

The ACLU of Maryland stands firm in our mission to uplift the humanity of Marylanders, including the Black and Brown children who too often are the targets of over policing and police violence. As a resident of Charles County, I know we all deserve to live in a safe and thriving environment that provides creative outlets for young people to express themselves and be free from criminalization. However, taking actions to create a curfew would not work toward the community's goal of keeping our neighborhoods and streets safe. Instead, it can lead to the over-policing of children and open the window for our county's most vulnerable kids, predominantly Black and Brown, to be funneled into the criminal legal system.

A report published in 2016 by the Campbell Collaboration found, "the pattern of evidence suggests that juvenile curfews are ineffective at reducing crime and victimization. The average effect on juvenile crime during curfew hours was slightly positive - that is a slight increase in crime - and close to zero for crime during all hours." Charles County should learn from the mistakes made in neighboring jurisdictions such as Baltimore City, who implemented a curfew in 2014 and saw an increase in child arrests, suggesting that the curfew did not decrease criminal behavior. In 2015 a study was conducted that found Washington D.C.'s youth curfew increased the number of youth related gun crimes by 69% during curfew hours.

Implementing curfews will lead to an increase in police presence, which will open children up to being racially profiled, targeted, and possibly brutalized by officers. Something that Black and Brown communities have seen happen to often in our society. As the wealthiest Black County in America, we must reject statements made by Commissioners for community members to support our officers when they use excessive force with our county's children and suggest we turn a blind eye to police brutality.

Instead of criminalizing Charles County children, we must develop solutions that solve the underlying root causes of these issues: creating designated safe spaces for young people to go and express themselves in a creative manner, through sports, music, arts, etc., supervised by trusted youth mentorship organizations, County government partnering with youth sports teams, clubs, and organizations to host weekend and night events targeted at young people, invest in ensuring children and families have access to mental health professionals, and more.

We must stand by the words of Coretta Scott King who said, "the greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

Carlos Childs  
Southern Maryland Regional Organizer  
ACLU of Maryland