

June 21 2022

DMV MUSIC STAKEHOLDER STATEMENT ON THE EVENTS OF JUNETEENTH

The music community is devastated by the deadly violence that took place off U Street Sunday night following a Juneteenth and Father's Day Celebration. This incident is yet another reminder of just how much work we have left to do as a city to confront and eradicate poverty, displacement, subpar public education, and the other forces that have long led to violence in our city.

We stand with our community members who suffered injuries on Sunday night, and with the family of the 15-year-old whose life was lost in the shooting. Gun violence in our city needs to be brought to an end — not by further increasing the power of MPD, whose presence does not increase safety for those most at risk, but by addressing the root causes of this violence: Poverty, lack of opportunity, and insufficient community-based violence prevention initiatives.

Sunday's mass shooting took place after 9pm — a full 45 minutes after the live music associated with the Juneteenth event, a peaceful demonstration, had ended. And the event was far from an illicit, unwanted gathering: It was co-sponsored and promoted by numerous DC agencies, and was advertised on Fox 5 DC by Deputy Mayor John Falcicchio. Representatives from the event appeared on the mic multiple times to encourage peaceful and respectful conduct. **The event was attended and supervised by hundreds of DC police officers, and the streets were properly closed to traffic for the duration of the performance and celebration, all of which were joyous, uplifting and peaceful.**

This coalition represents musicians, managers, artist collectives, non-profits, venues, promoters and festival producers. Organizing events in DC is an incredibly complicated process, and the special events industry has created numerous barriers to entry for grassroots organizers across the city. The city's permitting structure enforces further inequity between the "haves" and the "have-nots." While we encourage all promoters and organizers to continue to attempt to navigate the appropriate channels for permitting and licensing public events, the city must make efforts to remove the red tape and financial hurdles making those channels inaccessible to many.

Mayor Bowser's statement on Sunday night calling the shooting part of an "unpermitted" event is a clear attempt to distance her office from the organizers and avoid any blame or responsibility for the patterns of violence taking place under her watch.

DC has seen a decades-long pattern of public officials blaming endemic community violence issues on Go Go music and the community who gather around it. **That pattern must end.**

While our city's luminaries gathered in the shadows of the Capitol Building for a multi-million dollar, highly exclusive music event, thousands of their constituents celebrated Juneteenth at a free community-driven event honoring DC music and culture, just a couple miles north. Events

like Moechella have grown organically over the past 4 years, attracting more and more residents and visitors and inspiring pride in local culture. Our independent festival producers have been asking for funding and resources from the city for years, yet the city so often ignores those appeals in favor of support for large corporate events. Our local events, benefitting the communities who have contributed to DC culture for generations, need this support first and foremost.

Event permits will not stop gun violence in our city. If we let the permit status of this event, the genre of music, or the demographics of attendees influence how we respond to this tragedy, then we are hastening the death of DC's cultural legacy. The gap between the privileged and the marginalized continues to grow at a frightening rate. As rapid gentrification sees more families displaced, people are expressing their fear, frustration, anger and pain with violence, and they have no safe place to turn for help.

Gun violence will not end in Washington, D.C., until we do the hard work of evaluating and then drastically improving our social services, our public schools and our governing structure. Gun violence will continue to devastate our communities until we ensure that programs are equitably resourced. More police will not stop gun violence. Until we take concrete steps to make changes in how we see and treat the most vulnerable people in our city, we will see more lives lost.

Cultural events like Moechella must not only continue to have a place in our city, but they must be supported and uplifted as cultural programs fostering the continued cultural life of the "real DC."

Right now, our city mourns the terrible losses suffered over this weekend. But we need our elected leaders to work collaboratively with the music community to help fight our rising violence issues — not continue a pattern of shifting blame onto the cultural organizers working to make change, with or without their city's support.

Thank you,

DMV Music Stakeholder Coalition