.R. 5181, the SOAR Act.

The question is now on the previously postponed amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute, offered by Mr. Frost from Florida. This is the Frost Amendment 1. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on the amendment of H.R. 5181, the Frost Amendment 1.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 20. The nays are 25.

Chairman COMER. The nays have it. The amendment is not agreed to.

The question is now on the previously postponed amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute, offered by Mr. Frost from Florida. This will be the Frost Amendment Number 2. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on the amendment to the amendment of H.R. 5181, the Frost Amendment 2.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[Pause.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 20. The nays are 25.

Chairman COMER. The nays prevail. The amendment is not agreed to.



The question is now on the previously postponed amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute, offered by Mr. Frost from Florida. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on the amendment to the amendment of H.R. 5181, the Frost Amendment Number 3.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Ms. Randall? The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 20. The nays are 25.

Chairman COMER. The nays have it, and the amendment is not agreed to.

The question is now on the previously postponed amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute, offered by Ms. Simon. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on the amendment to the amendment of H.R. 5181, the Simon Amendment.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 20. The nays are 25.

Chairman COMER. The nays have it, and the amendment is not agreed to.

The question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5181.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 5181 is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5181, the SOAR Act Improvements Act, by Dr. Foxx. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5181 by Dr. Foxx.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is passed.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5107, the Common-Sense Law Enforcement and Accountability Now in D.C. Act, by Representative Clyde. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5107.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 26. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5143, the District of Columbia Policing Protection Act, by Representative Higgins from Louisiana. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5143.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5179, the District of Columbia Attorney General Appointment Reform Act, by Representative Fallon from Texas. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5179.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The motion is adopted.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 5125, the District of Columbia Judicial Nominations Reform Act, by Representative Sessions from Texas. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5125 by Representative Sessions from Texas.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Okay. The clerk will close the vote and report the total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The Committee will now resume consideration of H.R. 5242, a bill to repeal D.C.'s Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act of 2016 and the Second Chance Amendment Act of 2022.

The question is now on the previously postponed amendment, offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Perry. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on the amendment to H.R. 5242, the Perry Amendment 1.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on the previously postponed amendment, offered by Mr. Perry from Pennsylvania. This is the Perry Amendment 2. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on the amendment to H.R. 5242 by Mr. Perry, the Perry Amendment 2.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is on favorably reporting H.R. 5242, as amended. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system. The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 5242.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 24. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

Okay. Pursuant to House Rule XI, Clause 2, I ask that Committee Members have the right to file with the clerk of the Committee supplemental, additional, Minority, and dissenting views.

Without objection.

Additionally, the staff is authorized to make necessary technical and conforming changes to the bills ordered reported today, subject to the approval of the Minority.

Without objection, so ordered.

I appreciate everyone coming out this late. This has been a long day, and we have had great participation.

If there is no further business before the Committee, without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 8:27 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

