

**Testimony at DC Water & Sewer Authority Hearing**  
**Submitted by Janet Sharp member of the People for Fairness Coalition Downtown**  
**Washington DC Public Restroom Committeej**  
**February 25, 2016**

Good afternoon members of the DC City Council,

My name is Janet Sharp. I am a member of the People for Fairness Coalition (PFC) Downtown Washington DC Public Restroom Committee. I, along with my colleagues, am here to testify about the need for clean, safe public restrooms available 24/7 in needed areas of Downtown DC. John McDermott will testify focusing on issues relating to restroom availability and individuals who lack housing, and then Marcia Bernbaum will give you the larger view.

Pregnant women, families with children, senior citizens like me whose bladder doesn't hold as much as it used to, anyone taking medication(s) that have a diuretic effect, and people with colostomy bags, among others, urgently need clean, safe restrooms when they urgently have to go. Restrooms may or may not be available and are not clearly marked.

Tourists from other countries who are used to finding a public restroom when they need to use one are often frustrated because this city does not have clean, safe public restrooms open 24/7. If other capital cities have clean, safe public restrooms readily available why can't we?

I have heard stories about women with small children who urgently have to go and the patron will not permit the child to have access to a restroom. People that use wheelchairs and walkers, in particular, have a difficult time finding a place to go. We know from experiences in other cities that people who have these difficulties will often avoid going downtown to shop or to a park because they can't be sure they have ready access to a restroom when they urgently have to go. This situation is detrimental not only to these individuals but to merchants who might otherwise receive their business.

We recently posted an online petition asking individuals living in DC to ask the Mayor and the DC City Council to install safe, clean, public restrooms available 24/7 in needed areas of Downtown DC. Several people, in addition to signing the petition, added their personal comments. I would like to share a few of these comments with you:

*"If our nation's capital cannot project a social policy which supports human dignity and health, we are a city are in sad, sad shape."*

*"I have recently returned from a trip to Europe and was reminded how backward the US is in regard to public restrooms."*

*"I truly think this is a real necessity in any city but particularly a city where tourism is a big part of the economy. I've always been impressed when I've traveled to Europe on the availability of clean and often staffed public restrooms. They are either free or cost very little".*

*"Civilized countries have public restrooms readily available in their cities. I am a senior male with BPH, and often have to "go" suddenly when out and about in DC. I should not have to feel obligated to purchase something in a coffee house or restaurant simply because I need to relieve myself!"*

I am attaching to my testimony a list prepared by the American Restroom Association of individuals who are restroom challenged.

Thank you very much for listening to me.

## ***THE RESTROOM CHALLENGED***<sup>1</sup>

Middle age women (NAFC)  
Pregnant women  
Parents touring with young children  
Children in school  
Women experiencing an irregular menses  
People suffering certain congenital defects  
Those with bladder cancer  
Some wounded Combat Veterans  
Victims of abdominal or nerve trauma  
Women being treated for Vaginal Candidiasis  
10 to 40% of Stroke victims  
Otherwise healthy persons suffering bowel incontinence  
People with Interstitial Cystitis  
Those suffering Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Ulcerative Colitis  
The Elderly (functional capacity is halved as we age.)  
Patients suffering the diuretic effect of blood pressure medicine  
Men suffering an enlarged prostate  
Diners experiencing the diuretic effect of coffee or alcohol  
Patients on medications that act as bowel or bladder irritants  
Ostomy pouches require prompt attention when at capacity

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<sup>1</sup> From American Restroom Association website ([americanrestroom.org](http://americanrestroom.org)).