

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office Of Cable Television, Film, Music, And Entertainment**



**Public Hearing on
Bill 23-317, the “Go-Go Official Music of the District of Columbia Designation
Act of 2019”**

Testimony of
Angie M. Gates
Director

Before the
Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building
Room 500
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
4:00pm

Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and staff. I am Angie Gates, the Director of the Office of Cable Television, Film, Music, and Entertainment (OCTFME). I am pleased to provide testimony regarding Bill 23-317, the “Go-Go Official Music of the District of Columbia Designation Act of 2019.”

If enacted, this legislation would designate Go-Go music as the official music of the District of Columbia. It would also ensure that Go-Go always has a home in DC by creating a program to support, preserve, and archive Go-Go music and its history.

Go-Go started in the mid ‘60’s and ‘70’s as a term for a club where young people would unite in their love for music. Today, after decades of providing the sound of the city, it has been transformed into a movement of beats, culture, and activism.

A young musical pioneer named Chuck Brown began laying the foundation for a new and innovative sound in the District of Columbia in the ‘70’s. Since its inception, Go-Go has defined musical culture in the District of Columbia in a way that cannot be compared to any other city in the nation. With its conga beats and other percussion sounds mixed in with Blues, Salsa, R&B, Hip-Hop, and other genres, Go-Go continues to have a historic mark on the nation’s capital. It has been the soundtrack for the lives of District residents for decades.

Go-Go has not been limited to the Billboard charts. Thanks to award-winning director Spike Lee and his ground-breaking film, *School Daze*, Go-Go has also made it onto the “silver screen.” A scene from that film was captured right here in D.C. with the band “Experience Unlimited,” known as E.U. featuring Sugar Bear, on the stage of the 9:30 Club. Collaborations with musicians such as Jill Scott, Salt-N-Pepa, and Kid-N-Play have propelled Go-Go into the international spotlight taking its unique sound beyond our eight wards. Go-Go is not just music.

It is an experience that is woven into the history of D.C. It is the common thread that connects generation after generation.

It is no wonder that when the very existence of Go-Go has been put to the test in recent years, the community pushed back. More than 80 thousand supporters signed a petition under the hashtag “#Don’tMuteDC” in order to keep the sound of Go-Go alive. Thousands of artists, advocates and music lovers took to the streets to voice their support for Go-Go. The momentum from the Go-Go community has also been at the forefront of the movement to support DC becoming the 51st state, by lifting up our values and defining the very essence of what it means to be a Washingtonian.

At OCTFME, we value the contributions that Go-Go music has made to the District. In September 2018, our agency premiered *Straight Crankin’—A Go-Go Documentary*, which was produced by our Emmy award winning team. The film, featuring band members from past and present, highlights Go-Go's evolution from its roots to the “bounce beat” and its global impact. Year after year, several artists have taken “center stage” during OCTFME events, such as Rare Essence and Bela Dona entertaining friends and neighbors on Freedom Plaza during the District’s Emancipation Day Celebration. Most recently, the Black Alley Band performed during Mayor Bowser’s 2022 Creates Kickoff event.

In addition, OCTFME has highlighted Go-Go through DC Radio and special programming on the District of Columbia Network (DCN) and District Knowledge Network (DKN). On DCN, we highlight Go-Go videos on the program “Display” and open our studios for interviews and performances on our show, “The 202.” On DKN, we feature “Learning with Go-Go” for our youth.

OCTFME will always support the Go-Go community in D.C. It is for this reason that we support Bill B23-317. To properly archive Go-Go music and documents referenced in the bill, independent resources and infrastructure will be required. We are dedicated to doing our part to ensure that the tradition and culture of Go-Go continues to thrive and live on for generations to come.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank Mayor Muriel Bowser for her commitment to Go-Go music and ensuring that Go-Go remains a vibrant part of DC's culture, and the members of the Council for their partnership in this effort. I'd also like to thank the DC community for all that it does to keep the culture of the District alive through the sounds and the rhythm of Go-Go music. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.