

June 17, 2024

VIA EMAIL

Dear Wilmington City Council Members,

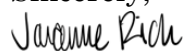
The ACLU of Delaware writes this letter urging you to reject proposed ordinance 24-036 which limits speech and protest under the guise of a noise prohibition. This ordinance would make it unlawful for a “noise disturbance” that is focused on a residence at any time, effectively placing undue limits on public assembly activities or protests.

Free speech and the right to protest is the pillar of our democracy and is critical to empowering communities. Protests allow people to express their opinions and grievances and often give voice to minority or underrepresented groups who may not have other means to express their views. This ordinance would further suppress those voices. Part of the very mission of many groups’ political speech is to deliver their message directly to elected officials and those in positions of power to make change. This ordinance significantly limits the people’s power to speak directly to those responsible for impacting their lives.

Protest helps expose the behaviors of the government and hold people and institutions accountable. Placing limits on when, where or how people may protest further dampens people’s will to organize and engage in protected political speech. This inhibits progress that comes by bringing attention to issues that may otherwise be overlooked. While placing limits on protest undoubtedly appeals to elected officials' interests in avoiding criticism, curtailing peoples' ability to express their views and engage in protest— even if annoying, offensive, or seemingly inconvenient— makes our democracy weaker.

We urge you to vote “no” on ordinance 24-036 and reject further limits on free speech and people’s ability to protest and assemble.

Sincerely,



Javonne Rich

Policy & Advocacy Director, *ACLU of Delaware*



Delaware

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