



Statement on the Destructive Mass Gathering on Chittenden Avenue

The Ohio State Community

April 18, 2021

Last night following the Spring Game, nearly 1,000 Ohio State students gathered on and around Chittenden Avenue to participate in “Chitt Fest.” Participants of “Chitt Fest” engaged in destructive behaviors that led to further intensified chaos on the street and surrounding area, causing severe damage and destruction of property. The destruction included flipped cars, broken windows, fires, fistfights, and more.

Hours after initial reports and no meaningful police intervention or arrests made, heavy crowds remained. By that time, drastic property damage had been done. Despite Chittenden Ave residents calling both the Ohio State University Police Department (OSUPD) and the Columbus Division of Police (CPD) around 10:45pm, the street was not fully cleared until 3am, when CPD cruisers were sent to disperse the crowds. CPD dispatched helicopters to order the mob to vacate the area and called the fest an unlawful gathering. CPD knew of the event prior to last evening, but, to public knowledge only placed barricades at the ends of Chittenden Avenue in preparation. The riot continued for hours, as OSUPD, CPD, and university administrators were fully aware of what was taking place.

Earlier this semester and throughout this past year, peaceful student protests advocating for social change, which are protected under the First Amendment, have led to a swift response from CPD with wooden bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, and so much more. The Undergraduate Student Government recognizes that the Columbus Division of Police demonstrates clear disparities in treatment between white students and students of color, specifically Black students. It is clear that CPD’s priorities lie in protecting interests of their own, and not those of general public safety, given their unmistakable negligence of the disgusting acts of last evening.

We cannot allow our students of color, specifically Black students, to be disproportionately affected by the blatant racism perpetuated by the Columbus Division of Police. This is especially disappointing following the recent increase in police presence that primarily impacts Black students and OSU community members. This past summer, at planned protests calling for an end to systemic inequities in law enforcement, CPD arrived in riot gear, yet responded slowly and

ineptly to this annually planned party of mostly white students last evening. There is a clear divide in the police response to both situations, and this appears to be intentional. As CPD continues to fail in protecting the campus area, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the university needs to reevaluate its relations with them for the protection of all its students.

Not only did the events of last night cause material and property destruction, but they were conducted in complete disregard of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the greater Columbus community. As of Thursday, April 15th, health officials upgraded Franklin County to Level Four Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 spread. It is clear that we are not yet free from the dangers and risks associated with COVID-19, and the ability to go to “Chitt Fest” does not supersede someone else’s right to safety from COVID-19 by endangering other people’s lives for sheer enjoyment.

Ohio State students must recognize that the greater Columbus community does not have the luxury of being tested twice a week for free, nor the privilege to make an appointment or have access to transportation to the Schottenstein Center to receive the vaccine. Many of the people in the Columbus community must work to make a living and getting COVID-19 will impact their salary and ability to care for their families. Ohio State students are guests in the Columbus community and must respect Columbus community members. Additionally, the actions of last night were dangerous to immunocompromised students who share university common spaces with those that attended “Chitt Fest.” Students involved in last nights’ crimes should be held accountable for property damage as well as the sustained effect their actions will have in the pandemic, particularly affecting the BIPOC communities, disabled people, the elderly, immunocompromised people, and LGBTQ+ communities. The events of last night were selfish, privileged, and entitled.

As the Undergraduate Student Government of the Ohio State University, we firmly condemn the destructive behaviors carried out by the members of the university community. We call on university administration, including but not limited to, University President Dr. Kristina Johnson; Dr. Melissa Shivers, Senior Vice President for Student Life; Jay Kasey, Senior Vice President of Administration and Planning; Monica Moll, Director of the Department of Public Safety; and Kimberly Spears-McNatt, Chief of The Ohio State University Police Division to hold students that participated in last night’s events accountable to university policy and practices. We request that the university offer fiscal and emotional support to those whose property was damaged last night because of the lack of intervention by the university, OSUPD, and CPD. Lastly, we demand that the university finally hold CPD accountable by reevaluating its relationship with them. These disparities cannot continue to be ignored.

We urge students whose property was damaged or destroyed because of last night’s events to press charges against those responsible if they’re able. We also encourage all students who knew someone at “Chitt Fest” or who have evidence of these crimes to report them online at <http://studentconduct.osu.edu/complaint> and for those who committed these crimes to come forward immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacob Chang". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a prominent loop at the end of the word "Chang".

Jacob Chang (he/him)
Undergraduate Student Body President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna Valerius". The signature is cursive, with a large, stylized "A" and "V".

Anna Valerius (she/her)
Undergraduate Student Body Vice President